



"Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy"

Reading Comprehension Assessment

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Name _____
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• Reading Comprehension Assessment

Directions: Read the passage. Then answer the questions below.

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy



Concussions are brain injuries that occur when a person receives a blow to the head, face, or neck. Although most people who suffer a concussion experience initial bouts of dizziness, nausea, and drowsiness, these symptoms often disappear after a few days. The long-term effects of concussions, however, are less understood and far more severe. Recent studies suggest that people who suffer multiple concussions are at a significant risk for developing chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), a degenerative brain disorder that causes a variety of dangerous mental and emotional problems to arise weeks, months, or even years after the initial injury. These psychological problems can include depression, anxiety, memory loss, inability to concentrate, and aggression. In extreme cases, people suffering from CTE have even committed suicide or homicide. The majority of people who develop these issues are athletes who participate in popular high-impact sports, especially football. Although both new sports regulations and improvements in helmet technology can help protect players, the sports media and fans alike bear some of the responsibility for reducing the incidence of these devastating injuries.

Improvements in diagnostic technology have provided substantial evidence to link severe—and often fatal—psychological disorders to the head injuries players receive while on the field. Recent autopsies performed on the brains of football players who have committed suicide have shown advanced cases of CTE in every single victim.

In response to the growing understanding of this danger, the National Football League (NFL) has revised its safety regulations. Players who have suffered a head injury on the field must undergo a "concussion sideline assessment"—a series of mental and physical fitness tests—before being allowed back in the game. In an effort to diminish the amount of head and neck injuries on the field, NFL officials have begun enforcing stricter penalty calls for helmet-to-helmet contact, leading with the head, and hitting a defenseless player. Furthermore, as of 2010, if a player's helmet is accidentally wrenched from his head during play, the ball is immediately whistled dead. There is hope that these new regulations, coupled with advances in helmet design, will reduce the number of concussions player endure, and thus curb the number of CTE cases.

Efforts by the NFL and other professional sports leagues are certainly **laudable**; indeed, we should commend every attempt to protect the mental and physical health of players. However, new regulations at the professional level cannot protect amateur players, especially young people. Fatal cases of CTE have been reported in victims as young as 21. With appropriate equipment and form, tackling need not be dangerous. Proper tackling form—using the arms and shoulders to aim for a player's midsection rather than leading with the top of the head—should be taught at an early age. Youth, high school, and college leagues should also adopt safety rules even more stringent than the NFL's. Furthermore, at an early age, athletes should be educated about the serious dangers of head injuries.

Perhaps the most important factor in reducing the number of traumatic brain injuries, however, lies not with the players, the coaches, or the administrators, but with the media and fans. Sports media producers have become accustomed to showcasing the most aggressive tackles and the most intense plays. NFL broadcasts often replay especially violent collisions, while the commentators marvel at the physical prowess of the players involved. Some sports programs even feature weekly countdowns of the hardest hits. When the media **exalts** such hazardous behavior, professionals are rewarded for injuring each other on the field, and amateurs become more likely to try to imitate their favorite NFL athletes. Announcers, commentators, television producers, and sportswriters should engage in a collective effort to cease glorifying brutal plays. In turn, fans should stop expecting their favorite players to put their lives on the line for the purposes of entertainment. Players must stop being encouraged to trade their careers, health, happiness, and their lives for the sake of a game.

- 1) The author apparently believes that
- A. NFL officials have not thoroughly implemented stricter safety regulations
 - B. doctors need to do more research about the potential long-term effects of CTE
 - C. amateur athletes suffer more serious long-term effects of CTE than professional athletes
 - D. fans share some of the blame for athletes' injuries
 - E. young people should not be encouraged to play football due to CTE risks
- 2) According to the author, each of the following statements are true EXCEPT which one?
- A. Tackling itself is not dangerous; however, players who use improper tackling form may suffer injury.
 - B. Scientists have established a link between players who shoot themselves and others and the onset of CTE.
 - C. NFL officials have done nothing to address the problem of CTE.
 - D. Athletes who are praised for exceptionally brutal hits are likely to continue engaging in such dangerous behavior.
 - E. Sports programs showcase exceptionally hard hits.
- 3) According to the author, which of the following contribute(s) to an increase in incidences of CTE in amateur players?
- I. fewer safety regulations than professional players
 - II. a lack of education geared to youth players about the dangers of head injuries
 - III. a desire to emulate professionals
- A. I only
 - B. II only
 - C. I and II only
 - D. II and III only
 - E. I, II, and III
- 4) As used in paragraph 4, which is the best synonym for **laudable**?
- A. praiseworthy
 - B. ineffective
 - C. determined
 - D. blameworthy
 - E. satisfactory
- 5) The author's tone in the final paragraph can best be described as
- A. apologetic
 - B. depressed
 - C. confused
 - D. solemn
 - E. hopeless
- 6) As used in the final paragraph, which is the best antonym for **exalts**?
- A. ignores
 - B. misrepresents
 - C. praises
 - D. reports
 - E. criticizes

