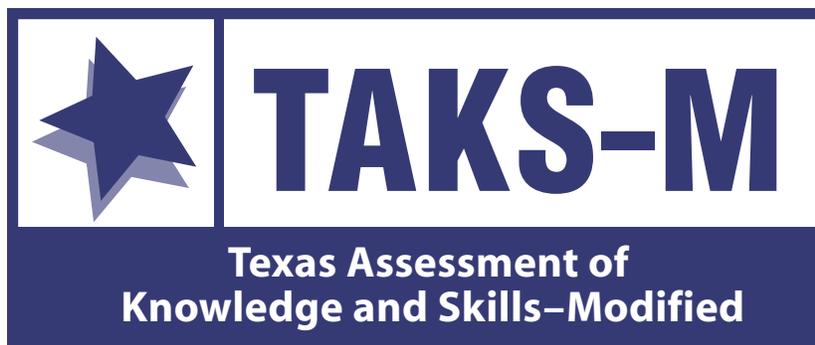


STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_



**GRADE 9  
READING**

**Administered March 2009**



# READING





## A Standing Union

In this selection, the author remembers an experience that took place when he was in the first grade. He was very nervous about going to his new school. A boy named Craig showed him around on his first day, and they have remained friends for many years. Now that the author is about to marry his fiancée Courtney, he reflects on his lasting friendship with Craig. Read the selection and then answer the questions that follow.

# A Standing Union

by Eric Weisman

- 1 I was seven years old, and I knew I was going to hate my first day of school. My mother drove me to the new school. The ride from our house seemed much shorter than it really was. I remember our car climbing the long, winding hill that led to my new school. As I watched the trees pass, I imagined that the car hadn't gone by them. In my mind, I was still back in bed at home.
- 2 My mom knew I was about to cry. She kept moving her hand back and forth between the steering wheel and my knee.
- 3 "Eric, all the kids are going to love you," she said, patting my leg. "Mrs. Smith is so excited to have you in her class."
- 4 I couldn't think of anything to say. I pictured Mrs. Smith forcing me to stand up in front of the class. She would ask me to tell the kids my name and what I liked to do. Then I saw the kids laughing as I broke down in tears. I wouldn't be able to answer. I couldn't even answer my own mother.
- 5 "Honey, it's O.K. to be nervous. Remember that I'll pick you up at 3:15. You don't have to take the bus today."

- 1 Read the sentence below from paragraph 4.

*I couldn't even answer my own mother.*

Which of these conclusions is best supported by this sentence?

- A The narrator did not hear his mother.
- B The narrator is too upset to talk.
- C The narrator is trying to help his mother relax.

- 6 Mom parked the car and held my hand as we walked up to the front of the school. Once inside, I had to walk with the principal and my mother down the long, empty corridor. I had been trying my hardest to hold back the tears. But the classroom was getting too close. I knew it because the principal slowed down and drifted to the right side of the corridor. I felt the tears under my eyes, but I didn't care enough to wipe them away with my arm.
- 7 I remember faces staring at me. I turned around, and my mother was waving good-bye. I guess she thought a quick exit would be the easiest. I was left standing next to my new teacher. She introduced me to the class, but I don't remember anything she said. I thought I heard a few boys laughing. I couldn't blame them because I would have laughed, too.

2 In paragraph 6, the word corridor refers to a —

- F doorway
- G hallway
- H street

8 Then I heard, "It's time for morning recess. Craig, come show Eric around the classroom."

9 The kid named Craig wasn't paying any attention to Mrs. Smith. Instead he was standing across the room, showing his muscles to a group of girls.

10 "The girl who can kiss my arm first gets to be my girlfriend," he told them. They were giggling, looking to see if Mrs. Smith was watching Craig's latest trick.

11 "Go!" Craig yelled.

12 At least six girls ran toward Craig. A girl named Beth won, and Craig seemed disappointed. He had his eyes on a blond girl named Jenny.

13 About this time, Mrs. Smith saw what Craig was doing and said, "Craig, you don't want a time-out, do you?"

14 The word "time-out" got Craig's attention, and he quickly stopped. As he walked toward us, I got a good look at him for the first time. He was short and had blond hair, but I noticed the muscles that bulged from his legs and arms. He reminded me of a miniature marine. His crew cut even had lightning bolts above his ears that the barber had shaved in his hair.

