

# Introduction to the Critical Reading Section

The Critical Reading sections (formerly called “verbal reasoning” sections) of the new SAT consist of two basic types of questions: sentence completions and critical reading (short and long passages).

Two Critical Reading sections are 25 minutes in length and one is 20 minutes in length. Since one section of the test is experimental (although you won’t know which one), you could have an additional Critical Reading section.

Although the order of the sections and the number of questions may change, at this time the three sections total about 65 to 70 questions that count toward your score. These three sections generate a scaled critical reading score that ranges from 200 to 800. About 50% right should generate an average score.

The sentence completion questions are generally arranged in a slight graduation of difficulty from easier to more difficult. Basically, the first few questions are the easiest; the middle few are of average difficulty; and the last few are difficult. There is no such pattern for the critical reading passages or questions.

## Sentence Completion

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You will have approximately 19 total sentence completions spread through the critical reading sections of the exam. In each section, the sentence completions will basically be arranged in order from easy to difficult.

### Ability Tested

This question type tests your ability to complete sentences with a word or words that retain the meaning of the sentence and are structurally and stylistically correct.

### Basic Skills Necessary

Good reading comprehension skills help in this section, as does a good twelfth-grade vocabulary. Some vocabulary building books can be helpful, although the best way to build a vocabulary is to read, read, read.

### Directions

Each blank in the following sentences indicates that something has been omitted. Consider the lettered words beneath the sentence and choose the word or set of words that best fits the whole sentence.

### Analysis of Directions

1. Note that you must choose the best word or words.
2. In cases where several choices might fit, select the one that fits the meaning of the sentence most precisely.
3. If the sentence contains two blanks, remember that both of the words corresponding to your choice must fit.

## Suggested Approaches with Samples

### Think of Words You Would Insert as the Answer

**After reading the sentence and before looking at the answer choices, think of words you would insert and look for synonyms of them.**

## Samples

1. Money \_\_\_\_\_ to a political campaign should be used for political purposes and nothing else.

*How would you fill in the blank? Maybe with the word given or donated? Now look at the choices and find a synonym for given or donated.*

- A. attracted
- B. forwarded
- C. contributed
- D. ascribed
- E. channeled

*Contributed* is the nearest synonym of *given* or *donated* and makes good sense in the sentence. The best choice is C.

2. Although it was not apparent at the time, in \_\_\_\_\_ we can see how Miles Davis's performances in the 1970s were \_\_\_\_\_ by what was happening then in popular music.

- A. retrospect . . . influenced
- B. effect . . . modified
- C. fact . . . unchanged
- D. foresight . . . endangered
- E. time . . . engendered

After reading the sentence, you may decide that the phrase *not apparent at the time* would suggest *looking back* for the first blank and that the second word needs to be *affected*. You could read the sentence "Although it was not apparent at the time, in *looking back* we can see how Miles Davis's performances in the 1970s were *affected* by what was happening then in popular music." Now, looking for synonyms for *looking back* and *affected* gives you choice A, *retrospect . . . influenced*. The best choice is A.

## Look for Signal Words Connecting Contrasting Ideas

**Some signal words, such as *however, although, on the other hand, but, instead, despite, regardless, rather than, and except*, connect contrasting ideas.**

## Samples

1. Can public opinion be influenced so that it \_\_\_\_\_ rather than encourages the proliferation of the sale of firearms?

- A. redoubles
- B. advances
- C. inverts
- D. impedes
- E. amplifies

The clue here is *rather than encourages*. You need a verb whose object is *proliferation* and that means the opposite of *encourages*. The best choice is *impedes*, which means obstructs or retards. To *invert* is to turn upside down. The best choice is D.

2. Most candidates spend \_\_\_\_\_ they can raise on their campaigns, but others wind up on election day with a \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. all . . . debt
  - B. whatever . . . liability
  - C. everything . . . surplus
  - D. every cent . . . deficit
  - E. nothing . . . war chest

*But* signals that the first half of the sentence *contrasts* with the second half. The fact that most candidates spend *everything* (and end up with nothing) contrasts with those who end up with a *surplus*. The best choice is C.

3. The critic praised the scenery of the film enthusiastically, but \_\_\_\_\_ her enthusiasm when she discussed its plot and characterizations.
- A. expanded
  - B. established
  - C. augmented
  - D. declined
  - E. tempered

*But* signals that you need a verb denoting something different from the enthusiasm of the first part of the sentence. Choices A, B, and C contradict *but*. The verb *tempered* (moderated, reduced in intensity) is both more suitable in meaning and more idiomatic than D. The best choice is E.

## Notice Signal Words Connecting Similar Ideas

Other signal words, such as *in other words*, *besides*, *and*, *in addition*, *also*, *therefore*, *furthermore*, and *as*, often connect similar ideas.

### Samples

1. We need experiments to discover whether the systems that we have designed that work in theory also work in \_\_\_\_\_, in other words, in the real world.
- A. hypotheses
  - B. fact
  - C. space
  - D. part
  - E. essence

The key words here are *in other words*, which tell you that your choice must be similar to *the real world*. The terms *in fact* and *in the real world* both refer to similar ideas in this sentence. The best choice is B.

2. This treatise is concerned only with the process unique to the period in question; therefore, no attempt has been made to \_\_\_\_\_ phenomena \_\_\_\_\_ to that era.
- A. include . . . unrelated
  - B. omit . . . irrelevant
  - C. re-create . . . germane
  - D. discuss . . . essential
  - E. evaluate . . . pertinent

The words in the first half of the sentence that are especially related to those to be filled in in the second half are *is concerned only* and *unique to the period*. The verb in the first blank is parallel to *is concerned* and describes the contents. Choices A, *include*, D, *discuss*, and possibly E, *evaluate*, are possible. The second blank needs an adjective that will make the phrase *to that era* parallel to *unique to the period*. Choice B, *irrelevant*, would work, but only A has the correct first word. The best choice is A.

## Focus on Signal Words that Help Define Other Words

**Some words or phrases will actually give you a definition or point you to the definition of the word needed.**

### Samples

1. The tools found in the New Mexico excavation are \_\_\_\_\_, as a single implement might have several edges, each with a different use.
- A. ancient
  - B. primitive
  - C. ferrous
  - D. versatile
  - E. reliable

The tools the sentence describes have several edges and several uses, and the missing adjective should fit these conditions. *Versatile* means capable of many things. The best choice is D.

2. The unique world of the film is \_\_\_\_\_, both wholly recognizable and unfamiliar.
- A. contradictory
  - B. realistic
  - C. simplistic
  - D. timeless
  - E. unchanging

The second part of this sentence, *both wholly recognizable and unfamiliar*, is a perfect example of the word needed, *contradictory*. The words *recognizable* and *unfamiliar* contradict each other (are opposites). The best choice is A.

## Watch for Contrasts between Positive and Negative

As you read the sentence, watch for contrasts between positive and negative words. Look for words like *not*, *never*, and *no*.

### Samples

1. A virtuous person will not shout \_\_\_\_\_ in public; he or she will respect the \_\_\_\_\_ of other people.

*The first blank is obviously a negative word, something that a good person would not shout; the second blank is a positive word, something that a good person would respect. Here are the choices:*

- A. obscenities . . . feelings
- B. loudly . . . comfort
- C. anywhere . . . presence
- D. blessings . . . cynicism
- E. insults . . . threat

Choice B is neutral-positive; C is neutral-neutral; D is positive-negative; E is negative-negative. Only choice A offers a negative-positive pair of words. The best choice is A.

