

Reading practice

Read the next passage and answer the questions.

Making Ends Meet

From a *New York Times* book review written by Dorothy Gallagher

- In Key West, Florida, Ehrenreich found a job as a waitress at an inexpensive family restaurant. Her shift ran from 2:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. Salary: \$2.43 an hour plus tips. To find an affordable rent, she had to move 30 miles out of town, a 45-minute commute on a crowded two-lane highway. How did her co-workers manage housing? One waitress shared a room in a \$250 a week flophouse; a cook shared a two-room apartment with three others; another worker lived in a van parked behind a shopping center.
- "There are no secret economies that nourish the poor," Ehrenreich writes. "If you can't put up the two months' rent you need to get an apartment, you end up paying through the nose for a room by the week. If you have only one room, with a hotplate at best, you can't save by cooking up huge stews that can be frozen for the week ahead. You eat hot dogs and the Styrofoam cups of soup that can be microwaved at a convenience store." Without health insurance from work, you risk a small cut becoming infected because you can afford neither a visit to the doctor nor antibiotics.
- In the summer tourist slump, Ehrenreich found her salary with tips dropped from about \$7 an hour to \$5.15. At this rate, the only way to pay her rent was to get a second job. So, for a while she worked 8:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. and then rushed to her regular shift at the first restaurant—a 14-hour day of brutal physical labor, as anyone who has waitressed for a living knows. With such a schedule, she could not, of course, keep her decent housing so far from town. Ehrenreich's new home was an eight-foot-wide trailer parked among others "in a nest of crime," where "desolation rules night and day. . . . There are not exactly people here, but what amounts to canned labor, being preserved between shifts from the heat."
- Moving to Maine, Ehrenreich took two jobs to make ends meet—a weekend job in a nursing home and a full-time job in a house-cleaning service. At Merry Maids, the cleaning service, the economics were as follows: the customer pays the service \$25 an hour per cleaning person; the service pays \$6.65 an hour to each cleaner. "How poor are my co-workers?" Ehrenreich asks. Half-bags of corn chips for lunch; dizziness from malnutrition; a toothache requiring frantic calls to find a free dental clinic; worries about makeshift childcare arrangements because a licensed day-care center at \$90 a week is beyond any cleaner's budget; no one sleeping in a car, but everyone crowded into housing with far too many others, strangers or family; "signs of real difficulty if not actual misery."

1. In general, what information does this passage present?
 - (A) An explanation of wages in different cities
 - (B) Advice about finding jobs
 - (C) Suggestions for saving money
 - (D) A description of living on too little money
2. All of the following characterized Ehrenreich's job in Key West, Florida, EXCEPT
 - (A) working as a waitress
 - (B) making a minimal salary
 - (C) needing 15 minutes to get to work
 - (D) commuting on a crowded highway
3. The word *you* throughout paragraph 2 refers to
 - (A) the reader
 - (B) a poor worker
 - (C) an unemployed person
 - (D) the author
4. The word *misery* in paragraph 4 is closest in meaning to
 - (A) anger
 - (B) poverty
 - (C) suffering
 - (D) pessimism
5. In paragraph 2, the author's primary purpose is
 - (A) to compare and contrast housing options in the United States
 - (B) to urge people to search for higher-paying jobs
 - (C) to inform readers about practices regarding rental payment
 - (D) to explain the causes and effects of living poor
6. The word *desolation* in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to
 - (A) sadness
 - (B) confusion
 - (C) destruction
 - (D) anger
7. Based on the information in paragraph 3, what can be inferred about poor people?
 - (A) They need their homes to protect them from the heat.
 - (B) They do little more than work long hours.
 - (C) They spend most of their time in their homes.
 - (D) They are negatively affected by weather changes.
8. In paragraph 4, how does the author characterize the lives of poor workers?
 - (A) extremely hard
 - (B) completely hopeless
 - (C) somewhat bright
 - (D) rarely demanding

9. Look at the four squares that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the passage. Where would the sentence best fit? Circle the letter that shows the point where you would insert this sentence.

That didn't leave much money for housing.

In Key West, Florida, Ehrenreich found a job as a waitress at an inexpensive family restaurant. Her shift ran from 2:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. Salary: \$2.43 an hour plus tips. A To find an affordable rent, she had to move 30 miles out of town, a 45-minute commute on a crowded two-lane highway. B How did her co-workers manage housing? C One waitress shared a room in a \$250 a week flophouse; a cook shared a two-room apartment with three others; another worker lived in a van parked behind a shopping center.

D "There are no secret economies that nourish the poor," Ehrenreich writes. "If you can't put up the two months' rent you need to get an apartment, you end up paying through the nose for a room by the week."

10. Which of the following best expresses the essential information in this sentence from the passage?

Without health insurance from work, you risk a small cut becoming infected because you can afford neither a visit to the doctor nor antibiotics.

- (A) People without health insurance can only afford to pay for doctor visits.
(B) People who injure themselves at work need antibiotics to ensure their health.
(C) Health risks can occur when poor people are not able to pay for medical treatment.
(D) Medical care is provided so that workers do not have further health problems.

11. An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by circling the THREE answer choices that express the most important ideas in the passage. Some sentences do not belong in the summary because they express ideas that are not presented in the passage or are minor ideas in the passage.

Poor Americans have difficulties making enough money to cover their living expenses.

- (A) As a waitress, Ehrenreich earned \$2.43 plus tips.
(B) Some people have to live in distant or unsafe housing.
(C) People must sometimes work two jobs to make ends meet.
(D) Freezing and microwaving food is an expensive way to eat.
(E) People can't afford medicine, and they have health problems.
(F) Trailer parks are practical housing options for the poor.