

PASSAGE FOUR (Questions 25–32)

Paragraph

Edna Ferber

- 1► Edna Ferber (1887–1968) was a popular American novelist in the first half of the twentieth century. Growing up as the daughter of an immigrant father and U.S.-born mother, her Jewish heritage caused her to encounter numerous incidences of discrimination, though none were severe enough to hinder her from pursuing and achieving renown as an author. However, it was Ferber's gender more than her background that caused astonishment among the early readers of her stories. Many assumed from reading her first works that the author was a man hiding behind a female pseudonym, a false name, and were genuinely surprised to find out that the author was indeed female. This mistaken identity was a source of pride for Ferber, since she believed that it showed her work to be equal in quality to that of any man, and further reinforced her popularity as she consistently produced stories of the same high level.
- 2► Ferber initially planned to be a journalist and embarked on her career by working as a newspaper reporter in Wisconsin. While she was recovering from a period of sickness during this point in her career, Ferber decided to try her hand at writing fiction. Her first novel, *Dawn O'Hara, the Girl Who Laughed*, was published in 1911, when she was only 24 years old. By the following year, the prolific author's short stories were being collected and marketed in book form.

- 3► Although Ferber achieved rapid preliminary success with her fictional writing, it was not enough to sustain a living, so she continued in her career in journalism for a number of years after her early stories came out. During this time she was able to expand her newspaper writing beyond the local level to the national level. She covered major media events such as both the Democratic and Republican National Conventions of 1920, which preceded the presidential election of that same year. This work, in addition to her fiction writing, not only permitted her to support herself, but also bolstered her reputation as a flexible writer.
- 4► Her big break came with the novel *So Big* (1924), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Literature in the subsequent year and was quickly adapted into a silent film. The main conflict in the novel is between a mother who places a high value on work and honor and a son who repudiates his mother's values, instead preferring the easier path to fortune and celebrity. Like many of Ferber's novels, this novel features a tenacious female protagonist with strong character who struggles to deal with ethical dilemmas about the importance of status and money. Also like many of Ferber's writings, it contains a male character of markedly lesser moral strength who plays a prime role in the struggle of the female heroine.
- 5► Probably the best known of Ferber's novels was *Show Boat* (1926), which tells the story of a Southern woman married to a charismatic but irresponsible man who leaves her with a daughter she must take great pains to support. In 1927, the novel was made into a musical that has endured to the present; yet this was a production that Ferber at first declined. Her fear was that the tone and meaning of her novel would be made light of in the contemporary style of musicals being produced. It was only when the producer, Jerome Kern, assured her that the production would convey the original intent of her novel, that she agreed to collaborate on the musical.
- 6► In addition to *So Big*, well-known novels by Ferber that were made into films include *Cimarron* (1930), which won an Academy Award, and *Giant* (1952). Both *So Big* and *Cimarron* have been remade, with the first "talkie" version of *So Big* in 1932 and a more prominent version in 1953, and a remake of *Cimarron* in 1960.
- 7► One can speculate on whether Ferber's tendency to write novels with weak males was a reflection of what she observed in her own life or whether the strength of the female leads necessitated an equilibrium found by creating male counterparts for them that were lacking in their morals and work ethic. No definite link has been drawn from Ferber's personal life to that of her characters, since she never married and had no children. Nevertheless, it would certainly not be unreasonable to hypothesize that, within the framework of her writing, Ferber desired to present female role models of strength and independence to young women of her time, role models that they could aspire to become like.

25. The word "incidences" in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to

- (A) occurrences
- (B) issues
- (C) problems
- (D) effects

26. The word "consistently" in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to

- (A) occasionally
- (B) stubbornly
- (C) regularly
- (D) rarely

27. The phrase "embarked on" in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to

- (A) took a trip to
- (B) started out on
- (C) improved upon
- (D) had an opinion about

28. The word "bolstered" in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to

- (A) changed
- (B) damaged
- (C) strengthened
- (D) started

29. The word "repudiates" in paragraph 4 is closest in meaning to

- Ⓐ refuses to accept
- Ⓑ lives up to
- Ⓒ tries to understand
- Ⓓ makes the best of

30. The word "endured" in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to

- Ⓐ lasted
- Ⓑ tested
- Ⓒ waited
- Ⓓ limited

31. The word "convey" in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to

- Ⓐ support
- Ⓑ differentiate
- Ⓒ transport
- Ⓓ communicate

32. The word "equilibrium" in paragraph 7 could best be replaced by

- Ⓐ balance
- Ⓑ uniformity
- Ⓒ distinction
- Ⓓ similarity