

### PASSAGE THREE (Questions 17–24)

Paragraph

#### The Golden Age of Comics

- 1▶ The period from the late 1930s until after the end of World War II is known as the Golden Age of Comics. The modern comic book came about in the early 1930s in the United States as a giveaway premium to promote the sales of a whole range of household products such as cereal and cleansers. The comic books, which were printed in bright colors to attract the attention of potential customers, proved so popular that some publishers decided to produce comic books that would come out on a monthly basis and would sell for a dime each. Though comic strips had been reproduced in publications prior to this time, the *Famous Funnies* comic book, which was started in 1934, marked the first occasion that a serialized book of comics was attempted.

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2► The precise event that initiated the Golden Age of Comics has been debated for decades; nevertheless, virtually all comic book experts agree that the introduction of Superman in 1938 changed the concept of comic books, as well as their perception in the eyes of the public. Previously, comic books had focused on reprints of already existing comic strips. However, the enormous popularity of Superman ushered in an entire generation of original characters known as superheroes, many of which remain popular today. Shortly after Superman arrived on the scene, Batman, The Flash, The Green Lantern, and Wonder Woman were created, along with a host of others. The superheroes varied widely in their backgrounds, appearances, and superpowers, yet all shared one characteristic in common: a noble compulsion to protect the United States—and later the world—against evil.

3► At the start of the Golden Age of Comics, many Americans were in despair and only slowly recovering from the effects of the Great Depression. Comics debuted as an inexpensive way to entertain children and young adults who were not able to afford the cost of a movie ticket. Perhaps because of their impoverished target audience, the first “villains” were often the wealthy owners of industry or powerful politicians. These prominent figures were portrayed as corrupt and unconcerned about the “common man,” and were almost always thoroughly defeated by the end of the comic book issue. Although some villains were able to escape after their losses to return in a later storyline, ultimately the conquering superhero always came out on top.

4► As the United States entered into World War II, new characters emerged that reflected the struggles Americans faced with their opposition overseas. The superheroes were recruited to battle against the same foreign forces American soldiers faced, though in the comic books, the negative characteristics of the opposing militaries were exaggerated and embellished in order to make the adventures more dramatic and thrilling for readers at home. Popular storylines exhibited patriotism and presented the ultimate resolution of good defeating evil.

5► The post-war demand for comic books fell off sharply from previous years, though this did not necessarily mean a decrease in the popularity of superheroes. While Superman, Batman, and other superheroes continued to be featured in traditional comic book formats, they also began to come to life in other media, especially films and television shows. Thus, even as the Golden Age of Comics began its inevitable decline, the enormous contribution of its superheroes to the popular culture of the United States has ensured that its significance will not be forgotten.

17. It can be inferred from paragraph 1 that, at the beginning of the 1930s, comic books most likely cost

- (A) nothing
- (B) five cents
- (C) ten cents
- (D) twenty-five cents

18. Comic books would least likely have been used to promote

- (A) soap
- (B) cookies
- (C) jewelry
- (D) bread

19. It is implied in paragraph 2 that

- (A) the start of the comic book's popularity has been precisely determined
- (B) Superman was not a popular figure when he first came out
- (C) it took decades for comic books to reach their Golden Age
- (D) not everyone agrees on what first caused comic books to gain popularity

20. From the information in paragraph 2, it appears that Superman most likely

- (A) was introduced sometime after Batman
- (B) was a character that first appeared in a comic book
- (C) first appeared in the early 1930s
- (D) was the most popular superhero of his time



21. It can be inferred from paragraph 3 that the villains in comic books

- (A) were eventually regarded as heroes by people after the Great Depression
- (B) sometimes defeated the superheroes in early comic books
- (C) were ones people in the 1930s liked to see defeated
- (D) were always killed at the end of a fight in comic books during their golden age

22. It can be inferred from the passage that

- (A) comic book storylines were influenced by Americans' real-life struggles
- (B) comic books helped Americans understand the reality of the world around them
- (C) comic books remain as popular today as they were decades ago
- (D) comic books had no lasting impact once the Golden Age ended

23. Paragraph 4 suggests that

- (A) comic books promoted Americans' devotion to their country
- (B) comic books depicted the domestic troubles in the U.S. at the time
- (C) comic books reached their height of excellence after World War II was over
- (D) overseas popularity of military-themed comic books was highest during World War II

24. What is implied in paragraph 5?

- (A) Superman remains the most popular superhero.
- (B) Superheroes became less popular as comic books declined.
- (C) Superheroes remain popular in modern times.
- (D) Films and television have influenced the popularity of superheroes more than comic books.