

TOEFL Reading Practice

Answer vocabulary questions:

Passage 1

The Civil War created feverish manufacturing activity to supply critical material, especially in the Northern states. When the fighting was over, the stage was set for dramatic economic growth. Wartime taxes on production had vanished, and the few taxes that remained leaned heavily on real estate, not on business. The population flow from farm to city increased, and the labor force that it provided was buttressed by millions of recent immigrants. These newcomers were willing to work for low wages in the mills of the North and on the railroads of the Midwest and West.

The federal government's position towards economic expansion was nothing if not accommodating. The government established tariff barriers, provided loans and grants to build a transcontinental railroad, and assumed a studied position of nonintervention in private enterprise. The Social Darwinism of British philosopher Herbert Spencer and American economist William Graham Sumner prevailed. The theory was that business, if left to its own devices, would eliminate the weak and nurture the strong. As business expanded, the rivalry heated up. In the 1880's, five railroads operating between New York and Chicago vied for passengers and freight traffic, and two more were under construction. As a result of the rivalry, the fare between the cities decreased at one point to one dollar. Petroleum companies likewise competed savagely with each other, and many of them failed.

1. The word **feverish** in the passage is closest in meaning to
 - sickly and slow
 - extremely rapid
 - very dangerous
 - unexpected
2. Which of the following is closest in meaning to the word **critical** in the passage?
 - industrial
 - serious
 - crucial
 - impressive
3. The phrase **the stage was set** in the passage is closest in meaning to which of the following?
 - The game was over.
 - The progress continued.
 - The foundation was laid.
 - The direction was clear.
4. The phrase **real estate** in the passage is closest in meaning to
 - tools and machines
 - personal income
 - new enterprises
 - land and buildings

5. Which of the following is closest in meaning to the word **buttressed** in the passage?

- supplemented
- concerned
- restructured
- enlightened

6. The word closest in meaning to **accommodating** in the passage is

- persistent
- indifferent
- balanced
- helpful

7. The word **prevailed** in the passage is closest in meaning to

- influenced
- succeeded
- premiered
- evolved

8. The phrase **left to its own devices** in the passage is closest in meaning to

- forced to do additional work
- allowed to do as it pleased
- made to change its plans
- encouraged to produce more

9. Which of the following is closest in meaning to the word **nurture** in the passage?

- take care of
- pay attention to
- feel sorry for
- watch out for

10. The phrase **vied for** in the passage is closest in meaning to

- competed for
- gained
- searched for
- restricted

11. Which of the following could best be substituted for the word **savagely** in the passage?

- fiercely
- suddenly
- surprisingly
- genuinely