

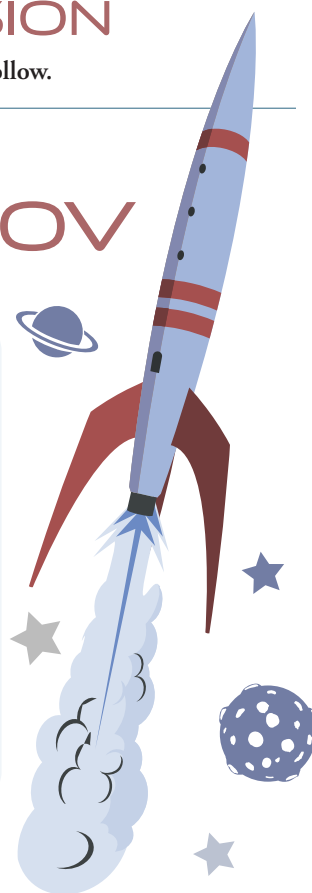
EXTENDED READING COMPREHENSION

Read this adaptation of the final chapters of Isaac Asimov's story "Youth." Then answer the questions that follow.

EXCERPT ADAPTED FROM "YOUTH" BY ISAAC ASIMOV

THE STORY TAKES PLACE on the large country estate of a wealthy Industrialist and his wife. An Astronomer is visiting the estate with his son, hoping to convince the Industrialist to support an interplanetary trade alliance with an alien world. They are expecting a group of these aliens, who communicate **telepathically**, to arrive today. However, the Industrialist is skeptical of brokering any agreement with aliens. He fears that they are hiding their true intentions to invade and conquer the planet. The two have been discussing a long-ago time, "Beforethewars," before atomic bombs nearly destroyed the world.

Meanwhile, the Industrialist's son, Red, and the Astronomer's son, Slim, found two small, strange animals that morning and put them in a cage in the barn, unbeknownst to their parents. The boys have hatched a plan to use the strange creatures in a circus act. After overhearing their fathers' conversation, the boys now realize that the "animals" are actually the alien visitors that their fathers were expecting. The aliens' spaceship crash-landed during the night, killing all but these two, the Explorer and the Merchant. Fearing that their parents will be angry with them for caging the aliens, the boys contemplate what to do next.



CHAPTER IX.

- 1 It was different, looking at them as though they were "people." As animals, they had been interesting; as "people," horrible. Their eyes, which were neutral little objects before, now seemed to watch them with active **malevolence**.
- 2 "They're making noises," said Slim, in a whisper which was barely audible.
- 3 "I guess they're talking or something," said Red. Funny that those noises which they had heard before had not had significance earlier. He was making no move toward them. Neither was Slim.
- 4 The canvas was off the cage, but they were just watching. The ground meat they'd offered as food hadn't been touched.
- 5 Slim said, "Aren't you going to do something?"
- 6 "Aren't you?"
- 7 "You found them."
- 8 "It's your turn, now."
- 9 "No, it isn't. You found them. It's your fault, the whole thing. I was watching."
- 10 "You joined in, Slim. You know you did."
- 11 "I don't care. You found them, and that's what I'll say when they come here looking for us."
- 12 Red said, "All right for you." But the thought of the consequences inspired him anyway, and he reached for the cage door.
- 13 Slim said, "Wait!"
- 14 Red was glad to. He said, "Now what's biting you?"
- 15 "One of them's got something on him that looks like it might be iron or something."
- 16 "Where?"
- 17 "Right there. I saw it before but I thought it was just part of him. But if he's 'people,' maybe it's a disintegrator gun."
- 18 "What's that?" asked Red.
- 19 "I read about it in the books from Beforethewars." Slim responded. "Mostly people with spaceships have disintegrator guns. They point them at you, and you get disintegrated."
- 20 "They didn't point it at us till now," pointed out Red, with his heart not quite in it.
- 21 "I don't care," said Slim. "I'm not hanging around here and getting disintegrated. I'm getting my father."
- 22 "Cowardy-cat. Yellow cowardy-cat."
- 23 "I don't care. You can call all the names you want, but if you bother them now you'll get disintegrated. You wait and see, and it'll be all your fault."

