# Nonfiction Reading Test
## *Y2K*

**Directions:** Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer to the text to check your answers when appropriate.
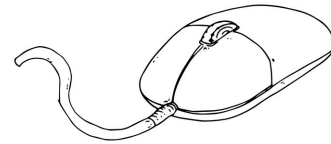
The year was 1999. The night was December 31st, New Year's Eve. The world watched and waited. It was a night of celebration. But it was also a night of fear. People had grown to depend on computers. Computers powered our banks. They ran our companies. Would they all break at midnight? Some thought that they might. But why?

The Year 2000 problem, or Y2K, had to do with computer storage. Computers store data and files in memory. Computer memory is cheap these days. Some companies will give you cloud storage for free. But in the early days of computing, memory was very expensive. One kilobyte (about 1,000 characters of storage) might cost as much as $100 USD.

People had to think of ways to use less storage. One way they did this was by storing only the last two digits of the year. Instead of saving the date as *07/02/1979*, they would save it as *07/02/79*.

This seemed like a good idea at first. But as the years passed, the turn of the century neared. Would our computers know that it was the year 2000 instead of the year 1900? How could they? What would happen if they got the dates wrong? Would the computers break?

The Y2K problem worried many people. Some feared that banking systems wouldn't work. Payments might fail. Cash registers might break.

Another fear was that transportation systems would break. Taxi meters could stop working. Airline computers could fail. Traffic lights could shut down. The Y2K problem was very worrisome.

But people didn't just wait for their systems to fail. They worked hard to prevent the bugs. Governments passed laws. Businesses upgraded their systems. People rewrote software. Some think over $300 billion dollars were spent fixing the Y2K problem. But were people really prepared when it happened?

As clocks turned and calendars flipped to the year 2000, there were very few problems. Air planes did not fall from the sky. Power grids did not shut down. Bank accounts did not get wiped out. We had avoided the worst.

A few bugs and errors happened around the world. Some bus ticket machines in Australia stopped working. Some slot machines in Delaware broke. Certain cell phones in Japan deleted new text messages. But most computers kept working just fine. Will things work out the same way for the Year 2038 problem (Y2K38)? Only time will tell.

# *Y2K* (Questions)

1. Which best describes the Y2K problem?

a) Magnetic waves might erase all computer memory.
b) Computers would cost too much for most families.
c) A computer virus would spread and break all systems.
d) Computers might get the date wrong and malfunction.

2. Which best explains why programmers shortened dates in computer storage?

a) They were in a big hurry.
b) They were trying to save money.
c) They were being lazy.
d) They were creating more work for themselves.

3. Which best describes the author's purpose in writing the SIXTH paragraph?

a) He is describing fears related to transportation and the Y2K bug.
b) He is informing readers of how computers help people.
c) He is explaining how a terrorist attack affected America on 9/11.
d) He is persuading readers to back up their computer storage.

4. Which is NOT a way that people addressed the Y2K problem according to the text?

a) Programmers rewrote software.
b) Companies upgraded their computer systems.
c) Individuals threw away outdated computers.
d) Governments created legislation.

5. Which best describes the TEXT STRUCTURE in the THIRD paragraph?

a) Problem and solution
b) Order of importance
c) Chronological order
d) Spatial order

6. Which of the following was NOT listed in the text as a fear related to Y2K?

a) Traffic control devices would fail.
b) School bells would not ring on time.
c) Bank systems would malfunction.
d) Airline computers would stop working.

7. Which best describes HOW the Y2K bug affected the world?

a) Many computers malfunctioned and it was a catastrophe.
b) All computers stopped working and the damage was tremendous.
c) A small number of computers malfunctioned but it was no big deal.
d) Most computers stopped working and it cost a lot of money.

8. With which statement would the author most likely AGREE?

a) It was a tragedy that people did not prepare more for Y2K.
b) Y2K was never a problem and people were worried for no reason.
c) Computers create more problems than they solve.
d) Since people prepared for Y2K, it wasn't much of a problem.

9. Which was NOT an error caused by the Y2K bug?

a) Credit card processors around the world went down.
b) Bus ticket machines in Australia stopped working.
c) Cell phones in Japan deleted new messages.
d) Slot machines in Delaware malfunctioned.

10. What lesson can readers learn from this text?

a) Technology is frustrating and not worth having.
b) Our dependence on technology can be scary at times.
c) Robots and AI will take over the world one day.
d) Y2K was the worst catastrophe in history.

1. In your own words, explain the Y2K problem. Then describe how people responded to the Y2K problem. Do you think that their response was successful? Why or why not? Refer to the text in your answer.

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2. Are we *too* dependent on technology as a society? Quote text to support your position. Explain the text you quoted and how it relates to your argument.

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