

Time allocated : 40 minutes

A Tough Decision



Yesterday, I let my best friend, Carla, beat me in a contest for the *Smart Aleck* game show. I hope I did the right thing. It was a tough decision, and I didn't have a lot of time to think about it. Here's what happened.

About a month ago, our principal, Mr. Gaudi, announced that our school had been selected to compete on *Smart Aleck*. Carla and I signed up right away because we both love *Smart Aleck*. We record it every day to watch when we get home. The game is like a trivia quiz. The questions are mostly serious, but there are a few where players have to answer a riddle or give the punch line to a joke. Carla has a good imagination, and I know a lot of history, so we figured we'd be good choices for the team.

A few days after the announcement, Mr. Gaudi held a meeting in his office with everyone interested in being on the show. He reminded us that *Smart Aleck* uses a five-member team. He also said that three more people would be needed as backup in case one of the players got sick or something. Unfortunately, three times that many students had signed up. So Mr. Gaudi said we would have a playoff using practice questions, and the top eight scorers would become the team and the alternates. Everybody agreed that this was a fair way to decide.

Yesterday, all of the hopefuls gathered in the cafeteria after school. We drew numbers to decide the starting lineup and took our places. Mr. Gaudi acted as the moderator (which was sort of funny because he doesn't look anything like Bob Jansen, the real host of *Smart Aleck*.) After a couple of hours, all the places on the team were set except one. Carla and I were tied for that last spot. We had to hold a one-on-one competition between the two of us. The winner would be on the team and the loser would be an alternate.

Midway through our two-person runoff, I was starting to pull ahead. Then I saw the look on Carla's face. I hesitated for a second but knew what I had to do. As much as I wanted to be a contestant on *Smart Aleck*, Carla wanted it even more. So, starting with my next question, I held back and let Carla win, just by a little bit. Her expression as she realized she would be on the show made up for my not being on the team. And since I will go as an alternate, I'll still have the fun of seeing the show up close.

Was I cheating by not trying as hard as I could? I don't think so. No one noticed, and Carla and I didn't plan it. It won't hurt the team because Carla will be a very good competitor on the real show. I think that making my best friend happy was the right thing to do.

1. What is the main conflict in this passage?
 - A) The narrator is accused of cheating after she lets her friend win a contest.
 - B) Too many students sign up to be contestants on a game show.
 - C) The narrator has to decide whether to beat her best friend in a contest.
 - D) The principal and students disagree about choosing a game show team.

2. What was the result of the meeting in Mr. Gaudi's office?
 - A) The students prepared for the game show by answering special practice questions.
 - B) Mr. Gaudi decided to hold a playoff to choose the team for the game show.
 - C) The narrator and her friend Carla both signed up to be on *Smart Aleck*.
 - D) Mr. Gaudi decided that the *Smart Aleck* team would have five members and three alternates.

3. How are Carla and the narrator in this passage alike?
 - A) Each goes straight home after school to watch TV.
 - B) Both are good at making up jokes.
 - C) Each is willing to make sacrifices for the other.
 - D) Both are well qualified to be on the *Smart Aleck*.

4. The passage says, "Carla will be a very good *competitor* on the real show." What is the meaning of the word *competitor*?
 - A) a person who competes
 - B) not competing
 - C) a place where teams compete
 - D) before competing

5. What happened after the students learned that too many kids wanted to participate?
 - A) The students gathered in the cafeteria for a playoff.
 - B) All interested students met in Mr. Gaudi's office.
 - C) The school was selected to compete on *Smart Aleck*.
 - D) The narrator and Carla signed up for the game show.

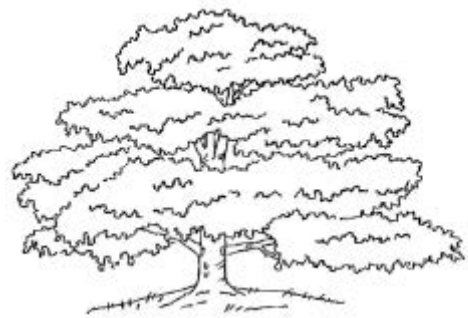
6. Which detail sentence would have to be omitted if this passage were rewritten from Carla's point of view?
 - A) We figured we'd be good choices for the team.
 - B) I hope I did the right thing.
 - C) Everybody agreed that this was a fair way to decide.
 - D) All the places on the team were set except one.

