READING TEST

35 Minutes—40 Questions

DIRECTIONS:

Open Browser Side by Side with Answer Page

There are several passages in this test. Each passage is accompanied by several questions. After reading a passage, choose the best answer to each question and fill in the corresponding oval on your answer document. You may refer to the passages as often as necessary.

Passage I

PROSE FICTION: This passage is adapted from the novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* by Salman Rushdie (©1999 by Salman Rushdie).

Art Deco is an architectural and decorative style that was popular in the first half of the twentieth century.

When you grow up, as I did, in a great city, during what just happens to be its golden age, you think of it as eternal. Always was there, always will be. The grandeur of the metropolis creates the illusion of permanence. The peninsular Bombay into which I was born certainly seemed perennial to me. Malabar and Cumballa hills were our Capitol and Palatine, the Brabourne Stadium was our Colosseum, and as for the glittering Art Deco sweep of Marine Drive, well, that was something not even Rome could boast. I actually grew up believing Art Deco to be the "Bombay style," a local invention, its name derived, in all probability, from the imperative of the verb "to see." *Art dekho*. Lo and behold art. (When I began to be familiar with images of New York, I at first felt a sort of anger. The Americans had so much; did they have to possess our "style" as well? But in another, more secret part of my heart, the Art Deco of Manhattan, built on a scale so much grander than our own, only increased America's allure, made it both familiar and awe-inspiring, our little Bombay writ large.)

In reality that Bombay was almost brand-new when I knew it; what's more, my parents' construction firm of Merchant & Merchant had been prominent in its making. In the ten years before my own coming into the world, the city had been a gigantic building site; as if it were in a hurry to become, as if it knew it had to provide itself in finished condition by the time I was able to start paying attention to it . . . No, no, I don't really think along such solipsistic lines. I'm not over-attached to history, or Bombay. Me, I'm the under-attached type.

But let me confess that, even as a child, I was insanely jealous of the city in which I was raised, because it was my parents' other love. They loved each other (good), they loved me (very good), and they loved her (not so good). Bombay was my rival. It was on account of their romance with the city that they drew up that weekly rota (list) of shared parental responsibilities. When my mother wasn't with me—when I was riding on my father's shoulders, or staring, with him, at the fish in the Taraporewala Aquarium—she was out there with *her*, with Bombay; out there bringing her into being. (For of course construction work never stops completely, and supervising such work was Ameer's particular genius. My mother the master builder. Like her father before her.) And when my father handed me over to her, he went off, wearing his local-history hat and a khaki jacket full of pockets, to dig in the foundations of building sites for the secrets of the city's past, or else sat hatless and coatless at a designing board and dreamed his lo-and-behold dreams.

Maps of the early town afforded my father great joy, and his collection of old photographs of the edifices and *objets* of the vanished city was second to none. In these faded images were resurrected the demolished Fort, the "breakfast bazaar" market outside the Teen Darvaza or Bazaargate, and the humble mutton shops and umbrella hospitals of the poor, as well as the fallen palaces of the great. The early city's relics filled his imagination as well as his photo albums. It was from my father that I learned of Bombay's first great photographers, Raja Deen Dayal and A. R. Haseler, whose portraits of the city became my first artistic influences, if only by showing me what I did not want to do. Dayal climbed the Rajabai tower to create his sweeping panoramas of the birth of the city; Haseler went one better and took to the air. Their images were awe-inspiring, unforgettable, but they also inspired in me a desperate need to get back down to ground level. From the heights you see only pinnacles. I yearned for the city streets, the knife grinders, the water carriers, the pavement moneylenders, the peremptory soldiers, the railway hordes, the chess players in the Irani restaurants, the snake-buckled schoolchildren, the beggars, the fishermen, the moviemakers, the dockers, the book sewers, the loom operators, the priests. I yearned for life.

When I said this to my father he showed me photos, still lives of storefronts and piers, and told me I was too young to understand. "See where people lived and worked and shopped," he clarified, with a rare flash of irritation, "and it becomes plain what they were like." For all his digging, Vivvy Merchant was content with the surfaces of his world. I, his photographer son, set out to prove him wrong, to show that a camera can see beyond the surface, beyond the trappings of the actual, and penetrate to its flesh and heart.

