

Reading Comprehension

Vocabulary Development Series

Level 8



Reading Comprehension Workbook

Level 8

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THE TRIPLE

Learn the Key Words

consistent	(kən sis' tənt)	keeping the same course of action; in agreement <i>The police noticed that the crimes followed a <u>consistent</u> pattern.</i>
misjudge	(mis juj')	to arrive at a wrong conclusion; to judge incorrectly <i>It is easy to <u>misjudge</u> distances at night.</i>
persistence	(pər sis' təns)	the will to stick to something; to continue acting the same way <i>After a while, we became annoyed at the salesperson's <u>persistence</u>.</i>
readiness	(red' ē nis)	state of being prepared <i>We worked all day to have the house in <u>readiness</u> for the party.</i>
reflex	(rē' fleks)	an involuntary action <i>When someone claps near your face, your <u>reflex</u> is to blink.</i>
vocation	(vō kā' shən)	occupation; profession <i>Larry had finished college and had not yet decided on a <u>vocation</u>.</i>

Preview:

1. Read the title.
2. Look at the picture.
3. Read the first six paragraphs of the selection.
4. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that

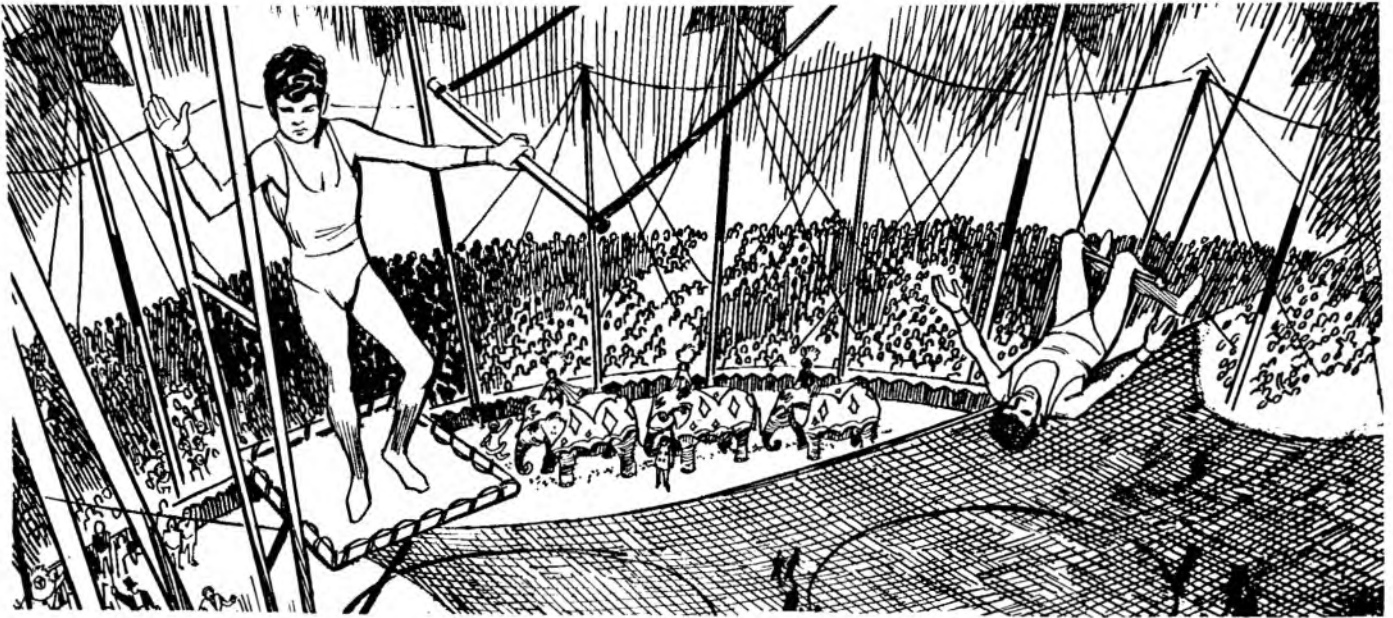
- ___ a. Rico was the "catcher" in the Mendoza family's act.
- ___ b. Rico had already completed a triple.
- ___ c. Rico's timing was off.
- ___ d. Rico was trying to perfect the triple.

Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 4 for the right answer.

Now read the selection.

Read to find out about a true performer and his family.

THE TRAPPE



A successful triple for Rico would mean he would no longer be regarded as a child.

