

Comprehension Passages

Passage 1

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

It was the summer of 1936. The Olympic Games were being held in Berlin. Because Adolf Hitler childishly insisted that his performers were members of a “master race,” nationalistic feelings were at an all-time high.

I wasn’t too worried about all this. I’d trained, sweated and disciplined myself for six years, with the Games in mind. While I was going over on the boat, all I could think about was taking home one or two of those gold medals. I had my eyes especially on the running broad jump. A year before, as a sophomore at the Ohio State, I’d set the world’s record of 26 feet 8 1/4 inches. Nearly everyone expected me to win this event.

Question 1.

Who is Jesse Owens?

Answer:

Jesse Owens is a black American athlete who set the world record in Long Jump

Question 2.

Why were nationalistic feelings running high during the 1936 Berlin Olympics?

Answer:

Adolf Hitler believed in Aryan Superiority theory. He thought that his German athletes belong to a master’s race and they would perform better than other participants in the 1936 Olympics, Berlin. So nationalistic feelings were running high.

Question 3.

Why was Owens expected to win the gold medal in the Long Jump hands down?

Answer:

Owens had set a world record in Long Jump just the previous year. So Owens knew he could win the Olympics hands down. Additionally he had practiced hard for the Olympics.

Question 4.

Why does Jesse Owens dismiss the claim of Hitler as childish?

Answer:

Hitler was a dictator, no doubt. But his casual remark to build up the spirit of his athletes had not been taken seriously by Owens because Owens had practiced hard and had even set the world record the previous year. Everyone was sure he would win the gold.

Question 5.

Explain, ‘I wasn’t too worried about all this. I’d trained, sweated disciplined myself for six years with the game in the mind.

Answer:

This passage is taken from, “My Greatest Olympic Prize” written by Jesse Owens. Jesse Owens shares his Olympic experience and the friendship he won. Patriotic feeling was running high in Germany. Owens did not bother as he trusted in his efforts.

Passage 2

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

I was in for a surprise. When the time came for the broad-jump trials, I was startled to see a tall boy hitting the pit at almost 26 feet on his practice leaps! He turned out to be a German named Luz Long. I was told that Hitler hoped to win the jump with him. I guessed that if Long won, it would add some new support to the Nazis' "master race" (Aryan superiority) theory. After all, I am a Negro. Angry about Hitler's ways, I determined to go out there and really show Der Fuhrer and his master race who was superior and who wasn't. An angry athlete is an athlete who will make mistakes, as any coach will tell you. I was no exception. On the first of my three qualifying jumps, I leaped from several inches beyond the takeoff board for a foul. On the second jump, I fouled even worse. "Did I come 3,000 miles for this?" I thought bitterly. "To foul out of the trials and make a fool of myself?" Walking a few yards from the pit, I kicked disgustedly at the dirt.

Question 1.

Why did Owens become hot under the collar before the trials?

Answer:

Owens was irritated about the Nazi's Aryan superiority theory.

Question 2.

"I was no exception: – Explain.

Answer:

An angry athlete is prone to making mistakes. Despite knowing this, Owens got angry that resulted in his underperformance which disallowed him to qualify in the first jump.

Question 3.

Why did Owens kick the pit in disgust?

Answer:

Owens leaped for several inches beyond the take-off point that ended up in disqualification in the first jump of his trials. He kicked the pit in disgust at his own poor performance.

Question 4.

I was in for a surprise. When the time came for the long jump trials, I was startled to see a tall boy hitting the pit at almost 26 feet on his practice leaps. What do these words mean?

Answer:

This passage is taken from, "My Greatest Olympic Prize" written by Jesse Owens. Jesse Owens shares his Olympic experience. Here he refers to Luz Long, the tall blond German athlete. He was surprised by his performance.

Question 5.

What shattered the confidence of Jesse Owens?

Answer:

He faulted twice in the qualifying jump.

Question 6.

"Did I come all the way from America for this?" I thought bitterly. "To foul out of the trials and make a fool of myself?" What does this show?

Answer:

Here Owens shows his frustration after failing twice in the qualifying jumps.

Question 7.

I supposed that if Long won, it would add some new support to the Nazis' Aryan- superiority theory. What did Jesse Owens want to show to Hitler?

Answer:

Jesse wanted to show Hitler that he was not inferior. These lines are taken from, "My Greatest Olympic Prize" written by Jesse Owens. In, these lines Owen thinks what will happen if Germany wins. Then it would add truth to Hitler's theory that the German race was superior and his athletes were meant to win.

Passage 3

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

Then, trying to hide my nervousness, I added, “How are you?”

“I’m fine. The question is: How are you?”

“What do you mean?” I asked “Something must be eating you,” he said—proud the way foreigners are when they’ve mastered a bit of American slang. “You should be able to qualify with your eyes closed.”

“Believe me, I know it,” I told him—and it felt good to say that to someone.