2. The chairperson was noted for not being obstinate; on the contrary, the members praised her \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. resistance
- B. experience
- C. coherence
- D. verbosity
- E. flexibility

The correct answer must describe a praiseworthy quality opposite to *obstinacy*. Although B and C are good qualities, only *flexibility*, E, means pliancy, the quality of being flexible. The best choice is E.

## Be Aware of the Direction of the Sentence

Negative words can change the direction of the sentence, sometimes making the logic of the sentence more difficult to follow.

### Samples

1. Tamino's choice of the quest to rescue Pamina is \_\_\_\_\_ not accidental, and he undertakes it with \_\_\_\_\_ and steadfastness.

- A. considered . . . trepidation
- B. circumstantial . . . valor
- C. intentional . . . reluctance
- D. deliberate . . . courage
- E. fortuitous . . . ardor

The adjective must be the opposite of *accidental*. The better choices are the synonyms of A, C, and D—*considered*, *intentional*, and *deliberate*. Choices B and E do not fit this context. The second blank requires a noun that is like *steadfastness* or describes a sterling quality. Choice A, *trepidation*, means fear or hesitancy, and choice C, *reluctance*, means unwillingness. Neither will do, but choice D, *courage*, is what is needed. The best choice is D.

2. The room was in an advanced state of disrepair; not only were the velvet draperies \_\_\_\_\_, but they were also mottled and \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. bright . . . torn
  - B. old . . . clean
  - C. faded . . . frayed
  - D. new . . . mangled
  - E. tattered . . . original

The logic of this sentence could be difficult to follow because of the negative wording. *State of disrepair* tips you off that both blanks must be filled with negative words. Choice C, *faded . . . frayed*, is the only negative pair. The words also fit the meaning of the sentence. The best choice is C.

## Attempt Questions One Word at a Time

Questions with two words missing should be attempted one word at a time.

### Samples

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ predictions of greatly decreased revenues next year have frightened lawmakers into \_\_\_\_\_ budget reductions.
- A. encouraging . . . sizeable
  - B. convincing . . . minute
  - C. alarming . . . negligible
  - D. optimistic . . . huge
  - E. dire . . . drastic

Notice that trying the first word will help you eliminate answer choices A, B, and D. If the predictions are of decreasing funds and frightening to lawmakers, the first adjective must be either *alarming*, C, or *dire*, E, (fearful, dreadful). Now try the second choice to get the correct answer. Since the lawmakers have been scared into action, you can infer that the reductions are *drastic*, E, rather than *negligible*, C. The best choice is E.

2. The government \_\_\_\_\_ that the new laws are necessary to prevent unscrupulous business owners from \_\_\_\_\_ off the profits while the workers are underpaid.
- A. implies . . . dilating
  - B. anticipates . . . privatizing
  - C. infers . . . acquiring
  - D. requires . . . living
  - E. contends . . . siphoning

The only first words that make sense in the sentence are choices A, *implies*, B, *anticipates*, and E, *contends*. But the second word in choice E, *siphoning*, is the only one that fits. “*Siphoning* off profits” is a common phrase and is something that unscrupulous business owners might try to do. The best choice is E.

## Work from the Second Blank First

Sometimes it is more efficient to work from the second blank first.

### Samples

1. Her parents were \_\_\_\_\_ when, despite losing the first three games, Sally \_\_\_\_\_ to win the set by a 6–3 score.
- A. surprised . . . failed
  - B. relieved . . . came back
  - C. puzzled . . . refused
  - D. alarmed . . . attempted
  - E. delighted . . . was unable

There are no clues here to tell you which of the first words describes the reaction of the parents. Any of the five might work. But if you deal with the second blank first, you can see that the word *despite* makes it clear that Sally must *win the set*. Choice B, *came back*, looks like the best choice, although D is possible. That B is better is confirmed by the first word, as *relieved* is better than *alarmed*. The best answer is B.

2. The merger will eliminate \_\_\_\_\_ and provide more \_\_\_\_\_ cross-training of staff.
- A. profit . . . and more
  - B. paperwork . . . or less
  - C. duplication . . . effective
  - D. bosses . . . wasteful
  - E. competitors . . . aggressive

The second blank is something that is provided. Chances are that the something provided is a positive word, and *effective* seems like a good choice. Reading choice C into the sentence, you will find that it makes good sense and is stylistically and structurally correct. The best choice is C.

## Read in Each Choice

If you don't spot any signal words or you don't know the meaning of some of the choices (or if you're just stumped), quickly read each answer choice in and see which sounds best. Sometimes this last method will help you at least eliminate some of the choices so that you can take an educated guess.

### Samples

1. The fertile and productive fields are located at the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Gila and the Arizona Rivers and are \_\_\_\_\_ by waters from both.
- A. junction . . . desiccated
  - B. confluence . . . irrigated
  - C. bank . . . drained
  - D. source . . . submerged
  - E. end . . . inundated

The first word probably refers to the place where the rivers are close, since the fields are watered by both. Except for C, any of the four nouns is possible. *Confluence* means a flowing together, the place where two waterways come together. The past participle must refer to the watering of these fertile lands. So *desiccated* (dried up) or *drained* can be eliminated. If the fields are productive, *irrigated* (supplied with water) makes better sense than *inundated* or *submerged*, which suggest destructive flooding. The best choice is B.

2. Many lawyers now believe that the \_\_\_\_\_ of the tobacco industry is so widely \_\_\_\_\_ by the public that juries will finally be willing to convict the corporations when the cases go to trial.
- A. advertising . . . disseminated
  - B. propaganda . . . credited
  - C. repute . . . queried
  - D. mendacity . . . queried
  - E. guilt . . . acknowledged

If you quickly read each choice into the sentence, you'll notice that some of the choices just don't seem to make sense, sound right, or fit. Since the last part of the sentence says *willing to convict the corporations when the cases go to trial*, the idea that the guilt is *acknowledged* sounds good and fits perfectly. The best choice is E.

**A special reminder: Always read your answer into the sentence to make sure that it makes sense. This will often help you avoid oversights or simple mistakes.**

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## A Summary of Strategies for Sentence Completion Questions

- After reading the sentence and before looking at the choices, think of words you would insert and look for synonyms of them.
  - Look for signal words like *however*, *although*, and *but* that connect contrasting ideas.
  - Look for signal words like *and*, *in other words*, and *therefore* that often connect similar ideas.
  - Focus on signal words or phrases that help define or lead to definitions of missing words.
  - Watch for contrasts between positive and negative words.
  - Negative words can change the direction of the sentence, sometimes making the logic of the sentence difficult to follow.
  - Questions with two words missing should be attempted one word at a time.
  - Sometimes it is more efficient to work from the second blank first.
  - If you're stumped, quickly read each answer choice into the sentence and see which sounds best.
  - Always read your answer into the sentence to make sure that it makes sense.
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## Critical Reading Passages (Short and Long)

Remember, there are three Critical Reading sections that count toward your score—two 25-minute sections and one 20-minute section. These sections will include short paragraph-length critical reading passages, longer reading comprehension passages, and/or paired passages or related passages. The short paragraph-length critical reading passages are new to the SAT. The reading passages and the questions following the reading passages are NOT in order of difficulty.

