

## WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS ARE ON THE WASL READING?

Do you remember elementary school? Reading often meant reading out loud, which made a lot of students nervous. The good news is that no one will make you read aloud to the class when taking the WASL Reading Assessment.

Now that you are in high school, reading is much more than just sounding out words. The purpose of reading is to open up a world of knowledge and experience. The WASL Reading Assessment measures how well you understand what you read and how well you are able to think about what you have read.

On the WASL Reading Assessment there are three types of questions, or items, to test your abilities. These items will follow a selection that you have read. They are:

**Multiple-Choice Items:** You will be presented with four answer choices. None of these answer choices will be "none of the above" or "all of the above."

**Short-Answer Items:** Short-answer items require a response of a few sentences. You may not need to respond with a full paragraph. Usually you will be asked to refer to two pieces of information from the selection.

**Extended-Response Items:** You will be required to respond with more detail, with as many as four pieces of information or examples from the selection. You may need to create a logical paragraph to answer the question.

## USE "CODES" TO MAKE BETTER GUESSES

You might find it helpful to use "codes" to rate multiple-choice answers. Using your pencil in the test booklet, you can mark the following codes beside each multiple-choice response to see which is the best choice. An example of a code used by a tenth-grade student is given below:

- (+) Put a plus sign by an answer choice if you are not sure if it is correct, but you think it might be correct;
- (?) Put a question mark by an answer choice if you are not sure if it is the correct answer, but you don't want to rule it out completely;
- (-) Put a minus sign by an answer choice if you are sure it is the wrong answer. (You then would choose from the other answers to make an educated guess.)

Remember, **it is okay to write in** your test booklet. The space in the booklet is yours **to use** to help you do better on the WASL. You will not have points counted off for using **this** coding system or creating your own system to help you on multiple-choice questions.

## ANSWER EVERY QUESTION

It *is* very important to answer as many multiple-choice questions as possible, even if you make an educated guess. On multiple-choice questions, you have a one in four chance of getting a question right, even if you just close your eyes and guess! This means for every four questions you guess, the odds are you will get about one (25%) of the answers right. Guessing alone is not going to make you a star on the WASL, but leaving multiple-choice questions blank is not going to help you either.

## LEARN How TO POWER GUESS

Not everything you know was learned in a classroom. Part of what you know comes from just living your day-to-day life. When you take the Reading Assessment of the WASL, you should use everything you have learned in school, but you should also use your experiences outside of the classroom to help you answer multiple-choice questions correctly. Using common sense, as well as your past experiences, will help you do especially well when answering multiple-choice items on the WASL.

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF "CHANCE"

On the Reading Assessment of the WASL, multiple-choice questions carry less weight than short-answer or extended-response items, but increasing your success on multiple-choice answers should increase your test-taking success. It is very important to answer as many multiple-choice questions as possible, even if you make a well thought-out "guess," because luck is with you. If you can eliminate even one possible answer, your chances of success are even better. The best way to improve your chances on multiple-choice questions is to use strategies such as using codes and power guessing that are described in this chapter. Learning how to improve your chances by educated guessing is not cheating. In fact, you probably use this strategy outside of the classroom and don't even think about it. Imagine that you have misplaced your iPod, and you want to find it before you leave for your friend's house. There are many possible places that it could be, but you use your common sense to eliminate some possibilities, thereby saving time searching and increasing your chances of finding it in time. For example, it might be possible that you left it in your sister's room, but you remember, "That isn't likely because your sister has banned you from her room and you haven't been there for a month." That leaves you one less place to look, and more chances for success.

### **Here is some other important information about the WASL Reading items:**

- All of the WASL Reading items ask you to respond to information that is in the selection you have read. This is GREAT news. To do your best, you don't have to rely on anything you read or learned anywhere else, although the more you learn in school, and the more you practice thinking, reading, and writing skills, the easier all tests will become.
- Reading the selection carefully is a key to success. Because all the information you need is in the selection, spending time carefully reading each selection makes a lot of sense. Going back and reading the selection again, or checking back to make sure the information you used in your answer is correct, is a good use of your time. Rushing while reading is a poor test-taking strategy. The WASL is not a limited-time test. You can have extra time if needed.
- Some of the reading selections will have diagrams, charts, maps, pictures, or captions. Make sure you pay attention to all of the information given. Ask yourself, "What am I looking at? Why is it there? What is it telling me?" Remember, not all reading is in paragraph form but the information presented in other forms can be just as important.
- About half of your WASL Reading score will be based on your answers on multiple-choice items, and half will be based on your responses to short-response and extended-response items. You can't ignore any of these types of items, so if one or the

- Selections were chosen to be interesting to most students. When you read a selection, try to enjoy what you are reading. The WASL may be a test, but it doesn't have to be a chore. A good attitude toward reading can go a long way to success on this assessment.

