“Through the Tunnel” by Doris Lessing

Selection Test

Critical Reading

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

1. What is the theme, or central idea, of “Through the Tunnel”?
   a. a boy's rejection of his mother's opinions
   b. an individual's struggle to achieve difficult goals
   c. a mother's failure to guide her son
   d. a child's vulnerability to destructive peer pressure

2. Jerry's mother feels that it is important to
   a. allow Jerry some independence.
   b. monitor all of Jerry's activities.
   c. spend a lot of time with Jerry.
   d. preserve some time for herself.

3. Which of the following quotations from the story best illustrates Jerry's internal conflict?
   a. “He swam back to shore, relieved at being sure she was there, but all at once very lonely.”
   b. “They looked down gravely, frowning. He knew the frown.”
   c. “I want some swimming goggles,’ he panted, defiant and beseeching.”
   d. “All night the boy dreamed of the waterfilled cave in the rock, and as soon as breakfast was over he went to the bay.”

4. Which of the following is the best reading strategy to use as you read “Through the Tunnel”?
   a. discussing events with a peer advisor
   b. asking yourself questions as you read the story
   c. scanning the story for key words and events
   d. setting goals before reading the story

5. What feelings motivate Jerry's resolution to swim through the tunnel?
   a. delight in viewing the undersea world
   b. rebellion against his mother's strictness
   c. ambition to be a champion swimmer
   d. shame at his childishness and fear

6. An action that demonstrates Jerry's internal conflict is
   a. diving off the rocks into the bay.
   b. clowning for the local boys.
   c. learning to hold his breath for two minutes.
   d. obeying his mother's request that he not swim for the day.
7. Which of the following details would be most useful in answering questions about Jerry's motivation in "Through the Tunnel"?
   a. “And yet, as he ran, he looked back over his shoulder at the wild bay; and all morning, as he played on the safe beach, he was thinking of it.”
   b. “The boys were gathering up their bits of clothing and running off along the shore to another promontory. They were leaving to get away from him.”
   c. “He knew he must find his way through that cave, or hole, or tunnel, and out the other side.”
   d. “He took the edges of the hole in his hands and drew himself into it, wriggling his shoulders in sidewise as he remembered he must, kicking himself along with his feet.”

8. Jerry’s preparations to swim the tunnel are
   a. determined and methodical.  
   b. sloppy and careless.  
   c. impulsive and irrational.  
   d. timid and hesitant.

9. Before Jerry gets up the nerve to swim the tunnel, he
   a. swims halfway through the tunnel before turning around.
   b. asks the local boys for advice.
   c. trains himself to hold his breath for two minutes underwater.
   d. asks his mother for permission.

10. Which of the following would be a useful question to ask—and answer—while you read “Through the Tunnel”?  
    a. Why does Jerry’s mother prefer to spend time on the “safe” beach?  
    b. How long have the local boys been able to swim through the barrier rock?  
    c. Why is getting through the barrier rock so important to Jerry?  
    d. How does Jerry stop his nose from bleeding after he holds his breath?

11. _________ will help you gain a fuller understanding of “Through the Tunnel.”  
    a. Reading other stories by Doris Lessing  
    b. Picturing the dimensions of the barrier rock  
    c. Predicting the outcome of Jerry’s adventure  
    d. Keeping questions in mind as you read

12. What question might you ask to increase your understanding of the following passage?
    Through his hot shame, feeling the pleading grin on his face like a scar that he could never remove, he looked up at the group of big brown boys on the rock and shouted, “Bonjour! Merci! Au revoir! Monsieur, monsieur!” while he hooked his fingers around his ears and waggled them.
   a. What kind of a face is Jerry making at the boys?  
   b. What do the words Bonjour! Merci! Au revoir! Monsieur, monsieur! mean?  
   c. Why is Jerry acting this way?  
   d. Can the local boys see Jerry clearly from where they stand?

13. At the end of the story, Jerry feels  
    a. disappointed and ashamed.  
    b. proud and satisfied.  
    c. excited and proud.  
    d. defiant and sullen.

14. By the end of the story, Jerry has lost interest in the cave because he  
    a. knows he has attained his goal.  
    b. succumbs to his mother’s pressure.  
    c. understands his efforts were pointless.  
    d. realizes how dangerous the tunnel is.
Vocabulary and Grammar

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

____ 15. LUMINOUS : MOON ::
   a. astronomical : rocket
   b. ocean : lake
   c. sun : solar
   d. explosive : volcano

____ 16. Which emotion is most closely linked to contrition?
   a. happiness    b. guilt     c. fear     d. anger

____ 17. A complete subject consists of
   a. the essential noun that names the subject of a sentence
   b. the essential noun or pronoun that names the subject of a sentence
   c. the essential noun or pronoun that names the subject of a sentence and any words that modify the noun or pronoun
   d. any words that modify the subject of a sentence

____ 18. In “Through the Tunnel,” the sight of a ______ near the tunnel’s entrance frightens Jerry.
   a. contrition       b. frond       c. promontory     d. gout

____ 19. What is the complete subject in the following sentence?
   And then, at a hundred and sixty, the water beyond the rock was full of boys blowing like brown whales.
   a. a hundred and sixty        c. rock
   b. the water                   d. the water beyond the rock

____ 20. In which sentence is the essential word or words of the subject underlined?
   a. The wildness of the bay appeals to him.
   b. One of the boys waves at him, giving him the encouragement he needs to join them.
   c. The impact of the water broke the rubber-enclosed vacuum.
   d. His nose bleeds so badly that he turns dizzy.

Essay Questions

21. In “Through the Tunnel,” Jerry puts his own safety at risk to prove something to himself. Are personal challenges worth risking one’s safety or health? State your opinion in a brief essay. Use details from the story to support your opinion.

22. Jerry struggles with conflicting feelings in “Through the Tunnel.” What is Jerry’s internal conflict? What actions represent both sides of this conflict? In a brief essay, describe and discuss Jerry’s internal conflict and how he resolves it.

23. Jerry undergoes a change that may not be obvious to those around him but which has profound meaning for the boy. How does Jerry change from the beginning of the story to the end? What qualities does he gain? Which ones does he leave behind? Write a character sketch of Jerry, describing the changes he undergoes.