

Compass Reading Samples

The only purpose of this study guide is to give you an overview of the type of reading skills needed to successfully complete the Compass reading assessment. The Study Guide is not intended to adequately prepare you for the Compass Test.

Einstein for a Day

Albert Einstein, one of the world's most brilliant and respected scientists, is best known for **formulating** the theory of relativity, which played a critical role in the development of atomic energy. What may not be as widely known is that Einstein had a fine sense of humor.

There's an amusing story about how Einstein was traveling to universities in a chauffeured car, giving lectures on relativity. One day the chauffeur said, "Dr. Einstein, I've heard you give that lecture about 30 times. I know it by heart, and I bet I could give it myself."

"Well, I'll give you the chance," said Einstein. "They won't recognize me at the school. When we get there I'll put on your cap, and you introduce yourself as me and give the lecture."

The chauffeur gave Einstein's lecture without a single mistake. When he finished, he started to leave, but one of the professors stopped him to ask a complex question. The chauffeur thought fast. "That problem is so **trivial**," he said. "I'm surprised you have to ask me. In fact, to show you just how simple it is, I'm going to ask my chauffeur to come up here and answer your question."

1. Which part of Albert Einstein's character is portrayed in this story?
 - a. pride
 - b. intelligence
 - c. humor
 - d. greed
2. What is the main idea of this story?
 - a. Einstein gives a lecture.
 - b. Einstein plays a trick on the chauffeur.
 - c. An audience learns the truth.
 - d. Two men switch places.
3. What happened as soon as the lecture was finished?
 - a. Einstein introduced himself to the audience.
 - b. Someone from the audience asked a question.
 - c. The chauffeur answered a difficult question.
 - d. Einstein and the chauffeur returned home.
4. Why did the chauffeur want Einstein to answer the last question?
 - a. The chauffeur wanted the audience to meet Einstein.
 - b. The chauffeur didn't know the answer to the question.
 - c. Someone in the audience recognized Einstein.
 - d. Einstein wanted to be introduced to the audience.
5. **Formulating** means:
 - a. developing
 - b. understanding
 - c. teaching
 - d. remembering
6. In this lesson, **trivial** means:
 - a. difficult
 - b. surprising
 - c. simple
 - d. unusual

New Images of Men and Women

School textbooks today reflect the changes that are taking place in American life. Female textbook characters are no longer just wearing aprons and cooking dinner. Females can also be seen working with carpenter's tools. The males, meanwhile, now enjoy cooking as much as batting a ball around. Moreover, Dad is as likely to be doing the laundry as Mom.

Today's book publishers are responding to new feelings about how children develop roles. Many people believe that limited, narrow roles are imposed upon children at a very early age through the toys they play with and the books they read.

As a result, publishers have **invoked** guidelines for changing the images of males and females in children's books. They are attempting to change the language and show men and women in a number of different roles. New books show parents sharing household tasks, working mothers, and stay-at-home fathers. A dentist or doctor is just as likely to be a female as a male. Job titles have changed as well: "mailmen" are now called letter carriers," "workmen" are now called "workers," and "fire fighters" have replaced "firemen."

By rejecting the **conventional** portrayal of women and men, textbook publishers hope they have taken an important step toward freeing society of unfair prejudices. Perhaps it will take as long as a generation to determine the effects of these changes on young men and women.

1. How have publishers revised their textbooks?
 - a. Males and females are shown in different roles.
 - b. Only the traditional male-female roles are portrayed.
 - c. More stories about less common jobs are emphasized.
 - d. Younger children are now portrayed.
2. The second paragraph is mainly about the influence of _____ on role development of young children.
 - a. clothes
 - b. toys and books
 - c. art and music classes
 - d. school lunches
3. Which shows that men and women can perform the same job?
 - a. a picture of a woman cooking
 - b. the word "craftsmen"
 - c. fire fighters being called "firemen"
 - d. mailmen being called "letter carriers"
4. Which story might you find in a modern textbook that you would not have found years ago?
 - a. a story of a male doctor
 - b. a story of a female rodeo rider
 - c. a story of a girl training to be a nurse
 - d. a story of a man's success in the business world
5. **Invoked** means:
 - a. created
 - b. demonstrated
 - c. put into effect
 - d. canceled
6. In this article, **conventional** means the same as:
 - a. unfair
 - b. unusual
 - c. original
 - d. traditional

Free Press in High Schools

For almost 10 years, California schools were the center of a controversy over freedom of the press for student journalists. Often high-school newspapers were not permitted to print articles on sensitive topics or to express opinions critical of the school. School boards argued that what went on inside a journalism classroom should be in the school's control.

