Virginia Apgar earned her medical degree from Columbia University in 1933. Her goal was to establish herself as a surgeon.

She began as a surgical intern and resident for three years at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital. Then, the head of the surgical department, Dr. Alan Whipple, urged her to enter the field of anesthesiology. It was the depression era and surgery was a crowded, male-dominated field. Dr. Whipple had seen other women fail trying to establish surgical practices. He didn't want Virginia Apgar to meet the same fate.

Struggling to support herself, Dr. Apgar followed Whipple's advice. She received additional training at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and at Bellevue Hospital in New York.

Then, she returned to Columbia University. Here, she became the second woman to get Board Certification from the American Society of Anesthesiologists. She also became the first woman appointed anesthesiologist-in-chief in the department of surgery at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital. Ten years later, in 1949, Dr. Apgar became the first female professor in the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University.

Dr. Apgar soon concentrated on obstetric anesthesiology. This is where she would make her biggest mark. She became passionate on the health and welfare of newborn infants. She pointed out that both mother and infant were patients. Since newborn deaths were highest in the first 24 hours after birth, she decided newborn conditions needed more careful monitoring.
To do this monitoring she developed the Newborn Scoring System. This system was a precursor to the Apgar score, a system that uses Dr Apgar’s initials. The Apgar scoring system became the standard in hospitals throughout the world. It greatly improved infant survival rates.

Basically, the Apgar system evaluates the newborn infant using five observable signs. A is for Appearance or color. P is for Pulse or heart rate. G is for Grimace, the baby’s reflexes and response to irritation. A is for Activity or movement of arms and legs. And R is for Respiration, is the baby breathing easily.

Dr. Apgar decided the signs should be judged twice: at one minute after birth and again at five minutes. Each sign is rated 0, 1 or 2, with 2 being the best score. The scores when added together can total a maximum of 10, 2 per sign. If the total is under 5 at either the one minute or five minute reading a prompt diagnosis and intervention is needed.

Virginia Apgar’s contributions didn’t end with the Apgar score. Later in life, she became director of the division of congenital defects at the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. This foundation later became the March of Dimes. Here, she concentrated on educating the public about the prevention of birth defects and raising funds for continued research. She also traveled the world, lecturing on related medical topics.

Dr. Apgar accomplished much in medicine. However, she also had other interests. She loved fishing and stamp collecting. And she had a great love for music. She was an accomplished cellist and violinist. She even built some of her own instruments.

Virginia Apgar died in 1974 at the age of 65. Twenty years later the U.S. Postal Service honored her with a stamp bearing her picture.

-Originally purchased by EdGate Total Reader in 2006 for use in a Lexile-based reading assessment program.
Virginia Apgar

1) According to the writer which of the following is the most important among the various details mentioned in the text?

a) Dr. Apgar’s great efforts in the prevention of birth defects
b) Her path-breaking accomplishments in assessing the overall well-being of new-born infants
c) Her inspiring other women to surpass men and achieve great heights in the medical field
d) Dr. Apgar’s setting an example for people by practicing a plethora of pastimes while being a super busy medical practitioner

2) With what intent did Dr. Alan Whipple redirect Virginia Apgar’s interest towards anesthesiology?

3) Enumerate Virginia Apgar’s contributions to medical science.

Virginia Apgar

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5) Obstetrics is the branch of medicine and surgery concerned with childbirth and midwifery. Find out three more branches of medicine commonly practiced in your nearby hospitals.
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2) With what intent did Dr. Alan Whipple redirect Virginia Apgar's interest towards anesthesiology?

Dr. Alan urged her to enter the field of anesthesiology because it was the depression era and surgery was a crowded, male-dominated field. Dr. Whipple had seen other women fail trying to establish surgical practices. He didn't want Virginia Apgar to meet the same fate so he redirected her.

3) Enumerate Virginia Apgar's contributions to medical science.

In addition to achieving a breakthrough with the Apgar scoring system, Virginia Apgar made many diverse and noteworthy contributions to medical science. She rose to become director of the division of congenital defects at the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. This foundation later became the March of Dimes. Here, she concentrated on educating the public about the prevention of birth defects and raising funds for continued
Obstetrics is the branch of medicine and surgery concerned with childbirth and midwifery. Find out three more branches of medicine commonly practiced in your nearby hospitals.

Answers may vary.

4) How does paragraph ten complement the overall structure of the text, despite containing little information about the core idea discussed in the article?

Paragraph ten doesn’t have any details about the medical achievements of Virginia, and the paragraph is different in that it gives information to the reader about Dr. Agpar’s free time pursuits. This was a deliberate ploy on the part of the writer as his intention was to portray a well-rounded Agpar, who wouldn’t just be content doing her job around the clock, but would find ample time to pursue her personal interests. Perhaps this also serves to send a message to children, that they should find as much time to pursue their personal interests as they would to practice their jobs.

5) Obstetrics is the branch of medicine and surgery concerned with childbirth and midwifery. Find out three more branches of medicine commonly practiced in your nearby hospitals.