

DIRECTIONS: Read the selections then answer the questions following the dotted lines.



This is a story about a girl named Allison. Allison is good at art and not very athletic. She tries to be a gymnast like her sister, but finds that she is not talented in the same way as her sister. Now you will read about how Allison finds what her special talent is. Then answer the questions that follow.

Allison's Gift

- 1 I will never forget the precise moment that caused me to set aside my gift because I wanted the gift that my older sister Carla had.
- 2 My family was spending a week at the beach. One morning, Carla went to the beach early, but I stayed behind to finish a sketch of a seashell I'd found the day before.
-

*My notes
about what I
am reading*

1. Where does this story take place?
- A. At Carla's House.
- B. In the forest.
- C. At the beach.
-

GO ON 



*My notes
about what I
am reading*

3

After I finished the drawing, I put on my swimsuit and walked from the hotel to the beach to join Carla. I was about a hundred yards away from the ocean when I spotted Carla doing cartwheels in the wet sand. Lean and muscular, Carla was a champion gymnast. Her motions were slow and fluid, in perfect coordination, as she wheeled along the shore. The beauty of that sight froze me in awe, and I decided instantly that I too would become a gymnast.

2. In paragraph 3, the author uses the words “froze me in awe” to show that Allison thinks Carla’s gymnastic abilities are —

F. unusual

G. suspicious

H. dazzling

GO ON 

*My notes
about what I
am reading*

3. What is the tone of paragraph 3?

- A. Angry
- B. Bored
- C. Admiring

4 It is important at this point to mention that I had never been very athletic or particularly agile. Physical education was my least favorite subject in school. Nevertheless, I told my parents I wanted to take a gymnastics class. "O.K., Allison," my mother said with surprise. The next week I enrolled in a beginners' tumbling class.

4. Why is Allison's mom surprised when Allison wants to take a gymnastics class?

- F. She knows Allison has not been interested in any kind of physical activity in the past.
- G. She thinks that Allison has little time to add another activity to her schedule.
- H. She knows that Allison and her sister do not like to participate in the same activities.

GO ON 

5 If only my parents had talked me out of this misguided plan and spared me the agonies I went through! Five minutes into the first class, it was obvious that I didn't have the makings of a gymnast. I couldn't even master a somersault! But I kept at it.

*My notes
about what I
am reading*

5. Why did Allison feel that she didn't have the makings of a gymnast?

- A. She didn't have the right clothes.
 - B. She wanted to go home.
 - C. She couldn't even master a somersault.
-

6 During this time drawing and painting—which had been my two passions—all but left my mind. I abandoned art to practice what, in my case, can only loosely be called tumbling. It must have been painful for my family to put on an encouraging face as they watched my dogged but fumbling efforts. I was blindly determined to be like Carla. I just would not give up.

7 At some point during this period, on the advice of Ms. Renquist, my art teacher, I hurriedly submitted my seashell sketch for an art contest in our town. One night as I was groaning my way through an attempted back bend in our living room, the phone rang.

8 I unbent myself gracelessly as Carla handed the phone to me. It was Ms. Renquist. "You won the contest!" she announced.



*My notes
about what I
am reading*

9 I blinked. "Really?" was all I managed to reply.

6. The tone in paragraph 9 can be described as:

F. anger

G. surprise

H. humor

10 "Yes," Ms. Renquist said. "They're going to give you an award at the annual banquet. And that's not all, Allison. The winner is automatically accepted into Wildale's Summer Fine Arts Institute."

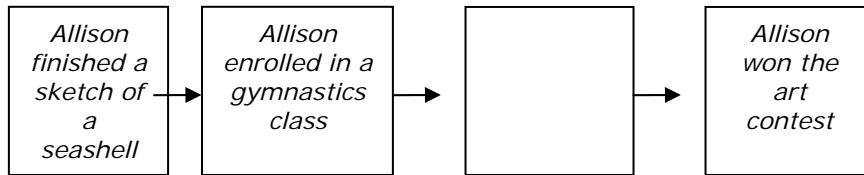
11 "Wow!" I shouted into the receiver. I couldn't believe that I'd gotten into such an elite program. Only a handful of young artists were accepted each summer.