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- 24 Slim made for the narrow spiral stairs that led to the main floor of the barn, stopped at its head, then backed away.
- 25 Red's mother was coming up the stairs, panting a little with the exertion and smiling a tight smile for the benefit of Slim in his capacity as guest.
- 26 "Red! You, Red! Are you up there? Now don't try to hide. I know this is where you're keeping them. Cook saw where you ran with the meat."
- 27 Red quavered, "Hello, Ma!"
- 28 "Now show me those nasty animals! I'm going to see to it that you get rid of them right away."
- 29 It was over! And despite imminent punishment, Red felt something like a load fall from him. At least the decision was out of his hands.
- 30 "Right there, Ma. I didn't do anything to them, Ma. I didn't know. They just looked like little animals, and I thought you'd let me keep them, Ma. I wouldn't have taken the meat from cook only they wouldn't eat grass or leaves and we couldn't find good nuts or berries and cook never lets me have anything or I would have asked her and I didn't know it was for lunch and—"
- 31 He was speaking on the sheer momentum of terror and did not realize that his mother did not hear him but, with eyes frozen and popping at the cage, was screaming in thin, piercing tones.

CHAPTER X

- 32 The Astronomer was saying to the Industrialist, "A quiet burial is all we can do. There is no point in any publicity now," when they heard the screams.
- 33 Running and running, Ma had not entirely recovered by the time she reached them. It was minutes before her husband could extract sense from her.
- 34 She was saying, finally, "I tell you they're in the barn. I don't know what they are. No, no—"
- 35 She barred the Industrialist's quick movement in that direction. She said, "Don't you go. Send one of the hands with a shotgun. I tell you, I never saw anything like it. Little horrible beasts with—with—I can't describe it. To think that Red was touching them and trying to feed them. He was holding them, and feeding them meat."
- 36 Red began, "I only—"
- 37 And Slim said, "It was not—"
- 38 The Industrialist said, quickly, "Now you boys have done enough harm today. March! Into the house! And not a word; not one word! I'm not interested in anything you have to say. After this is all over, I'll hear you out, and as for you, Red, I'll see that you're properly punished."

- 39 He turned to his wife. "Now whatever the animals are, we'll take care of them." He added quietly once the youngsters were out of hearing, "Come, come. The children aren't hurt and, after all, they haven't done anything really terrible. They've just found some new pets."
- 40 The Astronomer spoke with difficulty. "Pardon me, ma'am, but can you describe these animals?"
- 41 She shook her head. She was quite beyond words.
- 42 "Can you just tell me if they—"
- 43 "I'm sorry," said the Industrialist, apologetically, "but I think I had better take care of her. Will you excuse me?"
- 44 "A moment. Please. One moment. She said she had never seen such animals before. Surely it is not usual to find animals that are completely unique on an estate such as this."
- 45 "I'm sorry. Let's not discuss that now."
- 46 "Except that unique animals might have landed during the night."
- 47 The Industrialist stepped away from his wife. "What are you implying?"
- 48 "I think we had better go to the barn, sir!"
- 49 The Industrialist stared a moment, turned, and suddenly and quite uncharacteristically began running. The Astronomer followed, and the woman's wail rose unheeded behind them.



CHAPTER XI

- 50 The Industrialist stared, looked at the Astronomer, and turned to stare again.
- 51 "Those?"
- 52 "Those," said the Astronomer. "I have no doubt we appear strange and repulsive to them."
- 53 "What do they say?"
- 54 "Why, that they are uncomfortable and tired and even a little sick, but that they are not seriously damaged, and that the youngsters treated them well."
- 55 "Treated them well! Scooping them up, keeping them in a cage, giving them grass and raw meat to eat? Tell me how to speak to them."
- 56 "It may take a little time. Think at them. Try to listen. It will come to you, but perhaps not right away."

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57 The Industrialist tried. He grimaced with the effort of it, thinking over and over again, "The youngsters were ignorant of your identity."

58 And the thought was suddenly in his mind: "We were quite aware of it, and because we knew they meant well by us, according to their own view of the matter, we did not attempt to attack them."

59 "Attack them?" thought the Industrialist and said it aloud in his concentration.

60 "Why, yes," came the answering thought. "We are armed."

61 One of the revolting little creatures in the cage lifted a metal object, and there was a sudden hole in the top of the cage and another in the roof of the barn, each hole rimmed with charred wood.

62 "We hope," the creatures thought, "it will not be too difficult to make repairs."

63 The Industrialist found it impossible to organize himself to the point of directed thought. He turned to the Astronomer. "And with that weapon in their possession, they let themselves be handled and caged? I don't understand it."

64 But the calm thought came, "We would not harm the young of an intelligent species."

CHAPTER XII

65 It was twilight. The Industrialist had entirely missed the evening meal and remained unaware of the fact.

66 He said, "Do you really think the ship will fly?"

67 "If they say so," said the Astronomer, "I'm sure it will. They'll be back, I hope, before too long."