For the next few minutes we talked together. I didn’t tell Long what was “eating” me, but he seemed to understand my anger, and he took pains to reassure me. Although he’d been schooled in the Nazi youth movement, he didn’t believe in the Aryan-supremacy business any more than I did. We laughed over the fact that he really looked the part, though. An inch taller than I, he had a lean, muscular frame, clear blue eyes, blond hair and a strikingly handsome, chiseled face. Finally, seeing that I had calmed down somewhat, he pointed to the take-off board.

“Look,” he said. “Why don’t you draw a line a few inches in back of the board and aim at making your take-off from there? You’ll be sure not to foul, and you certainly ought to jump far enough to qualify. What does it matter if you’re not first in the trials? Tomorrow is what counts.”

Question 1.

What was actually eating Jesse Owens?

Answer:

Owens was preoccupied with the disturbing thought of fouling in the finals.

Question 2.

Did Owens tell Long what was eating him? If not, why?

Answer:

Owens did not admit to Long what was eating him because Long was just an acquaintance then, apart from being a Nazi rival.

Question 3.

Describe Luz Long.

Answer:

Luz Long was taller than Owens with a lean muscular frame with clear blue eyes, fair hair and a strikingly handsome face.

Question 4.

How did Owens manage to qualify for the finals with a foot to spare?

Answer:

Owens accepted Long’s advice to draw a line a few inches behind the take-off board which helped him qualify for the finals with a foot to spare.

Question 5.

Why did Jesse Owens foul the first two jumps in the trial?

Answer:

Despite knowing that anger spoils the spirit of an athlete, forcing him to make mistakes, he was angered at Hitler’s sly introduction of Luz Long to prove Aryan superiority. Owens, being a Negro, hated it and his angered at Hitler’s way belittled his determination to win the Olympics. Anger ruled his mind and made him foul in the first two attempts in the trials.

Passage 4

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

Suddenly all the tension seemed to ebb out of my body as the truth of what he said hit me. Confidently, I drew a line a full foot in back of the board and proceeded to jump from there. I qualified with almost a foot to spare.

That night I walked over to Luz Long's room in the Olympic village to thank him. I knew that if it hadn't been for him I probably wouldn't be jumping in the finals the following day. We sat in his quarters and talked for two hours—about track and field, ourselves, the world situation, a dozen other things.

When I finally got up to leave, we both knew that a real friendship had been formed. Luz would go out to the field the next day trying to beat me if he could. But I knew that he wanted me to do my best—even if that meant my winning.

Question 1.

How did Luz Long help Jesse Owens?

Answer:

Luz Long, a true sportsman and an amazing human being, eased Owens' tension by being compassionate. He gave him a genuinely friendly advice to draw a line a few inches from the takeoff board to avoid over-stepping and thus fouling. Owens took his advice and was able to qualify with a clean mind.

Question 2.

How did the rivalry of Owens and Long end?

Answer:

With Owens developing a misconception, the battle in his mind took over his determination to win. Long, who noticed Owens fouling, understood what Owens would be going through. Long's decision to get acquainted with Owens eased Owens. Owens, after the trials, met Long in his quarters and both spent some quality time together knowing each other, thus leading to a long lasting true friendship.

Question 3.

How did Owens manage to qualify for the finals with a foot to spare?

Answer:

Luz Long was a tall German long jumper. Though he was trained by Hitler, he did not believe in Hitler's theory. Jesse Owens was his opponent player but he was friendly with him and even helped him to get qualified for final. He suggested that Owen should draw a line behind take off board and then jump. Because of him, Jesse managed to qualify for the final.

Question 4.

Suddenly all the tension seemed to ebb out of my body as the truth of what he said hit me.

Answer:

This passage is taken from, "My Greatest Olympic Prize" written by Jesse Owens. Jesse Owens shares his Olympic experience and the friendship he won with Luz Long. After Long's advice of marking few inches behind board Owens felt relaxed and confident at winning

Passage 5

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

As it turned out, Luz broke his own past record. In doing so, he pushed me on to a peak performance. I remember that at the instant I landed from my final jump—the one which set the Olympic record of 26 feet 5-5/16 inches—he was at my side, congratulating me. Despite the fact that Hitler glared at us from the stands not a hundred yards away, Luz shook my hand hard—and it wasn't a fake “smile with a broken heart” sort of grip, either.

You can melt down all the gold medals and cups I have, and they couldn't be a plating on the 24-carat friendship I felt for Luz Long at that moment. I realized then, too, that Luz was the epitome of what Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Games, must have had in mind when he said, “The important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part. The essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well.”

Question 1.

How did Luz Long respond to Jesse winning the gold?

Answer:

Long was beside Owens congratulating him when Owens finished his jump. He gave Owens a firm handshake that was devoid of any jealousy.

Question 2.

Why did Hitler glare at Luz Long and Jesse Owens?