Where Have All the Chestnuts Gone?

Little more than a century ago, the American chestnut was one of the most important trees in the United States. It was also one of the most beautiful. This tree once made up 25 percent of the forests in the East. It covered millions of acres as far inland as Illinois. Today, it has almost vanished from the landscape.

Before 1900, there were so many American chestnuts that people said a squirrel could travel from Maine to Georgia by jumping from one to another without ever touching the ground. When chestnuts flowered in the spring, the white blossoms looked like snow on the mountains. These lovely trees grew large—up to 100 feet tall and four feet in diameter. Just one tree could yield enough boards to fill a railroad car.

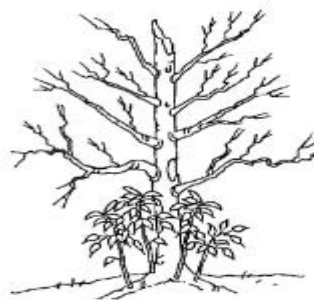
Entire communities depended on the chestnut for daily life and as a source of income. Its wood was light, strong, easy to work with and rot-resistant. So it was used for everything from houses to musical instruments. Native American medicine and folk remedies were made with the bark, leaves and other parts of the tree. The bark was also used for tanning leather. The nuts made good food for people, livestock and wildlife. They were also gathered and sold as a cash crop—again, filling up train cars headed for the cities. (For many years, roasted chestnuts were a tasty winter treat during the holidays). The branches of the chestnut provided welcome shade in the summer. It was a marvelous tree.



Yes, *it was*. In the early 1900s, people began to notice that the trees were dying. A fungus had arrived from Asia on a different kind of chestnut tree. It infected mature

American chestnuts, which had no immunity to the disease. The chestnut blight spread so fast that huge numbers of trees were killed before anyone fully realized what was happening.

The American chestnut is not extinct. The fungus does not kill the roots, which can still send up sprouts. However, as the sprouts grow, they too become infected and die back. Thus, the trees can never grow as large as they once did. Mature American chestnut trees are extremely rare.



Still, all hope is not lost. Scientists are working to find a way to help the trees resist the fungus. Several national groups support this research. They also encourage the planting of American chestnuts so there will be plenty of trees still around when the blight is eventually conquered.

Someday maybe people will once again see the "spring snow" of chestnut blossoms in the mountains. And squirrels will resume their treetop journeys from Maine to Georgia.

7. What is the main idea of this article?

- A. Chestnut trees may someday be saved by the efforts of researchers and others.
- B. The American chestnut was struck by a powerful and fast-spreading fungus.
- C. Chestnut trees flourished from Maine to Georgia and from the East Coast to Illinois.
- D. The American chestnut was a beautiful and important tree that is now almost gone.

8. Comparing the two pictures in this article is most useful in helping the reader to-
- A. visualize what an American chestnut looked like before and after the blight.
 - B. estimate how much shade a mature American chestnut could provide.
 - C. understand why American chestnut trees were infected by the blight.
 - D. explain how a blighted American chestnut sends up new sprouts
9. What most likely happened as a result of the American chestnut blight?
- A. Native Americans stopped using tree bark and leaves in folk medicines.
 - B. Communities that relied on chestnut trees suffered great hardships.
 - C. Other kinds of chestnut trees in the United States also began dying.
 - D. Landowners planted more American chestnut trees than in earlier years.
10. Which sentence from the article states an opinion?
- A. For many years, roasted chestnuts were a tasty winter treat during the holidays.
 - B. Just one tree could yield enough boards to fill a railroad car.
 - C. Entire communities depended on the chestnut for daily life and as a source of income.
 - D. Its wood was light, strong, easy to work with and rot-resistant.
11. Which detail from the article supports the idea that American chestnuts often grew close together?
- A. The forests covered millions of acres.
 - B. Some trees measured four feet in diameter.
 - C. Squirrels could jump from one tree to another.
 - D. The trees were good for shade in the summer.
12. The author organized the information in this article mainly by-
- A. comparing life before and after the blight.
 - B. tracing the spread of the chestnut blight from Asia to the United States.
 - C. identifying the causes and effects of the chestnut blight.
 - D. describing events in chronological order.

