Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

It is September 1918, and 16-year-old Hattie Brooks appears in front of Mr. Ebgard, a land official, to save the homestead she inherited from her uncle Chester. Traft Martin wants Hattie's property for his own, and Hattie is afraid she will lose it.

from
Hattie Big Sky
by Kirby Larson

1. The bell jingled as I entered Mr. Ebgard’s office. He hopped right up and found me a chair.

2. "Afternoon, Mr. Ebgard." I kept my chin up. Helped to hold back the tears.

3. "I'm real sorry about all this, Hattie." He fusses with some papers on his desk. "Part of the job."

4. "I know." I lifted my chin another inch. "Shall we get started?"

5. He sighed. "I expect we'd better."

6. The bell jingled again. Traft Martin swaggered inside. He made a big show of tipping his hat to me. "Good afternoon, Miss Brooks."

7. A curt nod was all I would give him.

8. Mr. Ebgard reached behind him and flipped through his files. He fumbled around so long that Traft began to rock on his feet. "Come on, Ebgard. Can't be that many B's."

9. A few more moments and Mr. Ebgard pulled out a file. "Let me review my notes."

10. Traft slammed down on an empty chair. "What's to review?" He jerked his thumb toward me. "She isn't twenty-one. Plain and simple. She admitted as much to witnesses."

11. I opened my mouth to answer, but Mr. Ebgard interrupted. "When is your next birthday, Miss Brooks?"


“Now you can bake her a cake.” Traft leaned forward on the chair. “Her birthday isn’t the question here. It’s her age. Ask her how old she is.”

“I’m in charge of this hearing,” said Mr. Ebgard. “And you’d best let me run it my way, Mr. Martin, or I will reschedule this hearing for October twenty-ninth.”

I couldn’t stop my smile. I still wouldn’t be old enough on October 29, but I saw what Mr. Ebgard was trying to do.

“Now, Miss Brooks. Will you please tell me where you were born?”

“Oh, for crying out—” Traft slapped his hand on his thigh.

“Your birthplace?” Mr. Ebgard continued calmly. “And year?”


“Seef!” Traft closed his eyes to do the math. “That makes her sixteen. Nowhere near old enough.”

“Who are your parents?” Mr. Ebgard asked.

“Raymond and Katherine Brooks,” I answered.

He nodded and made a note.

“But they are no longer living.” I touched Mother’s watch, pinned to my blouse.

“Oh?” Mr. Ebgard scribbled something else.

“Would you say your upbringing was different from most girls your age?” he asked.

“Cut this tea party talk and get down to business!”

Mr. Ebgard raised his eyebrow at Traft. “Your upbringing?” he prompted.

I thought about it for a minute. Mr. Ebgard’s questions were even beginning to puzzle me. What did any of this have to do with my homestead claim? “Well, I guess it was fine. I mean, I didn’t have folks to fuss over me like some girls I know.” Mildred Powell, for one. If she even got one sniffle, her mother put her to bed and waited on her hand on foot. “I guess I learned to do for myself sooner.”

“How much sooner, would you say?”
"How much?" I wrinkled my forehead. Then I smiled. I saw exactly where Mr. Ebgard was headed. I decided to play along. "Oh, five or six years, I'd say." I nodded. "Yes, definitely five or six years."

"Ebgard!" Traft looked ready to explode.

"Five or six years. Hmm." Mr. Ebgard scribbled furiously on his paper. "Very interesting." He scribbled some more.

"Mr. Martin," he began.

Traft shifted in his chair and smirked at me.

"Mr. Martin, while the law does specify an age of majority in order to file a homestead claim—"

"Yes, and it's not sixteen!"

"It also provides for the ability for a single woman, head of household, to file. Some might infer that the majority age applies in such a case—"

"Which it does!" Traft jumped up. It looked as if he'd figured out where Mr. Ebgard was going too.

"I am going to rule that the head-of-household status takes precedence over the age requirement. And, as Miss Brooks has herself explained, her sixteen years are the equivalent of twenty-one years for other girls raised under more fortuitous circumstances." Mr. Ebgard scribbled one final time on the paper. "I find this contestation has no merit."

I fought the urge to throw my arms around Mr. Ebgard's neck. I was so happy, I probably would've squeezed the life out of him. "I get to keep my claim!"

"Well, to be accurate, you may continue to work to prove up on it." He smiled.

"No hard feelings, Mr. Martin?" I stuck out my hand. Traft looked as if he might spit in it. He turned on his heel and slammed out the door.

I held my breath as the window glass in the door rattled, then stilled. I turned to Mr. Ebgard. "I can't thank you enough."

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1. The language in paragraph 42 is used to emphasize —
   A. the intensity of Hattie’s anxiety about the hearing
   B. Hattie’s physical strength
   C. Hattie’s confusion about the decision
   D. the extent of Hattie’s gratitude

2. Because the story is written from a first-person point of view, the reader is better able to understand —
   F. Hattie’s assessment of Traft Martin
   G. Hattie’s shift from being anxious to feeling relieved
   H. Traft Martin’s motivation for trying to get Hattie’s land
   J. Mr. Ebgard’s intentions during the hearing

3. In paragraph 41, the reader can tell that something that takes precedence is —
   A. pleasant
   B. more important
   C. accessible
   D. more interesting
4 Paragraphs 8 through 10 help build tension in the story by —

F showing Traft Martin’s refusal to acknowledge Mr. Ebgard’s authority
G suggesting that Mr. Ebgard is unfamiliar with the law
H contrasting Traft Martin’s personality with Mr. Ebgard’s
J revealing that Traft Martin believes the outcome of the meeting should be obvious

5 Based on the story, what can the reader conclude about homestead laws in the early 1900s?

A Women could not file a homestead claim.
B Homestead laws favored men over women.
C Homestead claims could not be passed from one family member to another.
D Land officials had some freedom in interpreting homestead laws.
Paragraph 32 is important to the story because it —

F explains that Hattie does not understand why Mr. Ebgard is asking her questions

G illustrates that Mr. Ebgard is intentionally prolonging the hearing

H foreshadows Mr. Ebgard’s decision to uphold Hattie’s homestead claim

J conveys that Hattie is uncomfortable discussing the loss of her parents

Which of these is the best summary of the excerpt?

A Hattie Brooks is nervous before a hearing to determine her right to claim a homestead. However, in the end the land official decides that Hattie is entitled to keep her claim.

B Hattie Brooks holds a homestead claim inherited from her uncle, but Traft Martin would like to stake a claim to Hattie’s property. A hearing is held to determine whether Hattie can continue working the homestead land left to her by her uncle.

C Hattie Brooks has inherited a homestead claim from her uncle, but Traft Martin would like to have it. The land official takes his time, asks Hattie many questions, and determines that she is unlike most other girls her age.

D Traft Martin would like to have Hattie Brooks’s homestead claim and has filed a challenge to her ownership. In spite of Martin’s interruptions, the land official maintains control of the proceedings and determines that Hattie has a legal right to the claim.
8 Which of these best demonstrates the moment when Traft Martin realizes he will lose the hearing?

F "See!" Traft closed his eyes to do the math. "That makes her sixteen. Nowhere near old enough."

G He turned on his heel and slammed out the door.

H Traft jumped up. It looked as if he'd figured out where Mr. Ebgard was going too.

J Traft shifted in his chair and smirked at me.

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9 In paragraph 10, which words does the author use to create a tense mood?

A slammed, jerked

B admitted, witnesses

C empty, thumb

D down, toward