12 When I hung up, Carla made me recount every word of the conversation. "That's fantastic, Allison!" she said. "Let's go tell Mom and Dad."

13 That night I didn't go back into the living room to continue practicing. And when my tumbling class ended the next week, I didn't sign up for another session. Gymnastics was Carla's gift, not mine. It had taken me a while, but I realized that I had a valuable gift of my own.

GO ON 

7. Read the diagram of information from the article.



Which of the following belongs in the empty box?

- A.** Allison submitted her drawing in an art contest.
- B.** Carla was upset that Allison enrolled in gymnastics.
- C.** Ms. Renquist tried to get Allison to drop out of her gymnastics class.

8. What is Allison's main problem in this story?

- F.** She does not like vacationing with her family.
- G.** She ignores her own strengths in trying to be like her sister.
- H.** She cannot find anything that interests her.



9. Allison learns to appreciate her own gift when —

A. she sketches the seashell she found on the beach

B. she sees her sister doing cartwheels in the sand

C. she finds out that she has won an art contest

10. Which of the following is the best summary of the story?

F. Allison ignores her talent for drawing to pursue a new interest in gymnastics. While she tries to excel in gymnastics like her sister, she realizes that her true gift is in drawing when she wins an art contest.

G. Allison vacations with her family on a beach where she draws pictures of her sister.

H. Allison's mom encourages her to become a gymnast because she is not very good at drawing. She decides to run away when she realizes she is not good at gymnastics.





This story is about a boy named Mike who moved from Russia to the United States. Mike is nervous about starting a new life in another country and sets very high goals for himself. Now you will read about how Mike learns about setting good goals.

Mike's List

- 1 If you could hear me tell this story aloud, you would know from my accent that I'm not originally from the United States. My family is from Saint Petersburg, a large city in the far western part of Russia. We came to Boston three years ago because my father was invited to teach at a large university in this city.

*My notes
about what I
am reading*

11. Why did Mike's family move to the United States?

- A.** Mike's family had other relatives living in Boston.
- G.** Mike's father was offered a teaching position at a university.
- H.** Mike's family did not like Russia.
-

GO ON 

2

Fortunately I already knew English fairly well before we got here. Still, my stomach became knotted up every time I thought about being in an unfamiliar place. For one thing, I would not have a single friend in the United States. For another, as the oldest of three children in my family, I thought I needed to set a good example for my brother and sister and make my parents proud.

*My notes
about what I
am reading*

12. In paragraph 2, Mike uses the words "knotted up" to show his feelings of —

- F. anxiety
- G. secretiveness
- H. curiosity

3

With this weight on my shoulders, I started my new life here. I sat at my desk and made a list of goals for myself. I taped this list to my bathroom mirror and reread it before leaving for my first day of school in the United States.

1. Make one new friend each day.
2. Earn the top grades in every subject.
3. Be the top athlete in every sport.
4. Help my sister and my brother adjust to their new life.

A black arrow pointing to the right with the words "GO ON" written in white capital letters inside it.

*My notes
about what I
am reading*

13. What is one of the main reasons Mike sets high expectations for himself?

- A.** He wants to be a good role model for his brother and sister.
- B.** He wants to go back to Russia.
- C.** He wants to drop out of school.

4 At the time the list seemed entirely reasonable to me. My mother thought otherwise. After reading it, she exclaimed, "Mike, you cannot possibly believe that you must accomplish these things! Your father and I don't expect you to be Superman." Maybe they didn't expect me to perform miracles, but I still wanted to excel in every possible way.



