

SAMPLE READING ASSESSMENT GUIDELINE RESPONSES

On the Decay of the Art of Lying by Mark Twain

1. Using context clues or other **vocabulary** strategies, give an appropriate definition for these words according to the way they are used in the article.

- **diffidence** (paragraph 1)
shyness or timidity; uncertainty; lack of confidence

- **uncultivated**(paragraph 2)
lacking education or skill; undeveloped

- **bemoan** (paragraph 7)
to express grief or regret; to complain

2. **Restate** one of the following passages in your own words:

- “An awkward, unscientific lie is often as ineffectual as the truth” (paragraph 12).

A lie that isn’t planned out and told well is as useless as telling the truth.

- “Among other common lies, we have the ‘silent’ lie—the deception which one conveys by simply keeping still and concealing the truth. Many obstinate truth-mongers indulge in this dissipation, imagining that if they *speak* no lie, they lie not at all” (paragraph 9).

One kind of lie is hiding what we really think by not saying anything at all—this kind of lying is preferred by those who claim to be truthful because they think that hiding the truth is the same as telling the truth.

Identify a specifically stated **comparison** made by the author. Be sure your answer mentions the two items being compared and a reason why they are similar to each other.

P#1—A lie is like a virtue; a lie is like an art; a novice liar telling an experienced liar how to lie well is like a childless person trying to tell mothers how to raise children

P#2—A poorly told lie is like the truth (because they both dangerous)

P#3—Children and fools are alike (because they both speak the truth)

P#6—Polite lying that is done well is like a beautiful piece of architecture

P#7—A hurtful lie and a hurtful truth are the same (because “neither should ever be uttered”)

P#8— A hurtful lie and a hurtful truth are the same (because they are both “uncommendable”)

P#10—Leaving the answer blank is the same as lying (because neither provides the truth); the lady and the undertaker are alike (because they both have an “interest” or involvement in the upcoming funeral)

P#13—Any person is like every other person (because they all lie)

3. Identify a specifically stated **contrast** made by the author. Be sure your answer mentions the two items being contrasted and a reason why they are different from each other.

P#1—Twain’s intentions are different from what he actually does (Twain said he would confine himself to generalities but he mentioned specifics—like Mr. Per—a lawyer

P#2—The “ignorant uncultivated liar” and the “educated liar” are not alike

P#3—What people think (that they never lie) and the reality (that they all DO lie) are not alike

P#4—The way the ladies act (as if they WANTED to see the people they visited) and the way they actually feel are different

P#5—The way the men act and the way the men feel are not alike; the way one responds to a polite question and the way one feels are not alike

P#9—The subjects that can be discussed when the children are present and those that can be discussed when they are absent are not alike

P#10—What the lady thinks of the nurse’s behavior and what she wrote on the form are not alike; Willie’s family’s expectations and the reality are not alike

P#11—The truth as the lady believed it to be and the truth as Twain knew it to be were not alike (because Twain lied to the lady)

Identify a specifically stated **cause→effect relationship** made by the author.

P#1 While the club remains→lying will not perish from the earth

P#1 High-minded man contemplating the slovenly lying of today→will grieve

P#1 Twain's perception that he is just a beginner at lying→makes him hesitant about giving advice to expert liars

P#2 Education in lying→results in better, more artful lying

P#2 With careful and diligent cultivation→a virtue, like lying, reaches its highest usefulness

P#3 Foolishness (children and fools)→always speaks the truth: adults and wise persons→never speak the truth

P#4 If the iron-souled truth-monger would utter that he didn't want to see those people→he would inflict totally unnecessary pain

P#5 When the men of the country greeted a passer-by with a howdy-do→the passer-by would lie in return

P#6 Courteous lying is an art→it should be studied or cultivated

P#7 If a man tells a lie to help a poor devil out of trouble→the angels would say there goes a heroic soul who casts his own welfare in jeopardy

P#9 Twain's accusation of lying→causes the lady to shush him; the presence of the children→causes the lady and Twain to change the subject

P#10 The nurse's failure to wrap the child up→causes the lady to be less satisfied with the nurse

P#10 The lady's desire not to hurt the nurse→causes her to leave one of the questions blank

P#11 Twain's lie about Willie Jones→causes the lady to hurry to tell the truth about the nurse

P#12 Any pleasant lie→takes the sting out of the troublesome expression of the truth

P#13 We all lie→therefore the wise thing to do is to diligently train ourselves to lie thoughtfully, judiciously, and with a good object

4. In your own words, write the **main point** of this article in one or two complete sentences.

Because lying has value and is something that everyone does, we should discuss it openly and learn when and how to do it well.

5. Structure: List 4 or 5 significant ideas that the author uses to develop the main point he makes in this article. Be sure that your list covers the whole article.

Paragraphs 1-2	Claims that lying is a virtue and an art Building a case for lying
Paragraph 3	Explains that telling the truth is often foolish and that everybody lies What philosophers say about lying
Paragraphs 4-6	Provides examples to prove his point that lying can be a kindly and positive thing
Paragraphs 7-8	Argues that the truth is often hurtful and that a hurtful truth is no more honorable than a hurtful lie
Paragraphs 9-11	Argues that leaving out the truth is just as deceptive as telling a lie and can cause trouble
Paragraphs 13-14	Reinforces his point that lying is universal and that we should talk about it and explore the morale issues related to it