At the Aquarium

Serene the silver fishes glide,
Stern-lipped, and pale, and wonder-eyed!
As through the aged deeps of ocean,
They glide with wan and wavy motion.
They have no pathway where they go, 5
They flow like water to and fro.
They watch with never winking eyes,
They watch with staring, cold surprise,
The level people in the air,
The people peering, peering there: 10
Who wander also to and fro,
And know not why or where they go,
Yet have a wonder in their eyes,
Sometimes a pale and cold surprise.

-Max Eastman

In March

On a soaked fence-post a little blue-backed bird,
Opening her sweet throat, has stirred
A million music-ripples in the air
That curl and circle everywhere.
They break not shallow at my ear, 5
But quiver far within. Warm days are near!

-Max Eastman

13. Between lines 6 and 8 in "At the Aquarium," the point of view changes from watching fish to-

- A. staring at the water.
- B. watching people.
- C. staring in a mirror.
- D. watching stars.

14. In "At the Aquarium," what does the speaker suggest about people and fish?

- A. They can never truly understand each other.
- B. People sometimes behave as aimlessly as fish.
- C. Fish and people are both suited to their environments.
- D. People are more interesting to watch.

15. In the second poem, the poet compares the bird's song to-

- A. a warm day.
- B. bright colors.
- C. the bird herself.
- D. moving water.

16. What is the second poem mostly about?
- A. the need for fences
 - B. a million sounds
 - C. the coming of spring
 - D. a broken heart
17. Which line includes an example of alliteration?
- A. Serene the silver fishes glide,
 - B. They have no pathway where they go,
 - C. The level people in the air,
 - D. That curl and circle everywhere.
18. What do these two poems have in common?
- A. They use similar images to express ideas.
 - B. They convey the same mood.
 - C. They use the same rhyming pattern.
 - D. They are both examples of free verse.

A Story of Hope

By 1843, English author Charles Dickens had already written eight novels, but he was broke. He needed money to support his family. So he dashed off a slim volume called *A Christmas Carol*. It told the story of a man named Ebenezer Scrooge. The first 6,000 copies of the book sold out in a week. But even this early success could not have predicted the life Scrooge would go on to lead. At the time, motion pictures had not yet been invented. But Ebenezer Scrooge would one day become a film and stage star.



A scene from A Christmas Carol

Never out of point in 165 years, *A Christmas Carol* has inspired countless stage versions. The first play was overseen by Dickens himself in 1844. The first two movie versions were silent films in 1901 and 1908. Since then, the story has been remade more than 60 times for television and cinema. In fact, many people know the story without ever having read the book.

What makes this tale so appealing? Audiences have always loved a good plot, a good villain and the triumph of right over wrong. *A Christmas Carol* offers all three.

Ebenezer Scrooge is a terrific villain. A heartless miser, he lives alone in a dreary house. In the opening scenes, he is harsh with his clerk and turns away his only living relative. When asked for money to help the needy, he points out that his taxes already pay for workhouses. (These were grim places where the homeless of the time were sent). As Scrooge sits down to his evening meal, the ghost of his late partner appears. Jacob Marley tells Scrooge that he is on the path to ruin. But he has the chance to turn his life around.

During the night, Scrooge is visited by three spirits. The first reveals scenes from Scrooge's youth that led to his current state. The second takes him to the homes of his clerk and his nephew. Here Scrooge sees that people can be happy without a lot of money.

The spirit also shows him the desperate poor people of London, whose lives he has dismissed so coldly. The final spirit shows Scrooge what will become of him if he continues to live as he has. He will die alone, and no one will care. At last the message sinks in, and Scrooge repents. He becomes a new person. He is generous and caring to all around him, especially to his clerk's sickly son, Tiny Tim.

Over the years, many thespians have played the role of Scrooge. Who wouldn't enjoy playing such a character? Actors as varied as Shakespearean player Sir Derek Jacobi, *Star Trek* cast member Patrick Stewart and cartoon character Mister Magoo have all played Ebenezer.

Every year, many thousands of people tune in to watch *A Christmas Carol* once again. Why? They may be touched by its lessons on the true meanings of wealth and happiness. They may enjoy the special effects, or watching every year may be just a habit. The answer most likely lies in the unforgettable Ebenezer Scrooge, both villain and hero. Viewers never seem to grow tired of the old miser and his dramatic message of hope and change.

