

**“The Dog That Bit People”** by James Thurber**Selection Test****Critical Reading**

In the blank, write the letter of the one best answer.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The author’s primary purpose in “The Dog That Bit People” is to
- persuade readers not to adopt dogs as house pets.
  - inform readers about animal behavior.
  - convince readers that he had good reason to dislike Muggs.
  - entertain readers with amusing anecdotes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Thurber begins his essay with anecdotes about other dogs to
- make fun of owners who take their relationships with dogs too seriously.
  - establish his fondness for dogs and set a humorous tone.
  - set a positive tone before describing the problems with Muggs.
  - tell an amusing story.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Which of the following would be the most appropriate replacement for the title of Thurber’s essay?
- “Why I Dislike Dogs”
  - “Man’s Best Friend?”
  - “How Not to Train Dogs”
  - “A Most Unusual Pet”
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Which of the following sentences best illustrates how Thurber uses odd juxtapositions to create a humorous effect?
- “Muggs went up the backstairs and down the frontstairs and had me cornered in the living room.”
  - “Muggs was afraid of only one thing, an electrical storm.”
  - “Muggs would stand on the bench and eat.”
  - “Muggs died quite suddenly one night.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Generally, Mother deals with conflicts involving Muggs by
- punishing him.
  - making excuses for him.
  - training him.
  - sending him outside.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Which of the following sentences best illustrates how the author uses exaggeration to make the essay more humorous?
- “They acted like pet mice, almost like mice somebody had trained.”
  - “Nobody knew exactly what was the matter with him, but whatever it was made him irascible, especially in the mornings.”
  - “Mother used to send a box of candy every Christmas to the people the Airedale bit.”
  - “Lots of people reported our Airedale to the police but my father held a municipal office at the time and was on friendly terms with the police.”

- \_\_\_ 7. What does Thurber's mother hope to learn by attending the lecture on "Harmonious Vibrations"?
- how to get people to like the dog
  - why the dog behaves as he does
  - how to restore the dog's strength
  - how to change the dog's behavior
- \_\_\_ 8. Which line from the essay is the best example of a detail that can help you form a mental image?
- "He really wasn't my dog, as a matter of fact: I came home from a vacation one summer to find that my brother Roy had bought him while I was away."
  - "Nobody could understand why we didn't get rid of the dog."
  - "Muggs at his meals was an unusual sight."
  - "He would rise slowly from the floor, growling low, and stalk stiff-legged and menacing toward nothing at all."
- \_\_\_ 9. Thurber's anecdote about the thunder machine is intended to show
- how family members tried to adjust to the dog's behavior.
  - how easily animals can be deceived by humans.
  - how the author attempted to punish the dog for biting him.
  - why neighbors wished the family would get rid of the dog.
- \_\_\_ 10. Which element of a humorous essay does the following quotation best illustrate?
- Then he was all over it: he never bit anyone more than once at a time. Mother always mentioned that as an argument in his favor.
- exaggeration
  - understatement
  - irony
  - anecdote
- \_\_\_ 11. Forming mental images of the scenes Thurber describes is most helpful for
- appreciating the author's humor.
  - understanding animal behavior.
  - mapping the story.
  - identifying conflict.
- \_\_\_ 12. Which of the following quotations from the selection helps you create the most cartoon-like mental image?
- "He would rush into the house and hide under a bed or in a clothes closet."
  - "Muggs' first free leap carried him all the way across the table and into a brass fire screen in front of the gas grate but he was back on his feet in a moment . . ."
  - "I think that one or two people tried to poison Muggs—he acted poisoned once in a while . . ."
  - "Still, in the years that we had him he bit everybody but Mother, and he made a pass at her once but missed."
- \_\_\_ 13. Most people who'd been bitten by Muggs might describe Mother as
- an irresponsible dog owner.
  - a generous woman.
  - understanding and empathetic.
  - mean spirited.
- \_\_\_ 14. The author of "The Dog That Bit People" would most likely agree with which of the following statements?
- A bad experience with one dog is no reason to dislike all dogs.
  - However badly dogs behave, one should try to please them.
  - Most dogs are more trouble than they are worth.
  - The more dogs one has, the easier it becomes to dislike them.

## Vocabulary and Grammar

- \_\_\_ 15. No one could predict when the \_\_\_\_\_ Muggs might bite someone.  
a. indignant      b. irascible      c. jangly      d. incredulity
- \_\_\_ 16. A complete predicate consists of  
a. the essential verb that tells something about the subject of a sentence  
b. the essential verb or verb phrase that tells something about the subject of a sentence  
c. the essential verb or verb phrase that tells something about the subject of a sentence and any words that modify the verb or verb phrase or help it complete the sentence  
d. any words that modify the essential verb or verb phrase in a sentence
- \_\_\_ 17. What is the complete predicate in the following sentence?  
The loud noise frightened Muggs so badly that he ran and hid for the rest of the day.  
a. The loud noise frightened Muggs  
b. frightened  
c. frightened Muggs so badly that he ran and hid  
d. frightened Muggs so badly that he ran and hid for the rest of the day
- \_\_\_ 18. Mother seemed not to notice the \_\_\_\_\_ reactions of Muggs' victims.  
a. choleric      b. irascible      c. indignant      d. incredulity

The following question consists of a related pair of words in CAPITAL LETTERS, followed by four lettered pairs of words. Choose the lettered pair that best expresses a relationship similar to that expressed in the pair in capital letters.

- \_\_\_ 19. INCREDULITY : DISBELIEF ::  
a. choleric : patient  
b. irascible : relaxed  
c. epitaph : epilogue  
d. jangle : discord
- \_\_\_ 20. In which sentence is only the essential word or words of the complete predicate underlined?  
a. Muggs stayed out in the pantry with the mice.  
b. He growled to himself about all the people in the next room that he would have liked to get at.  
c. One morning, when Muggs bit me slightly, I grabbed his tail.  
d. He took a different route and cornered me in the living room

## Essay Questions

21. Thurber's lively tales of his wild dog Muggs create a highly entertaining story. What are some of the mental images that help you to envision the scenes Thurber describes? Choose two of your favorite anecdotes about Muggs, and in an essay analyze the details that help you to form mental images of the action.
22. As a comedic writer, Thurber expertly weaves different elements of humorous writing into "The Dog That Bit People." Which element do you find to be the most effective? Why? In a brief essay, state your opinion and support it with examples from Thurber's essay.
23. Although Thurber's essay treats Muggs' problems with humor, it also reveals much about how Thurber's family handles conflict. In an essay, explain what you learn about the interpersonal dynamic of the Thurber household. How does Mother's style of handling conflict differ from or reflect that of her sons? Support your conclusions with examples from the essay.