### Ability Tested

This section tests your ability to understand, interpret, and analyze reading passages on a variety of topics. The passages on each exam will come from four content areas: humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and narrative (fiction or nonfiction).

The common types of questions are those that ask you

- about the meaning of a word or phrase in the passage.
- about the main idea, main point, purpose, or even a possible title of the passage.
- about information that is directly stated in the passage.
- about information that is assumed, implied, suggested, or can be inferred.
- to recognize applications of the author’s opinions or ideas.
- to evaluate how the author develops and presents the passage.
- to recognize the style or tone of the passage.

### Basic Skills Necessary

Students who have read widely and know how to read and mark a passage actively and efficiently tend to do well on this section.

### Directions

Questions follow each of the passages below. Using only the stated or implied information in each passage and in its introduction, if any, answer the questions.

### Analysis of Directions

1. Answer all the questions for one passage before moving on to the next one. If you don’t know the answer, take an educated guess or skip it.
2. If there is an introduction to the passage, read it carefully. It may be helpful in answering the questions.
3. Use only the information given or implied in a passage. Do not consider outside information, even if it seems more accurate than the given information.

## Suggested Approaches with Sample Passages

### General Strategies

- **Read Actively.** Read the passage actively, marking main points and other items you feel are important such as conclusions, names, definitions, places, and numbers. Make only a few such marks per paragraph. Remember, these marks are to help you understand the passage.

- **Preread a few questions.** You may want to skim a few questions first, marking words that give you a clue about what to look for when you read the passage. This method, called prereading questions, can be especially helpful on unfamiliar passages. Try it on a variety of passages to see how it works for you.
- **Pace yourself.** Don't get stuck on the passage or on any one question. If you have difficulty with one question, either take an educated guess by eliminating some choices or leave it blank and return to it briefly before you read the next passage (if there is more than one passage).
- **Answers are from information given or implied.** Base your answer on what you read in the passage, the introduction to the passage, or footnotes given following the passage. The passage must support your answer. All questions can and should be answered from information given or implied in the passage.
- **Be sure to answer the question.** Some good or true answers are not correct. Make sure that the answer you select is what the question is asking for according to the passage.
- **Read all choices.** Be sure to read all of the choices to make sure that you have the best of the ones given. Some other choices may be good, but you're looking for the best.
- **Avoid the attractive distractor.** Watch out for "attractive distractors," that is, answers that look good, but aren't the best answer. These attractive distractors are usually the most common wrong answers. They are answers that are carefully written to be close to the best answer. When you narrow your choice down to two answers, one is probably the attractive distractor. If you are down to two answers, reading the question again can help you find the best one.
- **Eliminate.** Use an elimination strategy. If you know an answer is incorrect, mark it out immediately in your question booklet.
- **You can skip passages.** When more than one reading passage is given, you may want to first read the passage that is of more interest or familiarity to you and answer those questions before reading the next passage. But be careful if you skip a passage to mark your answers in the proper place on your answer sheet.

## Specific Strategies for Questions Based on Single Passages

- Read the passage looking for its main point and its structure.
- Make sure that your answer is supported by the passage.
- As you read, note the tone of the passage.
- Take advantage of the line numbers.
- Use the context to figure out the meaning of the words, even if you're unfamiliar with them.
- Read all the choices, since you're looking for the *best* answer given.

## The Approaches

Read the passage actively, marking the main points and other items you feel are important.

### Mark the Passage

**You can mark a passage by underlining or circling important information. But be sure you don't overmark, or you'll defeat the purpose of the technique. The following passage shows one way a test taker might mark a passage to assist in understanding the information given and to quickly return to particular information in the passage when necessary. You may find that circling works better for you or using other marks that you personally find helpful.**

## Sample Long Reading Passage

Human beings have in recent years discovered that they may have succeeded in achieving a momentous but rather unwanted accomplishment. Because of our numbers and our technology, it now seems likely that we have begun altering the climate of our planet.

(5) Climatologists are confident that over the past century, the global average temperature has increased about half a degree Celsius. This warming is thought to be at least partly the result of human activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels in power plants and automobiles. Moreover, because populations, national economies, and the use of technology are all growing, the global average temperature is expected to continue increasing, by an additional 1.0 to 3.5 degrees C by the year 2100.

(10) Such warming is just one of the many consequences that climate change can have. Nevertheless, the ways that warming might affect the planet's environment—and, therefore, its life—are among the most compelling issues in earth science. Unfortunately, they are also among the most difficult to predict. The effects will be complex and vary considerably from place to place. Of particular interest are the changes in regional climate and local weather and especially extreme events—record temperatures, heat waves, very heavy rainfall, or drought, for example—which could very well have staggering effects on societies, agriculture, and ecosystems.

(15) Based on studies of how the earth's weather has changed over the past century as global temperatures edged upward as well as on sophisticated computer models of climate, it now seems probable that warming will accompany changes in regional weather. For example, longer and more intense heat waves—a likely consequence of an increase in either the mean temperature or in the variability of daily temperatures—would result in public health threats and even unprecedented levels of mortality, as well as in such costly inconveniences as road buckling and

(20) high cooling loads, the latter possibly leading to electrical brownouts or blackouts. Climate change would also affect the patterns of rainfall and other precipitation, with some areas getting more and others less, changing global patterns and occurrences of droughts and floods. Similarly, increased variability and extremes in precipitation can exacerbate existing problems in water quality and sewage treatment and in erosion and urban storm-water routing, among others. Such possibilities underscore the need to understand the consequences of

(25) humankind's effect on global climate. Researchers have two main—and complementary—methods of investigating these climate changes. Detailed meteorological records go back about a century, which coincides with the period during which the global average temperature increased by half a degree. By examining these measurements and records, climatologists are beginning to get a picture of how and where extremes of weather and climate have occurred.

(30) It is the relation between these extremes and the overall temperature increase that really interests scientists. This is where another critical research tool—global ocean-atmosphere climate models—comes in. These high-performance computer programs simulate the important processes of the atmosphere and oceans, giving researchers insights into the links between human activities and major weather and climate events.

(35) The combustion of fossil fuels, for example, increases the concentration in the atmosphere of certain greenhouse gases, the fundamental agents of the global warming that may be attributable to humans. These gases, which include carbon dioxide, methane, ozone, halocarbons, and nitrous oxide, let in sunlight but tend to insulate the planet against the loss of heat, not unlike the glass of a greenhouse. Thus a higher concentration means a warmer climate.

## Preread a Few Questions

Prereading can give you a clue about the passage and what to look for. Quickly reading a few of the questions before reading the passage may be very helpful, especially if the passage seems difficult or unfamiliar to you. *In prereading, read only the questions and NOT the answer choices (which aren't included in the following examples). Notice that you should mark (underline or circle) what the question is asking. After you read the passage, you'll go on to read the questions again and each of their answer choices. The following questions give examples of ways to mark as you preread.*

1. Which of the following would be the best title for this passage?

Notice that *best title* is marked. This is a main-point question and tips you off that you should be sure to read for the main point in the passage.

2. Which of the following inferences is NOT supported by information in the passage?

Notice that *inferences . . . NOT supported* is marked. To answer this question, you'll need to draw information from the passage by "reading between the lines."

3. According to the passage, which of the following terms best describes the effects of global warming?

Notice that *best describes . . . effects of global warming* is marked. You now know that the passage involves the effects of global warming.

4. Which of the following best describes the author's tone in this passage?

The words *author's tone* are marked here. You now know to pay special attention to the tone of the passage.