15 "I want you to show Eric around the classroom," Mrs. Smith said.

16 "No problem, Rosemary," he said.

17 "Craig, I warned you about that. You don't want to see Mr. Luther, do you?"

18 "Sorry, Mrs. Smith. Eric, let's go."

**3** In paragraph 13, why does the author use the word "time-out"?

- A** To show that Mrs. Smith is praising Craig
- B** To show that Mrs. Smith is warning Craig
- C** To show that Mrs. Smith is encouraging Craig

**4** From the information in this section, what can the reader conclude about Mr. Luther?

**F** He is another teacher.

**G** He is Craig's father.

**H** He is the principal.

**5** In paragraph 14, why does the author compare Craig to a marine?

**A** To emphasize Craig's talent

**B** To emphasize Craig's appearance

**C** To emphasize Craig's imagination

- 19 I did not want to eat lunch in the school cafeteria. Even though Craig introduced me to all his friends, I was afraid to open my lunch in front of everyone. The six kids at our table dumped their lunches onto the table. It seemed like everyone else's mothers had made perfect sandwiches for their children. I saw sandwiches with just the right amount of peanut butter and jelly. Mothers had cut the crusts off sandwiches and shaped them into triangles. But Craig's lunch was the best of all.
- 20 His mother had given him a cooler filled with two ham sandwiches, chips, cookies, and a Pepsi. I hid my lunch bag in my lap. I didn't want the other kids to see what was in it. I didn't have to unwrap my sandwich to know that the turkey would be hanging out the sides. My mother didn't even use white bread. I was sure she had packed a bruised apple or pear for me along with a juice box. I tried my hardest to prevent the kids from seeing me eat, but one saw me.
- 21 "Your mother doesn't cut the slimy edges off the turkey," the kid said. "That's gross."
- 22 From the corner of my eye, I saw a glob of mustard slide off the turkey and land in my lap. I heard laughter as I rubbed the mustard into my shorts.
- 23 "I'll trade you my sandwich for yours," Craig said, which suddenly ended all laughter. "It's turkey, right?"
- 24 "Yeah," I said. "Thanks."
- 25 A couple of years later, I found out that Craig hates turkey. On Thanksgiving, his mom cooks roast beef for him because he won't eat the turkey. But on that day, he ate my entire sandwich in front of those kids, and they didn't stop looking at him until the last bite was gone.

6 In paragraph 22, why does the author use the word “glob”?

- F To show that the mustard is messy
- G To show that the mustard is yellow
- H To show that the mustard is smelly

**symbolism**—when an author uses objects in a story to stand for ideas

7 What does the turkey sandwich **symbolize** to the narrator?

- A The feeling that he is different
- B The feeling that he is better than others
- C The feeling that he is not lucky

26 For the rest of the school day, Craig was there. At recess, he let me shoot baskets with him. He was the first kid to clap when I finished my math worksheet before anyone else. He also walked me to my mother when the day was over. And so I made it through my first day of school with Craig by my side.

27 I am now 28 years old. It has been roughly 21 years since the day I met Craig. You would think a lot has changed during that time, and in a way, you would be right. Craig and I have grown up together. We were together for Little League, varsity sports, proms, graduations, jobs, and even marriages. We're now men, with real responsibilities and problems that we must face. But when you think about it, nothing has really changed since we were 7.

28 I've come to realize that Craig will always have the qualities he showed on the first day of our friendship: pride, humor, generosity, and loyalty. They will follow him through life like bees following the scent of flowers. However, it's Loyalty that has been our bond. It's what will follow us around throughout our friendship.

**8** What are paragraphs 27 and 28 mainly about?

- F** The narrator and Craig are still close friends.
- G** The narrator and Craig share many problems.
- H** The narrator and Craig play sports together.

**9** In paragraph 28, why does the author capitalize the word "Loyalty"?

- A** To show that he is being humorous
- B** To emphasize its importance
- C** To indicate that it is being repeated in the selection

- 29 In two months I'll be married. My fiancée knows and likes Craig. She often asks me about our relationship.
- 30 "How can you guys talk on the phone two or three times a day?" Courtney will ask. Craig now lives in New York, while I am in Texas. "What can you possibly have to talk about? It's like you two are married."
- 31 I only know how to answer her honestly.
- 32 "I don't know," I'll say. "Stuff, I guess."
- 33 How do you explain to another person something you don't even understand? The truth is, every time he answers the phone, it's as if I'm both 7 and 28. Age and time are irrelevant. And what I know is this: in two months, when I'm standing at the altar about to marry Courtney, Craig will be there, too. He will be standing right beside me.