GO ON 

*My notes
about what I
am reading*

- 5 How did I do with the goals on my list? Not so well. First, I did not make a new friend every day, because good friendships take time. You can't collect friends the way you do baseball cards or marbles. Second, I worked hard but discovered that some subjects were easier for me than others. And that was O.K. Third, in my quest to be incomparable in all sports, I ended up spraining my wrist during a soccer game and breaking an ankle running track. And as for goal number four, I learned that my sister and my brother wanted to live their own life here in the United States, without their older brother's intrusiveness. In fact, they've probably adjusted better than I have. They haven't broken a single bone!

GO ON 

14. Look at the chart of information from the story.

Mikhail's List of Goals	The Result
1. Make one new friend each day.	➔ • _____
2. Earn the top grades in every subject.	➔ • He learns that some subjects are easier for him than others are.
3. Be the top athlete in every sport.	➔ • He hurts himself in two sports.
4. Help my sister and my brother adjust to their new life.	➔ • He finds out they don't need his help.

Which of these belongs on the blank line?

F. He doesn't want to make friends.

G. He realizes that friendships take time to develop.

H. He thinks no one wants to be his friend at his new school.



6 So I decided that I needed a new list.

*My notes
about what I
am reading*

1. Be kind to others.
2. Do my best every day at school.
3. Give my best effort to the sports I love to play.
4. Be a role model for my sister and my brother but learn from them as well.
5. Remember that Superman is a fictional character!

15. How did the way Mike about his brother and sister change at the end of the story.

- A.** Mike felt that his brother and sister never listened.
- B.** Mike learned his brother and sister wanted to live their own life and they were adjusting well to the United States.
- C.** Mike is jealous of his brother and sister.

GO ON 

16. From information in this story, you can conclude that -

F. Mike is a responsible person.

G. Mike tries to trick his parents.

H. Mike doesn't like doing homework.





This newspaper article is about a statue of alligators in El Paso. The statue was built in memory of alligators that once lived in a fountain in the middle of town. Now you will read about the history of the alligators and why there is now a statue where they used to live.



Gators Roam Downtown Plaza Again

by Wesley Schanen

- 1 EL PASO, Texas— After an absence of more than 20 years, alligators are again the center of attention downtown. But don't worry—these gators are harmless. They are part of artist Luis Jiménez's latest sculpture, titled Plaza de los Lagartos, which means "Plaza of the Alligators."
- 2 Hundreds of residents gathered in San Jacinto Plaza to dedicate the large fiberglass statue and fountain. It is located near the area where live alligators once roamed the plaza's pond. The statue brought back fond memories for many who attended the dedication. Some older **El Pasoans** related stories of childhood visits to the real gator pond in the 1950s and 1960s. Younger residents, however, found it hard to believe that gators actually lived in the park, hundreds of miles from the nearest swamp.

El Pasoans: people living in the city of El Paso



- 3 According to legend, the whole thing started as a joke. Around 1883 an El Paso miner named Adolph Munsenberger received a package about the size of a shoe box from a friend in Louisiana. Inside he found six baby alligators along with a note from his friend. The note suggested that Munsenberger use the alligators to haul mining carts. By all accounts Munsenberger took the joke well. He put the little reptiles into a water barrel and began raising them as pets. However, he knew that this small home could be only temporary. Munsenberger went to the mayor and offered the gators as a gift to the city. The mayor accepted even though there wasn't really a place to keep the animals. He finally decided to put the gators in the recently completed pond in San Jacinto Plaza.
-

17. The first alligators were originally sent to El Paso —

- A.** to welcome tourists
- B.** as part of a joke
- C.** Because they had nowhere else to live
-

- 4 El Paso residents soon began to think of the gators as community pets. They have each gator a name—Humpy, Sally, Ally, Don Porfirio, Mimmie, and Abercrombie. The gators quickly became local celebrities. El Paso newspapers reported their activities as though they were respected citizens. News accounts detailed the latest gator facts, and gossip columns included gator rumors. One local newspaper even ran a weekly column called "Alligators' Tails." The column related the "true" history of how alligators came to El Paso, as told by one of the alligators. People throughout the city shared tall tales and anecdotes about their unusual



new neighbors. As these tales spread, each gator seemed to take on a unique personality. For example, witnesses claimed that Ally liked music. They said that he would wag his tail whenever a mariachi band performed in the park.