- 7) In the final paragraph, the author writes, "Players must stop being encouraged to trade their careers, health, happiness, and their lives for the sake of a game." Which of the following literary devices is used in this quotation?
- A. Irony, characterized by the expression of something which is contrary to the intended meaning.
 - B. Climax, characterized by the arrangement of words, phrases, or causes in an order of ascending power.
 - C. Litotes, characterized by the expression of understatement used for intensification of a rhetorical purpose.
 - D. Hyperbole, characterized by the use of exaggeration for emphasis or rhetorical effect.
 - E. Apostrophe, characterized by a sudden turn from addressing the general audience to addressing a specific person, group, or personified abstraction.
- 8) Based on the information in the passage, explain CTE in your own words. What does it stand for? How does it occur? Whom does it normally affect? What are its effects?

- 9) What is your opinion of the NFL's new safety regulations? Do you think they are too strict, not strict enough, or just right? Why? What would change about the new rules, if anything? Explain.

10) Because of the health risks associated with concussions, injuries, and CTE, many parents are starting to forbid their children from participating in high-risk sports such as football. What do you think of these parents' decisions, given what you have just read? Have your parents encouraged you not to participate in such sports? What decisions do you think you would make if your own children wanted to play football one day? Why?

11) What do you think is the most important factor in reducing brain injuries and CTE in sports? Do you think, as the author does, that sports culture needs to change? Are new safety rules sufficient? Why?

1) **D**

Question Type: Global

In the first paragraph, the author notes that fans are partially responsible for players' violent hits, writing, "the sports media and fans alike bear some of the responsibility." This is interpreted in the final paragraph when the author writes, "Sports media producers have become accustomed to showcasing the most aggressive tackles" and "NFL broadcasts often replay especially violent collisions, while the commentators marvel at the physical prowess of the players involved." Using this information, we can infer that the sports entertainment industry does these things to boost ratings, because fans are more likely to watch when violence is on display. If broadcasters collectively decided to stop glorifying violent tackles and fans stopped choosing programming based on them, the players would be less likely to hit each other with devastating force. Therefore **(D)** is correct. In paragraph 2, the author writes, "the National Football League (NFL) has revised its safety regulations," before detailing all of the ways that the league has implemented stricter safety regulations. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. In paragraph 1, the author writes, "In extreme cases, people suffering from CTE have even committed suicide or homicide." Since loss of life is the final, long-term effect anyone with a disease can incur, this information indicates that long term effects of CTE have been studied. The passage does not provide information that would lead us to infer that doctors need to do more research about the potential long-term effects of CTE. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The passage does not provide information that would lead us to infer that amateur athletes suffer more serious long-term effects of CTE than professional athletes. Instead, because professional athletes are typically stronger and faster than amateur athletes, we might actually infer the opposite because hits at the professional level are presumably harder. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. The passage does not provide information that would lead us to infer that the author believes that young people should not be encouraged to play football due to CTE risks. Instead, the author proposes education on proper tackling technique as a potential solution: "Proper tackling form—using the arms and shoulders to aim for a player's midsection rather than leading with the top of the head—should be taught at an early age." Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

