BLOGS

Reading Comprehension Passage for CLAT 2026

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PASSAGE

As we both know, Liesel wasn't on hand on Himmel Street when Rudy performed his act of childhood infamy. When she looked back, though, it felt like she'd actually been there. In her memory, she had somehow become a member of Rudy's imaginary audience. Nobody else mentioned it, but Rudy certainly made up for that, so much that when Liesel came to recollect her story, the Jesse Owens incident was as much a part of it as everything she witnessed firsthand.

It was 1936. The Olympics. Hitler's games.

Jesse Owens had just completed the 4 × 100m relay and won his fourth gold medal. Talk that he was subhuman because he was black and Hitler's refusal to shake his hand were touted around the world. Even the most racist Germans were amazed with the efforts of Owens, and word of his feat slipped through the cracks. No one was more impressed than Rudy Steiner.

Everyone in his family was crowded together in their family room when he slipped out and made his way to the kitchen. He pulled some charcoal from the stove and gripped it in the smallness of his hands. "Now." There was a smile. He was ready.

He smeared the charcoal on, nice and thick, till he was covered in black. Even his hair received a once-over. In the window, the boy grinned almost maniacally at his reflection, and in his shorts and tank top, he quietly abducted his older brother's bike and pedaled it up the street, heading for Hubert Oval.

In one of his pockets, he'd hidden a few pieces of extra charcoal, in case some of it wore off later. In Liesel's mind, the moon was sewn into the sky that night. Clouds were stitched around it. The rusty bike crumbled to a halt at the Hubert Oval fence line and Rudy climbed over. He landed on the other side and trotted weedily up toward the beginning of the hundred. Enthusiastically, he conducted an awkward regimen of stretches. He dug starting holes into the dirt.

Waiting for his moment, he paced around, gathering concentration under the darkness sky, with the moon and the clouds watching, tightly. "Owens is looking good," he began to commentate.

“This could be his greatest victory ever. . . .”

He shook the imaginary hands of the other athletes and wished them luck, even though he knew. They didn’t have a chance. The starter signaled them forward. A crowd materialized around every square inch of Hubert Oval’s circumference.

They were all calling out one thing. They were chanting Rudy Steiner’s name—and his name was Jesse Owens. All fell silent.

His bare feet gripped the soil. He could feel it holding on between his toes. At the request of the starter, he raised to crouching position—and the gun clipped a hole in the night.

Source: The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

1. What does the word “maniacally” in the phrase “the boy grinned almost maniacally” most likely mean?

a) Calmly
b) Crazily
c) Joyfully
d) Secretly

Correct Answer: b) Crazily
Explanation: The context describes Rudy’s overly enthusiastic and exaggerated grin, which aligns with the meaning of “maniacally” as crazily.

2. What can be inferred about Rudy Steiner’s admiration for Jesse Owens?

a) He admired Owens for his determination despite societal prejudice.
b) He envied Owens’ success.
c) He wanted to compete against Owens in the Olympics.
d) He disliked Owens but wanted to mimic his achievements.

Correct Answer: a) He admired Owens for his determination despite societal prejudice.
Explanation: Rudy’s decision to imitate Owens and his enthusiasm for Owens’ success reflect admiration and respect.

3. What is the tone of the passage when describing Rudy’s actions?

a) Humorous and lighthearted

b) Critical and harsh

c) Formal and detached

d) Sad and reflective

Correct Answer: a) Humorous and lighthearted

Explanation: The passage uses playful and vivid descriptions of Rudy's antics, creating a humorous and lighthearted tone.

4. What is the central theme of the passage?

a) The importance of family in difficult times

b) The power of role models and childhood imagination

c) The cruelty of racism during the Olympics

d) The struggles of a war-torn childhood

Correct Answer: b) The power of role models and childhood imagination

Explanation: The passage highlights Rudy's admiration for Jesse Owens and his imaginative recreation of Owens' victory.

5. Which character trait best describes Rudy Steiner in the passage?

a) Determined

b) Mischievous

c) Jealous

d) Indifferent

Correct Answer: b) Mischievous

Explanation: Rudy's playful and daring imitation of Jesse Owens, including stealing charcoal and his brother's bike, shows his mischievous nature.

6. Why did Rudy use charcoal to cover himself?

a) To hide his identity

b) To mimic Jesse Owens' skin color

c) To protest against Hitler's ideology

d) To celebrate the Olympics

Correct Answer: b) To mimic Jesse Owens' skin color

Explanation: Rudy admired Jesse Owens and wanted to recreate his appearance as part of his imitation.

7. What was the sequence of events in the passage?

a) Rudy covered himself in charcoal, pedaled to Hubert Oval, and began the race.

b) Rudy pedaled to Hubert Oval, covered himself in charcoal, and began the race.

c) Rudy conducted stretches, pedaled to Hubert Oval, and covered himself in charcoal.

d) Rudy watched the Olympics, pedaled to Hubert Oval, and conducted stretches.

Correct Answer: a) Rudy covered himself in charcoal, pedaled to Hubert Oval, and began the race.

Explanation: The passage describes Rudy applying charcoal, biking to Hubert Oval, and then starting his performance.

8. Which sentence from the passage is an example of imagery?

a) "In her memory, she had somehow become a member of Rudy's imaginary audience."

b) "The rusty bike crumbled to a halt at the Hubert Oval fence line and Rudy climbed over."

c) "Waiting for his moment, he paced around, gathering concentration under the darkness sky."

d) "His bare feet gripped the soil. He could feel it holding on between his toes."

Correct Answer: d) "His bare feet gripped the soil. He could feel it holding on between his toes."

Explanation: The sentence appeals to the senses, creating a vivid image of the scene.

9. Which title best captures the essence of the passage?

a) "Rudy Steiner's Childhood Infamy"

b) "Liesel's Perspective on the Olympics"

c) "The Jesse Owens Incident"

d) "Hubert Oval: A Night of Triumph"

Correct Answer: c) "The Jesse Owens Incident"

Explanation: The passage revolves around Rudy's recreation of Jesse Owens' Olympic victory, making this title the most fitting.

10.Why does the narrator mention that Liesel wasn't present during Rudy's act but later felt as though she had been?

a) To emphasize the power of imagination and storytelling

b) To show Liesel’s guilt for not accompanying Rudy

c) To highlight Rudy’s attempt to gain attention

d) To suggest that Rudy exaggerated the event

Correct Answer: a) To emphasize the power of imagination and storytelling

Explanation: The passage conveys how vividly Liesel imagined Rudy’s act, demonstrating the impact of storytelling and memory on her perception of the event.

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