After such prereading and marking of the questions, you should go back and read the passage actively. The passage is reprinted here without the marking. Try marking it yourself this time before you go on to the sample questions that follow.

**Questions 1–8 are based on the following reading passage.**

Human beings have in recent years discovered that they may have succeeded in achieving a momentous but rather unwanted accomplishment. Because of our numbers and our technology, it now seems likely that we have begun altering the climate of our planet.

- (5) Climatologists are confident that over the past century, the global average temperature has increased about half a degree Celsius. This warming is thought to be at least partly the result of human activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels in power plants and automobiles. Moreover, because populations, national economies, and the use of technology are all growing, the global average temperature is expected to continue increasing, by an additional 1.0 to 3.5 degrees C by the year 2100.

- (10) Such warming is just one of the many consequences that climate change can have. Nevertheless, the ways that warming might affect the planet's environment—and, therefore, its life—are among the most compelling issues in earth science. Unfortunately, they are also among the most difficult to predict. The effects will be complex and vary considerably from place to place. Of particular interest are the changes in regional climate and local weather and especially extreme events—record temperatures, heat waves, very heavy rainfall, or drought, for example—which could very well have staggering effects on societies, agriculture, and ecosystems.

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- (20) Climate change would also affect the patterns of rainfall and other precipitation, with some areas getting more and others less, changing global patterns and occurrences of droughts and floods. Similarly, increased variability and extremes in precipitation can exacerbate existing problems in water quality and sewage treatment and in erosion and urban storm-water routing, among others. Such possibilities underscore the need to understand the consequences of humankind's effect on global climate.

Researchers have two main—and complementary—methods of investigating these climate changes. Detailed meteorological records go back about a century, which coincides with the period during which the global average temperature increased by half a degree. By examining these measurements and records, climatologists are beginning to get a picture of how and where extremes of weather and climate have occurred.

- (30) It is the relation between these extremes and the overall temperature increase that really interests scientists. This is where another critical research tool—global ocean-atmosphere climate models—comes in. These high-performance computer programs simulate the important processes of the atmosphere and oceans, giving researchers insights into the links between human activities and major weather and climate events.

- (35) The combustion of fossil fuels, for example, increases the concentration in the atmosphere of certain greenhouse gases, the fundamental agents of the global warming that may be attributable to humans. These gases, which include carbon dioxide, methane, ozone, halocarbons, and nitrous oxide, let in sunlight but tend to insulate the planet against the loss of heat, not unlike the glass of a greenhouse. Thus a higher concentration means a warmer climate.

## Read the Passage Looking for Its Main Point and Structure

As you read the passage, try to focus on “what the author is really saying” or “what point the author is trying to make.” There are many ways to ask about the main point of a passage.

1. Which of the following would be the best title for this passage?
  - A. The History of Climate
  - B. Fossil Fuels and Greenhouse Gases
  - C. Extremes of Climate
  - D. Global Warming and the Changing Climate
  - E. Methods of Researching Global Climate

Asking for the *best title* is a main-point, or main-idea, type question. Now take a careful look at each answer choice. Choice A is too broad; also, the passage doesn’t actually deal with the *history* of climate. Choices B, C, and E, on the other hand, are too narrow. While it’s true that all of these topics are touched upon in the passage, a title should cover the passage as a whole. The best choice is D.

## Make Sure that Your Answer Is Supported by the Passage

Every single correct answer is in the passage or can be directly inferred from the passage.

2. Which of the following inferences is NOT supported by information in the passage?
  - A. Computer models of climate have proved superior to old meteorological records in helping climatologists pinpoint changes.
  - B. Changes in climate are affected by both natural and human activities.
  - C. Whatever the changes that occur in North America’s climate over the next two hundred years, it is unlikely they will be accompanied by cooler average temperatures.
  - D. Dramatic changes in precipitation could have negative effects, producing both droughts and floods.
  - E. Increased industrialization in developing countries could lead to increases in the rate of global warming.

This is a tricky question, since it asks you which of the answer choices is NOT supported by the passage. The author mentions two ways of researching climate changes but describes them as *complementary*, not as superior or inferior. Therefore, choice A is not supported by the passage. You might be tempted by choice B, but notice that line 5 states that warming is thought to be at least *partly* the result of human activity, suggesting that natural forces are involved as well. Choice C is supported in lines 15–20, choice D in lines 21–22, and choice E in lines 6–8. The best choice is A.

## Make Sure that the Answer You Select “Answers the Question”

Some good or true answers are not correct. Even though more than one choice may be true, you’re looking for the best answer to the questions given.

3. According to the passage, which of the following terms best describes the effects of global warming?
- A. Complex
  - B. Disastrous
  - C. Predictable
  - D. Inconvenient
  - E. Inconsequential

Although it's true that some effects will cause inconvenience, making choice D a possible answer, the passage indicates that more far-reaching effects are probable as well. Another possible answer is choice B, but according to the passage, effects will vary from place to place; *disastrous* is too strong a word and not as accurate as choice A, *complex* (line 11). Choice C can be eliminated, since the passage states that the effects can't be predicted easily (lines 9–11). Choice E is also clearly incorrect; global warming will have significant effects (lines 13–14). The best choice is A.

### As You Read, Note the Tone of the Passage

**The words that the author uses to describe events, people, or places will help give you an understanding of what and how the author wants you to feel or think. Pay careful attention to the types of words—are they emotional, calm, positive, negative, subjective, or objective?**

4. Which of the following best describes the author's tone in this passage?
- A. Alarmist
  - B. Irate
  - C. Concerned
  - D. Accusatory
  - E. Indifferent

Although the author does mention some possible *staggering* effects, the tone is calm and concerned, not emotional as in choice A. Nor is the tone *irate*, choice B, or *accusatory*, choice D; the author presents facts about fossil fuels' role in global warming but doesn't place blame. Choice E is also incorrect; see, for example, lines 34–38, which clearly indicate the author is not indifferent to the issue of humans' effect on global climate. The best choice is C.

### Take Advantage of the Line Numbers

**All passages have the lines numbered, which, in questions that mention specific line numbers, gives you the advantage of being able to quickly spot where the information is located. After you spot the location, be sure to read the line(s) before and after the lines mentioned. This nearby text can be very helpful in putting the information in the proper context and answering the question.**

5. The name “greenhouse gases,” first mentioned in lines 34–35, is appropriate because these gases
- A. are hot.
  - B. are produced in controlled circumstances.
  - C. filter the sun's harmful rays.
  - D. are highly concentrated.
  - E. prevent heat loss.

Although *greenhouse gases* are first mentioned in lines 34–35, the answer to the question is actually found in lines 36–38. You can eliminate choice B, even though it is true that a greenhouse is a controlled climate. Also, nothing in the passage suggests that these gases are hot, choice A, or that they filter out harmful rays, choice C. Although it is true that the gases can be highly concentrated, choice D, high concentration has nothing to do with the term *greenhouse*. The best choice is E.

## Use the Context to Figure Out the Meaning of Words, Even if You're Unfamiliar with Them

**Some of the questions deal with “vocabulary in context,” that is, with understanding the meaning of a word as it is used in the passage. Even if you don't know the meaning of the word, the passage will give you good clues. You can also read the sentence from the passage, leaving the word space blank, and plug in each choice to see which answer choice makes sense in the sentence.**

6. The best definition of “exacerbate” in line 23 is
- A. worsen.
  - B. change.
  - C. cause.
  - D. complicate.
  - E. affect.