Passage II

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from *Great Waters: An Atlantic Passage* by Deborah Cramer (©2001 by Deborah Cramer).

The Sargasso Sea is a part of the northern Atlantic Ocean.

As the *Cramer* idles through the Sargasso Sea, waiting for the wind to rise, the sea is flat and empty. Nothing demarcates or divides the smooth expanse of water dissolving into the horizon. This vast, unroughened surface, this breadth of uniform sea, deceives. But for a few lonely oceanic islands, the unperturbed surface offers no hint of the grand and sweeping energies hidden below.

Only one thousand miles offshore, the *Cramer* has already sailed through some of Atlantic's deepest waters. Contrary to what one might guess, Atlantic's deepest waters, like those in other oceans, are along her edges. As we continue east, toward the middle of the sea, the bottom rises. The unmarked plains of the abyss, here flattened by layers of sediment, give way to rising foothills and then to mountains. The first maps of Atlantic seafloor noted, albeit crudely, this rise. Early efforts to plumb Atlantic's depths proved outrageously inaccurate: one naval officer paid out eight miles (thirteen kilometers) of hemp rope from a drifting ship and concluded the sea had no bottom. Eventually, sailors more or less successfully calculated depth by heaving overboard cannonballs tied to bailing twine. When they hit bottom, the sailors measured and snipped the twine and then moved on, leaving a trail of lead strung out across the seafloor. These crude soundings, forming the basis of the first map of Atlantic's basin, published in 1854, identified a prominent rise halfway between Europe and America.

For many years no one could explain why the basin of Atlantic, unlike a bowl, deepened at its edges and shoaled in its center. People assumed that this "Middle Ground," "Telegraph Plateau," or "Dolphin Rise," as it was variously called, was an ancient and drowned land bridge, or a lost continent, but sailors repairing transatlantic telegraph cable unknowingly produced evidence to prove otherwise. Wrestling with the broken cable, they accidentally twisted off a piece of the "plateau" and dredged up a twenty-one-pound (ten-kilogram) chunk of dense black volcanic rock. It was some of the youngest, freshest rock on earth, and it was torn not from a piece of continent sunk beneath the waves, but from the very foundation of the sea.

Today, highly sophisticated sound waves bring the hazy images of those early soundings into sharp focus, revealing that one of the largest and most salient geographic features on the planet lies on the floor of the ocean. Hidden beneath the waves is an immense submerged mountain range, the backbone of the sea. More extensive, rugged, and imposing than the Andes, Rockies, or Himalayas, it covers almost as much of earth's surface as the dry land of continents. Winding like the seam of a baseball, it circles the planet in a long, sinuous path, running the entire length of Atlantic, slashing the basin neatly in two. Its mountains are stark and black, as black as the sea itself, lit only at their peaks by a thin, patchy covering of white, the skeletal remains of tiny microscopic animals that once lived at the surface. Peaks as high as Mount St. Helens sit in a watery world of blackness, more than a mile below the surface, beyond the reach of light, beyond the sight of sailors.

A great valley, eclipsing any comparable feature on dry land, runs through these mountains. Arizona's Grand Canyon, one of earth's most spectacular places, extends for about 280 miles (450 kilometers). A lesser-known canyon of similar depth but considerably greater length lies hidden in the mountains of the ridge. Although offset in many places by breaks in the mountains, the rift valley, as the canyon is called, extends the length of Atlantic for 11,000 miles (17,700 kilometers). Here in this bleak and forbidding place, where the water is almost freezing, subterranean fires have lifted mounds of fresh lava onto the seafloor. Scientists visiting the rift valley for the first time named the volcanic hills in this otherworldly setting after distant, lifeless planets.

Yet, what had seemed so foreign to scientists is an integral part of earth's very being, for at the ridge our own planet gives birth. The floor of the rift valley is torn; from the gashes has sprung the seafloor underlying all of Atlantic. Here the youngest, newest pieces are made. Earth is still cooling from her tumultuous birth four and a half billion years ago. Heat, leaking from the molten core and from radioactive decay deep inside the planet, rises toward earth's surface, powering the volcanoes that deliver the ridge to the sea.

