

Nonfiction Reading Test

Maginot Line

Directions: Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer to the text to check your answers when appropriate.

The Maginot Line was one of the largest military structures ever built, second only to the Great Wall of China. It was a series of bunkers, forts, turrets, and obstacles that spanned more than 450 miles of France's border with Germany. Built between 1930 and 1940, it was one of the world's most impressive forts, yet it proved to be almost useless.

The Maginot Line was named after the man who argued for its construction, French Minister of War André Maginot. André Maginot had fought with the French against the Germans in the First World War. Much of this conflict took place along the Western Front, which was a line of trenches across which the two sides faced one another. Both sides dug in deep and each lost many men over little ground. Conditions were horrid for all and there was a **stalemate** for many years as neither side was able to move the other.

Maginot never forgot these awful conditions. He wanted to build a line of defenses that would give the French an advantage in a similar conflict. He feared, rightfully so, that the Germans would attack France again. Germany's population nearly doubled France's. The line of defenses that Maginot pictured would allow a smaller French army to hold off a larger German force. In 1929, Maginot convinced the French Parliament to fund his vision.

Though calling it a line makes it seem thin, the Maginot Line was in fact quite deep. It was fifteen miles wide at some points and varied in structure. There were outposts disguised as houses. These were manned by troops and rigged with explosives. There were antitank rails and obstacles. These were planted in the ground to prevent tanks and trucks from passing. There were bunkers armed with mounted machine guns and anti-tank guns. These were for pushing back attackers. And there were many large and small fortresses along the line. Each had mess halls, lots of supplies, and air conditioning. The Maginot line would give the French a supreme edge in the case of a head-on invasion by the Germans.

Unfortunately for the French, the Germans did not attack head-on. They positioned a decoy army in front of the line to distract the French. While the French waited, the Germans snuck a larger force through Belgium. Belgium is France's northeastern neighbor. The French did have some defenses along their border with Belgium, but this part of the Maginot line was weak. The Germans made quick work of these defenses. Within five days of their initial attack they were well into France.

Once they were in France, the Germans attempted to seize the main forts along the Maginot Line. They were not successful. The forts had proved to be strong, but they failed to hold back the Germans. The Germans had taken Paris, France's capital city. Soon after the French commander ordered his men to stand down. He commanded the French defenders to leave their bases along the Maginot Line. These soldiers were then taken to POW camps.

While the Maginot Line did not work in the way that the French had hoped, they did benefit by having built it. Belgium and England were strong allies. England had pledged to protect Belgium. Belgium declared itself a neutral country, one which wanted to stay out of wars. When Germany invaded Belgium to bypass the Maginot Line, they violated Belgium's neutrality. This led to England entering the war sooner.

Though the Maginot Line is no longer used militarily, many of the buildings remain. Some of the forts are now wine cellars or mushroom farms. One was turned into a disco club. Today the Maginot Line is often used as a metaphor. People may refer to a failed project in which someone placed a lot of hope as a Maginot Line. Also, the Maginot Line lives on as the best-known symbol of the common saying that "generals always fight the last war."

1. Which of the following statements is **true**?
 - a. The Maginot Line provided absolutely no benefit to the French.
 - b. The Maginot Line is still used by the French army today.
 - c. Maginot's experiences during WWI led to his support for the line.
 - d. The French were betrayed by the Belgians during World War II.

2. Which best expresses the author's purpose in writing the fourth paragraph?
 - a. To persuade readers that the Maginot Line was not at all thin.
 - b. To inform readers of the types of defenses along the Maginot Line.
 - c. To describe what the inside of the Maginot Line looked like.
 - d. To compare and contrast defenses along the Maginot Line.

3. Which best describes the weakness of the Maginot Line?
 - a. It was built from cheap material and could not resist attack.
 - b. Poor screening let spies take control of the forts from within.
 - c. The line was not fortified along France's border with Belgium.
 - d. The French underestimated the power of newer German tanks.

4. Which of the following is a **false** statement?
 - a. André Maginot fought against the French in the First World War.
 - b. André Maginot served as the Minister of War for France.
 - c. The Maginot Line is named after André Maginot.
 - d. After WWI, André Maginot believed that Germany would attack France again.

5. Which best explains why André Maginot wanted to build up France's defense rather than their offense?
 - a. After WWI, France and Germany became history's greatest allies.
 - b. France needed protection from the Germans and the hostile Belgians.
 - c. Maginot feared that French commanders might invade Germany if they had the power.
 - d. France had far fewer people than Germany and needed to save manpower.

6. Which best defines the meaning of the word *stalemate* as it is used in the second paragraph?
 - a. When troops lose morale because they miss their families
 - b. When two sides are locked in a draw
 - c. When breathing is made difficult by foul odors
 - d. When one side has a large advantage over the other

7. Which best expresses the main idea of the last paragraph of this text?
 - a. It describes how the Maginot Line is still used today.
 - b. It restates the main points of the text.
 - c. It discusses how the French used the Maginot Line during World War II.
 - d. It explains how the Maginot Line is used as a symbol.

