

Click on the letter choices to determine if you have the correct answer and for question explanations. An actual ACT Reading Test contains 40 questions to be answered in 35 minutes.

LITERARY NARRATIVE: This passage is adapted from the novel *The Men of Brewster Place* by Gloria Naylor (©1998 by Gloria Naylor).

### **The Men of Brewster Place**

Clifford Jackson, or Abshu, as he preferred to be known in the streets, had committed himself

Several years ago to use his talents as a playwright to broaden the horizons for the young, gifted, and black—which was how he saw every child milling around that dark street. As head of the community center he went after every existing grant on the city and state level to bring them puppet shows with the message to avoid drugs and stay in school; and plays in the park such as actors rapping their way through Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Abshu believed there was something in Shakespeare for everyone, even the young of Brewster Place, and if he broadened their horizons just a little bit, there might be enough room for some of them to slip through and see what the world had waiting. No, it would not be a perfect world, but definitely one with more room than they had now.

The kids who hung around the community center liked Abshu, because he never preached and it was clear that when they spoke he listened; so he could zero in on the kid who had a real problem. It might be an offhand remark while shooting a game of pool or a one-on-one out on the basketball court, but he had a way of making them feel special with just a word or two.

Abshu wished that his own family could have stayed together. There were four of them who ended up in foster care: him, two younger sisters, and a baby brother. He understood why his mother did what she did, but he couldn’t help wondering if there might have been a better way.

Abshu was put into a home that already had two other boys from foster care. The Masons lived in a small wooden bungalow right on the edge of Linden Hills. And Mother Mason insisted that they tell any-body who asked that they actually lived in Linden Hills, a more prestigious address than Summit Place. It was a home that was kept immaculate.

But what he remembered most about the Masons was that it seemed there was never quite enough to eat. She sent them to school with a lunch of exactly one and a half sandwiches—white bread spread with margarine and sprinkled with sugar—and half an apple. When Abshu dreamed of leaving—which was every day—he had his own apartment with a refrigerator overflowing with food that he gorged himself with day and night. The Masons weren’t mean people; he knew he could have ended up with a lot worse.

Abshu lived with these people for nine years, won a scholarship to the local college, and moved out to support himself through school by working in a doughnut shop. By this time his mother was ready to take her children back home, but he decided that since he was already out on his own he would stay there. One less mouth for her to worry about feeding. And after he

graduated with his degree in social work, he might even be able to give her a little money to help her along.

One thing he did thank the Masons for was keeping him out of gangs. There was a strict curfew in their home that was rigidly observed. And church was mandatory. "When you're out on your own," Father Mason always said, "you can do whatever you want, but in my home you do as I say." No, they weren't mean people, but they were stingy—stingy with their food and with their affection. Existing that way all the time, on the edge of hunger, on the edge of kindness, gave Abshu an appreciation for a life fully lived. Do whatever job makes you happy, regardless of the cost; and fill your home with love. Well, his home became the community center right around the corner from Brewster Place and the job that made him most fulfilled was working with young kids.

The kids who hung out at the community center weren't all lost yet. They wanted to make use of the tutors for their homework; and they wanted a safe place to hang. His motto was: Lose no child to the streets. And on occasion when that happened, he went home to cry. But he never let his emotions show at work. To the kids he was just a big, quiet kind of dude who didn't go looking for trouble, but he wouldn't run from it either. He was always challenged by a new set of boys who showed up at the center. He made it real clear to them that this was his territory—his rules—and if they needed to flex their muscles, they were welcome to try. And he showed many that just because he was kind, it didn't mean he was weak. There had to be rules some in their world, some kind of discipline. And if they understood that, then he worked with them, long and hard, to let them see that they could make a difference in their own lives.

1. 1.

**The point of view from which the passage is told can best be described as that of:**

Individual Question

A.

a man looking back on the best years of his life as director of a community center in a strife-ridden neighborhood.

B.

a narrator describing his experiences as they happen, starting with childhood and continuing through his adult years as an advocate for troubled children.

C.

an unidentified narrator describing a man who devoted his life to neighborhood children years after his own difficult childhood.

D.

an admiring relative of a man whose generosity with children was widely respected in the neighborhood where he turned around a declining community center.

1. 2.

**It can reasonably be inferred from the passage that which of the following is a cherished dream that Abshu expects to make a reality in his lifetime?**

Individual Question

E.

Establishing himself financially so as to be able to bring his original family back under one roof

F.

Seeing the children at the community center shift their interest from sports to the dramatic arts

G.

Building on the success of the community center by opening other centers like it throughout the state

H.

Expanding for some, if not all, of the children the vision they have of themselves and their futures

1. 3.

**It can reasonably be inferred from the passage that Abshu and the Masons would agree with which of the following statements about the best way to raise a child?**

Individual Question

A.

For a child to be happy, he or she must develop a firm basis in religion at an early age.

B.

For a child to be fulfilled, he or she must be exposed to great works of art and literature that contain universal themes.

C.

For a child to thrive and be a responsible member of society, he or she must develop a sense of discipline.

D.

For a child to achieve greatness, he or she must attach importance to the community and not to the self.

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1. 4.

**The fourth paragraph (lines 31–37) establishes all of the following EXCEPT:**

Individual Question

E.

that Abshu had foster brothers.

F.

that the Masons maintained a clean house.

G.

how Mother Mason felt about the location of their house.

H.

what Abshu remembered most about his years with

**It can reasonably be inferred that which of the following characters from the passage lives according to Abshu's definition of a life fully lived?**

Individual Question

A.

Mother Mason

B.

Father Mason

C.

Abshu as a child

D.

Abshu as an adult