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### Comprehension story 19

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow, using your own words wherever possible.

On the morning of October 3, 1989, 18-year-old Monica Young nearly seven month pregnant with her second child, walked into the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston complaining of abdominal pains. Her girlfriend, she said, had accidentally kicked in the stomach. The hospital, a sprawling, state-run complex whose various clinics constitute a medical safety net for many of the areas impoverished residents, admitted Young for observation and test. Included was a urinalysis, which the hospital had recently begun administering to any woman suspected of taking drugs during her pregnancy. The results: positive for cocaine. 05

The second of six children, Young was raised and still lives on Charleston's largely poor and black East side. It is a neighborhood of ramshackle houses, dirty yards and garbage-strewn vacant lot – place that is easy walking distance yet – years in spirit from the gracious antebellum homes and elegant shops of the city's postcard-pretty historic district. Young admits that she was using cocaine – but never more than a couple of times a week, she insists. Yes, she had heard that drug could pose dangers for the baby growing inside her. But she says she was running with an older crowd that seemed to think it was okay – “falling behind the big girls” is how she put it. “ I saw them do it, and I 10 15

just wanted to experience it. I was just living for myself. I wasn't facing reality."

Two days later after her admittance to the hospital, Young was force to face reality when two Charleston policemen came knocking on her door. "Are you Monica Young?" the officers asked as they entered her seventh-floor room. "Yes", came the surprised response. "We have a warrant for your arrest." They said. The charges possession of cocaine and distribution of drugs to a person under 18. (In the past, the South Carolina courts have treated a viable foetus as a human being.) And with that, Monica Young, some 28 weeks pregnant, was handcuffed, escorted downstairs, and placed in a patrol car waiting at the hospital door.

Later that day, still in handcuffs, bound now by iron shackles around her ankles as well, Young was led before Summary Court Judge Jack Guendalia. He set her bond at \$80,000. "I felt I had to put her under some sort of control so that she would not harm the unborn child", Guendalia would latter explain. "I had to think. How can I stop this woman?"

Stop her he did. Unable to make bond, Young was placed in the Charleston county jail. She would remain there for nearly six weeks. "I was treated like I was nothing", she says of her incarceration. "I had stomach pains, but they wouldn't let me see the nurse." She alleges that once she asked for help to relieve her pain, she was given water mixed with cornstarch.

Finally, Patricia Kennedy, a private lawyer who had agreed to handle her case on a *pro bono* basis, convinced Guendalia to reduce the bond to personal recognizance. Young was freed on the strict condition that she live under house arrest, save for daily visits to the country's outpatient drug program for treatment and testing. The message was clear. One way or another, Charleston would stop Monica Young and pregnant women like her from using drugs if it meant locking them up.

Monica Young and a growing number of women around the country, nearly all of them poor, many of them black, are guinea pigs in a new and fiercely controversial social experiment known as “fetal-abuse” prosecution. Spurred by mounting public frustration over the rising toll of “Coke babies”, more and more prosecutors, in many cases with full co-operation from local doctors and hospitals, are bringing the power of criminal justice system to bear on what was once considered a purely medical matter: what a pregnant woman chooses to do with her body.

The prosecutor’s action, proponents say, are a bold and necessary response to an increasingly grim social reality. Approximately one in ten newborn in the United States are exposed to illegal drugs in the womb. In particular, cocaine and its more potent smokable derivatives, crack, have been claiming women of child-bearing age at alarming, drug abuse experts now believe that roughly one-half of the estimated half a million crack users in this country are female. (In contrast, women account for a third or less of all heroin addicts.) As a result, prenatal cocaine abuse, especially in the poverty-stricken inner cities where crack use is concentrated, has skyrocketed. In New York City, for instance, health officials say cocaine abuse among pregnant women has increased 3,000% over the past ten years. And although the research on the effects of cocaine in Utero is still in early stages, it is increasingly clear that a woman who uses cocaine – even occasionally – while she is pregnant runs at least some risk of causing serious damage, in some cases death, to her unborn child.