## **Now, ABOUT THOSE SELECTIONS...**

Think about all that you read in a single day. Not all that you read is just paragraphs in textbooks, although sometimes it might seem that way! When you eat breakfast, you might read the instructions on how long to microwave your toaster sandwich. On the way to school, you might read several billboards and signs. You might read a poem or song written by a friend. In your classes, you read all sorts of materials. After school, you look forward to receiving your favorite magazine or reading the sports page of the daily newspaper. You read the on-screen guide on your television to make sure you don't miss your favorite shows. You might read a web page about a video game that you are thinking of buying. The WASL Reading Assessment tests a student's ability to benefit from all types of reading.

### **There are two general types of selections on the WASL Reading:**

1. **Literary:** Literary selections may include stories, poems, biographies, autobiographies, and essays.
2. **Informational:** Informational selections may include magazine or newspaper articles, or historical documents. Informational selections may include feature like timelines, charts, graphs, pictures, or captions. Some informational selections focus on science (for example, ecology), while others focus on social studies (for example, life in another country).

The best test-taking strategy to prepare for the WASL Reading Assessment is to read everything and read everywhere! The more you feel comfortable and familiar with different types of reading selections, the better your chances are for success on the WASL Reading Assessment.

## **BEING AN ACTIVE READER CAN MAKE YOU A TEST LEADER**

The WASL Reading Assessment tests your ability to read and your ability to think about what you have read. It is not enough to just read and never think much about what you have read. That is called being a passive reader. Active readers think as they read. For example, they ask themselves questions as they go along, maybe guessing what will happen next in a story, imagining themselves in a fictional selection, comparing what they have read with their own experiences and opinions, and making sure they understand all of the vocabulary words. Being an active reader is great for learning and also is a necessary test-taking strategy on the WASL.

**The WASL Reading Assessment your active reading skills in a number of ways. As you prepare for the WASL Reading Assessment, every time you read, ask yourself if you can answer the following:**

**1. What is the major theme or idea** of the selection? Main ideas can be found by reading titles, introductory sentences of paragraphs, and closing sentences. Carefully reading each paragraph and finding common ideas throughout the selection can help you find the main idea of a story. For example, if your selection was about conquering Mount Everest, you would observe that each paragraph detailed a life-threatening obstacle in the climb, and the last sentence or two would again relate to what the climbers had to overcome to be successful. The main idea would be the dangers they fought to reach the peak of the mountain.

**2. Can I summarize the selection using information** from the selection? A summary might include a brief listing of what the climbers endured to succeed. "The author writes of the struggles of four climbers to reach the peak of Mount Everest in the summer of 1998. They endured a freak snowstorm, the loss of food and water, and physical illness, but they reached the summit in record time."

**3. Can I make an inference or prediction from what I read?** What does that selection tell you about the dangers of mountain climbing? **Can you** infer that it takes a special person to attempt **this** feat? Can you predict that few others **will** be successful unless they are prepared to overcome these obstacles?

**4. Did I understand the vocabulary in the selection?** The author may have used less common words to convey descriptions and emotions. Use **context clues** to help you figure out vocabulary words. For example, the **word** "meticulous" can be understood in the context of the sentence, "The climbers were meticulous in planning the climb, not ignoring any detail or possible problem." You might not have known the exact definition of the word if you saw it by itself, but now you know that "meticulous" means being careful and concerned with details. Hopefully, you will also be meticulous in preparing for the WASL.

**5. Do I understand why the author presented certain information? Why** did he tell the reader about the climbers' families, at home waiting for their return? What did he want the reader to think about when adding this detail?

**6. Do I understand the graphic details of the text?** For example, you might find a mini-map of Mount Everest included with the selection, and one of the questions asks you to read the map and tell what direction the hikers traveled. Will you be able to do this? The graphic details can come in many different forms like maps, charts, or pictures. Be prepared!

**7. Do I know how an idea or detail relates to another, and why?** For example, do you understand that when the author writes both of the wind becoming stronger and the climbers becoming weaker that he is describing how one problem builds on another?

**8. Do I know the purpose of this selection?** Why did the author write in this particular way? What is the message of this selection? For example, why did he write in the third person, instead of the first person?

**9. Can I think of how what I read can relate to other situations? Think about** what this selection tells the reader about challenges and courage.

## Now take a look at this sample of a reading selection:

Tony could hardly believe his eyes—the Space Needle at last! As he stared at the tall, thin structure, he felt as if he had been here before. After hearing so many stories from his grandparents and parents about how Seattle hosted the 1962 World's Fair, and how his cousins who lived in Seattle rode the Space Needle nearly every time they went to the city with their parents, it was finally his turn to go to the top! As he sat on the curb by the bus waiting for everyone to unload, he looked up in the sky. Leaning his head way back, he could see the top of the Space Needle. He imagined how 20,000 people a day, 2.3 million in all, rode the elevator at the World's Fair. He couldn't wait to ride it himself. "It is 41 seconds to the top—as fast as a parachutist falls!" he thought to himself. "This was better than any ride at his county fair! In fact, that's 800 feet a minute—enough for a thrill!" He had heard that the elevator traveled faster than snowflakes and if you visited in the winter and it was snowing, it looks like it is snowing up instead of down as you ride the elevator. "Hmm," thought Tony, "I would wish it was winter now, but it's May and only three weeks left of school!" Suddenly, Tony's daydreams were interrupted by a loud voice.

