

# Subtests I and II: Multiple-Choice Questions

This section offers you specific examples and helpful strategies to approach the multiple-choice questions included on the CSET: English. Multiple-choice questions make up the following tests:

- Subtest I: Literature and Textual Analysis; Composition and Rhetoric has 50 multiple-choice questions.
- Subtest II: Language, Linguistics, and Literacy has 50 multiple-choice questions.

In this section, you learn about the formats and types of multiple-choice questions on the CSET: English tests. Multiple-choice questions require you to analyze passages, synthesize information, and apply knowledge, which can be time-consuming. Being familiar with the format of these questions prepares you to recognize the patterns quickly and answer each question with the most efficiency. This section also includes helpful tips to help you achieve your goal—a passing score on the CSET: English!

## How to Approach the Multiple-Choice Questions

---

Be aware that five types of multiple-choice questions appear on the CSET: English:

- Complete the Statement
- Which of the Following
- Roman Numeral
- LEAST/NOT/EXCEPT
- Reading Passage

Often two types of questions are combined, as in a question that involves reading a passage and then answering a question about it.

### Complete the Statement

In a Complete the Statement question, you are given an incomplete statement. You must choose one of the answer choices to make the completed statement correct.

**Example:** *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman is written almost entirely in:

- A. blank verse.
- B. rhyming couplets.
- C. free verse.
- D. quatrains.

Answer: C

## Which of the Following

In this question type, you read a short question that includes the phrase “Which of the following?” This is the most frequently used type of question on the CSET: English.

**Example:** Which of the following best describes the fiction of Virginia Woolf?

- A. realistic
- B. stream of consciousness
- C. historical
- D. imagistic

Answer: B

## Roman Numeral

This format is used when there might be more than one correct answer in the list. You must use your critical reasoning ability to determine which of the answer choices contains all of the correct options. These questions take more time than most multiple-choice questions and appear infrequently on the CSET: English.

**Example:** Of the sentences below, which contain a subordinate clause?

- I. T. S. Eliot, who was born in the United States, spent most of his life in England.
  - II. Eliot’s poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is written in the first person.
  - III. Eliot summarized his attitudes as “classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion.”
  - IV. Although his literary output is relatively small, T. S. Eliot is considered a major poet.
- A. III, IV
  - B. II, III
  - C. I, III, IV
  - D. I, IV

Answer: D

## LEAST/NOT/EXCEPT

A LEAST/NOT/EXCEPT question contains a short passage and one of the three terms—*least*, *not*, or *except* (negative choices). This type of question is used in situations that have several good solutions or ways of approaching, but there is also a clearly wrong way to do it. You must select the choice that does not work. Be very careful with this type of question; don’t forget that you are selecting a negative.

**LEAST Example:** Which of the following works is LEAST likely to be understandable to a tenth-grader?

- A. James Joyce’s *Ulysses*
- B. J. D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*
- C. Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*
- D. Pearl S. Buck’s *The Good Earth*

Answer: A

**NOT Example:** Which of the following literary works was NOT written by John Steinbeck?

- A. *East of Eden*
- B. *The Grapes of Wrath*
- C. *The Red and the Black*
- D. *In Dubious Battle*

Answer: C

**EXCEPT Example:** Each of the following works of literature is a frame story EXCEPT

- A. *The Turn of the Screw*
- B. “The Minister’s Black Veil”
- C. *The Canterbury Tales*
- D. *Heart of Darkness*

Answer: B

## Reading Passage

Reading Passage questions are common on the CSET: English. For this type of question, you read a passage and then answer one or more questions based on it.

**Example:** This sample question is based on the following excerpt from “The Cask of Amontillado” by Edgar Allan Poe:

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

Which of the following clichéd expressions is suggested by this passage?

- A. Slow and steady wins the race.
- B. Keep your friends close, but keep your enemies closer.
- C. Revenge is a dish best served cold.
- D. People who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones.

Answer: C

## Other Formats

From time to time, new formats are developed for multiple-choice questions. If you come across a format that you are not familiar with, don't panic! Read the directions carefully. Then read and approach the question the same way you would any other question. Ask yourself what you are supposed to be looking for. Then look for details in the question that help you find the answer.

## Strategies for the Multiple-Choice Questions

---

You will do better on the multiple-choice questions if you have a strategy—a plan of attack. In this section, you review a systematic approach to the multiple-choice questions. Then you practice the strategy.