Students of the 1950s and early 1960s went along with school policy. But they became more vocal and stirred up during the Vietnam War. They began to **agitate** for the right to express their views.

The chain of events climaxing in a free-press law for California high schools began in 1969. Two students who were prevented from distributing an unofficial newspaper on their school campus took their case to court. A court ruled that the school could not ban a newspaper because of its content.

The next nine years saw many debates and reports on the issue until January 1978, when California law **deemed** that freedom of the press also applies to student journalists. Under the new law, the only articles not permitted are those that are slanderous, indecent, or would disturb the operation of the school. Student editors were given both the freedom to determine what they will print and the same responsibility for truth, accuracy, and fairness as the regular press.

1. What event led to students' desire for more freedom in writing newspaper articles?
 - a. the 1978 presidential election
 - b. the US. involvement in the Vietnam War
 - c. the arrest of two student editors
 - d. the passage of a California free-press law
2. This article tells mainly about:
 - a. California schools
 - b. students of the 1960s
 - c. freedom of the school press
 - d. laws about the press
3. When did the courts grant schools "free press"?
 - a. 1969
 - b. 1978
 - c. 1953
 - d. 1975
4. Even under present freedom-of-the-press laws, a school newspaper may not:
 - a. criticize the principal
 - b. criticize school-board policy
 - c. discuss the use of drugs
 - d. call for a student strike
5. Which word is most like **agitate**?
 - a. argue
 - b. think
 - c. plan
 - d. agree
6. **Deemed** means:
 - a. denied
 - b. reported
 - c. attacked
 - d. judged

Little Bighorn

The most famous battle between the American Indians and the U.S. Cavalry took place along the Little Bighorn River in eastern Montana. There, in June 1876, Lieutenant Colonel George Custer, recklessly impatient for combat, led 600 soldiers into battle against almost 3000 Plains Indians - the largest force of Indian warriors ever to face an army unit.

Custer had been ordered to scout out Indian **encampments**. When he found several camps on the river's west bank, he was ready to overtake them. Because of the small number of men in his command, Custer had also been ordered to wait for more troops before attacking. Custer, however, felt that his soldiers were **invincible** - more than a match for any number of Indians. He was so confident that he divided his outnumbered band of soldiers into three units of 200 members each.

For some unexplainable reason, the first unit was sent on a scouting mission, thus missing the battle completely. The second unit was sent three miles downstream to sneak across the river. There they were overwhelmed by hundreds of Indians who forced the soldiers to retreat. Custer himself led the third unit up the east bank of the river, but he never made it across. The troops were attacked by wave after wave of Indian horsemen, and none of the third unit survived. Little Bighorn was the Indians' greatest victory, and it was also their last. Soon the bands of Indians were hunted down or led captive to the reservations.

1. What caused Lieutenant Colonel George Custer's downfall?
 - a. his selfishness
 - b. his overconfidence
 - c. battle fatigue
 - d. his ill health
2. What is this article mainly about?
 - a. the Little Bighorn River
 - b. Custer's scouting missions
 - c. a great Indian victory
 - d. the U.S. Cavalry
3. Before the attack on the Indian camps, Custer had been given orders to:
 - a. surrender to the Indians
 - b. wait for reinforcements
 - c. cross the Little Bighorn River
 - d. attack the river's east bank immediately
4. This article suggests that Custer's plan of attack was:
 - a. sound
 - b. intricate
 - c. reasonable
 - d. not logical
5. What are **encampments**?
 - a. campsites
 - b. scouts
 - c. villages
 - d. warriors
6. **Invincible** soldiers are:
 - a. uncertain
 - b. unbeatable
 - c. cowardly
 - d. outnumbered

Katharine Graham: Publisher

Some people pursue power, and some have power thrust upon them. Katharine Graham, a well-educated Washingtonian, found herself thrust into a position of great power at the age of 46. The death of her husband left Katharine Graham with a publishing **legacy** worth millions of dollars. The empire her husband left included the *Washington Post* newspaper, *Newsweek* magazine, and various radio and TV stations.

Graham knew little about running these businesses and at first considered selling them all. Then, after careful thinking, she decided to accept the challenge. Unsure at first, Graham totally immersed herself in the business of publishing. She emerged a capable, confident, and **decisive** executive called by some the most powerful woman in America.