**10** In paragraph 30, why does the narrator's fiancée compare his relationship with Craig to a married couple's relationship?

- F** To emphasize the years that have passed since they met
- G** To emphasize the amount of time they spend on the phone
- H** To emphasize the distance between their respective homes

**11** In paragraph 33, the author uses the phrase "it's as if I'm both 7 and 28" to emphasize that —

- A** he has not changed
- B** he has become more mature
- C** he wants more friends

**Use the whole story "A Standing Union"  
on pages 6–13 to answer questions 12–15.**

**12** Events in the selection take place in —

- F** the future
- G** the narrator's house
- H** the past and present

**13** Where would this selection be most likely to appear?

- A** In a book featuring stories about friendship
- B** In a newsletter for school principals
- C** In a newspaper article about rude kids

**14** What is one thing that makes the author a credible source for this selection?

- F** He is writing about events that he learned about.
- G** He is writing about events that he experienced himself.
- H** He is writing about events that rarely happen.

**conflict**—the main problem in a story

**15** The narrator's **conflict** is mainly —

- A** with his teacher
- B** with himself
- C** with his mother







## Behind the Wheel at High Noon

This is a story about a girl named Jill. She will turn 16 in a month and wants to get her driver's license. She needs to practice driving because she is having trouble with the standard transmission on her dad's old car. A standard transmission does not shift gears automatically, so she must shift the gears herself while driving. Jill's mom offers to go with her as she practices. Read the story and find out what problems Jill has while driving. Then answer the questions that follow.

# Behind the Wheel at High Noon

by Juanita Havill

1 It is summer, and it is one month before my sixteenth birthday. My driver's license looms like a trophy in a glass case just out of reach. It is a trophy I will never win if I don't get a lot better at driving. I need a whole year to practice driving, but I have only a month. I am desperate to get behind the wheel. A person can only learn so much from watching other people drive.

2 Mom said she would help me practice driving. She is an artist and does illustrations for catalogs. She works at home, so it should be easy for her to take me driving every day. However, I've noticed that her best inspirations always come in the morning and then drag on until noon.

3 "I promise, Jill, I'll make time. We'll go out every morning," Mom says.

4 "Morning" is important—*early* morning. If we wait until nine o'clock, I will be driving in a mobile steam room. The sweat will blind me and turn the steering wheel into a slippery mess.

5 The car I'm learning to drive has a five-speed standard transmission, where I have to shift the gears myself. It also has no air-conditioning! It is the only car my dad ever bought new. That was nine years ago when we lived in Wisconsin, where it stays cool most of the year. By the time I was old enough for my driver's permit, we had moved to Arizona. The car is still in great shape, thanks to my dad, but it still has no air-conditioning. It is a cool-weather car, and Arizona in the summer is not cool!

**16** Why doesn't Jill's car have air-conditioning?

- F** Cars did not have air-conditioning when Jill's car was built.
- G** The air conditioner is broken, and Jill can't afford to fix it.
- H** The car was bought in a state where air-conditioning isn't important.

6 On Monday morning at 7 A.M., I start the car as a hint for Mom. But she is so busy right now that she doesn't even look out the window to the driveway.

7 Honk? No, I can't do that. With my left foot I press down on the clutch. I shift the gear. The car jerks, and then the engine dies. I look up at my mom through the window. Still busy. I practice shifting gears until it gets too hot outside to think. When I go inside, I discover that Mom is now in the middle of an important phone call. So I go watch T.V.

8 Finally Mom comes rushing out of her studio. "Are you ready to go for a short drive?"

9 "Yes! Yes! Yes!" I scream as I grab the keys.

10 Mom doesn't seem to notice that the car has moved a few feet, but she does notice the heat. "Whew, we'd better make this real short today. Half the neighborhood? What do you say?"

11 "But, Mom, how will I ever learn to drive on the freeway? I know I'll have to for my test."