- 1. Preview the multiple-choice subtest.** As you quickly skim the test, take note of those questions that seem easier (that is, questions that you think you can answer without too much thought) and consider postponing those that seem more difficult.
- 2. Start with those questions that you have deemed to be easier.** Don't waste time at this point with those questions that require more thought. Be sure you get credit for the items you know well.
- 3. Go through the test again, now tackling the questions you left for last.** Sometimes, the simple fact that you have answered some questions already makes you feel more confident and relaxed, and answers occur to you more easily. Sometimes, too, an answer to one question provides a clue to the answer of another.
- 4. Read the question stem carefully** (the *stem* is the question part). Underline or circle important words that might help you understand the question more clearly. (By the way, it's perfectly acceptable to make marks in your test booklet. It is not graded, although it is collected at the end of the exam time.)
- 5. If possible, don't look at the answer choices provided until you think of an answer.** Then analyze the responses available and choose the one that most closely matches the answer you thought of.
- 6. Read all the answer choices.** Be on the lookout for *distracters* or *decoys*. These are answer choices that appear correct in some way but are not as good as the credited response.
- 7. Identify any modifiers or qualifiers.** Watch for absolute words, such as *always*, *never*, *none*, *all*, and *only*. These words indicate that the answer is an undisputed fact. Such modifiers *usually*—but not always—signal an incorrect response. Indefinite modifiers such as *usually*, *often*, *generally*, *may*, and *seldom* are more likely to signal a correct response because they allow for exceptions.
- 8. Use the process of elimination.** If you are not sure of a correct answer, can you be sure that at least one choice is incorrect? If so, cross out that choice on your test booklet. This gives you better odds of making a correct guess if you are forced into that position.
- 9. If you are not sure of an answer, guess!** There is no penalty for incorrect responses on the CSET, so it is in your best interests to answer each question even if you are not sure.
- 10. Mark your bubble sheet carefully.** If you are skipping around, it is easy to make a mistake. Double-check the number on the bubble sheet and make sure it matches the number of the question you are answering. In addition, be sure to fill in the bubbles completely. Do not make any stray marks on the answer sheet because a computer scores the multiple-choice responses that you record.
- 11. Watch the time!** The testing session is five hours. If you are taking only one or two subtests, you don't really have to worry about the time—five hours should be more than enough. But if you are taking all four subtests during one testing session, you have to be very aware of the time.
- 12. If you have enough time, check your answers.** Don't be afraid to change your answer if you have analyzed the question and determined that your first answer was wrong.

## A Few More Tips

- Don't forget that your goal is to *pass* the CSET: English. You don't have to get the highest score in CSET history. Tests like this one are designed for you not to know all the answers, especially in the multiple-choice format. Expect that you will encounter several difficult questions and don't waste energy worrying about your score as you work.
- Don't be intimidated by difficult words or unfamiliar passages. Use the context of the question as an aid in inferring the answer on difficult test questions.
- You don't have to do the multiple-choice questions in order. You can skip around, doing the easiest questions first. Just take care that you fill in the corresponding answer bubble on the answer sheet.
- Feel free to write in your test booklet if it is helpful to you. Underline or circle key words, and put an X by any items you skipped. On the harder questions, draw a line through answer choices you're able to eliminate so you won't waste time reading them again. Just be sure to mark your final choice on the answer sheet.
- Remember that there are no patterns in the credited responses. For example, you might have three Bs in a row as correct answers. This, in itself, is not a reason to change answers.
- Read all the answer choices before choosing the answer you think is correct.
- Make sure that you answer each question. If you have left blanks, time is almost up, and you have no idea about some questions, guess!

## Preview and Practice: Apply the Strategies

1. Read the passage below from "The Law of Life," a short story by Jack London; then answer the question that follows.

He placed a stick carefully upon the fire and resumed his meditations. It was the same everywhere, with all things. The mosquitoes vanished with the first frost. The little tree squirrel crawled away to die. When age settled upon the rabbit it became slow and heavy and could no longer outfoot its enemies. Even the big bald-face grew clumsy and blind and quarrelsome, in the end to be dragged down by a handful of yelping huskies. He remembered how he had abandoned his own father on an upper reach of the Klondike one winter, the winter before the missionary came with his talk books and his box of

medicines. Many a time had Koskoosh smacked his lips over the recollection of that box, though now his mouth refused to moisten. The "painkiller" had been especially good. But the missionary was a bother after all, for he brought no meat into the camp, and he ate heartily, and the hunters grumbled. But he chilled his lungs on the divide by the Mayo, and the dogs afterward nosed the stones away and fought over his bones.

The main point of Koskoosh's meditations is that

- A. Klondike winters are harsh.
- B. Missionaries are a bother.
- C. All living things must die.
- D. Everyone should contribute equally to meals.

Questions 2 and 3 are based on the following excerpt from “The Blue Hotel,” a short story by Stephen Crane.

The Swede backed rapidly toward a corner of the room. His hands were out protectingly [sic] in front of his chest, but he was making an obvious struggle to control his fright. “Gentlemen,” he quavered, “I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house! I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house!” In his eyes was the dying swan look. Through the windows could be seen the snow turning blue in the shadow of dusk. The wind tore at the house and some loose thing beat regularly against the clapboards like a spirit tapping.