"Students? Meadow Ridge High students! Everyone come here! Tony that means you, too!"

Tony was startled out of his daydream by Ms. Espinoza, a teacher from his high school. Ms. Espinoza wasn't a mean teacher, but she was organized! If it weren't for her, this trip never would have happened. It was a 300-mile trip to Seattle, and the class was staying in a motel. It took a lot of fundraising to make it here: car washes, candy sales, and even a talent show put on by the 10th grade class. The main purpose of the trip was for students from the eastern part of the state to visit Seattle. Some students were from social studies classes and were doing projects on Washington state history. Some, like Tony, were using this experience to learn more about geography. From the top of the Space Needle, you could see the Pacific Ocean, Mount Rainer, and Puget Sound - you could see for miles and miles. Tony didn't think that his geography teacher, Mr. Radwell, would care very much about the speed of the elevator, but not everyone is interested in the same information about this special place. For example, Tony's father couldn't stop telling him about the 6,000 tons of steel used in constructing the tower, or that the tower expands about an inch in hot weather, but then again, he builds houses for a living.

Tony wished he could wander around the Space Needle alone, but he immediately heard Ms. Espinoza say, "I want you to split into groups of four. At 4:00 p.m., our groups will meet right here, at the base of the Space Needle." Ms. Espinoza then proceeded to select students to go with her, "Jordan and Ralph, I would like you two to come with me."

Ms. Espinoza had made a miscalculation. All together, there should have been six groups of four, but Ms. Espinoza had only chosen three for her group, counting herself as the fourth. That meant that if Tony were careful to avoid notice, it would leave him to fly solo. He could roam on a self-guided tour, looking at the huge base of the tower, maybe sneaking on an extra ride or two on the famous elevator. "Maybe I could take the stairs—I heard that there are 832 steps just up to the restaurant!"

Tony then slipped into a daydream, imagining himself building the tower with his dad, and being the first to ride that elevator to the top.

#### FACTS ABOUT THE SPACE NEEDLE

- It takes 41 seconds in the elevator of the Space Needle to get up to the Observation Deck.
- On a hot day, the Space Needle expands about one inch.
- The price of a ticket to go up to the Observation Deck is \$13.00 for adults and \$6.00 for children.
- Hours of operation for the Observation **Deck are** Monday through Sunday 9 a.m. until 12 a.m.
- The original name of the Space Needle was "The Space Cage."
- In 1962, when the Space Needle was built, it was the tallest building west of the Mississippi River.

## **You WON'T HAVE TO SEARCH FAR TO BE A READING STAR ON THE WASL READING ASSESSMENT**

All of the information you need to correctly answer multiple-choice questions on the WASL Reading Assessment is found in the selection you just read! You don't have to remember facts from the past, or memorize formulas, but you do have to carefully read the selection—and if necessary read it again. Remember, the WASL Reading tests you on how well you use and understand what you have read. The answer is right in front of you!

**Now, take a look at some sample reading questions:**

1. What is the meaning of the *phrase fly solo* in paragraph 4 of the selection?
  - A. To not put up with other people
  - B. To go in an elevator
  - C. To be on one's own
  - D. To not have friends

*Choice C is correct. How do you figure this out? The term "fly solo" is an odd phrase, especially since no one is flying! However, by carefully reading the paragraph, you will understand that if Tony is lucky, he will be on his own. He isn't being rejected by anyone: he still has friends. He doesn't dislike his classmates. He just wants to be on his own to explore the Space Needle and that includes more than just going in the elevator. You also know that the word "solo" is very much like the word "sole." You remember reading in your government class that Thurgood Marshall was the "sole" African-American on the Supreme Court for a long time. He was alone and Tony will be alone, too, if he gets to "fly solo."*

## **READING QUESTIONS CAN HELP YOU FIND ANSWERS**

Often, the question or item will help you find an answer quickly and correctly. Let's say you are given a selection about two elderly women who were friends for life. The multiple-choice item might ask, "What event in their lives lets you know that Marie and Estelle really are true friends?" You then can refer back to the selection and focus on finding that special time that defined their friendship because the question gives you direction.

2. **The selection shows that Tony is fascinated with the Space Needle. Provide two details from the selection that supports this idea.**

*Tony is fascinated with the elevator that takes people to the top of the Space Needle. He thinks riding the elevator will be better than any ride at his county fair. Tony has even memorized facts about the Space Needle's elevator, such as how many people rode the elevator during the 1962 World's Fair and the fact that it only takes 31 seconds to get to the top of the Space Needle.*

3. What is the author's purpose for writing the selection? Provide three details from the selection to support your answer.

*The author wrote this selection to inform readers about the Space Needle. The Space Needle is a great historical place to take a class field trip. The author also gives interesting facts such as how fast the elevator goes to the Observation Deck, how much admission is to the Observation Deck, and what the hours of operation are. The author also lets us know that it was originally part of the 1962 World's Fair.*