As it is used in this sentence, *exacerbate* means to aggravate or irritate (make worse). The passage describes the problems as already existing; therefore, choice C could not be correct. From context, it is also clear that choices B, D, and E are too mild; none of them includes the concept of an existing problem (such as water quality) becoming *worse* because of variable and extreme precipitation. In this case, a common meaning is the correct answer, but remember that the common meaning of the word is not always the meaning used in the passage. The best choice is A.

## Read All the Choices, Since You're Looking for the Best Answer Given

**Best is a relative term; that is, determining what is best may mean choosing from degrees of good, better, or best. Although you may have more than one good choice, you're looking for the best of those given. Remember, the answer doesn't have to be perfect, just the best of those presented to you. So don't get stuck on one choice before you read the rest.**

7. According to the passage, scientists are most interested in the link between global warming and extreme changes in regional climate because
- A. such a link has never been made and cannot be easily explained.
  - B. establishing the link will prove their current theories about the causes of global warming.
  - C. it could help explain the effects of natural forces, such as gravitational pull, on climate.
  - D. finding it will solve the problem of global warming.
  - E. it could help pinpoint which human activities are involved in climate extremes.

It is possible that choices A and B are peripheral reasons for their interest, but not their main reason and, therefore, not the *best* answer. Choice C is not the best answer because scientists are more interested in the effects of human activities than those of natural forces on global warming. Even though it is a step toward a solution, understanding the link wouldn't in itself *solve* the problem of global warming, thus eliminating choice D. Notice that some of the choices here are possible, but choice E is the *best* because it is clearly supported in lines 31–33. The correct answer is E.

## Use an Elimination Strategy

**Often you can arrive at the right answer by eliminating other answers. Watch for key words in the answer choices to help you find the main point given in each choice. Notice that some incorrect choices are too general, too specific, irrelevant, or off topic or that they contradict information given in the passage.**

8. If true, which of the following would call into question current theories of global warming?
- A. A dramatic increase in world precipitation
  - B. A dramatic decrease in world precipitation
  - C. An increase in the rate of global warming following the elimination of the use of fossil fuels
  - D. Below-normal temperature recordings in Canada for two years
  - E. The discovery that average global temperatures were lower 500 years ago than they are today

Since experts believe that the use of fossil fuels is partly responsible, one would expect the elimination of that use to lead to a *decrease*, not an increase, in the rate of global warming. Both increases and decreases in precipitation are expected, and, therefore, choices A and B are incorrect and can be eliminated. Two years of decreased temperatures in a particular area wouldn't disprove global warming; its effects vary considerably from place to place, according to the passage; thus, choice D can be eliminated. Finally, you can eliminate choice E, since it would support the theory, not call it into question. The best choice is C.

## Another Sample Reading Passage

Questions 1–5 are based on the following passage.

Woodrow Wilson is usually ranked among the country's great presidents in spite of his failures to win Senate approval of the League of Nations. Wilson had yearned for a political career all his life; he won his first office in 1910 when he was elected governor of New Jersey. Two years later he was elected president in one of the most rapid political rises in our history. For a while Wilson had practiced law but found it both boring and unprofitable; (5) then he became a political scientist of great renown and finally president of Princeton University. He did an outstanding job at Princeton but lost out in a battle with Dean Andrew West for control of the graduate school. When he was asked by the Democratic boss of New Jersey, Jim Smith, to run for governor, Wilson readily accepted because his position at Princeton was becoming untenable.

Until 1910 Wilson seemed to be a conservative Democrat in the Grover Cleveland tradition. He had denounced (10) Bryan in 1896 and had voted for the National Democratic candidate who supported gold. In fact, when the Democratic machine first pushed Wilson's nomination in 1912, the young New Jersey progressives wanted no part of him. Wilson later assured them that he would champion the progressive cause, and so they decided to work for his election. It is easy to accuse Wilson of political expediency, but it is entirely possible that by 1912 he had changed his views as had countless other Americans. While governor of New Jersey, he carried out his election pledges by (15) enacting an impressive list of reforms.

Wilson secured the Democratic nomination on the forty-sixth ballot after a fierce battle with Champ Clark of Missouri and Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama. Clark actually had a majority of votes but was unable to attract the necessary two-thirds. In the campaign, Wilson emerged as the middle-of-the-road candidate—between the conservative William H. Taft and the more radical Theodore Roosevelt. Wilson called his program the New Freedom, which (20) he said was the restoration of free competition as it had existed before the growth of the trusts. In contrast, Theodore Roosevelt was advocating a New Nationalism, which seemed to call for massive federal intervention in the economic life of the nation. Wilson felt that the trusts should be destroyed, but he made a distinction between a trust and a legitimately successful big business. Theodore Roosevelt, on the other hand, accepted the trusts as inevitable but said that the government should regulate them by establishing a new regulatory agency. The former (25) president also felt that a distinction should be made between the “good” trusts and the “bad” trusts.

**Always look for the main point of the passage.**

1. The author's main purpose in writing this passage is to
- A. argue that Wilson is one of the great U.S. presidents.
  - B. survey the differences between Wilson, Taft, and Roosevelt.
  - C. explain Wilson's concept of the New Freedom.
  - D. discuss some major events of Wilson's career.
  - E. suggest reasons that Wilson's presidency may have started World War I.

Remember that there are many ways to ask about the main point of a passage. What is the main idea? What is the best title? What is the author's purpose? Choices A and E are irrelevant to the information in the passage, and choices B and C mention secondary purposes rather than the primary one. The best choice is D.

**Be aware of information not directly stated in the passage.**

2. The author implies which of the following about the New Jersey progressives?
- A. They did not support Wilson after he was governor.
  - B. They were not conservative Democrats.
  - C. They were more interested in political expediency.
  - D. Along with Wilson, they were supporters of Bryan in 1896.
  - E. They particularly admired Wilson's experience as president of Princeton University.

Read between the lines. Implied information can be valuable in understanding the passage and in answering some questions. In the second paragraph, Wilson's decision to champion the progressive cause after 1912 is contrasted with his earlier career, when he seemed to be a conservative Democrat. Thus, it may be concluded that the progressives, whom Wilson finally joined, were not conservative Democrats, as was Wilson earlier in his career. Choices A and D contradict information in the paragraph, while choices C and E are not suggested by any information given in the passage. The best choice is B.

**Watch for important conclusions or information that supports a conclusion.**

3. The passage supports which of the following conclusions about the progress of Wilson's political career?
- A. Few politicians have progressed so rapidly toward the attainment of higher office.
  - B. Failures late in his career caused him to be regarded as a president who regressed instead of progressed.
  - C. Wilson encountered little opposition once he determined to seek the presidency.
  - D. The League of Nations marked the end of Wilson's reputation as a strong leader.
  - E. Wilson's political progress was aided by Champ Clark and Oscar Underwood.

This choice is explicitly supported by the third sentence in the first paragraph in which you are told that Wilson was *elected president in one of the most rapid political rises in our history*. The best choice is A.

