



"English Ivy: Friend or Foe?"

Reading Comprehension Assessment

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Name _____
 Date _____

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Directions: Read the passage. Then answer the questions below.

English Ivy: Friend or Foe?

English Ivy **betrays** its poor reputation as a nuisance by its unparalleled ability to provide shade. By seamlessly covering the exterior of a building, it works as a natural insulator, blocking the sun and decreasing air conditioning costs. This means big savings for both building tenants and homeowners alike. And it can happen quickly, too. Under the proper conditions, established English Ivy can grow to cover an area of roughly 500 square feet per year. Given that most homes have a roof measuring roughly 2000 square feet, ivy-friendly homeowners can rest assured that their roofs will be completely covered in about four years. When considering growth rates of newly planted ivy, just remember the old adage: First year, it sleeps. Second year, it creeps. Third year, it leaps! For English Ivy, this is especially true.



Now, detractors may take this opportunity to remind readers about how invasive English Ivy can be. For what ivy enthusiast hasn't been cautioned about its ability to burrow holes, fracture windows, and even **deteriorate** brick? But be warned. Oftentimes, this suggestion is taken to the comical extreme. Naysayers take a strange pleasure in spinning yarns about a particularly **malevolent** strand of ivy—one that slips in through the cracks on a hot summer night, silently strangling homeowners in their sleep. Admittedly, this can be a funny story to tell. But are we to believe such a tale? The intelligent gardener will quickly dismiss such rubbish for what it is.

- 1) The primary purpose of the passage is to
 - A. highlight the reasons why English Ivy's fast growth rate is beneficial
 - B. argue that English Ivy is an essential plant for homeowners
 - C. educate readers about how to use English Ivy to insulate their homes
 - D. belittle detractors of English Ivy
 - E. defend the reputation of English Ivy

- 2) As used in paragraph 1, which is the best definition for **betrays**?
 - A. gives away
 - B. contradicts
 - C. reveals
 - D. supports
 - E. highlights

- 3) In paragraph 1, the author states, "Given that most homes have a roof measuring roughly 2000 square feet, ivy-friendly homeowners can rest assured that their roofs will be completely covered in about four years." Which of the following logical mistakes does the author make in drawing this conclusion?
 - I. English Ivy will not cover the area of most roofs in 4 years if it only grows 500 square feet per year.
 - II. Homes may not have the proper conditions necessary for English Ivy to grow at the specified rate.
 - III. Newly planted ivy does not grow as fast as established ivy.

- A. I only
- B. II only
- C. I and II only
- D. II and II only
- E. I, II, and III

4) As used in paragraph 2, which is the best definition for **deteriorate**?

- A. wear away
- B. shield
- C. add to
- D. climb on
- E. strengthen

5) As used in paragraph 2, which is the best antonym for **malevolent**?

- A. wary
- B. sensitive
- C. virtuous
- D. injured
- E. willing

6) This passage would most likely be found

- A. in a scholarly journal about botany
- B. in a magazine article about gardening
- C. in a letter from one gardener to another
- D. on a website identifying different types of plants
- E. in a pamphlet about the best ways to make a home more energy-efficient

7) The author's tone can best be described as

- A. passionate
- B. defensive
- C. argumentative
- D. persuasive
- E. accusatory

8) Is the author's argument successful? Why or why not?

1) E

Question Type: Global

To answer this question correctly, we must study the first sentence: “English Ivy betrays its poor reputation as a nuisance by its unparalleled ability to provide shade.” In this sentence, the author lets us know that he or she is providing reasons why English Ivy betrays, or contradicts, its poor reputation. In other words, the author intends to point out some benefits of English Ivy. By pointing out these benefits, as well as discrediting detractors of ivy who often “take a strange pleasure in spinning yarns” about it, the author defends the reputation of English Ivy. Therefore (E) is correct. Although the author does highlight one reason why English Ivy’s fast growth rate is beneficial (it will quickly cover a house and thus act as a natural insulator), he or she does not point out additional reasons. Furthermore, this minor point serves the author’s larger argument, which is that English Ivy does not deserve its poor reputation. Therefore (A) is incorrect. The author does not argue that English Ivy is an essential plant for homeowners, only that it does not deserve its reputation as a nuisance. This means (B) is incorrect. In paragraph 1, the author states that homeowners can use ivy to insulate their homes, but he or she does not provide details about precisely how to do this. The author’s lack of specific directions indicates that he or she is more concerned with defending English Ivy’s reputation than with educating readers. This makes (C) incorrect. The author does not intend to belittle, or disparage, detractors of English Ivy, but rather to contradict them. Although the author does gently mock their tendency to “take a strange pleasure in spinning yarns” about ivy, this statement is not so harsh as to be considered belittling. Therefore (D) is incorrect.