2. Which of the following literary elements is used in the passage above?
  - A. foreshadowing
  - B. metonymy
  - C. apostrophe
  - D. hyperbole
3. The last sentence of the passage contains an example of
  - A. metaphor.
  - B. simile.
  - C. alliteration.
  - D. oxymoron.
4. Which of the following authors are known for their writing during the Realistic Period of American literature?
  - I. William Faulkner
  - II. Bret Harte
  - III. Mark Twain
  - IV. Henry James
  - A. I and III
  - B. II and III
  - C. II, III, and IV
  - D. I, III, and IV
5. Which of the following is the LEAST reliable Internet source of information for background for a research paper?
  - A. a Website whose domain name ends in .com
  - B. a Website whose domain name ends in .edu
  - C. a Website whose domain name ends in .gov
  - D. a Website whose domain name ends in .org
6. During the prewriting stage, you might do all of the following EXCEPT
  - A. create lists.
  - B. have a brainstorming session.
  - C. research.
  - D. edit for grammar.
7. Which of the following helps explain why second-language learners often cannot pronounce certain sounds in the target language?
  - A. They lack the physical ability to form the sounds.
  - B. They never heard the sounds before in their native languages.
  - C. Their brains work slightly differently than those of speakers of the target language.
  - D. They are afraid of making mistakes and appearing foolish.

8. The most common root words in English come from
- A. Greek roots.
  - B. Latin roots.
  - C. Anglo-Saxon roots.
  - D. Spanish roots.
9. The most efficient way to find specific information in a textbook is to
- A. consult the table of contents.
  - B. check in the textbook's index.
  - C. read the first paragraph of each chapter.
  - D. skim for boldfaced terms.
10. Read the passage below; then answer the question that follows.

Bond prices fell following release of the factory order data. The yield, which moves inversely to the price, rose to 4.65 from 4.64 percent for the benchmark 10-year Treasury note late Wednesday. The dollar was mixed against other major currencies, while gold prices fell.

Which of the following best describes the language in this passage?

- A. jargon
- B. slang
- C. doublespeak
- D. ambiguity

11. Read the sentences below; then answer the question that follows.
- The woman was wearing a lovely yellow straw hat.
  - She was also wearing a blue dress with a wide yellow belt.

Which of the following sentences combines the two sentences above using an adjectival subordinate clause?

- A. The woman was wearing a lovely yellow straw hat and a blue dress with a wide yellow belt.
  - B. The woman in the yellow straw hat was wearing a blue dress; she also had on a wide yellow belt.
  - C. The woman was wearing a lovely yellow straw hat and a blue dress, which was accented with a wide yellow belt.
  - D. The woman in the blue dress was wearing not only a wide yellow belt but also a lovely yellow straw hat.
12. Which of the following indefinite pronouns can take either a singular or plural verb?
- A. something
  - B. each
  - C. neither
  - D. none

## Answers and Explanations

Answer Key			
Question	Answer	Content Category	Question Type
1.	C	Literature and Textual Analysis	Reading Passage/Complete the Statement
2.	A	Literature and Textual Analysis	Reading Passage/Which of the Following
3.	B	Literature and Textual Analysis	Reading Passage/Complete the Statement
4.	C	Literature and Textual Analysis	Roman Numeral/Which of the Following
5.	A	Composition and Rhetoric	LEAST/NOT/EXCEPT/Which of the Following
6.	D	Composition and Rhetoric	LEAST/NOT/EXCEPT/Complete the Statement
7.	B	Language, Linguistics, and Literacy	Which of the Following
8.	C	Language, Linguistics, and Literacy	Complete the Statement
9.	B	Language, Linguistics, and Literacy	Complete the Statement
10.	A	Language, Linguistics, and Literacy	Reading Passage/Which of the Following
11.	C	Language, Linguistics, and Literacy	Reading Passage/Which of the Following
12.	D	Language, Linguistics, and Literacy	Which of the Following

- C.** Koskoosh’s meditations are mainly about the fact that all things must die. He thinks about the short lives of mosquitoes, squirrels, rabbits, “the big bald-face,” his own father, and the missionary.
- A.** This passage from “The Blue Hotel” provides foreshadowing for the events to come in the story.
- B.** The last sentence in the passage contains an example of a simile, a comparison using the word *like* or *as*. In this case, the loose thing beating regularly against the clapboards is compared to a spirit tapping.
- C.** The Realistic Period in American Literature is approximately 1865 to 1900. Bret Harte, Mark Twain, and Henry James were writing during this time; William Faulkner came later.
- A.** The least reliable Internet sources are those whose domain names end in .com because, as commercial sites, they are often trying to sell something.
- D.** Editing for grammar is not an appropriate activity at the prewriting stage; it is done during the revising stage.
- B.** Second-language learners often cannot pronounce certain sounds in the target language because they have never heard them before.
- C.** Greek and Latin roots often form the basis of scientific words in English, and many Spanish roots have found their way into the language, but the most common root words in English come from Anglo-Saxon roots.
- B.** The most efficient way to find specific information in a textbook is to check the index.
- A.** Jargon is the specialized language of a particular group or culture, and the passage uses the jargon of economics. Slang is informal language; doublespeak is language intended to be evasive or to conceal; ambiguity is language that has the possibility of more than one meaning.
- C.** The adjectival subordinate clause in this sentence is “which was accented with a wide yellow belt.”
- D.** *None* can take either a singular or plural verb, depending on the context. Each of the other indefinite pronouns in the list always takes a singular verb.