Answer:

Hitler had nurtured Long to win the Olympics. Not only did Luz Long lose but was congratulating Owens heartily on his victory. This angered Hitler.

Question 3.

What, according to Coubertin, is the true spirit of the Olympics? Explain the reference to Coubertin.

Answer:

Coubertin had declared that taking part in Olympics was more important than winning. Coubertin had declared that taking part in Olympics was more important than winning. Luz Long, being a true sportsman and an amazing human being, helped his fellow sportsman to qualify in his jump that made him win. This shows Long believed in participating rather than winning. His rival's winning did not make him jealous. On the contrary, he congratulated him with all his heart. This clearly exemplifies that Long believed in Coubertin's words and passed the thought to Owens.

Question 4.

What do you understand of Hitler from Jesse's account?

Answer:

Hitler had secretly nurtured a very strong Nazi youth and had kept him hidden until the day, to petrify other athletes, especially Owens. Hitler would have been fully aware that an angry athlete often errs and that perhaps was what he wanted. His slyness in doing so would allow his athlete to win, if not through competence, thus strengthening the Aryan superiority.

Question 5.

You can melt down all the gold medals and cups I have, and they wouldn't be a plating on the 24-carat friendship I felt for Luz Long at that moment.

Answer:

This passage is taken from, “My Greatest Olympic Prize” written by Jesse Owens. Jesse Owens shares his Olympic experience. Jesse Owens feels that his friendship with Luz Long is greater than that of all the medals he has won. His friendship with his German rival and friend was worth more than anything and his greatest prize.

Assignment

Question 1.

How did Luz Long exemplify the true sporting spirit?

Answer:

Luz Long, noticing a world record holder pathetically fouling, understood the reason behind it. Without hesitation, despite being an opponent, he extends an arm of friendship to Owens. Long was expected to beat Owens in the finals, His being friendly with Owens only resulted in angering his leader, Hitler. Without paying heed to that, he also gave his rival crucial tips to avoid fouling, Owens took the advice and won.

When Owens finished his jump, he found Long by his side congratulating him on his victory, not bothering about his leader's glares. He didn't seem to mind his loss. His demeanor and handshake, at Owens' victory, showed no sign of jealousy either. Long was the epitome of the message of Coubertin that not winning, but taking part in Olympics is more important.

Question 2.

Describe the professional rivalry and professional friendship of Owens and Long.

Answer:

Initially Owens saw Luz Long as his professional rival since Long was indeed brought in by Hitler to beat Owens. His anger led to his fouling in the trials. Long, who noticed the unnatural development of a crisis in a world record holder, counseled Owens to focus on the jump by giving him a valuable tip. This not only took Owens by surprise, but also eased him and allowed him the opportunity to believe in himself. Long thus broke the ice and they developed a bond. He later visited Long at his quarters and they spent some time knowing each other. This paved way for building a genuine friendship between the two. When Owens won the finals, Long was beside him congratulating him on his victory. Owens could sense no jealousy or regret in Long's demeanor or handshake. It was a genuine wish coming right from the bottom of Long's heart. He respected Long for it and knew that a strong friendship had bloomed between them.

Question 3.

Which is considered as the greatest Olympic prize? Why?

Answer:

Luz Long's friendship was the greatest Olympic Prize that Owens ever won in his life. Luz Long's compassion and camaraderie touched Owens. Luz Long recognized the battle in Owens' mind and offered him a valuable tip. He was genuinely happy for Owens when he won the gold. He was by Owens' side, congratulating him. It is very rare for a rival to offer professional tips but Long did. It is very rare for a rival to congratulate the winner without feeling a pang of jealousy. But Long felt none. What Long felt was evident in what he said and how he looked. His selflessness proves that he was an epitome of goodness and true sportsmanship. His congratulating Owens on his victory was of greater value to Owens than the gold medal itself. His genuine heart was so that Owens felt nothing could equalize the friendship that formed between the two.

Question 4.

Analyze the character of Luz Long.

Answer:

Luz Long, though trained in the Nazi youth school, evidently did not possess the sly characteristics of Nazis. His leader had brought him to take part in the Olympics to win. Long, though knowing the pressure on him, had not lost the spirit of a true sportsman. He had no inhibitions in offering his rival a very important tip even though it could have meant his failure. He saw his rival as a friend. Not just that, he was a good human being; he helped a person in distress. Long had nothing to hide. His intentions were clear. He had come to participate and winning to him was just a matter of effort.

Knowing that Owens was a record holder, he did not try any foul means to win the event. His camaraderie won the heart of Owens. Owens was swept off his feet at this magnificent Nazi's pure heart and led to a friendship beyond all material richness of the game. Long nurtured no jealousy

at his failure. He genuinely congratulated Owens. He remained unbothered about having to face the wrath of his leader for losing. Long broke the hope of his leader and his nation, but helped an able world record holder to set yet another record which he rightfully deserved. He also was by his rival's side when he won the event. Long is the perfect example of a true sportsman.