Passage III

HUMANITIES: Passage A is adapted from the essay "Just This Side of Byzantium" by Ray Bradbury (©1975 by Ray Bradbury), which is the introduction to a later edition of Bradbury's 1957 novel *Dandelion Wine*. Passage B is adapted from *Dandelion Wine* (©1957 by Ray Bradbury).

Passage A by Ray Bradbury

I began to learn the nature of surprises, thankfully, when I was fairly young as a writer. Before that, like every beginner, I thought you could beat, pummel, and thrash an idea into existence. Under such treatment, of course, any decent idea folds up its paws, turns on its back, fixes its eyes on eternity, and dies.

It was with great relief, then, that in my early twenties I floundered into a word-association process in which I simply got out of bed each morning, walked to my desk, and put down any word or series of words that happened along in my head.

I would then take arms against the word, or for it, and bring on an assortment of characters to weigh the word and show me its meaning in my own life. An hour or two hours later, to my amazement, a new story would be finished and done. The surprise was total and lovely. I soon found that I would have to work this way for the rest of my life.

First I rummaged my mind for words that could describe my personal nightmares, fears of night and time from my childhood, and shaped stories from these.

Then I took a long look at the green apple trees and the old house I was born in and the house next door where lived my grandparents, and all the lawns of the summers I grew up in, and I began to try words for all that.

I had to send myself back, with words as catalysts, to open the memories out and see what they had to offer.

So from the age of twenty-four to thirty-six hardly a day passed when I didn't stroll myself across a recollection of my grandparents' northern Illinois grass, hoping to come across some old half-burnt firecracker, a rusted toy, or a fragment of letter written to myself in some young year hoping to contact the older person I became to remind him of his past, his life, his people, his joys, and his drenching sorrows.

Along the way I came upon and collided, through word-association, with old and true friendships. I borrowed my friend John Huff from my childhood in Arizona and shipped him East to Green Town so that I could say good-bye to him properly.

Along the way, I sat me down to breakfasts, lunches, and dinners with the long dead and much loved.

Thus I fell into surprise. I came on the old and best ways of writing through ignorance and experiment and was startled when truths leaped out of bushes like quail before gunshot. I blundered into creativity as any child learning to walk and see. I learned to let my senses and my Past tell me all that was somehow true.

Passage B by Ray Bradbury

The facts about John Huff, aged twelve, are simple and soon stated. He could pathfind more trails than anyone since time began, could leap from the sky like a chimpanzee from a vine, could live underwater two minutes and slide fifty yards downstream from where you last saw him. The baseballs you pitched him he hit in the apple trees, knocking down harvests. He ran laughing. He sat easy. He was not a bully. He was kind. He knew the names of all the wild flowers and when the moon would rise and set. He was, in fact, the only god living in the whole of Green Town, Illinois, during the twentieth century that Douglas Spaulding knew of.

And right now he and Douglas were hiking out beyond town on another warm and marble-round day, the sky blue blown-glass reaching high, the creeks bright with mirror waters fanning over white stones. It was a day as perfect as the flame of a candle.

Douglas walked through it thinking it would go on this way forever. The sound of a good friend whistling like an oriole, pegging the softball, as you horse-danced, key-jingled the dusty paths; things were at hand and would remain.

It was such a fine day and then suddenly a cloud crossed the sky, covered the sun, and did not move again.

John Huff had been speaking quietly for several minutes. Now Douglas stopped on the path and looked over at him.

"John, say that again."

"You heard me the first time, Doug."

"Did you say you were—going away?"

John took a yellow and green train ticket solemnly from his pocket and they both looked at it.

"Tonight!" said Douglas. "My gosh! Tonight we were going to play Red Light, Green Light and Statues! How come, all of a sudden? You been here in Green Town all my life. You just don't pick up and leave!"