The most serious consequences, researchers, believe so far, are impaired fetal growth, and premature delivery, both of which hike the odds of infant mortality as well as the slew of complications associated with low birth weight-mental retardation and lung problems, among others. Preliminary studies have also linked cocaine to spontaneous abortion, small head size and birth defects such as genital urinary deformities, heart defects, and brain damage, and to sudden infant

death syndromes. In addition, there is some evidence that maternal cocaine use may put children at greater-than-average risk for whole host of long-range developmental problems, including learning disabilities, personality disorders and emotional withdraw. 70

So far, few cities have chosen to follow Charleston's lead in actually imprisoning women who use illegal drugs.

## Questions

- (a) Suggest a suitable title for the passage (02 marks)
- (b) According to the passage, why did Monica Young fall victim of drug abuse? (06marks)
- (c) How, justifiable was the arrest of Monica Young?  
(Your answer should not exceed 100 words) (12marks)
- (d) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage, using you own words wherever possible
- (i) sprawling (line 04) (02 marks)
  - (ii) impoverished (line 05) (02 marks)
  - (iii) postcard-pretty (line 12-13) (02 marks)
  - (iv) incarcerated (line 34) (02 marks)
  - (v) “fetal-abuse” (line 45) (02 marks)
  - (vi) potent (line 53) (02 marks)
  - (vii) skyrocketed (line 58) (02 marks)
  - (viii) hike the odds of infant mortality (line 64) (02 marks)
  - (ix) spontaneous abortion (line 67) (02 marks)
  - (x) personality disorder (line 71) (02 marks)
- (20 marks)

Spellings, Punctuation and Grammatical Expression (SPGE) (10 marks)

## Suggested answers

(a) Suggest a suitable title for the passage (02 marks)

Monica Young arrest

Drug abuse in Charleston

Protecting unborn baby from drug abuse

Justifications of Monica Young arrest

(b) According to the passage, why did Monica Young fall victim of drug abuse? (06marks)

Monica Young was a victim of drug abuse because her urine test was positive for cocaine use and she also admitted to using cocaine which was a crime in Charleston to for a pregnant woman to use drug since it would poison the unborn baby.

(c) How, justifiable was the arrest of Monica Young? (Your answer should not exceed 100 words) (12marks)

### JUSTIFICATIONS FOR MONICA YOUNG ARREST

Monica Young's arrest was justifiable because it was against the law to use drugs during pregnancy; taking drugs like cocaine during pregnancy harmful effect on unborn babies which necessitates their protection and prosecution of Monica Young would deter other pregnant women from using drugs. This would reduce the prevalence of spontaneous abortion, infant mortality rates, and children with brain damage, learning disabilities and personality disorders. However, such arrest based on medical evidence of a patient contradicts medical ethics of confidentiality.

(d) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage, using you own words wherever possible

(i) sprawling (line 04) (02 marks)

extensive/expansive/covering a large area in an untidy or irregular way

(ii) impoverished (line 05) (02 marks)

poor/needy

(iii) postcard-pretty (line 12-13) (02 marks)

outskirt/

(iv) incarcerated (line 34) (02 marks)

imprisonment /confinement

- (v) “fetal-abuse” (line 45) (02 marks)  
Poisoning/endangering of unborn baby
- (vi) potent (line 53) (02 marks)  
strong/powerful/intoxicating
- (vii) skyrocketed (line 58) (02 marks)  
shoot up/high rate of increase/steep rise
- (viii) hike the odds of infant mortality (line 64) (02 marks)  
increase the probability of death of babies
- (ix) spontaneous abortion (line 67) (02 marks)  
random/unplanned abortion
- (x) personality disorder (line 71) (02 marks)  
abnormal thinking, behavior and mood
- (20 marks)

Spellings, Punctuation and Grammatical Expression (SPGE) (10 marks)

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**Thanks**

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