18. The tone in paragraph 4 can be described as —

F. humor

G. anger

H. embarrassment

- 5 Alligators occupied the pond in San Jacinto Plaza for some 80 years. Over the years the original alligators died and were replaced with new ones. The alligators remained a popular local attraction and could be seen sunning themselves during the warmer months. Although El Paso is usually warm and sunny, its winters were cold for the gators. When temperatures dropped, usually in late October, the gators would retreat to the center of the pond. They would remain there in a type of hibernation until warmer days



Photograph courtesy of © Maria Gallegos.



returned. Around March the gators would crawl back out of the water. Many El Pasoans came to view the alligators' reappearance as a sure sign of spring.

- 6 Of course, the gators were by nature dangerous animals. On a few occasions park workers were attacked. Although most El Pasoans were fond of the alligators, people often involved the gators in risky pranks and practical jokes. On at least one occasion, a gator was placed in a hotel room to welcome an unsuspecting tourist. Once, students from a local college kidnapped one of the large reptiles and put it in the school swimming pool. Some of these exploits were even more harmful. There were incidents in which the alligators were mistreated and abused. In the 1960s two alligators were stoned to death, and another lost an eye. Park officials became worried about the gators' safety and wisely decided to move them to the city zoo. Though the gators made a brief return to the pond in the 1970s, protected by a plastic enclosure, the zoo eventually became their permanent home.
-

19. What is paragraph 6 mainly about?

- A.** Why the alligators had to be moved to the zoo
- B.** How the alligators make great pets
- C.** How alligators can be trained to do tricks



20. Read this part of an outline of information from the article.

- I. Reasons the alligators were moved to the zoo
- A. _____
- B. Mistreated and abused
- C. Dangerous to people

Which idea belongs on the blank line?

- F. Used for pranks
- G. Disliked by everyone
- H. Made too much noise

-
- 7 After they left San Jacinto Plaza, the gators gradually faded into El Paso's past. Then in 1987 city officials asked Jiménez to create a work of art for downtown El Paso. An El Paso native, Jiménez remembered seeing the gators as a boy. He knew that they held special memories for many El Pasoans and chose to make them the subject of the statue. The statue took Jiménez eight years to complete. It depicts four alligators seeming to lunge out from the fountain, two with their mouths agape, their sharp teeth bared as if ready



to attack. Mist from the fountain keeps the gators looking moist and lifelike. Those in attendance at the dedication were happy that the park's most famous citizens had finally returned—at least in spirit—to San Jacinto Plaza.

21. What does the word agape mean in paragraph 7?

- A. Damp
- B. Shiny
- C. Open

22. Why does the author include information about the real alligators that once lived in the plaza?

- F. To give information about what alligators like to eat
- G. To help find homes for alligators
- H. To show how the statue relates to the city's history



23. Which sentence from this article supports the idea that many people in El Paso still think of the alligators as special?

A. People were tired of seeing the alligators.

B. The alligators gradually faded into El Paso's past

C. The statue brought back fond memories for many who attended the dedication.

24. Which sentence from this article supports the idea that it would be unusual to find alligators living in El Paso?

F. The statue took Jiménez eight years to complete.

G. Younger residents, however, found it hard to believe that gators actually lived in the park, hundreds of miles from the nearest swamp.