2) B

Question Type: Vocabulary
betray (*verb*): to be unfaithful in guarding, maintaining, or fulfilling.

In paragraph 1, the author indicates his or her intention to explain how English Ivy “betrays its poor reputation as a nuisance.” The author then goes on to cite reasons why English Ivy is beneficial. Based on this information, we can infer that English Ivy has a bad reputation, but in the author’s opinion, it does not deserve such a reputation. This means that in this context *betrays* means goes against or fails to remain true to. *Contradicts* is the only answer choice that reflects this meaning, so it is a good definition in this context. Therefore (B) is correct. Although the word *betray* is often used to describe the act of treason, or someone who disloyally *gives away* secrets, this is not the definition used in the passage. This means (A) is incorrect. While *betray* can mean to *reveal* information that should remain secret, this is not the definition used in the passage. Indeed, in this context, if the English Ivy revealed its poor reputation as a nuisance, it would confirm it, not contradict it. This makes (C) incorrect. *Support* means to maintain. This is the opposite meaning of contradict, so (D) is incorrect. *Highlight* means to emphasize. This is the opposite meaning of contradict, so (E) is incorrect.

3) D

Question Type: Inference

In paragraph 1, the author states, “Under the proper conditions, established English Ivy can grow to cover an area of roughly 500 square feet per year. Given that most homes have a roof measuring roughly 2000 square feet, ivy-friendly homeowners can rest assured that their roofs will be completely covered in about four years.” 500 (square feet) multiplied by 4 (years) equals 2000 (square feet). Given that English Ivy can grow to cover an area of roughly 500 square feet per year, and most homes have a roof measuring roughly 2000 square feet, then it makes mathematical sense to figure that English Ivy will indeed have enough time to cover the area of most roofs in 4 years. This means the author does not make a logical mistake in this calculation. This eliminates **option (I)**. While the author’s math checks out correctly, there are other flaws in his or her logic. In paragraph 1, the author states, “Under the proper conditions, established English Ivy can grow to cover an area of roughly 500 square feet per year.” Given that these figures only hold true under the proper conditions, it is wrong to assume that English Ivy will grow at this rate at most homes. After all, many houses may not get sufficient light, rain, or temperatures necessary for English Ivy to grow well. This supports **option (II)**. At the end of paragraph 1, the author states, “When considering growth rates of newly planted ivy, just remember the old adage: First year, it sleeps. Second year, it creeps. Third year, it leaps! For English Ivy, this is especially true.” Using this information, it can be inferred that English Ivy will need up to two years before it begins to grow at a regular pace. The author cites the growth rates for “established” ivy, or ivy that is not newly planted. Using this information, we can infer that newly planted English Ivy will likely take longer than 4 years to cover a 2000-square foot roof. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore (D) is correct.

4) A

Question Type: Vocabulary
deteriorate (*verb*): to make or become worse in quality or character; to disintegrate or wear away.

In paragraph 2, the author writes, “Now, detractors may take this opportunity to remind readers about how invasive English Ivy can be. For what ivy enthusiast hasn’t been cautioned about its ability to burrow holes, fracture windows, and even deteriorate brick?” The author describes how invasive ivy can be by listing ways in which it can be destructive. Based on this information, we can infer that *deteriorate* has a negative, destructive connotation. *Wear away* is the only answer choice that has a destructive connotation, so it is the best definition for *deteriorate*. Therefore (A) is correct. *Shield* means to cover or protect, which is not a negative or destructive action. Since the author uses *deteriorate* in a list of negative actions, we know that (B) is incorrect. *Add to* means to increase or build on, which is not a negative or destructive action. Since the author uses *deteriorate* in a list of negative actions, we know that (C) is incorrect. *Climb on* means to ascend or crawl up. Although this may accurately describe how ivy grows, it does not indicate a way that ivy could be destructive to brick. Therefore (D) is incorrect. *Strengthen* means to make stronger. This is not a negative or destructive action, so (E) is incorrect.

5) C

Question Type: Vocabulary
malevolent (*adjective*): evil, harmful, or injurious.