**Understand the meaning and possible reason for using certain words or phrases.**

4. At the end of the first paragraph in the phrase *his position at Princeton was becoming untenable* (line 8), the meaning of *untenable* is which of the following?
- A. Unlikely to last for ten years
  - B. Filled with considerably less tension
  - C. Difficult to maintain or continue
  - D. Filled with achievements that would appeal to voters
  - E. Something he did not have a tenacious desire to continue

Be alert to the positive and negative connotations of words and phrases in each passage, as well as in the questions themselves. In the case of *untenable*, the prefix *un-* suggests that the word has a negative connotation. The context in which the word occurs does as well. Wilson *left* his position at Princeton; therefore, you may conclude that the position was somehow unappealing or something else was more appealing. Only two of the answer choices, C and E, provide a negative definition. Although choice E may attract your attention because *tenacious* looks similar to *tenable*, the correct choice is C, which, in this case, is the conventional definition of *untenable*. The best choice is C.

**Eliminate those choices that are not supported by the passage.**

5. According to the passage, which of the following was probably true about the presidential campaign of 1912?
- A. Woodrow Wilson won the election by an overwhelming majority.
  - B. The inexperience of Theodore Roosevelt accounted for his radical position.
  - C. Wilson was unable to attract two-thirds of the votes but won anyway.
  - D. There were three nominated candidates for the presidency.
  - E. Wilson's New Freedom did not represent Democratic interests.

Your answer choice must be supported by information either stated or implied in the passage. Choices A, B, and C contain information that is not addressed in the passage and can be eliminated as irrelevant. Choice E contradicts the fact that Wilson was a Democratic candidate. The discussion of Taft and Roosevelt as the candidates who finally ran against Wilson for the presidency supports choice D, which is the correct answer. The best choice is D.

## Short Paragraph-Length Reading Passages

The new SAT now includes paragraph-length critical reading passages. These short passages, about 100 words in length, are usually followed by two questions. All of the strategies for the longer reading comprehension passages also apply here. As you attempt to answer the questions to the first passage, apply the strategies:

- Read the passage looking for its main point and its structure.
- Make sure that your answer is supported by the passage.
- As you read, note the tone of the passage.
- Take advantage of the line numbers.
- Use the context to figure out the meaning of the words, even if you're unfamiliar with them.
- Read all the choices, since you're looking for the *best* answer given.

## Samples

Questions 1–2 are based on the following passage.

- Potatoes changed history, or rather, the lack of potatoes changed history. The Great Famine in Ireland (1846–1849) was partly the result of a potato fungus that destroyed the major food source of the Irish and was particularly devastating to the poor. Food relief from the British was inadequate and came too late. Some estimates place the number of deaths at 750,000, with an equal number of the Irish poor emigrating to Britain, Canada, (5) Australia, and the United States. British economic policy—including the policy of *laissez faire*, which argued against state intervention—was partly responsible for the disaster. Among the other culprits were the nature of Irish landholdings, destructive farming methods, and a lack of agricultural diversity.

1. The first sentence of the paragraph can best be described as intended to
- A. create interest.
  - B. mislead the reader.
  - C. provide facts.
  - D. promote a myth.
  - E. provide a humorous perspective.

Note that this question is asking for the intent of the first sentence. You should have underlined the key words. *What is the first sentence trying to do?* Instead of beginning immediately with facts as in choice C, the author chooses to create interest by making a surprising statement (“Potatoes changed history. . .”). The intent is not to mislead as in choice B or to “promote” a myth as in choice D. The most likely wrong answer is E, but nothing in this paragraph is seen from a “humorous perspective” as in choice E. The best choice is A.

2. From the passage, one can infer that during the famine, aid from the British came too late because of
- A. animosity between the English and the Irish.
  - B. poor methods of food distribution.
  - C. inadequate communication about the extent of the disaster.
  - D. the British policy of *laissez faire*.
  - E. the lack of agricultural diversity.

First, you should have underlined the words “infer” and “aid came too late because.” Remember, inference questions are asking you to *read between the lines*. Focusing on lines 5–6 will give you the answer. The British government didn’t intervene in the famine earlier because British economic policy was “hands off,” that is, the less intervention by government, the better—the British policy of *laissez faire*, choice D. It is possible that A, B, and C are accurate, but none of these is covered in the passage. E doesn’t make sense as an answer here. The best choice is D.

**Did you read the passage actively, marking major points? Did you preread the two questions? Did you mark the key words in the questions?**

Let’s try one more short reading passage.

Questions 3–4 are based on the following passage.

- Chipmunks recently challenged the scientific dogma that small mammals were forced south during the Ice Age 18,000 years ago. DNA samples from more than 200 chipmunks in Illinois and Wisconsin were used to construct a family tree showing that chipmunks migrated further south only after glaciers receded. Scientists determined the chipmunks' migration routes by analyzing mutations in their genes. The longer a group of animals remains in one place, the more mutations they accumulate, increasing their genetic diversity. Animals leaving the refuge for a new area take only a few of the changes, and, therefore, the new group has less variety in its genes. The chipmunk populations found in the south had fewer mutations than those in northern Illinois and Wisconsin.

3. In the passage, the best definition of “dogma” (line 1) is

- A. truth.
- B. accepted opinion.
- C. faith.
- D. strict rules.
- E. myth.

*What does the word “dogma” mean in the passage?* From the context of the first sentence, you should understand that “dogma” refers to something held as an established or accepted opinion (choice B). The paragraph’s content contradicts choice A. Since “dogma” is often used in a religious context, choice C might be tempting, but there is no connection between the definition of “dogma” and faith. Choice D doesn’t make sense, and choice E is simply incorrect. The best choice is B.

4. According to the passage, less genetic diversity in a chipmunk population supports which of the following statements?

- A. Some chipmunk populations migrated south more recently than previously believed.
- B. Chipmunks are the most resilient of the small mammal groups.
- C. Northern and southern chipmunks are in fact two different species.
- D. Frigid temperatures change the genetic structure of mammals.
- E. DNA samples are an unreliable technique in establishing a sequence of events.

This question asks you to find *which statement is supported by the passage*. Less genetic diversity in the southern chipmunk population points to the chipmunks migrating after the Ice Age, choice A, not before (lines 2–3). No evidence supports choice D. Although choice B could be true, it is irrelevant, and choice C is simply inaccurate and not suggested anywhere in the passage. The scientists’ conclusions about the later migration of chipmunks are based on genetic information, and any doubts there might be about DNA evidence as in choice E are outside the scope of the passage. The best answer is A.

## Related, or Paired, Passages

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You’ll be given two passages (paired passages) that have a common theme or subject. Each passage in some way relates to the other passage—sometimes supporting, sometimes opposing the views given. In some instances, the two passages are about the same subject but were written at different times—years, decades, or centuries—or in different places. You can use all of the general strategies given on pages 19–20 for these paired passages. In addition, many of the strategies given for single passages are also effective here, but there are some new strategies you can use for paired passages.

## Specific Strategies for Questions Based on Paired Passages

- Carefully read any introductory material describing or giving information about the two passages.
- Note that the first group of questions refers to the first passage; the second group of questions refers to the second passage; and the last group of questions refers to both passages as they relate to each other.
- Consider reading the first passage, then answering the first group of questions, and then reading the second passage, and answering the remaining questions.
- Be aware that the first question can (and sometimes does) ask for the primary purpose of both passages.
- Be aware of how the passages are alike and different.
- Watch out for choices that are true for one passage but not the other.
- Read the passages looking for the main point and the structure of each passage.
- Make sure that your answer is supported by the passages. Some good or true answers are not correct.
- As you read, note the tone of each passage.
- Take advantage of the line numbers.
- Use the context to figure out the meaning of words, even if you're unfamiliar with them.
- Read all the choices, since you're looking for the *best* answer given.
- Use an elimination strategy.