19. What is the main idea of this passage?

- A. Charles Dickens needed money for his family.
- B. Many who have not read *A Christmas Carol* still know the story.
- C. *A Christmas Carol* is a story set in England.
- D. The story of Ebenezer Scrooge has become popular on screen and stage.

20. Which detail is not essential to the main idea and could have been left out?

- A. The book has never been out of print in 165 years.
- B. Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*
- C. The first play was overseen by Dickens himself in 1844.
- D. Every year, thousands of people watch *A Christmas Carol* again.

21. The use of the phrase *dashed off* in the third sentence of the passage suggests that Dickens-

- A. destroyed the book.
- B. ran home to start writing.
- C. wrote the book in a hurry.
- D. had poor handwriting.

22. According to this passage, what did Ebenezer Scrooge do last?

- A. He visited the home of his nephew.
- B. He saw some poor people living in London.
- C. He became generous and caring.
- D. He received a warning from Jacob Marley.

23. Which detail best supports the idea that Charles Dickens was a popular writer before he wrote *A Christmas Carol*?

- A. He staged a play based on the book.
- B. The book sold 6,000 copies in a week.
- C. He is described as the "English author".
- D. The book has never gone out of print.

24. The passage says, "Over the years, many *thespians* have played the role of Scrooge". What are *thespians*?
- A. actors
B. evil villains
C. writers
D. lonely people
25. Which is the best summary of this passage?
- A. Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843. He needed money to support his family.
B. Ebenezer Scrooge is the main character in Charles Dickens's book *A Christmas Carol*. The story has been remade many times for stage and screen.
C. Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* when his family needed money. The book sold out in a week and has never been out of print.
D. People love *A Christmas Carol* because of its colorful characters. The movie has been remade more than 60 times.

The Silver Mouse

Once upon a time on his way to playground, a boy named Gregory caught a tiny silver-colored mouse outside his apartment building. While he was pondering what to do with it, the mouse spoke to him. "Oh, most benevolent human," it pleaded, "please do not hurt me. I am no ordinary mouse. If you release me, I can be of great service to you."

Gregory did not see how a talking mouse could help him. But the creature's anxious look persuaded him to let it go anyway. He set the mouse unharmed on the sidewalk and started toward the corner.

"Wait," called the mouse, "don't you want to ask for something?" Gregory thought for a moment and said, "How about a high-definition TV?" He never believed for a minute that the mouse could fulfill such a request. But when he got home after his basketball game, he found his mother in a state of excitement. There in the living room in a carton labeled "Silvermouse Enterprises" was a 42-inch HD television.

When Gregory explained to his astonished mother what had happened, she couldn't believe her ears. "You had a magic mouse under your thumb and all you asked for was a TV?" she exclaimed. "Why, you could have asked for a house! Go find the mouse and ask for a house. I want a really big house in the suburbs."

Although it seemed like a lot to ask for, Gregory reluctantly went outside. Standing in the same place as before, he chanted, "*Oh, Silver Mouse, Silver Mouse, my mother wants you to help us out.*" Gregory heard a scurrying sound, and the mouse appeared. "Did you like the TV?" Gregory said that the television was far better than he had expected. Then, somewhat embarrassed, he relayed his mother's wish.

"She shall have her house immediately," declared the mouse.

Sure enough, Gregory returned home to find his mother oohing and aching at pictures of a fancy new house. Gregory wasn't convinced he wanted to live in the suburbs, but he said nothing. His mother seemed so delighted that he couldn't bear to disappoint her. However, as they drove to their new neighborhood the next day, he was already starting to miss his buddies. There were no basketball hoops anywhere.

After about a month in their new house, Gregory's mother started to complain that the house was too hard to take care of. "Go tell that mouse we need a maid, a cook and a gardener," she ordered. Gregory protested, but his mother insisted.

So that Saturday, he took the train into the city. Walking through his old neighborhood, he gazed wistfully at the kids playing basketball in the park. When he reached his old building, he chanted, "Oh, Silver Mouse, Silver Mouse, my mother wants you to help us out." He heard a scurrying sound, and the mouse appeared.

"Let me guess," said the mouse. "Your mother isn't satisfied with her house." Hanging his head, Gregory admitted that his mother now wanted servants. "She shall have them immediately," declared the mouse. Then it disappeared through the fence.