When the events of Watergate first took place and it became clear that they would have a major effect on the country, the *Washington Post* and its publisher, Graham, made the decision to break the story. In keeping with the *Post's* tradition of public service, Graham did not interfere or direct as the story unfolded. She followed each development closely to make sure the paper was being fair and accurate. "The reputation of the paper was clearly at stake," she says.

Graham turned the publishing of the *Washington Post* over to her son in 1979. But it was her leadership that made it one of the most respected and successful papers in the country.

1. How did Katharine Graham become a publisher?
 - a. She worked her way up the ladder.
 - b. She took over her parents' business.
 - c. She inherited her husband's publishing business.
 - d. She purchased a bankrupt newspaper.
2. This article tells mainly about:
 - a. the Grahams' business partnership
 - b. the running of the *Washington Post*
 - c. a woman learning to run a magazine
 - d. Graham's business success
3. When her husband died, Katharine Graham's first impulse was to _____ the business.
 - a. learn to manage
 - b. take over
 - c. sell
 - d. let her son run
4. Which words describe the author's feelings about Katharine Graham?
 - a. disappointed in her leadership
 - b. respectful of her accomplishments
 - c. regretful that she turned over the *Post*
 - d. suspicious of her power
5. A **legacy** is something that is:
 - a. left to you
 - b. earned by you
 - c. borrowed
 - d. sold after a death
6. A **decisive** person can:
 - a. learn quickly
 - b. make decisions
 - c. avoid decisions
 - d. delegate responsibility

The False Face Society

When an Iroquois Indian had an **affliction**, perhaps a toothache, sprained ankle, or headache, he or she looked to the members of the False Face Society for help. The False Face Society was a religious group within the tribe. The wooden masks (false faces) worn by the society's members during ceremonies were believed by the Iroquois to be endowed with healing powers.

The curing process began when the patient had a dream in which a False Face appeared. This was a sign to call upon the Society to effect a cure. Clad in their masks, False Face members arrived at the patient's dwelling and formed a circle around the person. Members danced, shook rattles, and sometimes blew glowing embers at the ailing Iroquois.

Once the pain or illness **subsided**, the cured patient became a member of the False Face Society. The new member of the society would go out into the woods, find a tree, and begin carving a face on the base of its trunk. The mask wasn't cut away from the tree until the features emerged. These features varied widely: faces could be laughing or crying, happy or sad. Usually the mask was made to resemble the face that first appeared in the dream.

1. What happened to patients once they were cured?
 - a. They joined the Iroquois tribe.
 - b. They discovered a cure for toothaches.
 - c. They purchased masks at the general store.
 - d. They became members of the False Face Society.
2. This story is mainly about:
 - a. the curative powers of the False Face Society
 - b. the Iroquois' religious holidays
 - c. carving masks from oak trees
 - d. the dreams of sick people
3. The False Face Society was _____ within the Iroquois tribe.
 - a. an artist colony
 - b. a dramatic club
 - c. a religious group
 - d. an entertainment group
4. The Iroquois Indians treated the masks of the False Face Society with:
 - a. consideration
 - b. kindness
 - c. respect
 - d. affection
5. What is an **affliction**?
 - a. a wooden mask
 - b. an illness
 - c. a dream
 - d. an effective cure
6. Pain that has **subsided** is:
 - a. still intense
 - b. no longer felt
 - c. unceasing
 - d. continuing

Under the North Atlantic

In 1975 an underwater **habitat**, or dwelling, named *Helgoland* was submerged 100 feet to the floor of the Atlantic Ocean. A crew of four lived in the habitat, researching the behavior of the North Atlantic herring and other fish. Most of the time the crew were alone on the ocean floor. A radio was their only link to people ashore.

The underwater researchers had no direct access to the surface. Since the underwater pressure is much greater than a human can withstand, the gaseous content of the divers' blood had to be adjusted. As the divers were lowered into the water, their blood was slowly made to equal the pressure found at 110 feet. For the divers to return to the surface, it took 50 hours of decompression to restore their blood to its normal state.

From inside the *Helgoland*, the crew observed the **aquatic** world. Hundreds of zooplankton often gathered on the glass outside. Sometimes a school of fish would swim by to feast upon these minute animals. Sometimes the crew, in wet suits and tanks, swam outside the *Helgoland*. Twelve nylon lines radiated 200 yards out from the habitat. The crew swam along the lines, observing herring, cod, tuna, blackfish, and pollock.