68 "And when they do come back," said the Industrialist, energetically, "I will keep my part of the agreement. What is more, I will move sky and earth to have the world accept them. I was entirely wrong, Doctor. Creatures that would refuse to harm children, under such provocation as they received, are admirable. But you know—I almost hate to say this—"

69 "Say what?"

70 "The kids. Yours and mine. I'm almost proud of them. Imagine seizing these creatures, feeding them or trying to, and keeping them hidden. The amazing gall of it. Red told me it was his idea to get a job in a circus on the strength of them. Imagine!"

71 The Astronomer said, "Youth!"



CHAPTER XIII

72 The Merchant said, "Will we be taking off soon?"

73 "Half an hour," said the Explorer.

74 It was going to be a lonely trip back. All the remaining seventeen of the crew were dead, and their ashes were to be left on a strange planet. Back they would go with a limping ship and the burden of the controls entirely on the Explorer himself.

75 The Merchant said, "It was a good business stroke, not harming the young ones. We will get very good terms—very good terms."

76 The Explorer thought: *Business!*

77 The Merchant then said, "They've lined up to see us off. All of them. You don't think they're too close, do you? It would be bad to burn any of them with the rocket blast at this stage of the game."

78 "They're safe."

79 "Horrible-looking things, aren't they?"

80 "Pleasant enough, inside. Their thoughts are perfectly friendly," the Explorer responded.

81 "You wouldn't believe it of them. That immature one, the one that first picked us up—"

82 "They called him Red," provided the Explorer.

83 "That's a strange name for a monster. Makes me laugh. He actually feels bad that we're leaving. Only, I can't make out exactly why. The nearest I can come to it is something about a lost opportunity with some organization or other that I can't quite interpret."

84 "A circus," said the Explorer, briefly.

85 "What? Why, the impertinent monstrosity."

86 "Why not? What would you have done if you had found him wandering on your native world; found him sleeping on a field on Earth, red tentacles, six legs, pseudopods, and all?"



CHAPTER XIV

87 Red watched the ship leave. His red tentacles, which gave him his nickname, quivered their regret at lost opportunity to the very last, and the eyes at their tips filled with drifting yellowish crystals that were the equivalent of Earthly tears.

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Answer the following questions about the story.

- 1. The word **malevolence** in paragraph 1 indicates that the boys now believe the "people" in the cage _____.
 - A. are curious about them
 - B. want to harm them
 - C. are afraid of them
 - D. want to communicate

- 2. The characters in the story have knowledge and understanding that the readers do not have until the end. What effect does this create at the end of the story?
 - A. heartbreak
 - B. suspense
 - C. surprise
 - D. horror

- 3. In Chapters IX and X, Red's mother does not know what the boys know about the creatures in the cage. Describe how this affects her reaction to seeing the "animals" and how this reaction advances the plot.

- 4. Describe how Asimov leads the reader to assume that the Industrialist, the Astronomer, and the boys are humans on planet Earth. Include at least **two** ways he attempts to do this, citing specific text evidence.
 - 1. _____

 - 2. _____

- 5. In the introduction before the story, it is noted that the aliens communicate **telepathically**. Based on the dialogue in Chapter XI, what does this mean?
 - A. They communicate through a universally understood sign language.
 - B. They send coded messages through the metal objects they carry.
 - C. They speak words that are instantly translated into any native language.
 - D. They communicate mind-to-mind by projecting and receiving thoughts.

- 6. The Industrialist is initially skeptical of supporting a trade alliance with the aliens. How and why does his attitude change by the end of the story? Cite specific text evidence.

- 7. What does the dialogue in Chapter XIII reveal about the Merchant and the Explorer's characters?

- 8. Both the Astronomer and the Explorer demonstrate an ability to see things through another's perspective. Identify a paragraph from the story in which each character demonstrates this trait. Explain your answers.

The Astronomer: _____

The Explorer: _____

- 9. Which of the following is a theme of the story?
 - A. People's love of their young is universal, and respect for that common value can build bridges.
 - B. The youth of a society cannot be trusted on their own; they must always be closely monitored by elders.
 - C. It is the youth of a civilization that have the vision and courage to create technology that will change the world.
 - D. It is inevitable that space exploration of the future will lead to tragedy for the youth of all civilizations.

- 10. Explain how the story reflects the theme you chose in question 9.