Gregory made the long trip home and discovered that, once again, the mouse had delivered on its promise.

Several months went by before Gregory's mother again grew discontent. "The weather around here is terrible," she grumbled. "I want a new climate that is never too hot, too cold, too wet or too dry. Better yet, I want to be in charge of the weather. Then I can change conditions to suit my mood. Go and tell the rodent of my wishes."

Gregory sighed and headed into the city once again. He chanted, "Oh, Silver Mouse, Silver Mouse my mother wants you to help us out."

With a scurrying sound, the mouse appeared. "What now?" asked the mouse. When Gregory told him, the mouse replied, "She shall have her climate change immediately."

In the very next moment, a yellow taxicab pulled up at the curb. Gregory's mother was in the back seat. The driver unloaded a large number of boxes and suitcases onto the sidewalk. As he drove away, the mouse climbed atop the mountain of luggage and addressed Gregory's mother.

"Too bad for you," it scolded. "You could have had anything within reason. But instead, your greediness has returned you to where you started. I certainly hope you enjoy city weather!"

As the mouse disappeared through the fence, Gregory and his mother started to lug their belongings up the stairs. Upon entering their old apartment, Gregory smiled to himself. The HD television was gone, but there in the middle of the carpet were a brand new basketball and a pair of the latest basketball shoes. Gregory never saw the silver mouse again.

26. "The Silver Mouse" is most like what kind of literature?

- A. essay
- B. science fiction
- C. folktale
- D. biography

27. Why did Gregory let the mouse go at the beginning?

- A. He felt sorry for it.
- B. The mouse bit him.
- C. He was in a hurry.
- D. The mouse granted his wish.

28. That Gregory had the mouse "under his thumb" means he-

- A. gave the mouse a thumbs-up sign.
- B. caught the mouse with his thumb.
- C. had control of the mouse.
- D. squeezed the mouse in his hand.

29. Why was Gregory reluctant to tell the mouse his mother's requests?

- A. He was afraid his friends would see him talking to a mouse.
- B. He believed that she was asking for too much.
- C. He thought the mouse might not respond.
- D. He did not want to move out of the neighborhood.

30. As the story goes along, how can you tell that the mouse is losing patience?
- A. It argues with Gregory about his mother's wishes.
 - B. It takes longer to arrive each time Gregory calls.
 - C. The look on its face shows how it feels.
 - D. It sounds more annoyed each time it appears.
31. Which detail is the best clue that this story takes place in the very recent past?
- A. a high-definition TV
 - B. the silver mouse
 - C. a playground
 - D. boxes and suitcases
32. Which saying best expresses a theme of this story?
- A. Getting up early makes a man wise.
 - B. Make the best of what you've got.
 - C. Home is where you hang your hat.
 - D. A small leak will sink a great ship.

Passage 1: So You Want to Donate Blood

Why Donating Blood Is Important

Did you know that every two seconds in America, someone in a hospital needs blood? There are several reasons for needing blood. People get in an accident, have an operation or develop certain kinds of diseases. If they cannot get a transfusion, they may get sicker or even die. Donating blood saves lives!

Who, Where and How

Almost anyone can donate blood. According to the American Red Cross, donors must be at least 17 years old (16 in some states). They must weigh at least 110 pounds. They must be healthy. They must not have given blood in the last eight weeks.

Donating blood is very safe for most people. To be sure it is safe for you, a nurse or medical person will start by asking some questions. Then he or she will check your temperature and blood pressure and test a drop of your blood.

Donating blood is simple. To start with, you have to find a blood donation center or blood drive. The Red Cross has web sites that list places and times to give blood. Most towns and cities post announcements about upcoming blood drives.

At most blood drives, you start by signing in and getting a number. You go through the medical check-in and then wait your turn. When your number is called, you go and sit or lie on a cot with your arm on a special support. Then a phlebotomist, whose specialty is collecting blood, puts a rubber strap around your arm and gives you a rubber ball to squeeze. (This is to make your veins stand out so they are easier to find.) The person slips a needle into a vein and then loosens the band. This allows your blood to flow freely through the needle. From there it goes into a tube and into a collection bag. After about ten minutes, the person disconnects the bag and puts a bandage on your arm. At this point, you might feel a little light-headed. When you are ready, a volunteer walks you over to a table for some juice and snacks like cookies, pretzels or raisins. It is especially important to drink lots of liquid to replace what you just gave away. The snacks may seem like the best thing about donating blood. But the real best thing is knowing that your pint of blood may save someone's life.

