

**YEAR 6****SATs Reading: The Racing Pigeon (Fiction)**

Read the text first. Three parts that get harder: finding information, then working out what the text suggests, then why the writer made the choices they did. Write the letter of the right option, or one word or number. A story, like the first text in the real reading booklet.

Nadia had been sent to tidy the garden shed. Nobody had told her what to do if something in it was alive.

- 1 The pigeon was sitting on top of the lawnmower as if it had paid for the seat. It was grey, with a sheen of green and purple at its throat that changed colour whenever it turned its head, and around one pink leg it wore a thin blue ring.
- 2 Nadia stood very still in the doorway. The pigeon looked at her with one orange eye, then the other, and did not move either. It was, she decided, the calmest creature she had ever met. Her little brother Kai, who had followed her down the garden in his pyjamas, was not calm at all.
- 3 "Is it hurt? Can we keep it? What's it called?" he whispered, three questions in a single breath.
- 4 Nadia crouched to look at the ring. Tiny letters and numbers were printed around it. "It isn't a wild one," she said slowly. "Somebody owns it. It's a racing pigeon." She had seen them once on television: hundreds of birds let out of baskets miles from home, finding their way back by a trick the presenter said scientists were still arguing about.
- 5 That evening, Mum typed the letters and numbers into a website for pigeon keepers, and an hour later a man called Mr Brennan rang from Doncaster. His voice crackled down the line like a bonfire. He said the bird was called Blue Bess, that she had been missing for nine days, and that he had nearly given up on her.
- 6 "She'll have been blown off course by that storm," he said. "Give her a day or two of rest, a bit of seed and some water, and then let her go. She'll know the way."

- 7 Kai did not think this was a good plan. For two days he sat by the shed with a saucer of birdseed, reporting on every move Bess made as though she were on the news. She ate. She drank. She smoothed her feathers. Once she flapped up to the window ledge and Kai ran inside shouting that she was leaving, but she was only looking at the weather.
- 8 On the third morning the sky was clean and blue, and Nadia carried the pigeon out to the middle of the lawn. Its heart beat fast and light against her palms. Kai stood beside her with his arms folded tightly, as if he were holding something in.
- 9 Nadia opened her hands. For a moment Bess did nothing at all. Then she rose in a clatter of wings, circled the garden once, twice, three times, climbing higher with each loop, and turned north. They watched until she was a speck, and then until she was nothing.
- 10 Kai unfolded his arms. "Do you think she'll make it?" he asked. Nadia looked at the empty sky and thought about Mr Brennan, waiting by his pigeon loft in Doncaster, checking the clock.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____

A. Warm-up

Retrieval: the answer is written in the text. Find it, then check the paragraph number.

- 1 Look at paragraph 1. What colour was the ring on the pigeon's leg? Write one word.
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- 2 In paragraph 1 the pigeon's throat has a **sheen**. Which word is closest in meaning to *sheen*?
- (a) shine
 - (b) stain
 - (c) feather
 - (d) shadow
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- 3 Look at paragraph 3. How many questions did Kai ask in a single breath?
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- 4 Look at paragraph 5. In which town does Mr Brennan live? Write one word.
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5 Look at paragraph 5. For how many days had Blue Bess been missing?

6 According to Mr Brennan in paragraph 6, why had Bess ended up so far from home?

- (a) She had escaped from a basket
 - (b) A storm had blown her off course
 - (c) She was looking for food
 - (d) Kai had caught her
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B. Where you should be now

Inference: the text does not say it straight out. Choose the option the clues prove.

7 The pigeon was sitting on the lawnmower "as if it had paid for the seat" (paragraph 1). What does this suggest?

- (a) It had bought the lawnmower
 - (b) It was about to fly away
 - (c) It looked completely at home there
 - (d) It was too ill to move
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8 Look at paragraph 2. Nadia decides the pigeon is "the calmest creature she had ever met". What does this tell you?

- (a) The pigeon was fast asleep
 - (b) The pigeon was badly injured
 - (c) The pigeon wanted to be fed
 - (d) The pigeon was not frightened of her
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9 Find and copy one word from paragraph 9 that tells you how noisily Bess took off.

10 Kai reported on Bess "as though she were on the news" (paragraph 7). What does this show about Kai?

- (a) He was fascinated by her and did not want to miss anything
 - (b) He was bored of watching her
 - (c) He wanted to be on television
 - (d) He was frightened of her
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- 11 Kai stood "with his arms folded tightly, as if he were holding something in" (paragraph 8). What was he most likely holding in?
- (a) A handful of birdseed
 - (b) His sadness at saying goodbye
 - (c) A secret about the shed
 - (d) His anger with Mr Brennan
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- 12 Which sentence best sums up paragraph 5 and paragraph 6 together?
- (a) Mr Brennan drove to Doncaster to collect his pigeon.
 - (b) Nadia learned how racing pigeons find their way home.
 - (c) Mum found the pigeon's owner, who explained how to send her home.
 - (d) The family decided to keep the pigeon as a pet.
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C. Stretch

Why did the writer choose these words, and what do they make the reader think or feel?

- 13 "His voice crackled down the line like a bonfire" (paragraph 5). What does this simile suggest about the phone call?
- (a) Mr Brennan was angry and shouting
 - (b) The call was perfectly clear
 - (c) Mr Brennan was sitting by a fire
 - (d) The line was rough and broken up, like the sound of a fire
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- 14 How is Kai different from Nadia when they first find the pigeon (paragraphs 2 to 4)?
- (a) Kai is excited and full of questions, while Nadia stays still and thinks it through
 - (b) Kai is frightened, while Nadia wants to keep the pigeon
 - (c) Kai wants to let the pigeon go, while Nadia wants to keep it
 - (d) Kai is calm, while Nadia is excited
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- 15 Bess circled the garden, then "turned north" (paragraph 9). Which direction is Doncaster most likely to be from Nadia's house?
- (a) south
 - (b) north
 - (c) east
 - (d) west
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- 16 "They watched until she was a speck, and then until she was nothing" (paragraph 9). What effect does this sentence have?
- (a) It tells us Bess was hurt
 - (b) It shows the weather was getting worse
 - (c) It slows the moment down, so we feel how long they watched her disappear
 - (d) It makes the moment funny
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- 17 Will Bess get home? Which detail from the story best supports the prediction that she WILL?
- (a) Kai folds his arms tightly.
 - (b) Bess flapped up to the window ledge.
 - (c) The pigeon sat on the lawnmower.
 - (d) Mr Brennan says, "She'll know the way."
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- 18 The story ends with Mr Brennan "waiting by his pigeon loft in Doncaster, checking the clock" (paragraph 10). Why might the writer end here?
- (a) It leaves the reader hoping, like Mr Brennan, that Bess will arrive
 - (b) It tells us that Bess has already got home
 - (c) It explains what a pigeon loft is
 - (d) It shows that Mr Brennan is late for something
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