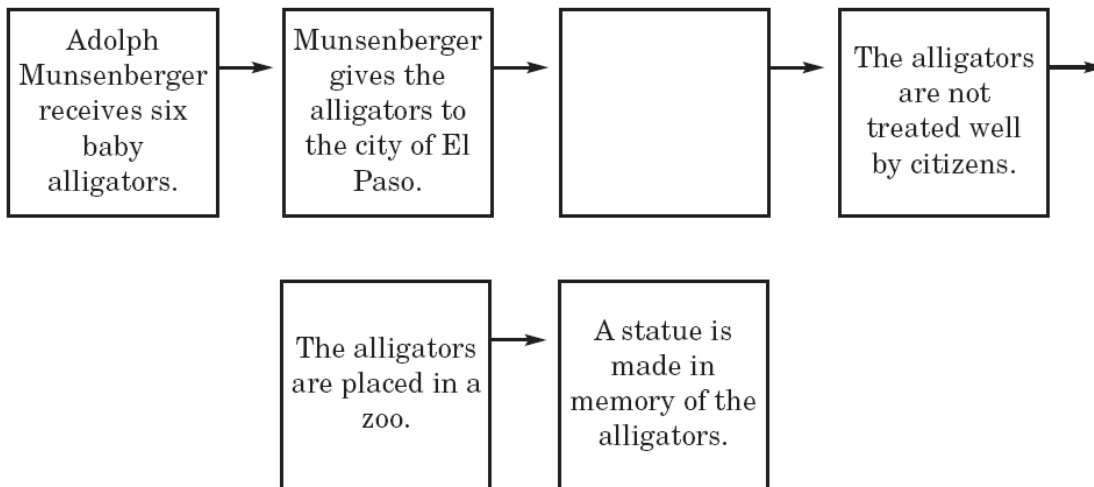
H. On a few occasions park workers were attacked.



25. From information in this article, you can conclude that El Paso —

- A. alligators eat year round.
- B. did not have a zoo when Adolph Munsenberger received the alligators
- C. did not have alligators in the city

26. Read the diagram of information from the article.



Which of the following belongs in the empty box?

- F. The alligators are sent back to Louisiana.
- G. The alligators are set free.
- H. The alligators are considered community pets.





The following story is about a girl living in 1925. Her family orders a new home through a catalog. Now you will read about the family's experience building the house and how this order from a catalog changed their lives.

