"The Red-headed League" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Selection Test A

Critical Reading Identify the letter of the choice that best answers the question.

1. Where does “The Red-headed League” take place?
   A. New York City
   B. London
   C. Paris
   D. Pennsylvania

2. Which of the following correctly describes the protagonist in a literary work?
   A. the author’s choice of language
   B. the main character
   C. the work’s narrator
   D. the most colorful character

3. In “The Red-headed League,” which of these characters turns out to be John Clay?
   A. Jabez Wilson
   B. Dr. Watson
   C. Vincent Spaulding
   D. Sherlock Holmes

4. In “The Red-headed League,” why was the League ended?
   A. Membership declined to very low levels.
   B. The League had financial problems.
   C. William Morris escaped with the League’s money.
   D. The bank robbers had completed their tunnel.

5. To better understand different characters in a story, which of the following is MOST helpful for a reader to do?
   A. restate the things they say to themselves
   B. compare them to characters in real life
   C. imagine what they would be like if they were younger
   D. compare and contrast their actions and personalities

6. In “The Red-headed League,” why does Dr. Watson like working with Sherlock Holmes?
   A. He wants to become a detective.
   B. He is retired and has little else to do.
   C. Holmes’s unusual cases interest him.
   D. He shares Holmes’s love of music.
7. In “The Red-headed League,” who is the antagonist?
   A. Mr. Merryweather  
   B. Jabez Wilson  
   C. John Clay  
   D. Peter Jones

8. Why does Holmes put special emphasis on the knees of the trousers worn by the pawnbroker’s assistant?
   A. He wishes to draw attention to the assistant’s low wages.  
   B. He wants to emphasize how ordinary the assistant’s clothes are.  
   C. He suspects that the assistant has been on his knees digging a tunnel.  
   D. He is afraid to look the assistant directly in the face.

9. Why is Wilson interested in becoming a member of the League in “The Red-headed League”?
   A. Members of the League might become customers of his shop.  
   B. Membership will bring Wilson prestige and social position.  
   C. Business is slow, and Wilson can use the extra money.  
   D. Wilson is lazy and wants an easy job with a high salary.

10. How does Holmes solve the mystery in “The Red-headed League”?
    A. carefully and scientifically  
    B. playfully  
    C. cheerlessly  
    D. eagerly and enthusiastically

11. Suspense is the reader’s feeling of tension or uncertainty about how events in a story will turn out. Which of the following details increases suspense in “The Red-headed League”?
    A. The climax of the story occurs on a Saturday.  
    B. Holmes asks Watson to bring along his army revolver.  
    C. Mr. Merryweather joins the group traveling to the Square.  
    D. John Clay is a young man without much experience.

12. Which identifies the protagonist vs. the antagonist in “The Red-headed League”?
    A. Peter Jones against John Clay  
    B. Sherlock Holmes against John Clay  
    C. Mr. Merryweather against John Clay  
    D. Sherlock Holmes against Jabez Wilson
Vocabulary and Grammar

13. If you consider a situation vexing, how are you likely to feel?
   A. amused
   B. annoyed
   C. grateful
   D. impressed

14. Which of the following is the best synonym for formidable?
   A. interesting
   B. careful
   C. small
   D. strong

15. Where in the following sentence should you place a comma?
   After several rejections from publishers Conan Doyle sold A Study in Scarlet in 1887.
   A. after rejections
   B. after After
   C. after sold
   D. after publishers

Essay

16. In “The Red-headed League,” Holmes tells Watson, “My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplace of existence.” In an essay, explain how Holmes, as the protagonist of the story, does not lead a “commonplace,” or ordinary, life. Also, explain why he has appealed to millions of readers. Use at least two examples from the text to support your main ideas.

17. Because Watson narrates “The Red-headed League,” the audience acquires a unique insight into how Watson sees himself. In an essay, describe Watson as he presents himself to the reader. Use at least two examples from the text for support.

18. Thinking About the Big Question: Do heroes have responsibilities? As the protagonist who solves the mystery and thwarts a criminal plot in “The Red-headed League,” Sherlock Holmes is a hero. Does Sherlock Holmes take on the responsibility of solving the mystery to make society better and safer? Or does Sherlock Holmes take on the responsibility of solving the mystery to make himself more important? In an essay, tell why you think Holmes takes on responsibility. Support your main ideas with specific references to the story.