From the moment he had taken hold of the bar this afternoon, Rico's timing had been perfect. Now he checked the tape on his wrists, ignoring the familiar bustle of other circus people moving about below, and looked across to the opposite trapeze where his brother Eduardo waited.

"Ed," he called, sounding more relaxed than he felt, "this time we go for the triple."

Immediately, before Eduardo could answer, the voice of their sister Anita shot up from the ground, warning and scolding.

"You know Papa told you to go easy until he got back and if he finds out you've been trying for triples..."

Changing over to their native Spanish, she let the threats roll rapidly off her tongue.

To Rico's surprise Eduardo cut her short, sounding almost impatient. Eduardo was the "catcher" in the Mendoza family's aerial act. When the rest of them came spinning off

the trapeze, speeding through space, only Eduardo's steady strength and state of constant readiness kept them from flying beyond the edges of the safety net, flying to terrible injury or to death. When Eduardo spoke, even sister Anita had to listen with respect.

"Watch Little Brother make this triple," he said, "before you decide what Papa will think about it."

Rico let the annoying nickname slip right by in his pleasure at Eduardo's expression of confidence. The triple somersault was a difficult feat for any aerialist at any age. To achieve it on a consistent basis was a mark of greatness, the kind of greatness Rico felt was not beyond his reach.

Without another word he began to swing, arching his body to build up the necessary speed until, at exactly the right moment, he let go and soared free, tucking into the first perfect somersault, the second,

the third. Then he was flat out, reaching for Eduardo. Feeling those powerful hands touch his wrists, he tried to close his own hands around the wrists of his brother but their grip did not hold.

"You're still trying too hard," Eduardo called down, as Rico flipped expertly but disgustedly from the net to the floor. "Let's give it another try but this time you concentrate on the flying and let me worry about the catching."

Rico looked up at him, surprised again. In the past, only great persistence on his part had gotten Ed to agree to an occasional try at the triple. Usually, like Anita, Eduardo reminded him all the time that Papa wanted him to go easy. Everybody, it seemed, always wanted him to go easy. Despite his acknowledged talent for the family vocation, he was by far the youngest, the "Little Brother." This time, however, as he climbed to the platform, Anita was silent and no more did he hear about going easy or

about what Papa might say.

In the days following, Rico worked with Eduardo on the triple, and at night he dreamt about it, until every movement was as perfect a reflex as possible. Then it was almost time to go on the road for the season. Papa had returned, asking how they all were and what was new. By now everyone in the family, definitely everyone in the circus, knew that Rico Mendoza was doing a fairly consistent triple but they wanted Rico to be the one to tell Papa.

"There's something I've been working on that I think you ought to see," Rico said.

Papa, with other matters on his mind, just nodded absently and followed his sons to the practice area, but Rico knew his father's full attention would be riveted on him as soon as his hands left that bar. He didn't dare misjudge the timing by a fraction of a second, because if this triple didn't just about knock Papa's eyes out, he wasn't likely to get another chance.

With a last arching swing he went off the bar, over once, twice, three times and straight out to Eduardo's firm, triumphant clasp. He came down to scattered applause from various circus folk who had stopped by to watch, but Papa didn't join in. Instead, he looked Rico up and down as if measuring him for a new pair of spangled tights.

"This," he said finally, "is what you call going easy?"

"Well, Papa," Rico answered carefully, "the more I do it, the easier it gets."

Papa, a strict father who demanded obedience, but also an aerialist who valued

persistence and perfection, threw back his head in a great roar of satisfied laughter. That problem solved, Rico didn't see any reason to hesitate about taking the next step. His vocation was performing and the triple wouldn't be good enough for him until he had performed it before an audience.

"I want to make it part of the act," he told Papa. "Right away, for the new season."

"Rico, Rico," Papa exclaimed, "to do this in practice is one thing but to perform for the public...think of the difficulty, the pressure."

"That's exactly what I am thinking of," Rico replied.

From then until opening night the hours passed swiftly. There was practice, and more practice, broken only by the long trip to the first city on the schedule. Even while traveling, Rico did mental triples, his muscles contracting by reflex as he imagined every movement. He was finding that each goal he achieved became a challenge in its turn. Having won Papa's consent to perform the triple, he now faced the biggest challenge of all.

Opening night was always a miracle as each new circus area went from complete chaos to a state of perfect readiness, from the scuffle and scurry of work crews to the glitter and glory of circus time. The huge audience cheered with excitement. Rico, whose training made him quick to notice if a fellow performer misjudged his time or made a slip, felt like cheering too.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, high above the center ring, the tremendous trapeze talents of the Amazing

Mendozas!"

