Whenever anyone asks me what my favorite animal is, I always say, “Horses!” I like almost all animals—in fact, when I grow up, I want to be a veterinarian. But horses have always been my very favorite animals.

I don’t have a horse of my own. Horses are very expensive. It’s expensive to buy one, and it’s also very expensive to own one. You have to pay for their food, equipment, insurance, and health care, for example. If you live on a farm or other big piece of land, you can keep your horse there, but if you don’t have a place that’s big enough for a horse, you have to pay to keep it somewhere else, which is called boarding.

We’re very lucky to live near a horse stable. I go there on the weekends sometimes and watch the trainers exercising the horses. All of the horses need a lot of exercise in order to stay healthy, no matter what kind of riding they are used for. Most of the horses are used for trail riding, which I think is the easiest and the most fun. It’s nice to go out into the woods or along the beach with a horse. There are a couple of horses at the stable that are ridden for dressage. Dressage is fancier riding, when the horses have to go through precise exercises. These are simple patterns and circles in which the horses walk, trot, and canter. These exercises then increase to more complex movements that are more difficult.

One of the trainers at the horse farm is named John. John used to ride horses in competitions. Now, he doesn’t compete anymore. He takes care of the horses, and he works as a riding instructor, teaching some of the owners to be better riders so that they can enter competitions with their horses. John lets me help him groom the horses (it means brushing them to keep their coats healthy and shiny, and making sure that they are clean) and tells me a lot about them. One reason I really like horses is that they have as much personality as people do. They can’t talk, but they can tell you how they’re feeling with their body language. For example, if their ears are forward, and their tails are relaxed, it means they are happy.

My favorite horse at the stable is a mare named “Vrana”. She is older than a lot of the other horses, and she is the sweetest horse! Sometimes I help John tack her up before she exercises. We only use a simple bridle (that’s the harness that goes over the horse’s head) and a saddle when we tack up the horses. I’ve ridden Vrana a few times when she exercises. First she walks around the ring, then she trots (a little faster), and then she canters. Vrana always knows what to do. I just pinch my knees in a tiny bit, and it’s like she can read my mind! Even though Vrana is a very safe horse, of course I always wear a helmet when I ride her.

John says that maybe, when I get a little older, I could get a job at the stable. Then I could be around horses all the time. I’m trying to learn as much about horses as I can now, so that I’ll be really qualified. I would love to have a job like that!
HORSES!
Read the following questions. Circle the answer that best completes the sentence.

1. Horses are expensive…
   a. to buy, but not to own.
   b. to buy and to own.
   c. to own, but not to buy.
   d. if you live near a stable.

2. If you own a horse, you need to pay for
   a. food.
   b. health care.
   c. insurance.
   d. all of the above

3. Trail riding is
   a. taking a horse for exercise.
   b. the same as dressage.
   c. riding horses on trails, away from the main road.
   d. only good on weekends.

4. Dressage is
   a. getting ready to go to a party.
   b. the same as trail riding.
   c. horses going through precise exercises.
   d. a soft tail and a shiny coat.

5. John works as a riding instructor. An instructor…
   a. teaches someone how to do something.
   b. grooms horses.
   c. works at a horse stable.
   d. doesn’t compete anymore.

   a. talking with your mouth.
   b. using words to describe your feelings.
   c. ears are forward and tails are relaxed.
   d. showing someone how you feel with your gestures.

7. In the story, the horse named Vrana is a mare. A mare is probably
   a. a female horse.
   b. a riding instructor.
   c. a pony.
   d. a male horse.

8. A good title for this story would be
   a. Why I Want to be a Veterinarian
   b. My Friend John, the Riding Instructor
   c. My Favorite Animal
   d. Grooming and Tacking Up Your Horse
Horses: Reading Comprehension

Name___________________________________________________ Date______________

HORSES!
Answers

1. b
2. d
3. c
4. c
5. a
6. d
7. a
8. c