



TABE 11 & 12 READING PRACTICE ITEMS

**Read the passage. Then answer questions 1 through 5.**

**Quirky Quicksand**

- 1 Quicksand has a reputation that it does not deserve. In a typical Hollywood movie scene, a character accidentally wanders into quicksand. Sometimes, the terrified character sinks quickly out of sight, leaving only a hat floating on the surface. At other times, a dramatic escape involves grabbing a nearby tree branch or the hand of another character.
- 2 It is true that you will begin to sink if you step into quicksand. However, you will not be sucked in and swallowed whole. The depth of quicksand ranges from a few inches to four feet. A person of average height probably will sink only waist-deep.
- 3 Quicksand can form almost any place where water flows beneath a sandy surface. Some common areas for quicksand include river deltas, shores, and sandy creek beds.
- 4 The best condition for forming quicksand is when water seeps upward from an underground source and saturates an area of sand, silt, or other grainy soil. If you disturb (or step into) the quicksand, a loose layer of fine sand on top of the water changes into a thick, soupy liquid. The mixture settles to the bottom and packs tightly around your feet. The mud-like layer creates a strong suction, especially if you are wearing flat shoes or boots.
- 5 A person can float on quicksand just as he or she floats on water. The human body has a density of about 62 pounds per cubic foot. Quicksand has a density of about 125 pounds per cubic foot. Because a person is less dense than quicksand, the person will rise to the top when his or her feet are free from the paste-like sand at the bottom. The key is to remain calm and follow a few simple steps to escape.
- 6 Start by taking several deep breaths and trying to relax. Stretch out your back and lean backward slightly to increase your surface area. Soon, you will be able to move your legs. Rotate one leg at a time in a slow circular motion. Water will flow down the leg into the thick sand on the bottom. Then as the bottom mixture thins, you can begin to free yourself. Move slowly and carefully. The area around you also might be soggy. Thrashing about wildly will cause you to sink deeper.



TABE 11 & 12 READING PRACTICE ITEMS

- 7 If you wander into an area of quicksand, do not ask another person to pull you out. In fact, pulling you from the thick mixture would require a great deal of strength. The suction that holds you in place is quite strong. Researchers at the University of Amsterdam found that the amount of force required to pull your trapped feet free is equal to the force that is needed to lift a medium-sized car. Your rescuer could be pulled into the heavy mixture, or you could be injured by the extreme stress placed on your arms.
- 8 Quicksand is not quite the mysterious force of nature that many believe it to be. An experience with quicksand usually is more messy and embarrassing than it is dangerous. In any case, don't panic, and keep your wits about you. Afterward, you will have a most interesting story to share with friends and family!

1. Read this sentence from the passage.

In any case, don't panic, and keep your wits about you.

Which of these best explains the meaning of the phrase "keep your wits about you"?

- A. stay quiet
  - B. remain alert
  - C. focus on intelligence
  - D. have a helpful attitude
2. How does paragraph 4 contribute to the development of ideas in the passage?
- A. It explains why a person might disturb quicksand.
  - B. It presents information about the water found in quicksand.
  - C. It describes what happens when a person steps into quicksand.
  - D. It states which shoes to wear in areas where quicksand is likely to form.



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3. How does the movie scene described in paragraph 1 connect to the information in paragraphs 6 and 7?
- A. The paragraphs demonstrate that the Hollywood movie scenes are accurate.
  - B. The Hollywood movie scenes foreshadow the actions discussed in the paragraphs.
  - C. The Hollywood movie scenes show what the paragraphs suggest will happen in quicksand.
  - D. The paragraphs describe what to do differently from the actions in the Hollywood movie scenes.
4. Which sentence from the passage best expresses the author's attitude toward the threat of quicksand?
- A. "It is true that you will begin to sink if you step into quicksand."
  - B. "The depth of quicksand ranges from a few inches to four feet."
  - C. "If you wander into an area of quicksand, do not ask another person to pull you out."
  - D. "An experience with quicksand usually is more messy and embarrassing than it is dangerous."



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5.

**Part A**

Which statement expresses a claim the author makes about quicksand?

- A. Stepping in quicksand is an emergency that requires immediate action.
- B. Quicksand is not a threat unless people attempt to float on the surface.
- C. Any kind of movement a person makes in quicksand is apt to cause more trouble.
- D. Some of the risks associated with stepping in quicksand are caused by people's reactions.

**Part B**

Which sentence from the passage best supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "Sometimes, the terrified character sinks quickly out of sight, leaving only a hat floating on the surface."
- B. "A person can float on quicksand just as he or she floats on water."
- C. "Water will flow down the leg into the thick sand on the bottom."
- D. "Thrashing about wildly will cause you to sink deeper."



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**ANSWER KEY:**

1. B
2. C
3. D
4. D
5. Part A—D  
Part B—D