

## PASSAGE THREE (Questions 17–24)

Paragraph

### New World Epidemics

- 1► When colonists from Europe traveled across the Atlantic to explore the New World, they never imagined what they would find, nor did they envision the devastation suffered by the native tribes of the Americas because of diseases that they carried with them. Though it was surely unintentional, these diseases effectively reduced well over half the population of Native American tribes, with some estimates claiming the loss of up to 95 percent of the original inhabitants of the New World.
- 2► This huge loss of life resulted from the introduction of Old World diseases into the Americas in the early sixteenth century. The inhabitants of the Americas were separated from Asia, Africa, and Europe by rising oceans following the Ice Ages, and, as a result, they were isolated by means of this watery barrier from numerous virulent epidemic diseases that had developed across the ocean, such as measles, smallpox, pneumonia, and malaria. While Pre-Columbian Americans did transmit infections among their own people, their living environment, which allowed them plenty of fresh air and wide-open spaces, meant they had a relatively disease-free environment when compared with residents of distinctly more crowded cities and towns in Europe. As a result of the lack of exposure to these more serious infections, native tribes lacked the antibodies needed to protect them from bacteria and viruses introduced into their environment by European settlers.
- 3► The most prevalent and deadly disease of this time period that affected Native Americans was probably smallpox. Smallpox is an infection that results in fever, painful sores, and ultimately death, without proper medication. Once this phenomenon was observed by Europeans, reactions varied from fascinated scientific interest to compassion, which led to educating the natives or conversely, to a calculated strategy for conquering the land by purposely spreading the disease. At least one British general, Lord Jeffrey Amherst, took advantage of the compromised immune systems of Native Americans to spread the disease. He employed the strategy during the French and Indian War (1756–1763) by distributing blankets that had been used by previous smallpox sufferers to unsuspecting Native Americans, who were likely grateful for what they viewed as a kindness shown to them.
- 4► Even though other Europeans may not have shared the brutal perspective of Amherst, nor his intentions to eliminate the New World's inhabitants, many believed they possessed innately superior immune systems to those of the Native Americans. Ignorant of the reality of how the human body develops resistance to infection and disease, Europeans were often convinced that their relative health in the New World was a spiritual indication that they were destined to conquer the land. This viewpoint was further reinforced as the Europeans witnessed the natives' often futile attempts to overcome the sickness with their natural remedies. The indigenous tribes attempted to adapt their homegrown medicines composed of plants, berries, tree bark, and other organic substances, but they often failed in these attempts. Used to living in communal environments, whether in small or large groups, Native Americans were slow to realize that quarantine, or isolation of the sick, was one of the most effective methods to slow or stop the spread of the disease. Eventually, compassionate

Some referent words have more than one function or meaning, such as *that*. Whenever you see these words, make sure you understand which meaning they express in the passage. This will help you to determine their referents.

READING



Europeans educated the native people and assisted them in finding better ways to combat the fatal infection, but not before a vast majority of them had been wiped out.

- 5► Although smallpox may have been the most devastating disease, it was not the only one Native Americans contracted from Europeans. Colonists brought a variety of infections to the New World with them, including measles, tuberculosis, diphtheria, and influenza. Each of these presented new and seemingly insurmountable challenges to Native American populations, and each had its own tragic effect on the mortality rate of indigenous tribes. As with smallpox, the transfer of these diseases likely started slowly, rapidly increasing as more settlers arrived on the shores of the Americas and gradually pushed further inland. A widespread consensus among experts exists that indicates these various diseases reduced far greater numbers of native people in the New World than the many battles that were fought to gain control over the land.

17. The word "them" in paragraph 1 refers to

- (A) native tribes
- (B) diseases
- (C) colonists
- (D) Americas

18. The word "they" in paragraph 2 refers to

- (A) the inhabitants
- (B) epidemic diseases
- (C) rising oceans
- (D) the Ice Ages

19. The word "that" in paragraph 2 refers to

- (A) a disease-free environment
- (B) this watery barrier
- (C) virulent epidemic diseases
- (D) the ocean

20. The word "which" in paragraph 3 refers to

- (A) scientific interest
- (B) compassion
- (C) reactions
- (D) phenomenon

21. The word "who" in paragraph 3 refers to

- (A) Lord Jeffrey Amherst
- (B) sufferers
- (C) blankets
- (D) Native Americans

22. The word "those" in paragraph 4 refers to

- (A) Europeans
- (B) intentions
- (C) immune systems
- (D) inhabitants

23. The word "them" in paragraph 4 refers to

- (A) effective methods
- (B) Europeans
- (C) native people
- (D) better ways

24. The word "these" in paragraph 5 refers to

- (A) Europeans
- (B) colonists
- (C) measles
- (D) infections