SAT Reading Comprehension Practice

Passage-Based Questions | Topic: The 2026 Nepal–Tibet Floods

Directions: *The passage below is followed by questions based on its content. After reading the passage, choose the best answer to each question based on what is stated or implied in the passage and its introduction. Some questions include line references; use the numbered lines in the margin to locate the relevant text. All facts and figures in this passage are drawn from verified news reporting current as of* ***September 10, 2026****; sources are listed at the end of this worksheet.*

Passage

On the morning of August 26, 2026, a massive section of the Langtang Lirung glacier, high in the Himalayas near the border of Nepal and China's Tibet Autonomous Region, broke free and collapsed into a river valley below.[1] The collapse triggered an ice-rock avalanche that thundered down the mountainside and slammed into the Bhotekoshi River, transforming a routine seasonal waterway into a wall of mud, rock, and debris.[1,2] Within hours, the surge had swept downstream through Nepal's Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts and into Gyirong County on the Chinese side, destroying homes, roads, bridges, and hydropower facilities in its path.[1]

More than two weeks later, the scale of the disaster is still being tallied. As of September 10, 2026, Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) reported that the confirmed death toll in Nepal alone had climbed to 1,377, with the heaviest losses recorded in Chitwan district (364 bodies recovered), followed by Nawalparasi East (228), Nawalparasi West (222), and Nuwakot (198).[2] An estimated 5,130 people remained missing in Nepal, even as rescue teams reported that 13,656 individuals had been pulled from the wreckage alive.[2] Across the border in Tibet, Chinese authorities confirmed at least 43 deaths, with more than 500 people still unaccounted for.[2] Property damage in Nepal alone has been estimated at roughly 400 billion Nepalese rupees, or about $2.64 billion.[3]

A significant share of the missing are workers from hydropower construction sites along the Bhotekoshi and Trishuli rivers. Rescue efforts have concentrated on twelve hydropower projects, where roughly 900 workers went missing and an estimated 500 are believed to remain trapped in flooded tunnels.[4] Specialized international rescue teams from India, China, South Korea, and the United States have joined Nepali security forces in the search, using heavy equipment to clear debris from collapsed tunnel entrances.[4] Even so, families of the missing have grown increasingly frustrated with the pace of the operation. Standing outside government offices in Kathmandu thirteen days after the disaster, Sumana Shrestha held a photograph of her husband, a geologist who had not been heard from since the flood struck the Trishuli hydropower project where he worked. “We are here because we have not heard of any rescue attempt on this project, but it has been 13 days already,” she said. “The only thing we have been able to do is pray to God and hope for a miracle.”[4] Another protester, whose brother worked at the same site, criticized the government for waiting nearly a week before requesting heavy-lift helicopters capable of transporting large excavators to the remote site.[4]

On September 7, Nepal observed a national day of mourning, with flags flown at half-mast at government buildings and diplomatic missions abroad. No large public ceremonies were held, however, because search and rescue operations were still underway and resources remained stretched thin. “There are no government programmes organised as the rescue and search operation is still going on in the flood-hit areas,” explained Phanindra Paudel of Nepal's National Emergency Operation Center.[4] President Ram Chandra Paudel toured flood-affected districts that same day to survey the damage firsthand.[4]

Beyond the immediate human toll, the disaster has renewed scrutiny of the early-warning systems meant to protect Himalayan communities from glacial and flood hazards. Investigators have noted that existing monitoring networks failed to detect the rapid onset of the flooding, leaving little time for downstream villages to evacuate.[3] As climate change accelerates glacial melt and destabilizes high-altitude ice formations across the Himalayas, scientists warn that similar events may become more frequent, raising urgent questions about how mountainous nations can better anticipate—and survive—the next collapse.[3]

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[1] Wikipedia, “2026 Nepal–Tibet floods” [2] The Hindu (PTI), Sept. 10, 2026 [3] Wikipedia, “2026 Nepal–Tibet floods” [4] Al Jazeera (AP/Reuters), Sept. 7, 2026 — full citations on the Sources page.

Photographs

The images below, sourced from Wikimedia Commons, show the region affected by the disaster.

Fig. 1 — Floodwater hits the Gyirong Port crossing on the China–Nepal border, minutes after the initial tremor, Aug. 26, 2026. *Source: Wikimedia Commons (public domain screenshot)*

Fig. 2 — Mt. Lirung (near Langtang Lirung), the glaciated peak whose collapse triggered the disaster, seen from Dhunche, Rasuwa District. *Photo: Rajivkilanashrestha / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0*

Fig. 3 — The Bhotekoshi and Lende Khola rivers in Rasuwa District, the waterway that carried the flood downstream into Nepal. *Photo: Krish Dulal / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0*

Questions 1–12

Answer the following questions based on the passage. Choose the best answer among the four choices given for each question.