After 40 minutes the air in the tanks was exhausted, and so were the divers. The cold water temperature and the exertion of swimming rapidly drained the energies of the divers. One of the crew described the 16 days underwater as "a time of intense living which would leave none of us unchanged."

1. How long did the crew live inside the *Helgoland*?
 - a. 50 hours
 - b. one year
 - c. 16 days
 - d. 110 days
2. Which might be another title for this article?
 - a. Exploring *Helgoland*
 - b. Underwater Research
 - c. Emergency at 100 Feet
 - d. Undersea Animal Life
3. The pressure on the ocean floor is:
 - a. adequate for human survival
 - b. greater than people can stand
 - c. unsatisfactory for fish
 - d. bearable after 10 hours
4. After 40 minutes outside *Helgoland*, the crew returned to their dwelling because:
 - a. they wanted to get fresh air tanks
 - b. they completed their studies of fish
 - c. conditions made it difficult to stay out longer
 - d. schools of fish were attacking them
5. In this article, a **habitat** is:
 - a. a crew of scientists
 - b. the ocean floor
 - c. a school of fish
 - d. an underwater home
6. **Aquatic** means:
 - a. in water
 - b. on land
 - c. beneath the surface
 - d. beyond the earth

America's Hot Spot

"It's sure a hot day," said the old prospector as he slowed his battered pickup truck to glance at a lizard beside the road. "A stick lizard sometimes uses a twig like a pogo stick so his feet don't get too hot."

I could almost believe that tall tale. We were in Death Valley, California, the hottest place in the United States, where thermometers in midsummer have recorded temperatures of 190° F.

The pickup truck rattled along the highway. Before us lay a fantastic **panorama** - dazzling white salt beds surrounded by gloomy, towering mountains. We began to climb, and the air grew cooler. We reached Dante's View, where the darkly shaded valley lay spread out before us in all its **somber** beauty. I saw how the surrounding mountains trapped any moisture-laden clouds that might have watered this valley, making it like a huge stone oven.

The prospector and I rode the rocky trails where the once famous 20-mule team wagons hauled a mineral called borax out of the valley. Then we headed toward Stovepipe Wells. A small animal hopped across the road. I recognized it as a kangaroo rat, one of the few animals that can go their entire lives without drinking a drop of water. I remarked about the heat. The weather-beaten prospector replied, "Compared to what's coming this summer, this is like a day at the North Pole."

1. Why is it so hot in Death Valley?
 - a. The salt beds prevent cool air from descending.
 - b. The surrounding mountains block almost all rainfall.
 - c. The sun is always directly overhead.
 - d. It is near the equator.
2. This story is mainly about:
 - a. how animals survive in Death Valley
 - b. an old prospector's tall tales
 - c. the climate and geographic features of Death Valley
 - d. the best way to travel through Death Valley
3. The kangaroo rat is able to survive in Death Valley without:
 - a. plants
 - b. water
 - c. sleep
 - d. food
4. You can guess that Death Valley got its name because:
 - a. it was once a mining area
 - b. many people died from the heat
 - c. the mountains prevented frequent rainfalls
 - d. it was the scene of a horrid battle
5. What is a **panorama**?
 - a. a wide view
 - b. a shocking sight
 - c. a high peak
 - d. a resting place
6. Another word for **somber** is:
 - a. mysterious
 - b. colorful
 - c. dark
 - d. dry

Building the Great Pyramid

The Great Pyramid at Giza, built for the Egyptian pharaoh, Cheops, is massive yet so precisely built that it has aroused endless speculation about how it could have been made by an ancient society. Historians do not have all the answers, but they are certain that the Egyptian architects had some knowledge of **geometry**. The pyramid's base is almost a perfect 750-foot square. Its sides are triangular in shape. Its sides are so perfectly laid out that they run almost exactly from north to south and from east to west. Some believe that the builders used a star as a guide by which to achieve this precise orientation.

The Great Pyramid is made of colossal stone blocks, averaging $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons each and totaling $6\frac{1}{2}$ million tons. Each of these blocks was transported and raised, probably by some type of ramp, to build a structure 481 feet high. The historian Herodotus **estimated** that to build the Great Pyramid, about 100,000 workers were replaced every three months for a period of 20 years. Others contend that this is a wild exaggeration. However, a huge work force of masons, quarrymen, and stonecutters was required to construct the tomb of Cheops.

