

Reading Retake Practice

Reading Selection #1

This article from The New Yorker magazine explains how one determined person obtained her desired job. Read the article and answer the questions that follow.

Lego **from *The New Yorker*** **January 14, 1991**

1 Growing up in Queens in the sixties and seventies, Francie Berger knew exactly what she wanted from life: more Lego building bricks. She received her first set, a gift from her parents, when she was three. Gradually, she added to her holdings. She liked to build houses, and she wished that she could build bigger ones. As a teenager, she began writing to Lego Systems, Inc., the American division of the toy's Danish manufacturer, to ask if she could order, say, two million standard red bricks. The company said that she could not. In college—where she majored in architecture, figuring that building real houses was the adult occupation that came closest to her favorite activity—she wrote more letters. At some point, it occurred to her that she might be able to get a job at Lego itself. She began calling the company on a monthly basis, and she once dropped by its headquarters, in Enfield, Connecticut. “By then,” Berger recalls, “they knew who I was.” The person who was dispatched to get rid of her told her to send a resume, by mail, after graduation. Undeterred, she spent part of her senior

year using Lego bricks to build a scale model of a farm. The model served both as her senior thesis and as a job application. Seeing no way out, Lego hired her, in 1984, for a three-week trial period. She has been with the company ever since, and is perhaps the most satisfied worker in the history of employment.

2 Berger's job is building things out of Lego bricks. Her works include the six-foot-tall red-bearded pirate that stands in the Lego department of F.A.O. Schwartz, on Fifth Avenue, and the six-foot-tall roller coaster, part of an animal amusement park, in the window of the Toys “R” Us in Herald Square. They also include the thirteen-foot-tall (and twenty-seven-and-a-half-foot-wide) replica of the United States Capitol which, along with a number of models of other national landmarks and monuments, recently spent a little more than a month on display at A. & S. Plaza, on West Thirty-third Street. All these models are made entirely of Lego bricks (the Capitol contains more than half a million), and all were assembled by Lego's staff of model-designers and model-

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builders, of which Berger is the head. The company uses the models as promotions. The Capitol was part of a travelling show that visited ten shopping malls during 1990 and is now in the process of being split up and parcelled out to various children's museums. Most people, upon seeing the Capitol model, have two reactions. The first is "Hey, the White House!" The second is "I can't believe somebody built that out of Lego bricks!"

- 3 "When we build a model, we don't use any bricks that you can't buy in stores, and we don't alter them or cut them or do anything weird to them," Berger told us not long ago, when we went to visit her in Enfield. "First, the designers draw the model on special graph paper that is scaled to the bricks. Then they build a prototype without gluing it, to prove that it can be done. Then the model-builders make an exact copy and glue it together. They also make sure it's as hollow as possible, so it will be easier to move around." Some of the moving around is done in two custom-built air-ride semitrailers.
- 4 Lego's model-builders work at long tables that can be raised and lowered

hydraulically. The tables are connected to an elaborate ventilation system that whisks away fumes from the glue, which is kept in Elmer's bottles but is actually methyl ethyl ketone, a potent solvent that causes the plastic of the bricks to fuse. Once a model has been glued, it can be taken out into the parking lot of a shopping mall, say, and washed down with a garden hose or scrubbed with Formula 409. It can also be left outside for just about as long as you like. The visitors' parking lot at the company headquarters is furnished with an earlier version of the Capitol model, which is kept there year-round. . . .

- 5 Berger's job didn't exist when she was hired. At that time, all the models used by Lego's American division were made in Denmark and shipped to the United States. To Berger, that seemed nutty. Why not build those models right here in America, and why not let Francie Berger build them? Today, she supervises two other designers and half a dozen full-time model-builders. All these people are, in effect, manifestations of her determination to spend her life doing the thing she likes best.

"Lego" by David Owen, from the January 14, 1991 issue of *The New Yorker* magazine.

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Multiple-Choice Questions

1. According to this article, why did Francie Berger major in architecture?
 - A. Architecture reminded her of playing with Lego bricks.
 - B. Her father, an architect, wanted her to enter his occupation.
 - C. Lego Systems, Inc. encouraged her to be an architect.
 - D. Architecture is a very high-paying profession.

2. In paragraph 1, the author's statement, "Seeing no way out, Lego hired her . . ." means that
 - A. Lego Systems, Inc. legally could not deny Francie employment.
 - B. architects had proven to be the company's best employees.
 - C. the company was severely understaffed and needed employees.
 - D. Francie proved to the company that she would be a suitable employee.

3. What is the main reason Lego Systems, Inc. sends large models of buildings to various sites?
 - A. It is good advertising for the company.
 - B. They are created as donations to museums.
 - C. The models show special Lego bricks to the public.
 - D. It is the only way some people can see these buildings.

4. When building a model, Lego's staff of model-designers and model-builders do all of the following **except**
 - A. use bricks that are available to everyone.
 - B. draw the model on special graph paper.
 - C. build an exact-scale prototype.
 - D. attach wheels to the bottom of the model.

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5. In the sentence, “Lego’s model-builders work at long tables that can be raised and lowered hydraulically,” what part of speech is the word *hydraulically*?
- A. adjective
 - B. verb
 - C. adverb
 - D. noun
6. The author mentions that the large models made by Lego’s staff can be washed and scrubbed in order to emphasize the
- A. cleanliness of the Lego operation.
 - B. company’s concern for the environment.
 - C. solid construction of the models.
 - D. authenticity of the Lego bricks.
7. Which best describes the content of this article?
- A. persuasive
 - B. autobiographical
 - C. informational
 - D. fictional