12 "I'll take you on the freeway, Jill, just not today."

**17** Paragraphs 6 and 7 are mainly about Jill —

- A** waiting for her mother to help her learn how to drive
- B** describing what her mother does for a living
- C** imagining how to drive on the freeway

**18** Read the following dictionary entry.

**clutch** \ˈklʌtʃ\ *n*  
**1.** a nest of eggs  
**2.** a lever or a pedal  
**3.** a woman's small handbag

Which definition best matches the use of the word clutch in paragraph 7?

**F** Definition 1

**G** Definition 2

**H** Definition 3

13 By the time I get the car started and back out onto the quiet street in front of the house, my hands have melted onto the roasting steering wheel. I steer onto the street and see Mrs. Henager. She looks as if she is drinking coffee and putting on makeup while driving. Then I do something with the clutch that kills my engine. The car stops in the middle of the road. Mrs. Henager isn't looking, so Mom reaches over and honks the horn. Suddenly Mrs. Henager hits the brakes and drops her coffee mug. I see her face ignite in surprise.

14 Mom jumps out of the car to explain. I slowly open the door and walk toward Mrs. Henager. "I'm really sorry," I tell her, feeling shamed and totally stupid. But even I know you always have to keep your eyes on the road. Every driver's textbook, as well as your instructor, dad, mom, big brother, and grandmother, tells you this. If Mrs. Henager had been paying attention, she would have seen me.

15 She's not at all happy, and I don't blame her. I wouldn't be happy if I had just spilled a drink in my lap. But Mom is good with people, so I think Mrs. Henager might speak to Mom again someday. Mrs. Henager heads back home to change clothes.

**19** In paragraph 13, when Jill sees Mrs. Henager's face "ignite in surprise," it means that Mrs. Henager —

- A** changes her expression suddenly
- B** drops her makeup in her lap
- C** turns red with embarrassment

- 16 Mom pulls the car back into our driveway and wipes the sweat from her forehead. We exchange places and start over. I am still a little shaky, but I keep the engine going and back out. The car jerks a few feet up the road as I shift from first to second gear. After that I shift smoothly into third, and the car is doing what it's supposed to do. I'm driving!
- 17 Soon I notice Mom stiffen her leg as if she is going to put on the brakes. "I see the car, Mom," I say and apply the brakes.
- 18 "O.K. Good. Really, you're doing fine." She reaches over and mops my forehead with a tissue. "It's way too hot."
- 19 "It's not too bad with all the windows down," I say. "At least the air is moving." I don't care. I'm driving. I'm sailing up the road, around the corner, into the sunset—well, not quite, more like into the blazing sun at high noon.
- 20 Almost thirty minutes go by before I turn back to the house. Before we get there, Mom says, "Let's go see if the mail has come. Want to?"
- 21 "Sure." I nod. Then I drive past the house and downshift from third to second as I signal and pull over to the mailboxes. Mom jumps out and grabs the mail.
- 22 "Do you want me to go out on the highway?" I ask. The highway is just a block ahead. If I go straight, I can get on the highway, take the first right, and reach the road that leads to our street.
- 23 "No, just pull into the driveway of the house that's for sale. The Logans have moved, so there are no cars blocking the driveway. We can turn around there."

**20** Why does Mom think it is safe for Jill to pull into the Logans' driveway?

- F** Because no cars are in the way
- G** Because they know the family
- H** Because it is close to the mailboxes

24 I look both ways on the empty street and move to the right toward the Logans' driveway. The driveway is between two brick pillars. I'm turning, and the car keeps moving forward. I don't realize I am still pushing the gas pedal and not the brake.

25 Suddenly Mom yells, "Hit the brakes! Jill, you can't make the turn!"

26 I push my foot to the floor, but I run smack into the pillar in front of me. The engine dies, and I look up with horror at the huge round globe wobbling on top of the pillar.

27 "Oh no!" I scream. "Not on the hood!" In one instant my car's entire life passes before my eyes. I see it shiny as it was the day Dad drove it home. I see him washing it, changing the oil, and checking every funny noise it makes. Then I imagine the glass globe crashing through the hood and smashing the engine. But the globe lands with a thud in the sand three inches from the front bumper. Fear drains from every inch of my body, and I sink back in relief.