1. How many workers were needed to build the tomb of Cheops? Choose the correct number sentence.
 - a. $100,000 \times 4 \times 20 =$
 - b. $100,000 \times 20 =$
 - c. $100,000 \times 3 \times 20 =$
 - d. $100,000 \times 20 \div 4 =$
2. What is the purpose of this article?
 - a. to discuss the architects of the Great Pyramid
 - b. to give some facts and figures on the Great Pyramid
 - c. to describe the laborers who built the Great Pyramid
 - d. to teach a lesson on triangles
3. If the base of the Great Pyramid is a 750-foot square, what is the length of each side of the base?
 - a. 750 feet
 - b. almost 175 feet
 - c. about 375 feet
 - d. about 187 feet
4. How many blocks of stone were used to build the Great Pyramid? Choose the correct number sentence.
 - a. $6\frac{1}{2}$ million tons \div $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons =
 - b. $2\frac{1}{2}$ million tons + $6\frac{1}{2}$ million tons =
 - c. $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons \times $6\frac{1}{2}$ million tons =
 - d. $2\frac{1}{2}$ million tons \div $6\frac{1}{2}$ million tons =
5. **Geometry** is a branch of mathematics that measures:
 - a. shapes
 - b. negative numbers
 - c. tons
 - d. metrics
6. What does **estimated** mean?
 - a. evaluated
 - b. calculated exactly
 - c. determined roughly
 - d. constructed precisely

Beyond the Marathon

Run. Eat. Sleep. Run. This was Tom McGrath's routine as he confidently began to run from New York to California in 1977. Eight pairs of shoes later and several pounds lighter, with an actual running time of 53 days and 7 minutes, he arrived in Los Angeles feeling like the king of the world. Such is the experience of the "ultra" runner for whom the marathon, the 26-mile race, is "too short." The ultra runner pursues any race that is longer than the standard marathon, such as running nonstop around Hawaii.

Ultra runners are not new. The ancient Greek Euchidas ran a round trip of 185 kilometers. At the finish he fainted and died. Since the time of the ancient Greeks, the formal record of long runs is scanty. Yet ultra runners have continued to do the near-impossible. They are the persistent, **obstinate** ones who refuse to accept the normal boundaries of human endurance. They teach us that much more is possible than we care to recognize or bother to explore.

What keeps an ultra runner on the road with blistered feet and aching limbs? For some it may be simple competition, but for most it is a contest of mind over body. When the day's reserve of energy is nearly spent, willpower urges an ultra runner forward. Yet it is not so very difficult either. As one runner said after breaking a record, "I just kept picking my feet up and putting them down until it was over."

1. How long did it take Tom McGrath to run across the U.S.?
 - a. just under six months
 - b. almost two months
 - c. more than three months
 - d. about five weeks
2. The last paragraph is mainly about:
 - a. the injuries incurred by ultra runners
 - b. how ultra runners prevent bodily injuries
 - c. the history of ancient Greek marathon runners
 - d. why ultra runners push themselves to their physical limits
3. Since the days of Euchidas:
 - a. ultra running has become a popular pastime
 - b. there haven't been many ultra runners
 - c. it is easier to run an ultra marathon
 - d. scanty records have been kept
4. Who are most like the ultra runners of today? Choose the one that is **not** correct.
 - a. long-distance swimmers
 - b. chess players
 - c. mountain climbers
 - d. marathon bicyclists
5. Something **ultra** is:
 - a. typical
 - b. strange
 - c. beyond the usual limits
 - d. better than everything
6. Which word means the same as **obstinate**?
 - a. determined
 - b. deserted
 - c. wavering
 - d. undecided

Answer Key for Compass Reading

1. Einstein for a Day

1. c
2. d
3. b
4. b
5. a
6. c

2. New Images of Men and Women

1. a
2. b
3. d
4. b
5. c
6. d

3. Free Press in High Schools

1. b
2. c
3. b
4. d
5. a
6. d

4. Little Bighorn

1. b
2. c
3. b
4. d
5. a
6. b

5. Katherine Graham: Publisher

1. c
2. d
3. c
4. c
5. a
6. b

6. The False Face Society

1. d
2. a
3. c
4. c
5. b
6. b

7. Under the North Atlantic

1. c
2. b
3. b
4. c
5. d
6. a

8. America's Hot Spot

1. b
2. c
3. b
4. b
5. a
6. c

9. Building the Great Pyramid

1. a
2. b
3. a
4. a
5. a
6. c

10. Beyond the Marathon

1. b
2. d
3. d
4. b
5. c
6. a