

READING INTRODUCTION EXERCISE

Questions 1–6 are based on the following passage.

The following passage is an excerpt from the memoir of a well-known African American singer and community leader. It is set in New York and Philadelphia in the 1920s.

I now had what amounted to a complex about music. Hopes had been raised too high, and when they crashed too low, I could not be objective. Perhaps I had not admitted it to myself, but Town Hall in New York had represented the mainstream of American musical life, and I had plunged into it hoping to become one of the fortunate swimmers.

I kept rehashing the concert in my mind, lingering on some points and thrusting others so thoroughly aside that I do not remember to this day which dress I wore, whether it was the one Mrs. Patterson had made over for me or a special one. I don't remember what financial arrangements were made with the young man who managed the event, but I do know that I received nothing and that he must have lost money. I thought then, and still do, that I might have done better if I had not been told that auditorium was full. If you are sensitive, and I was perhaps too sensitive, a misrepresentation like that can throw you off balance, particularly if you feel that you have a great deal at stake.

I stopped going regularly to Mr. Boghetti's studio. I appeared once in a while, and things must have gone very indifferently. He realized how much the fiasco had shaken me, and he did not make an issue of my irregular attendance.

Mother and I talked about the

whole thing, and with her patience and understanding she helped me out of my trouble. I knew that the criticism was right and that I should not have given the critics the opportunity to write as they did. I kept reiterating that I had wanted so very much to sing well enough to please everybody.

"Listen my child," Mother said.

"Whatever you do in this world, no matter how good it is, you will never be able to please everybody. All you can strive for is to do the best it is humanly possible for you to do."

As the months went by I was able again to consider singing as a career. "Think about it for a while," Mother advised, "and think of other things you might like to do."

I thought about it. It took a long time before I could confront singing again with enthusiasm, before the old conviction returned that nothing in life could be as important as music.

1

The passage as a whole best supports which explanation of the narrator’s “complex about music” (lines 1–2) ?

- A) A critical review of a performance caused her to change careers.
- B) Becoming an accomplished singer was not her primary ambition.
- C) A formidable experience led her to question her aspirations.
- D) Performing in Town Hall was the pinnacle of her early musical career.

2

In line 9, “fortunate swimmers” refers to the author’s

- A) obsession with music.
- B) desire to be a popular singer.
- C) respect for other famous singers.
- D) rapid change of fortune.

3

The use of the phrase “thrusting . . . aside” (line 12) conveys a sense of the narrator’s

- A) distress.
- B) resentment.
- C) instability.
- D) perseverance.

4

According to the passage, “misrepresentation” (line 24) refers to a discrepancy between

- A) the narrator’s actual proficiency at singing and her performance at the Town Hall.
- B) the stated number of people in attendance and the actual number.
- C) the reaction of the audience to the Town Hall performance and the reviews of it.
- D) the narrator’s desire to please everybody and her inability to do so.

5

The third paragraph (lines 27–32) primarily focuses on

- A) the importance of rehearsals.
- B) the kindness of strangers.
- C) a return to a musical career.
- D) the consequences of a performance.

6

In lines 37–38, the narrator’s comment about having “given critics the opportunity” suggests that she

- A) acknowledged that the unfavorable reviews were warranted.
- B) intended to switch careers from music to journalism.
- C) doubted that the critics who reviewed her did so objectively.
- D) recognized the influence critics exert on a singer’s career.