Home Sweet Catalog Home

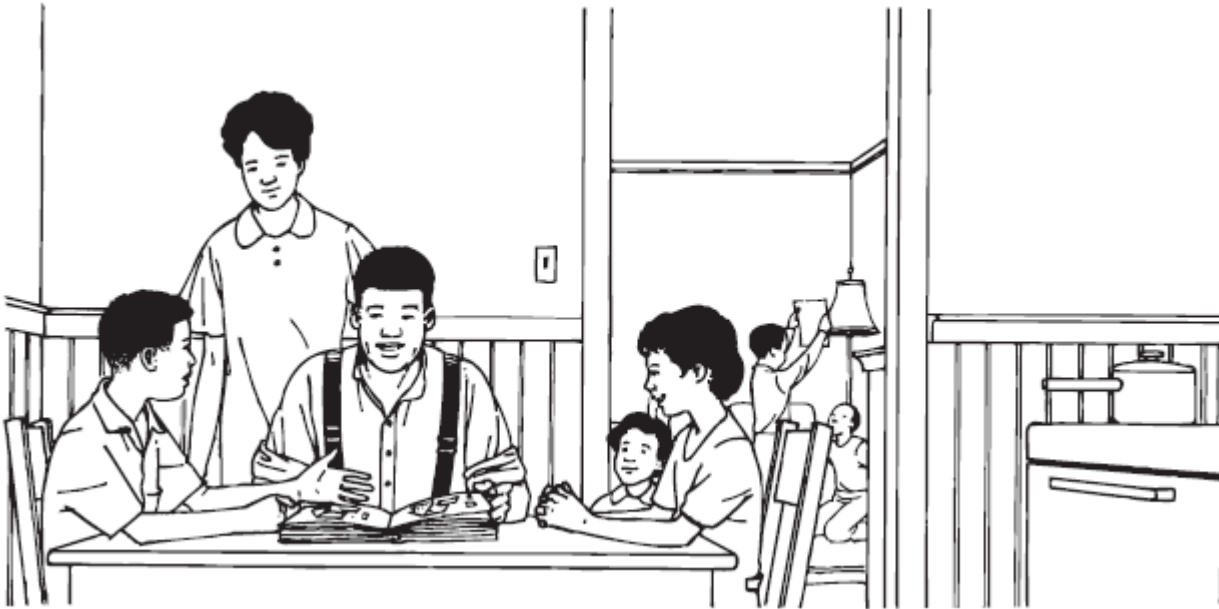
- 1 In 1925, the year I turned 13, a Sears catalog changed my life. Up until then my family had rented a tiny three-room apartment on Main Street. My three brothers slept in the bedroom with my parents. My younger sister and I slept on a foldaway sofa in the living room. Daddy didn't make much money as a coal miner, so having our own house seemed like an impossible dream—that is, until the day the *Sears Modern Homes* catalog came in the mail. Daddy had ordered the catalog and paid a whole dollar for it. Mama wasn't too happy about his spending so extravagantly on a catalog, but Daddy said it was worth every penny.
- 2 The catalog showed the different houses that could be built from a Sears do-it-yourself home kit. The kit came with everything a family needed to build its very own house. There were blueprints and a book of instructions that showed how to build the house, as well as all the wood, nails, paint, roofing, and so on. Each house had a different name, such as the Salem or the Woodland. Some of the houses were big and some small, but they were all beautiful. It didn't seem possible that we could ever have a home like one of those.
- 3 Mama thought Daddy was just dreaming. She looked at the catalog over his shoulder. "John, that house costs more than a thousand dollars!" Mama exclaimed. "We can't afford that."

*My notes
about what I
am reading*



- 4 "There are cheaper houses in here," Daddy said, flipping to a different page and contemplating the features of another house. "Look! Here's one that starts around \$600—the Estes." He put the catalog down and looked at my mother. "Grace, you know no bank will give us a loan so we can get our own place. But we can do it if you get a job to help make the extra money."

*My notes
about what I
am reading*



- 5 Mama still looked doubtful. It took a while, but Daddy finally wore down Mama's resistance. Mama found a job as a seamstress, sewing clothes for people. She was able to work from home, so she could still take care of the little ones. I even started collecting soda bottles to make money. After several months we used our family's small savings to buy a piece of land outside town. Then we all studied the catalog until we just about knew it by heart. We finally decided to order a house called the Solace. It had not one, not two, but three bedrooms—one for my parents, one for the boys, and one for us girls!

GO ON 

27. The family members solve the problem of having enough money to order a house by —

- A.** working together to earn what they need
 - B.** taking their savings out of the bank
 - C.** deciding to sell their apartment
-

*My notes
about what I
am reading*

6 Finally the big day came. Our kit arrived at the train station, and we had to go pick it up. Daddy borrowed a wagon and two horses to pull the kit. Then he, my older brother Peter, and I rode to the station together. I had read in the catalog that each home kit contained 30,000 pieces, but it didn't really sink in until I saw how enormous our shipment was. Again and again we loaded the wagon with the pieces we would use to build our house. Again and again we made the trip between the train station and our land. How my arms ached from loading and unloading that wagon!

7 During the weeks before our house arrived, on Daddy's days off, he and my oldest brother had dug and laid the foundation for the house. The day after our shipment came, we all started to build the frame. Daddy called this the bones of the house—the pieces of wood that would later be covered by the walls and the roof. It was hard work, but Daddy's excitement was contagious. Even the little kids helped out by sorting the materials. Sears had told the truth—the kit contained everything we needed to build our dream house, including doorknobs, windowpanes, and flooring.

GO ON 

8 Every minute that Daddy wasn't working in the mines was spent working on our house. Every day our dream was slowly becoming a reality. Mama was talking about where she would hang the curtains she was making with the material left over from her sewing jobs.