So the cheers now were for him and his family and they too, went through their routine without a flaw until the whistles and applause quieted for, "...a special announcement, ladies and gentlemen."

Not really listening, Rico heard only parts: "Young Rico Mendoza...first time anywhere...the extremely demanding triple somersault."

For just a moment he was keenly aware of all those eyes watching him, all those voices ready to cheer his success — or groan at his failure. Then he was up and off, his body and mind a single instrument under his complete control. Not until he came spinning out of the last somersault into the strong grip of Eduardo did he hear the crowd cheer.

Afterward there was celebration, laughter and song.

"I wonder, Little Brother," Eduardo joked, "when you'll be wanting to go for four."

"I will need to grow stronger first," Rico answered seriously, expecting to be teased or scolded.

"It is not impossible," Papa said suddenly, astonishing them all. "I have never seen it, and I know I could not do four, but all the same, it is not impossible."

Rico tried to lighten the silence that followed by joking back at Eduardo.

"What I wonder," he said, "is when you're going to stop calling me 'Little Brother'."

"Oh," Ed laughed, "probably about the time you make those four somersaults."

But for the rest of the evening, Rico noticed, everyone was careful to call him by his name.

THE TRIPLE

Preview Answer:
d. Rico was trying to perfect the triple.

COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

1. In the story, the triple was
 - a. a play in baseball.
 - b. three identical children.
 - c. Eduardo, Rico and Anita.
 - d. three complete aerial somersaults.

2. The Mendoza family
 - a. owned the circus.
 - b. were animal trainers.
 - c. ran a concession stand.
 - d. were trapeze artists.

3. Everyone stopped calling Rico "Little Brother" because
 - a. he showed good judgement, skill and maturity.
 - b. he demanded they do so.
 - c. he left the family and the act.
 - d. his strict father told them they should.

4. Papa Mendoza wanted Rico to take it easy because
 - a. he did not want him to get conceited.
 - b. he was concerned about his son's safety.
 - c. he did not want the act to be ruined.
 - d. he did not want his son to become better than he.

5. The first time Ed encouraged his brother to perform a triple, Rico completed three somersaults. Then
 - a. he attempted a fourth.
 - b. he grabbed Ed's hands tightly.
 - c. decided they weren't perfect enough.
 - d. he tried to grab Ed's wrists, but failed.

6. Eduardo's responsibility in the act was
 - a. swinging the bar.
 - b. doing the double.
 - c. catching Rico.
 - d. coaching the rest of the family.

7. The one factor that made performing really different from practicing was
 - a. the pressure of the crowd.
 - b. the circus tent.
 - c. Papa's attention.
 - d. Anita's scolding.

8. Papa's reaction to Rico's accomplishment was
 - a. annoyance, disgust and frustration.
 - b. anger, pride and expectation.
 - c. fear, hate and pride.
 - d. happiness, concern and depression.

9. Another name for this selection might be
 - a. "Papa's Trip."
 - b. "The Big Top."
 - c. "The Biggest Challenge."
 - d. "A Trapeze For Two."

10. This selection is mainly about
 - a. a family working to attain a goal.
 - b. the circus coming to town.
 - c. a strict father and a disobedient son.
 - d. the dangers of the trapeze.

11. *Develop your own sentences using any four key words found in the box on the following page.*

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

Check your answers with the key on page 53.

THE TRIPLE

VOCABULARY CHECK

consistent	misjudge	persistence	readiness	reflex	vocation
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I. Choose the correct key word from the box to complete the following sentences.

1. It is easy to _____ someone by his appearance alone.
2. The doctor hits a certain place on your knee to test your _____.
3. Because of the child's _____, his mother finally allowed him to go.
4. A _____ northeast wind produces perfectly formed, good breaking waves.
5. After high school, most people must decide on a _____.
6. The race cars stood in _____ at the starting line.

II. Your key words are listed in Column A and the definitions for them are listed in Column B. On each line in Column A, write the letter of the correct definition.

Column A

- _____ 1. readiness
 _____ 2. vocation
 _____ 3. persistence
 _____ 4. misjudge
 _____ 5. reflex
 _____ 6. consistent

Column B

- a. to arrive at a wrong conclusion
 b. occupation
 c. state of being prepared
 d. happening the same way each time
 e. the will or desire to stick to a job
 f. an automatic action

Check your answers with the key on page 55.