2) **C**

Question Type: Detail

In paragraph 2, the author writes, "the National Football League (NFL) has revised its safety regulations," before detailing specific ways in which the NFL has tried to combat the problem of CTE. Therefore, **(C)** is correct because the author does not suggest that the NFL has done "nothing to address the problem." In paragraph 3, the author writes, "With appropriate equipment and form, tackling need not be dangerous." Using this information we can see that tackling can be done safely. In paragraph 2, the author writes "NFL officials have begun enforcing stricter penalty calls for helmet-to-helmet contact, leading with the head, and hitting a defenseless player." Using this information, we can understand that improper tackling form is not safe, since penalties are called on players who tackle this way. Because it provides information present in the passage, **(A)** is incorrect. In paragraph 1, the author cites "recent studies" which have found that, "In extreme cases, people suffering from CTE have even committed suicide or homicide." In paragraph 2, the author writes, "Recent autopsies performed on the brains of football players who have committed suicide have shown advanced cases of CTE in every single victim." Using this information, we can see that some link has been established between murder, suicide, and the onset of CTE. Because it provides information present in the passage, **(B)** is incorrect. In the final paragraph, the author writes, "When the media exalts such hazardous behavior, professionals are rewarded for injuring each other on the field, and amateurs become more likely to try to imitate their favorite NFL athletes." Using this information, we can see that individuals who receive positive attention—praise or glorification for their actions—are more likely to continue those actions. Therefore, athletes who are praised for their brutal hits will likely continue hitting violently. Because it provides information present in the passage, **(D)** is incorrect. In the final paragraph, the author writes, "Sports media producers have become accustomed to showcasing the most aggressive tackles" and "NFL broadcasts often replay especially violent collisions, while the commentators marvel at the physical prowess of the players involved." Using this information, we can see that sports programs showcase exceptionally hard hits, since showcasing can also occur through replays and commentary. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

3) **E**

Question Type: Detail

In paragraph 3, the author writes, "Youth, high school, and college leagues should also adopt safety rules even more stringent than the NFL's." The author suggests that NFL standards may protect professional players, but the regulations for amateurs are not as strict, if they exist at all, as those for professional players. Therefore, increased NFL safety standards do not directly address the injuries suffered by amateurs, who have fewer, or less strict safety regulations. This supports **option (I)**. In paragraph 3, the author writes, "at an early age athletes should be educated about the serious dangers of head injuries." Using this information, we can see that youth are not educated properly. This supports **option (II)**. In the final paragraph, the author argues that "amateurs" are "likely to try to imitate their favorite NFL athletes" when they watch violent highlight reels on sports programs. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(E)** is correct.

4) **A**

Question Type: Vocabulary

laudable (*adjective*): worthy of praise; commendable.

In paragraph 3, the author writes, "Efforts by the NFL and other professional sports leagues are certainly laudable; indeed, we should commend every attempt to protect the mental and physical health of players." If we should "commend" these attempts, and another word for commend is praise, then to say that the efforts are praiseworthy (worthy of praise) is the same as saying they are laudable. Therefore **(A)** is correct. *Ineffective* means without producing results. Since we know that we are looking for the word that most nearly means worthy of praise, we know that **(B)** is incorrect because it describes the extent to which the efforts of the NFL and other professional sports leagues are effective. This choice does not speak to how we should receive those efforts as individuals who want to see the mental and physical health of players protected. *Determined* means decided, settled, or resolved. Using context clues, we can tell that we are looking for a word that most nearly means commendable since the sentence connected by a semicolon to the one containing laudable reads "indeed, we should commend every attempt to protect the mental and physical health of players." Using this information, we can see that being determined speaks to the nature of the actions while commendable speaks to how an audience should react to the actions. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. *Blameworthy* means deserving criticism or blame. We know that we are looking for the word that most nearly means worthy of praise. To praise the actions of the NFL and other

professional sports leagues is not at all the same as blaming them for their actions. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect. *Satisfactory* means fulfilling the requirements. We know that we are looking for the word that most nearly means worthy of praise. Satisfactory does not adequately express the extent to which the NFL and other professional leagues are reacting to the CTE threat, based on the fact that we should be commending them. The word merely implies that they are doing the bare minimum to fill requirements. Most things worthy of praise—as a synonym for laudable would be—are above and beyond the satisfactory. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect, because it does not fully express the extent of the groups' efforts.