"It's my father," said John. "He's got a job in Milwaukee. We weren't sure until today . . . "

They sat under an old oak tree on the side of the hill looking back at town. Out beyond, in sunlight, the town was painted with heat, the windows all gaping. Douglas wanted to run back in there where the town, by its very weight, its houses, their bulk, might enclose and prevent John's ever getting up and running off.

Passage IV

NATURAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from the article "The Jaws That Jump" by Adam Summers (©2006 by Natural History Magazine, Inc.).

Recently I was reminded of just how powerful ants can be when inflicting damage on intruders. A team of biomechanists has studied the incredibly speedy bite of a group of Central and South American ants. The team clocked the bite as the fastest on the planet—and discovered that it also gives the ants the unique ability to jump with their jaws, adding to an impressive array of already known defenses.

Trap-jaw ants nest in leaf litter, rather than underground or in mounds. There they often feed on well-armored and elusive prey, including other species of ants. As they stalk their dinner, the trap-jaws hold their mandibles wide apart, often cocked open at 180 degrees or more by a latch mechanism. When minute trigger hairs on the inner edge of the mandible come in contact with something, the jaws snap shut at speeds now known to reach 145 miles per hour. No passerby could outrace that. The astoundingly high speed gives the jaws, despite their light weight, enough force to crack open the armor of most prey and get at the tasty meat inside.

The key to the jaws' speed (and their even more amazing acceleration) is that the release comes from stored energy produced by the strong but slow muscles of the jaw. Think how an archer slowly draws an arrow in a bowstring against the flex of a bow: nearly all the energy from the archer's muscles pours into the flexing of the bow. When released, the energy stored in the bow wings the arrow toward its target much faster than the archer could by throwing the arrow like a javelin. The biomechanics of energy storage is the domain of Sheila N. Patek and Joseph E. Baio, both biomechanists at the University of California, Berkeley. They teamed up with two ant experts, Brian L. Fisher of the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco and Andrew V. Suarez of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, to look at the trap-jaw ant *Odontomachus bauri*.

Fisher, Suarez, and other field biologists had already noted that catching *O. bauri* was like grabbing for popping popcorn—and very hot popcorn at that, because a painful sting goes with an ant's trap-jaw bite. The insects bounced around in a dizzying frenzy and propelled themselves many times their body length when biologists or smaller intruders approached them. Patek and Baio made high-speed video images of their movements, and discovered that the secret of their self-propulsion was the well-executed "firing" of their mandibles. They also observed that mandibles started to decelerate before they meet—possibly to avoid self-inflicted damage. Most important, the ants had two distinct modes of aerial locomotion.

In the so-called escape jump, an ant orients its head and jaws perpendicular to the ground, then slams its face straight down. That triggers the cocked mandibles to release with a force 400 times the ant's body weight, launching the insect ten or more body lengths nearly straight into the air. The ant doesn't seem to go in any particular direction, but the jump is presumably fast and unpredictable enough to help the insect evade, say, the probing tongue of a lizard. Not only can the jumping ant gain height and sow confusion, but it may also get to a new vantage point from which to relaunch an attack.

The second kind of jaw-propelled locomotion is even more common than escape jumping. If an intruder enters the ants' nest, one of the ants bangs its jaws against the intruder, which triggers the trap-jaw and propels the interloper (if small enough) in one direction, out of the nest, and the ant in the other. Often the force sends the ant skimming an inch off the ground for nearly a foot. The attack, for obvious reasons, is known as the "bouncer defense." In the wild, gangs of defending ants team up to attack hostile strangers, sending them head over heels out of the nest.

From an evolutionary point of view, the trap-jaws are an intriguing story. The ants clearly evolved an entirely new function, propulsion, for a system that was already useful—chewing up prey. Several lineages of trap-jaw ants have independently hit on the tactic of storing energy in their jaws to penetrate well-defended prey. In *Odontomachus*, the horizontal, bouncer-defense jump could have arisen out of attempts to bite intruders, but the high, escape jump—with jaws aimed directly at the ground—must have arisen from a different, perhaps accidental kind of behavior. Such a serendipitous event would have been a rare instance in which banging one's head against the ground got good results.