1. Which choice best states the main purpose of the passage?

A) To argue that Nepal's government mishandled disaster relief efforts
B) To describe the causes, human toll, and ongoing consequences of a major Himalayan flood disaster
C) To explain the geology of glacier collapse in the Himalayas
D) To compare Nepal's disaster response with that of other countries

2. As used in line 1 (“a massive section…collapsed into a river valley below”), the word “massive” most nearly means

A) numerous
B) extremely large
C) solid
D) heavy with metal

3. According to the passage, what specifically triggered the flash floods of August 26, 2026?

A) Weeks of unusually heavy monsoon rainfall
B) A collapsing section of the Langtang Lirung glacier that caused an ice-rock avalanche
C) The failure of a hydropower dam upstream
D) An earthquake along the Nepal-Tibet border

4. Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

A) “More than two weeks later, the scale of the disaster is still being tallied.”
B) “a massive section of the Langtang Lirung glacier...broke free and collapsed into a river valley below”
C) “Property damage in Nepal alone has been estimated at roughly 400 billion Nepalese rupees”
D) “No large public ceremonies were held, however, because search and rescue operations were still underway”

5. Based on the second paragraph, which Nepali district recorded the highest number of recovered bodies as of September 10, 2026?

A) Nuwakot
B) Nawalparasi East
C) Chitwan
D) Rasuwa

6. The passage indicates that, as of September 10, 2026, approximately how many people remained missing in Nepal alone?

A) 1,377
B) 13,656
C) 5,130
D) 43

7. Why does the author most likely include the quotation from Sumana Shrestha?

A) To provide expert scientific analysis of the flood's causes
B) To illustrate the emotional toll on families still waiting for news of missing relatives
C) To criticize international rescue teams for their slow response
D) To explain how hydropower projects are typically constructed

8. As used in the passage, the phrase “stretched thin” (paragraph 4) most nearly means

A) physically expanded
B) insufficient to meet demand
C) flexible and adaptable
D) evenly distributed

9. Which choice best describes the relationship between paragraphs 3 and 4?

A) Paragraph 4 contradicts a claim made in paragraph 3
B) Paragraph 4 describes a broader national response that follows from the localized frustration described in paragraph 3
C) Paragraph 4 introduces an entirely unrelated natural disaster
D) Paragraph 4 offers a scientific explanation for the events described in paragraph 3

10. It can reasonably be inferred from the final paragraph that the author believes

A) the August 2026 disaster was an isolated, unrepeatable event
B) improved early-warning systems could help reduce the impact of future glacial flood disasters
C) climate change has no meaningful connection to glacial collapse events
D) Himalayan nations currently have adequate systems to predict glacial flooding

11. Based on the passage, approximately how many workers were reported missing across the twelve hydropower project sites mentioned in paragraph 3?

A) 500
B) 900
C) 12
D) 5,130

12. Which choice best supports the idea that the disaster's effects extended beyond Nepal's borders?

A) “Within hours, the surge had swept downstream through Nepal's Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts”
B) “Across the border in Tibet, Chinese authorities confirmed at least 43 deaths, with more than 500 people still unaccounted for.”
C) “Rescue efforts have concentrated on twelve hydropower projects”
D) “On September 7, Nepal observed a national day of mourning”

Short-Answer Questions

Respond to each prompt in 2–4 complete sentences, using specific evidence from the passage to support your answer.

13. Using specific details from the passage, explain how a single glacier collapse on August 26 led to casualties and damage in two different countries. What does this reveal about the geography of disaster risk in the Himalayas?

14. The passage notes that “existing monitoring networks failed to detect the rapid onset of the flooding.” Based on the passage, explain why an early-warning failure would have made this disaster more severe than it might otherwise have been.

15. Compare the tone and purpose of paragraph 3 (the Shrestha family's frustration) with paragraph 4 (the national day of mourning). How does the author use these two paragraphs together to show different dimensions of the disaster's impact on Nepali society?

Essay Question

Plan and write a well-organized essay of approximately 400–550 words. Support your argument with specific evidence drawn from the passage, and consider acknowledging a counterargument.

16. The passage describes both the immediate human toll of the 2026 Nepal–Tibet floods and the longer-term questions the disaster raises about early-warning systems and climate change in the Himalayas. In a well-developed essay, discuss how governments and international organizations should balance immediate disaster response (search-and-rescue, emergency aid) with longer-term investment in prevention (early-warning systems, climate adaptation). Use evidence from the passage to support your position, and address at least one likely counterargument to your position.