Following is a set of “paired passages” with questions and explanations. Try your hand at marking the passages and the questions and answering the questions before you read the explanation and analysis of each.

### Samples

Questions 1–13 are based on the following passages.

*The following two passages, written in 1960 and 1980, discuss some limitations of television programs.*

#### Passage 1

Despite all this increase in commercialization some—but not all—advertising men have wanted still greater control of the total content of the shows they sponsor. One producer, John E. Hasty, who had made shows for both Hollywood and television, was quoted as arguing that television could reach its full potential as an advertising medium only when advertising men produced the shows. “TV viewers cannot be regarded as an audience to be entertained,” he said. “They are prospects . . . for what the sponsor has to sell. This fact constitutes the show’s reason for being. . . . Thus in a TV production the selling motive stands as the dominant factor.”

He granted that showmen from Broadway and Hollywood might possess certain important skills that affect scripts, talent, music, and choreography, and that they might be generously endowed with skill and imagination. But, he asked, “Does this overbalance a seasoned adman’s experience in mass selling?”

(10) Many sponsors tend to view their television vehicles as total advertisements. The Institute for Advertising Research has begun offering a new measuring technique called Television Program Analysis which weights the total value of a program as an ad for the company. And an advertising trade journal in 1960 observed, “From all indications, a better tailoring of program type to advertiser, and commercial to program, is in the making. Taken together, commercials and programs in many cases accentuate the values of a high-consumption economy.”

(15) Marketing consultant Victor Lebow summed up the powerful appeal television has as a selling medium when he pointed out: “It creates a new set of conditions, impelling toward a monopoly of the consumer’s attention. For the first time, almost the entire American consuming public has become a captive audience. . . . Television actually sells the generalized idea of consumption.” Cases in point to support this theory that television sells “the generalized idea of consumption” might be the squeals and ahs of television audiences on panel shows when prizes such as stoves, refrigerators, rotisseries, and matched luggage are unveiled amid fanfare.

(20) One might speculate also on what it does to a people’s sense of values—especially to children’s—when discussions of significant events are followed on television by announcers who in often louder and more solemn voices announce a great new discovery for a hair bleach. Or, to consider another kind of juxtaposition, a broadcast appeal to aid hungry children in mid-1960 was followed immediately by a dog-food commercial.

## Passage 2

(25) A story’s “newsworthiness” is often determined by geography. Journalist Thomas Griffith describes how he and his colleagues used to argue over “how many people would have to be killed where to make news—three people in an auto wreck in your own town? Ten people drowning in a shipwreck in the English Channel; twenty-five in an avalanche in the Alps—and now the numbers increase sharply—one hundred in an earthquake in Turkey; three hundred in the collapse of a bridge in Bolivia; one thousand in a typhoon off Calcutta; fifteen hundred in a fire in China?” News, it appears, is what happens in your own backyard.

(30) This kind of reporting helps to magnify our provincialism. The average American, asked to draw a map of the world, would probably show the U.S.A. occupying half of the land surface, with Europe and Russia and China and Africa tucked off in some untidy, insignificant corner of the globe.

(35) Television news dissolves meaning in a wash of flashy images. The takeover of Afghanistan is summed up with a close-up view of a weeping widow, the problem of inflation with an image of the interior of a supermarket with a tight shot of the price of hamburger, the importance of gold price fluctuations with footage of gold traders frantically jostling each other to get their orders in. A typical half-hour news broadcast has fifteen to twenty stories. Allowing time for commercial interruptions, that leaves an average of one minute per story. Congressman Michael Synar says this makes for a simple-minded electorate: “When I go home I have to deal with people, and all they know of a four-hundred-page bill is one paragraph in the Sunday paper or a thirty-second TV spot. Issues don’t break that way, but people just don’t grasp the complexity.”

(40) The criterion for how much time a story gets, or whether it appears at all, is not its relative importance in world affairs. “We like stories that have wiggle,” one network executive says. “Sexy stories. Iran has wiggle. Defectors from the Bolshoi have wiggle. Stories about government agencies have no wiggle.”

(45) In the mind of many network news executives, the difference between a good news story and Marilyn Monroe’s posterior is undetectable. Reporters are told to go after the human interest angle to a story—the “people factor”—rather than to explore the how or why of a particular event. Researcher David Altheide once accompanied a reporter assigned to do a story on proposed alternatives to achieve racial integration. As they left the studio, the reporter explained how he planned to do the story: “Just barely give a background as to what these alternatives are. Explain the story over film of kids, bless their little hearts, who have no say in the matter whatsoever, caught in a game of politics between their parents and the school board.” The dramatic peg for the story was thus determined before the reporter had even arrived at the scene!

**Notice that the line numbers of the passages continue from the first to the second passage. The first group of questions is typically about Passage 1.**

1. Which of the following best fulfills the ideal of the producer quoted in the first two paragraphs of Passage 1?
  - A. Music television
  - B. Educational television
  - C. Home-shopping television
  - D. Twenty-four hour television news
  - E. Situation comedy

Because the producer believes that selling is the real reason for television and sees the audience only as buyers, his ideal would be realized by home-shopping television in which there is no pretense about buying and selling. The best answer is C.

2. In line 9, *seasoned* means
  - A. improved in quality.
  - B. experienced.
  - C. softened.
  - D. flavored.
  - E. changed in ability.

Although a dictionary would list all five of these definitions of *seasoned*, here it means experienced or mature. The best choice is B.

**3.** According to Passage 1, television programs may be expected to become

- A. increasingly dependent on comedy and games.
- B. more carefully crafted to sell a product.
- C. more dependent on Broadway and Hollywood directors.
- D. less dependent on depicting sex and violence.
- E. more carefully edited to suit children's viewing.

The third paragraph speaks of *a better tailoring of program type to advertiser, and commercial to program*. The best choice is B.

**4.** The sentence *Television actually sells the generalized idea of consumption* (lines 17–18) is best understood to mean that

- A. the more people watch television, the more likely they are to buy an advertised product.
- B. television is by and large indifferent to the ecological needs of the modern world.
- C. television, more than any other medium, is suited to the selling of products to a mass audience.
- D. game and panel programs which feature costly prizes pander to the greed of the audience.
- E. by reflecting the consumer values of society, television encourages its viewer to consume more.

Although some of the statements here may be true or may express ideas that the passage is in sympathy with, only E specifically paraphrases or interprets the quotation of the question. By showing consumer products and luxury, television programs make the idea of owning more attractive to viewers. The best choice is E.

**5.** In line 23, the word *juxtaposition* means

- A. placing side by side.
- B. sequence of events.
- C. misunderstanding.
- D. unintentional joke.
- E. inappropriate comparison.

A *juxtaposition* is a placing side by side. The best choice is A.

**The next group of questions is usually about Passage 2.**

**6.** Which of the following best answers the question of the first paragraph of Passage 2, *how many people would have to be killed where to make news* (line 26)?

- A. A small number of deaths will not make news.
- B. The number killed in an earthquake must be at least four times greater than the number killed in an avalanche.
- C. Local accidents are not news.
- D. The smaller the number of deaths, the closer to home they must be.
- E. Ten deaths in an air crash in East Africa would be more likely to make news than ten deaths in an explosion in West Africa.