*My notes
about what I
am reading*

28. To the family the catalog is a symbol of —

F. hope

G. anger

H. selfishness

9 Then disaster struck. Daddy became sick with a bad cold that turned into pneumonia. The doctor told us that Daddy had to stay in bed and that it could take him weeks, even months, to get better. Daddy was too sick to argue. The sound of his coughing filled our apartment. Meanwhile, five miles away, our house stood unfinished. It was September, and the days were getting shorter and colder. I knew how badly Daddy had wanted to finish the house before winter, but that seemed unlikely now. Our hopes of ever finishing it started to fade.

29. The author includes the information in paragraph 9 to —

A. explain how to treat pneumonia

B. explain how cold winters can be

C. create suspense about whether the family will ever have its own house

GO ON 

*My notes
about what I
am reading*

30. Read this phrase from paragraph 9.

the days were getting shorter and colder

The author uses these words to create a feeling of —

- F. relief
- G. discouragement
- H. trust

10 One afternoon when Daddy was sleeping, Mama gathered all of us together. There was an obstinate look on her face. I had seen this look before, when Mama had her mind set on something, and I knew that nothing was going to stand in her way. "I've been reading the directions Sears sent," she said in a firm voice, "and we are going to finish our house." It was Mama's turn to take over.

31. In paragraph 10, the word obstinate means —

- A. humorous
- B. gentle
- C. stubborn

GO ON 

*My notes
about what I
am reading*

11 We were surprised, but we weren't about to argue. Whenever she could, Mama would go to the house and work. She would tell Daddy she was running errands or taking the younger kids out to the park so that he could get his rest. As soon as school was out for the day, my older brother and I would go straight to the house. We built and painted walls. We laid down pine floors. We even put black tar paper on the roof to waterproof it and covered that with shingles. Sometimes Mama got a friend or neighbor to help, but she and my brothers and sister and I did most of the work. The best part was that Daddy didn't know what we were up to. Several weeks later, when he was feeling much better, he got the surprise of his life. As we all stood inside our new home and looked around, Daddy's face had the biggest smile I have ever seen.

32. This story is organized by —

F. comparing a family's life in an apartment with its life in a house

G. describing a series of events that fulfills a family dream

H. discussing what each member of a family thinks about building a home

GO ON 

33. Based on information in the story, what can the reader conclude about the year 1925?

A. Most men worked as coal miners.

B. Most people dropped out of school to work.

C. A dollar was considered a lot of money.

34. Which of the following is the best summary of the story?

F. The father of a large family orders a catalog offering kits for building a house. The mother of the family thinks he is just dreaming and says that the kits are too expensive.

G. A father and his family living in an apartment, work together to save money, buy land, order a house, and start building. When the father gets sick and can't work on the house, the mother and the children work to finish it.

H. A family decides to buy a kit for a house called the Solace. There are 30,000 pieces, including nails, wood, paint, roofing, doorknobs, windowpanes, and floors.



35. Which sentence from the story shows that the narrator’s father is a source of strength for the rest of the family?

A. It was hard work, but Daddy’s excitement was contagious.

B. Daddy called this the bones of the house—the pieces of wood that would later be covered by the walls and the roof.

C. Our hopes of ever finishing it started to fade.

36. Which idea below from the story shows how life in 1925 was different from the way it is today?

F. The narrator’s father takes a long time to recover from pneumonia.

G. The narrator’s mother disapproves of the narrator’s father wasting money.

H. The narrator, her father, and her brother ride to the train station in a wagon.



37. Why does the author choose to tell this story from a first-person point of view?

A. To help the reader better understand the emotions the family experiences

B. To trick the reader

C. To show how children talk

38. The author wrote this story most likely to —

F. show how a family's life changes because of a catalog

G. tell readers how to build a house from a kit

H. explain how to save money