**21** What does Jill feel when she thinks the globe will fall on the car?

- A** Anger
- B** Embarrassment
- C** Panic

**22** What is one reason that Jill crashes into the brick pillar near the Logans' driveway?

**F** She is distracted by the other cars on the street.

**G** She doesn't realize that there is something in her way.

**H** She is stepping on the gas pedal instead of the brake.

**23** The author includes paragraph 27 to make the story more —

**A** informative

**B** dramatic

**C** persuasive

28 "Oh my gosh," Mom says. "Are you O.K.? Good grief! Would you look at that?" We both jump out of the car. The bumper has only a small dent. The brick pillar has a scrape on the corner, but the globe looks fine. Luckily, it is made of plastic. We try to place the globe back on the pillar, but it is too tall and we give up.

29 We stand there for a long time. Finally we get back into the car with me in the driver's seat—serious, sad, and shaking. Tears, not sweat, roll down my cheeks. I wipe them with Mom's tissues, and with her encouragement I start the engine. "If you fall off a horse," she says, "and don't break anything or get hurt too bad, then the best thing to do is to get right back on the horse."

30 As far as I can see, there's no serious damage to the car. I drive home slowly and pull carefully into the driveway.

31 We get a ladder, walk to the Logans' house, and put the globe back on top of the pillar. "I think you have a good chance of passing your driver's test, Jill," says Mom. "You've now had a dose of reality—and, believe me, a little fear will actually help you. You're going to pass. I know you will."

32 "Do you think so?"

33 She hugs me.

34 "Thanks for taking me driving. Uh, Mom, can we go tomorrow?"

35 She nods.

36 "Around noon?" I ask, wiping the sweat from my forehead. I can tell from the look she gives me that she knows I'm joking.

**24** Why isn't Mom angry about the accident?

- F** She knows that Jill has learned a valuable lesson.
- G** She knows that the Logans have moved.
- H** She knows that the car is very old.

- 25** In paragraph 29, why does the author use the words “serious, sad, and shaking” to describe Jill?
- A** To show her feelings when she sees the car
  - B** To show her inability to control the steering wheel
  - C** To show her reaction to the car accident

**Use the whole story “Behind the Wheel at High Noon”  
on pages 18–26 to answer questions 26–30.**

- 26** By the end of the story, what can the reader conclude about Jill?
- F** She is determined to continue practicing.
  - G** She is disappointed in her mother’s teaching.
  - H** She is thrilled by the day’s adventure.

**point of view**—whether the story is told by one of the characters or by someone who is not in the story

**27** What does the author’s use of first-person **point of view** do?

- A** Helps the reader understand Mom’s attitude about teaching Jill to drive
- B** Helps the reader understand Jill’s strong desire to get her driver’s license
- C** Helps the reader understand the unexpected things that happen in the story

**28** Which of these is the best plot summary of the story?

- F** Jill’s mother works during the mornings and can only take Jill driving during the heat of the day. Jill’s mother is an artist and makes drawings for catalogs. She often gets her ideas in the morning, which causes Jill to have to wait for her. Once she finally is able to take Jill driving, she does not let her drive on the freeway.
- G** Jill begins learning how to drive when her mother takes her out in the family car. While they are out, Jill causes a neighbor to spill her coffee while driving. Jill’s mother rushes out of the car to apologize to the neighbor, who is not happy with either Jill or her mother. Jill’s mom talks with the neighbor, who then forgives Jill.
- H** Jill is old enough to drive, so she asks her mother to help her learn in preparation for her driver’s test. After waiting patiently for her mother, Jill begins her driving lessons in the heat of the day. After making two mistakes, Jill is upset and nervous. Her mother reassures her that she will do fine if she continues to practice driving.

**theme**—a statement about life that the author communicates in the story

**29** Which of these best states a major **theme** of the story?

- A** *The engine dies, and I look up with horror at the huge round globe wobbling on top of the pillar.*
- B** *"If you fall off a horse . . . and don't break anything or get hurt too bad, then the best thing to do is to get right back on the horse."*
- C** *I can tell from the look she gives me that she knows I'm joking.*

**30** Which word best describes Jill's mother?

- F** Impatient
- G** Supportive
- H** Nervous

BE SURE ALL OF YOUR ANSWERS ARE RECORDED  
ON THE ANSWER DOCUMENT.







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