The question asks both *how many* and *where*. The passage makes clear that news, on television, is *what happens in your own backyard*, so a small number of local deaths would make news, but in distant areas, the size and spectacle would have to be much greater. The best choice is D.

- 7.** In the second paragraph of Passage 2, the point of describing the world map an average American would draw is to show that
- A. Americans know less about geography than the citizens of other countries.
  - B. the United States occupies half of the world's land surface.
  - C. Americans have a false notion of the importance of the United States.
  - D. Americans are usually unable to identify the capital cities of other nations.
  - E. Americans' knowledge of geography has improved since television became popular.

The paragraph is about the provincialism, that is, the narrowness of outlook, of most Americans, and the map most Americans would draw reveals how little they know about the rest of the world and how much they overestimate their own importance. The passage does not tell us whether or not people elsewhere are more or less provincial. The best choice is C.

- 8.** In Passage 2 (line 40), the word *bill* means
- A. a statement of charges for services or goods.
  - B. any written document with a seal.
  - C. a list of things offered.
  - D. a draft of a law.
  - E. a bank note.

As it is used here, *bill* means the draft of a law. The speaker is a Congressman speaking of his constituents' ignorance of legislation in Congress. The best choice is D.

- 9.** The phrase to *have wiggle* used in the fourth paragraph of Passage 2 is best taken to mean to
- A. have popular appeal.
  - B. have overt sexual interest.
  - C. involve stars of film or theater.
  - D. move sinuously.
  - E. have serious implications.

As it is used here, *wiggle* is figurative, not literal, since *Iran has wiggle*. It stands for what has popular appeal. The best choice is A.

- 10.** Of the following aspects of television mentioned in Passage 2, which does the author believe should be foremost in news broadcasting?
- A. flashy images (line 34)
  - B. wiggle (line 43)
  - C. the human interest angle (line 46)
  - D. the "people factor" (line 46)
  - E. the how or why of a particular event (line 47)

The author would favor television news that deals with the how or why of events, although television programmers have preferred the four other options. The best choice is E.

- 11.** From Passage 2, it can be inferred that a news story on which of the following topics would be least likely to appear on television news broadcasts?
- A. The computer systems of the Internal Revenue Service
  - B. A local woman's entry in the Miss America contest
  - C. The marriage of a rock star and a soap opera actress
  - D. The effect of flooding on the Mississippi
  - E. Espionage in New York City

The computers of the IRS have little drama, human interest, or local appeal, so they are less likely to be considered newsworthy. The best choice is A.

**The last group of questions usually relies on both passages, comparing and contrasting general ideas and specific points.**

- 12.** Unlike Passage 2, Passage 1 is an attack upon television chiefly for its
- A. parochialism.
  - B. materialism.
  - C. superficiality.
  - D. anti-intellectualism.
  - E. lack of objectivity.

The focus of Passage 1 is on materialism, television as a vehicle for selling. Passage 2 attacks the parochialism, superficiality, and anti-intellectualism of television news broadcasts. The best choice is B.

- 13.** Which of the following best describes the primary difference between the two passages?
- A. Passage 1 is serious in tone, while Passage 2 is comic and colloquial.
  - B. Passage 1, on the whole, approves of television programming, while Passage 2 is harshly critical.
  - C. Passage 1 is concerned with the way that television harms the moral values of all viewers, while Passage 2 is concerned with the failure to report world events accurately.
  - D. Passage 1 is chiefly concerned with the influence of advertisers on television, while Passage 2 is chiefly concerned with the superficiality of television news programs.
  - E. Passage 1 is concerned with the audience of television programs, while Passage 2 is concerned with the programs.

Passage 2, though colloquial, is very serious in tone. Neither passage approves of television as it is. Passage 1 mentions value in only one paragraph. Both passages are concerned with audience and programs. Choice D is a reasonable summary of the two passages. The best choice is D.

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## A Summary of Strategies for Critical Reading Questions

- Read the passage actively, marking main points and other items you feel are important.
  - You may want to skim a few questions first, marking words that give you a clue about the passage before you read the passage.
  - Base your answer on what you read in the passage, the introduction to the passage, or footnotes given following the passage.
  - The passage must support your answer.
  - Some good or true answers are not correct. Make sure that the answer you select is “what the question is asking.”
  - Be sure to read all of the choices to make sure that you have the best of the ones given.
  - Pace yourself. Don’t get stuck on the passage or any one question.
  - When more than one reading passage is given, you may want to first read the passage that is of more interest or familiarity to you and answer those questions first. When skipping, be extra careful to mark your answers in the proper place on your answer sheet.
  - On paired passages, the first questions will refer to Passage 1, the next group of questions to Passage 2, and the final group to both passages as they relate to each other.
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## Three Final Strategies

If you’re having real trouble with a passage or simply running out of time, try one of these three strategies.

- **Skip a difficult passage.** You could skip a difficult passage entirely, along with the questions based on it, and come back to them later. Remember that you can return to those questions only while you’re working in that section. Also, if you use this strategy, take care to mark your answers in the correct spaces on the answer sheet when you skip a group of questions.
  - **Skim the passage.** If you’re running out of time, you might want to skim the passage and then answer the questions—referring back to the passage when necessary.
  - **Potshot questions and spots in the passage.** For this “last resort method,” simply read the questions that refer to specific lines in the passage and read only those specific lines in the passage (potshot them) to try to answer the question. This final strategy may help you at least eliminate some answer choices and take some educated guesses.
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## Common Prefixes, Suffixes, and Roots

The following list should help you to arrive at definitions of unfamiliar words in the critical reading sections of the SAT and PSAT/NMSQT. These prefixes, suffixes, and roots apply to thousands of words.

Prefixes		
<i>Prefix</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Example</i>
ad-	to, toward	advance
anti-	against	antidote
bi-	two	bicycle
com-	together, with	composite
de-	away, from	deter
epi-	upon	epilogue
equi-	equal, equally	equivalent
ex-	out of	expel
homo-	same, equal, like	homogenized
hyper-	over, too much	hyperactive
hypo-	under, too little	hypodermic
in-	not	insufficient
in-	into	instruct
inter-	between	interstate
mal-	bad	malfunction
mis-	wrong	mistake
mono-	alone, one	monolith
non-	not	nonentity
ob-	against	objection
omni-	all, everywhere	omniscient
over-	above	overbearing
poly-	many	polymorphous
pre-	before	precede
pro-	forward	propel
re-	back, again	regress
retro-	backward	retrograde
semi-	half, partly	semicircle
sub-	under	submarine
trans-	across, beyond	transcend
un-	not	unnecessary

<b>Suffixes</b>		
<b><i>Suffix</i></b>	<b><i>Meaning</i></b>	<b><i>Example</i></b>
-able, -ible	able to	usable
-er, -or	one who does	competitor
-ism	the practice of	rationalism
-ist	one who is occupied with	feminist
-less	without, lacking	meaningless
-ship	the art or skill of	statesmanship
-fy	to make	dignify
-ness	the quality of	aggressiveness
-tude	the state of	rectitude
-logue	a particular kind of speaking or writing	prologue

<b>Roots</b>		
<b><i>Root</i></b>	<b><i>Meaning</i></b>	<b><i>Example</i></b>
arch	to rule	monarch
belli	war, warlike	belligerent
bene	good	benevolent
chron	time	chronology
dic	to say	indicative
fac	to make, to do	artifact
graph	writing	telegraph
mort	to die	mortal
port	to carry	deport
vid, vis	to see	invisible