• Reading Comprehension Assessment

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

Birth Order

For years, people have believed that the birth order of children has an effect on personality. In other words, whether you are the oldest child, the middle child, or the youngest child means you act in different ways. Is this just a stereotype or is there some proof to support this belief?

People say that the oldest child in a family tends to be more responsible than the other children. Firstborns seem more likely to make safer choices in life and to be high achievers. These qualities may develop because oldest children grow up taking care of younger siblings. It also may be because parents usually invest lots of time, attention, and money in their firstborn.

On the other hand, the youngest child in a family is often seen as wilder, more willing to take risks, and more creative than the other children. People also say the youngest child is more likely to be funny, perhaps because humor is a way to get attention in a large family. Though the youngest is seen as less responsible, he or she may be more agreeable than the oldest child. The youngest has to learn how to get along with other people in a way that the oldest does not.

Children born in the middle of the birth order are a puzzle. Sometimes they copy their older siblings’ paths, but they may end up being compared unfavorably. Sometimes they rebel against their older siblings by doing the opposite thing. If an older sibling goes to college and gets a dependable job close to home, the next-oldest sibling may choose to skip college and work on a boat in Alaska. People wonder if life is difficult for middle siblings because they tend to get less of their parents’ time and attention.

This could just be a case of people seeing patterns where there really are none. However, science now suggests that birth order may well affect personality. Studies show a disproportionate number of Congressmen, heads of companies, and professional athletes are firstborns. Comedians, artists, and acrobats are more likely to be the youngest in their families. Still, most people would agree that many things affect people’s personalities, not just birth order.

1) Based on information in the passage, it can be understood that people who are clowns, painters, or gamblers may be more likely to be

A. a youngest child
B. a middle child
C. an oldest child
D. parents

2) The author claims that since oldest children often end up taking care of their younger siblings, oldest children may

A. have younger siblings who follow their paths
B. be more responsible
C. get less of their parent's time and attention
D. earn more money
3) In paragraph 4, the author writes, “If an older sibling goes to college and gets a dependable job close to home, the next-oldest sibling may choose to skip college and work on a boat in Alaska.” This statement is intended to

A. explain a problem  
B. provide an example  
C. summarize an idea  
D. support an argument

4) Based on its use in the final paragraph, it can be understood that the word disproportionate belongs to which of the following word groups?

A. unbalanced, unequal, uneven  
B. dishonest, tricky, unfair  
C. uncertain, undecided, unsure  
D. counted, guessed, measured

5) How is this passage organized?

A. Three examples are used to prove a theory. 
B. A scientific study is described and then questioned. 
C. A question is asked, explored, and answered. 
D. Events are listed in the order that they happen.

6) According to the passage, which of the following statements about birth order is TRUE?

A. The birth order in a family determines the children’s personalities.  
B. Firstborns are never wild, risky, or creative, but the youngest children in a family are.  
C. Middle children always rebel against their older siblings by making different choices.  
D. Birth order may cause the oldest child to make safer choices than the youngest child.

7) What is the birth order like in your family? Do you and your siblings follow the behavioral characteristics described in the passage? Why or why not? If you are an only child, talk about your own behavioral characteristics. Are you most similar to the youngest, middle, or oldest sibling?
8) What types of evidence could the author of the passage provide to make his or her argument even more convincing? What kinds of evidence are lacking in this article? Explain.


9) Why do you believe the author was interested in writing a passage like this? What kind of a background do you think he or she has? Who is he or she trying to reach with this article, and how? Explain your inferences below.