5) **D**

Question Type: Global

An author's tone is directly related to the language, content, and imagery of a passage. In the final paragraph, the author writes, "Players must stop being encouraged to trade their careers, health, happiness, and their lives for the sake of a game." A solemn tone is serious. Using the above information, we sense that the author views the potential death of athletes—simply for the sake of a game—as a solemn or serious matter. The author's tone is thus solemn, as the adamant language is used to persuade us that CTE is not just a serious threat to football players' health, but that it could also end their lives. If we look at the syntax—the arrangement of the words—we also see a progression from the less serious (loss of career), to the most solemn consequence (death). This structure furthers the development of the solemn tone in the final paragraph. Therefore **(D)** is correct. An apologetic tone conveys a sense of remorse. The final paragraph provides no evidence to indicate that the author feels sorry, or apologetic, for arguing that CTE is a serious threat to football players' health. Instead, language like "Announcers, commentators, television producers, and sportswriters should engage in a collective effort..." indicate the author's confidence in making a call to action. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. A depressed tone conveys a sense of extreme sadness. The final paragraph provides no evidence to indicate that the author feels depressed about this situation. The author expresses some frustration with fans and "the media [for] exalt[ing] such hazardous behavior," but there is nothing that would indicate the author is so sad that he or she feels depressed. Instead, language like "Announcers, commentators, television producers, and sportswriters should engage in a collective effort..." indicate the author's confidence and hope that change is possible. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. In the final paragraph, the author articulates precisely how fans and the media perpetuate aggressive, violent hits. There is no information provided in the final paragraph that would indicate that the author feels confused about this topic or how we should react. The last sentence of the passage clearly states that "Players must stop being encouraged to trade their careers, health, happiness, and their lives for the sake of a game." Using this information, we can see that the author knows exactly what needs to happen. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. The author makes an argument throughout the passage that is emphasized in the last paragraph. The fact that the argument is being made at all indicates that the author feels hopeful that change is a possibility. Language like, "Announcers, commentators, television producers, and sportswriters should engage in a collective effort..." indicate the author's hope that change is possible. Using this information, we can see that the author does not feel hopeless about the possibilities of curbing CTE cases, since the final paragraph outlines measures that we can take, as fans, to discourage violent hits in football. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

6) **E**

Question Type: Vocabulary

exalt (*verb*): to praise or glorify something or somebody.

In the final paragraph, the author writes, "When the media exalts such hazardous behavior, professionals are rewarded for injuring each other on the field, and amateurs become more likely to try to imitate their favorite NFL athletes." Using context, we can see that professional players are rewarded when the media exalts their hazardous behavior. We can also use the sentence immediately following it—which suggests an appropriate response—to provide context clues: "Announcers, commentators, television producers, and sportswriters should engage in a collective effort to cease glorifying brutal plays." Using this information, we can see that the author believes that "glorifying brutal plays" needs to stop. Thus, using the information above, exalt must mean to reward or to glorify. We know that we are looking for the word that most nearly means the opposite of reward or glorify. *Criticize* means to be critical of, scold, or find flaws with, which is quite opposite of rewarding or glorifying something. Likewise, if the media were critical of the players for hitting violently, the behavior would be less likely to continue. Therefore **(E)** is correct. Using the information above, we know that we are looking for the word that most nearly means the opposite of reward or glorify. To simply *ignore* the players' violent hits does not express the opposite of reward or glorify to the same extent. Because it is not an adjective equal in degree to exalt, we know that ignore is not a strong enough opposite. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Using the information above, we know that we are looking for the word that most nearly means the opposite of reward or glorify. For the media to *misrepresent* the players' violent hits implies a level of deceit and corruption not accurate in a word that most nearly means the opposite of exalt. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect because it speaks to the character of the media and not the way they react to the violent hits. *Praises* is a synonym for exalts. We know that we are looking for the word that most nearly means the opposite; therefore **(C)** is incorrect. *Reports* does not adequately express the opposite of what the media does with footage of violent hits. Simply reporting on the players who make the hits is not as bad as praising them, but it's also not equally opposite of praising the players. To report something implies an absence of emotion in relaying facts. The word that most nearly means the opposite of praise would have to be somewhat critical to be adequately opposite. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

7) **B**

Question Type: Inference

In the last sentence, the author urges players to stop trading "their careers, their health, their happiness, and their lives for the sake of a game." The ideas progress from least crucial (careers) to most crucial (lives). Organizing ideas in order of ascending power or importance is called climax. Therefore **(B)** is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)**, **(C)**, **(D)**, and **(E)**. Therefore they are incorrect.