In paragraph 2, the author writes, “Naysayers take a strange pleasure in spinning yarns about a particularly malevolent strand of ivy—one that slips in through the cracks on a hot summer night, silently strangling homeowners in their sleep.” A plant that wishes to strangle someone is portrayed as bad, so *malevolent* must mean bad or evil. *Virtuous* is the best antonym for evil. Therefore (C) is correct.

correct. *Wary* means cautious. Although one might be wary about something evil, wary is not the opposite of evil. This means **(A)** is incorrect. *Sensitive* means emotional or perceptive. Although these are generally considered positive characteristics, they are not the opposite of evil. This makes **(B)** incorrect. *Injured* means harmed in some way. Although something evil could cause harm, the opposite of evil is not injured. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect. *Willing* means compliant or agreeable. Although this is a positive characteristic, it is not the opposite of evil. This means **(E)** is incorrect.

6) **B**

Question Type: Global

The passage provides a defense of English Ivy's reputation. In paragraph 1, the author notes its benefits, namely that it can provide shade, act as an insulator, and is fast-growing. In paragraph 2, the author argues that those who claim ivy is invasive often take their warnings "to the comical extreme." Overall, the author argues that English Ivy does not deserve its poor reputation as a nuisance. Moreover, the author uses familiar, colloquial language that gives the passage a folksy tone. For example, he or she writes: "When considering growth rates of newly planted ivy, just remember the old adage: First year, it sleeps. Second year, it creeps. Third year, it leaps!" This tone is also evident when the author asks, "But are we to believe such a tale?" Finally, the author seems to address a general audience that includes "building tenants and homeowners," "detractors," "naysayers," as well as "ivy enthusiasts." Based on the content, the colloquial tone, and the general audience of this passage, we can infer that it would most likely be found in a magazine article about gardening. Therefore **(B)** is correct. The folksy, familiar tone and general audience of this passage do not belong in a scholarly journal, so **(A)** is incorrect. The audience of this passage includes many different types of people, and while the tone is familiar, it is not as intimate as one would expect in a personal letter. This eliminates **(C)**. The purpose of the passage is not to identify plants in an objective way, but to defend English Ivy's reputation. This means it would not likely be found on a website identifying plants, so **(D)** is incorrect. Although in paragraph 1 the author does note that English Ivy can act as a "natural insulator, blocking the sun and decreasing air conditioning costs," the focus of the passage is on English Ivy's reputation, not on ways to make a home energy-efficient. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

7) **B**

Question Type: Global

At the beginning of the passage, the author writes, "English Ivy betrays its poor reputation as a nuisance by its unparalleled ability to provide shade." This lets us know that the author intends to defend English Ivy against its poor reputation. He or she then provides several reasons why English Ivy might be considered a desirable plant. In paragraph 2, the author expresses indignation about how English Ivy acquired such a bad reputation, suggesting that "naysayers take a strange pleasure in spinning yarns about a particularly malevolent strand of ivy—one that slips in through the cracks on a hot summer night, silently strangling homeowners in their sleep." Furthermore, the author advises the reader to "be warned" about these detractors of English Ivy, which implies that the author considers their tactics somehow unfair or offensive. The author continues to discuss how detractors will try to scare the reader into believing false accounts of English Ivy that the author states are "rubbish." Based on the displeasure the author expresses about English Ivy's poor reputation and how it is acquired, we can determine that the author's tone is defensive. Therefore **(B)** is correct. The author may indeed be passionate about gardening and English Ivy. However, the author's tone in this passage is not as passionate as it is defensive. In passionate writing, the author would be more sentimental and expressive. Moreover, the author would probably focus on his or her love of English Ivy rather than his or her indignation at its detractors. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. While the author does present several arguments in the passage, the passage as a whole does not restrict itself to formal argument. In argumentative writing, facts are used to support an opinion. However, in this passage, there is a mixture of facts ("Under the proper conditions, established English Ivy can grow to cover an area of roughly 500 square feet per year") and opinions ("Oftentimes, this suggestion is taken to the comical extreme," and "But are we to believe such a tale?"). Furthermore, the author relies on anecdotal, conjectural evidence instead of concrete facts and statistics to support his or her claim that the reader should ignore ivy's detractors. This means the tone is not strictly argumentative. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. While one of the author's secondary purposes is to persuade the reader to agree with him or her, the author does not overtly call the reader to action using language such as *should*, *must*, *needs to*, or *has to*. The author is not explicitly persuasive about what the reader should believe. He or she merely claims that the reader should not listen to those who criticize English Ivy. This means **(D)** is incorrect. The author does not overtly accuse or blame anyone, but rather provides a defense against general "detractors." An accusatory tone is harsher than the author's tone in this passage, so **(E)** is incorrect.