Answer Key & Explanations

Questions 1–12 (Multiple Choice)

#	Answer	Explanation
1	B	The passage as a whole narrates the cause of the flood, reports casualty and rescue figures, and discusses ongoing consequences (hydropower losses, warning-system scrutiny) — a broad descriptive purpose, not a narrow argument or comparison.
2	B	“Massive” describes the enormous scale of the glacier section that collapsed, consistent with “extremely large.”
3	B	Paragraph 1 states the glacier collapse “triggered an ice-rock avalanche” that caused the flooding.
4	B	This quotation directly states the cause identified in question 3; the other choices describe unrelated details (timeline, cost, mourning).
5	C	Paragraph 2 lists Chitwan with 364 recovered bodies, the highest figure among the districts named.
6	C	Paragraph 2 states “an estimated 5,130 people remained missing in Nepal.” 1,377 is the death toll, 13,656 is the number rescued, and 43 is deaths in Tibet.
7	B	The Shrestha quotation personalizes the statistics by showing the anguish of a family still waiting for news, illustrating the human cost behind the numbers.
8	B	In context, “resources remained stretched thin” means resources were insufficient to cover all needs, not physically expanded.
9	B	Paragraph 3 describes local frustration at one project; paragraph 4 shifts to the national response (day of mourning, presidential visit), a broader scale following the same disaster.
10	B	The passage ends by noting that early-warning systems failed and that similar events may become more frequent, implying better systems could help — not that events are unrepeatable or that current systems are adequate.
11	B	Paragraph 3 states “roughly 900 workers went missing” at the twelve hydropower sites; 500 is the number believed trapped.
12	B	This choice explicitly references deaths and missing persons in Tibet, showing the disaster's cross-border reach.

Questions 13–16 (Short Answer & Essay) — Sample Guidance

13. A strong answer notes that the Langtang Lirung glacier straddles the Nepal–Tibet border region, so meltwater and debris from a single collapse flowed downstream through both Nepali districts (Rasuwa, Nuwakot) and Chinese territory (Gyirong County) — showing that mountain watersheds ignore political borders, making disaster risk in the Himalayas inherently a shared, cross-border issue.

14. A strong answer explains that without advance warning, downstream communities had little or no time to evacuate before the flood arrived, which likely increased the number of deaths, missing persons, and trapped hydropower workers compared to a scenario with functioning alerts.

15. A strong answer notes that paragraph 3 has a personal, emotional tone focused on one family's frustration and grief, while paragraph 4 has a more formal, national tone describing official mourning and government response — together showing both the intimate human cost and the disaster's broader societal significance.

16. Essays should be scored holistically for: (1) a clear position on balancing response vs. prevention, (2) specific use of passage evidence (casualty figures, the early-warning failure, hydropower worker deaths), (3) acknowledgment of a counterargument (e.g., limited government resources make it hard to fund both), and (4) organized paragraph structure with a clear introduction and conclusion.

Sources

All facts, figures, and quotations in this worksheet are drawn from the following news reports and reference articles, current as of the dates indicated. Casualty and rescue figures for ongoing disasters change frequently; consult the original sources for the latest updates.

1. Wikipedia contributors. “2026 Nepal–Tibet floods.” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.* Accessed September 11, 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Nepal–Tibet_floods

2. Press Trust of India (PTI). “Nepal floods death toll climbs to 1,377; search operations continue for more than 5,000 missing.” *The Hindu*, September 10, 2026. https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/nepal-floods-death-toll-climbs-to-1377-search-operations-continue-for-more-than-5000-missing/article71451283.ece

3. *The Hindu*, infographic feature. “Nepal flash floods: What caused the devastation?” September 4, 2026. https://www.thehindu.com/infographics/2026-09-04/nepal-flash-floods-explained/index.html — and Wikipedia, “2026 Nepal–Tibet floods” (see source 1).

4. Al Jazeera Staff, with AP and Reuters. “Nepal holds day of mourning for more than 1,300 killed in floods.” *Al Jazeera*, September 7, 2026. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/9/7/nepal-holds-day-of-mourning-for-more-than-1300-killed-in-floods

Image Credits

Fig. 1. “Mudslide at Gyirong Port (screenshot).” Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mudslide_at_Gyirong_Port_2_(screenshot).png

Fig. 2. Rajivkilanashrestha. “Mt. Lirung from Dhunche.jpg.” Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mt._Lirung_from_Dhunche.jpg

Fig. 3. Krish Dulal. “River in Rasuwa.JPG.” Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:River_in_Rasuwa.JPG

This worksheet is intended for reading-comprehension practice modeled on SAT Reading question types. It is not an official College Board publication. Casualty figures reflect reporting as of September 10–11, 2026, and are expected to change as search and recovery operations continue.