Where Does Donated Blood Go?

You've probably heard of "blood banks". These are special places where blood is stored until it is needed. Blood must be stored at exactly the right temperature. It must also be handled very carefully to prevent infections. The blood banks test each donated unit to be sure it is free from viruses and other problems. Then they separate the blood into three parts: red cells (which can be kept for up to 42 days), plasma (one year) and platelets (five days). This means that each unit could help up to three people.

Most hospitals keep a supply of blood on hand. But they can also contact the blood centers 24 hours a day if they run out or need a certain type. Especially when the needed type is rare, the centers contact one another to find a source. A computer system is used to keep track of the national blood supply. Hospitals use more than 29 million units of blood every year.

Never Too Young to Help

Even those who are too young to donate blood themselves can still help. Most blood drives need volunteers to put up posters. They need people to give out cookies and juice and even keep donors company while they wait. Young people can also tell their parents and other adults how blood donation works and how important it is.

Passage 2: Student Council Holds Blood Drive

The Westwood Middle School Student Council has decided to hold a blood drive and you can help.

HELP WITH THE BLOOD DRIVE!

The student Council is holding a blood drive for teachers, parents and townspeople. We need everyone's help to make this drive a success. That includes you!

Our goal is to collect 50 units of blood. That means we need to have at least 65 people come to the drive.

Pick up information brochures from the office or get them from any Student Council member. Pass them out to any adults you know. Even your older siblings and their friends can donate if they are healthy and at least 17 years old.

The blood drive will take place on Tuesday, October 21, from 3:00 to 6:00 PM in the cafeteria. Free babysitting for donors' children will be provided during those hours.

How You Can Help

There are lots of ways to help. The most important is to find donors, so talk to people!

Here are some other things you can do:

1. Put up posters around town.
2. Make cookies for snacks.
3. Plan games and other entertainment for the babysitting shift.
4. Volunteer for a babysitting shift.
5. Greet donors at the school entrance and tell them where the cafeteria is.
6. Visit with donors while they wait.
7. Make "Thank You" cards to give to everyone who donates.

Remember - every pint of blood can help save as many as three lives!

33. Passage 1 says, "If they cannot get a *transfusion*, they may get sicker or even die." The word *transfusion* means-

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| A. "medical attention" | B. "transportation to a hospital" |
| C. "the name of a doctor" | D. "a transfer of blood" |

34. Under which heading in Passage 1 should you look for information about how blood banks store pints of blood?
- A. **Why Donating Blood Is Important** B. **Who, Where and How**
C. **Where Does Donated Blood Go?** D. **Never Too Young to Help**
35. When giving blood, what is the effect of tightening a rubber strap around a blood donor's arm?
- A. Blood flows freely into the collection bag B. The donor feels light-headed.
C. Blood vessels in the donor's arm stand out. D. The donor is able to squeeze a rubber ball.
36. The main purpose of Passage 2 is to-
- A. help students stay healthy.
B. persuade students to help with the blood drive.
C. tell an entertaining story about a school blood drive.
D. give information about donating blood.
37. If you were trying to recruit donors for a blood drive at your school, reading Passage 1 would help you most by-
- A. supplying information to help you answer questions.
B. explaining where to find a blood bank.
C. suggesting ways to entertain the donors' children.
D. identifying the best kind of snacks to make for the donors.
38. Passage 2 mentions volunteering for "a babysitting *shift*". What meaning of the word *shift* best fits in this sentence?
- A. a change from one place to another B. a straight, loose-fitting dress
C. a handle used to change gears in a car or truck. D. A person's scheduled period of work.
39. The Student Council's goal is to collect 50 units of blood. What is the most likely reason they want 65 people to come to the drive?
- A. Some of the donors might feel well after giving their blood.
B. Some people do not like the idea of giving blood.
C. Some blood might be lost or spilled on the way to the hospital.
D. Some people who show up may not be qualified to give blood.
40. How do these two passages compare as sources of information?
- A. Both identify ways that young people can help with blood drives.
B. The information in Passage 1 is more useful to students.
C. Both give detailed information about the blood donation process.
D. Passage 2 tries harder to encourage people to give blood.

End of Test