Reading Comprehension:

Passage I.

Henry Varnum Poor, editor of *American Railroad Journal*, drew the important elements of the image of the railroad together in 1851, —Look at the results of this material progress...the vigour, life, and executive energy that followed in its train, rapidly succeeded by wealth, the refinement and intellectual culture of a high civilization. All this is typified, in a degree, by a locomotive. The combination in its construction of nice art and scientific application of power, its speed surpassing that of our proudest courser, and its immense strength, are all characteristic of our age and tendencies. To us, like the telegraph, it is essential, it constitutes a part of our nature, is a condition of our being what we are.

In the third decade of the nineteenth century, Americans began to define their character in light of the new railroads. They liked the idea that it took special people to foresee and capitalize on the promise of science. Railroad promoters, using the steam engine as a metaphor for what they thought Americans were and what they thought Americans were becoming, frequently discussed parallels between the locomotive and national character, pointing out that both possessed youth, power, speed, single-mindedness, and bright prospects.

Poor was, of course, promoting acceptance of railroads and enticing his readers to open their pocketbooks. But his metaphors had their dark side. A locomotive was quite unlike anything Americans had ever seen. It was large, mysterious and dangerous; many thought that it was a monster waiting to devour the unwary.

There was a suspicion that a country founded upon Jeffersonian agrarian principles had bought a ticket and boarded a train pulled by some iron monster into the dark recesses of an unknown future. To ease such public apprehensions, promoters, poets, editors, and writers alike adopted the notion that locomotives were really only —iron horses, an early metaphor that lingered because it made steam technology ordinary and understandable. Iron horse metaphors assuaged fears about inherent defects in the national character, prompting images of a more secure future, and made an alien technology less frightening, and even comforting and congenial.

Essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson saw the locomotive as an agent of domestic harmony. He observed that —the locomotive and the steamboat, like enormous shuttles, shoot every day across the thousand various threads of national descent and employment and bind them fast in one web, adding —an hourly assimilation goes forward, and there is no danger that local peculiarities and hostilities should be preserved. To us Americans, it seems to have fallen as a political aid. We could not else have held the vast North America together, which we now engage to do.

1. Which of the following claims would the author of the passage most agree with?
A. The railroad undermined America's progressive tendencies.
B. Railroad promoters like Poor denounced Jeffersonian agrarian principles.
C. The Americans in general were against the railroad
D. Ralph Waldo Emerson thought that the railroad would harm America.
E. Americans generally supported the development of the railroad.

2. The passage is primarily concerned with which of the following?
A. criticize one interpretation of the early American railroads
B. discuss the early years of the railroad and its connection to the American character of the time.
C. suggest that railroads were the most important development in the history of America
D. describe the apprehension with which most of the Americans greeted the early railroads
E. assert that Americans were tricked into believing that the railroads were beneficial for them

3. According to the passage, which of the following is most likely to be true about Ralph Waldo Emerson's beliefs?
A. He felt that Americans should adhere strictly to Jeffersonian agrarian principles.
B. He thought that the railroad was as important as the telegraph.
C. He felt that technological progress would help to unify Americans.
D. He thought that railroad promoters were acting against America's best interests.
E. His metaphors had a dark side to them

4. Suppose that an early nineteenth-century American inventor had developed a device that made it easier to construct multi-story building. How would early nineteenth-century Americans be expected to react to this invention?
A. They would not support society's use of such a device.
B. They would generally support society's use of such a device.
C. They would have no opinion about society's use of such a device.
D. They themselves would not use such a device.
E. They would initially view such a device with scepticism

Passage II.

A few days after receiving the letter, as I was walking to work in the morning, I saw an Indian woman on the other side of Massachusetts Avenue, wearing a sari with its free end nearly dragging on the footpath, and pushing a child in a stroller. An American woman with a small black dog on a leash was walking to one side of her. Suddenly the dog began barking. From the other side of the street I watched as the Indian woman, startled, stopped in her path, at which point the dog leapt up and seized the end of the sari between its teeth. The American woman scolded the dog, appeared to apologize, and walked quickly away, leaving the Indian woman to fix her sari in

the middle of the footpath, and quiet her crying child. She did not see me standing there, and eventually she continued on her way. Such a mishap, I realized that morning, would soon be my concern. It was my duty to take care of Mala, to welcome her and protect her. I would have to buy her first pair of snow boots, her first winter coat. I would have to tell her which streets to avoid, which way the traffic came, tell her to wear her sari so that the free end did not drag on the footpath. A five-mile separation from her parents, I recalled with some irritation, had caused her to weep.

Unlike Mala, I was used to it all by then: used to cornflakes and milk, used to Helen's visits, used to sitting on the bench with Mrs. Croft. The only thing I was not used to was Mala. Nevertheless I did what I had to do. I went to the housing office at MIT and found a furnished apartment a few blocks away, with a double bed and a private kitchen and bath, for forty dollars a week. One last Friday I handed Mrs. Croft eight one-dollar bills in an envelope, brought my suitcase downstairs, and informed her that I was moving. She put my key into her change purse. The last thing she asked me to do was hand her the cane propped against the table, so that she could walk to the door and lock it behind me. "Good-bye, then," she said, and retreated back into the house. I did not expect any display of emotion, but I was disappointed all the same. I was only a boarder, a man who paid her a bit of money and passed in and out of her home for six weeks. Compared to a century, it was no time at all.

At the airport I recognized Mala immediately. The free end of her sari did not drag on the floor, but was draped in a sign of bridal modesty over her head, just as it had draped my mother until the day my father died. Her thin brown arms were stacked with gold bracelets, a small red circle was painted on her forehead, and the edges of her feet were tinted with a decorative red dye. I did not embrace her, or kiss her, or take her hand. Instead I asked her, speaking Bengali for the first time in America, if she was hungry.

She hesitated, then nodded yes. I told her I had prepared some egg curry at home. "What did they give you to eat on the plane?"
"I didn't eat."
"All the way from Calcutta?" "The menu said oxtail soup."
"But surely there were other items."
"The thought of eating an ox's tail made me lose my appetite."

When we arrived home, Mala opened up one of her suitcases, and presented me with two pullover sweaters, both made with bright blue wool, which she had knitted in the course of our

separation; one with a V neck, the other covered with cables. I tried them on; both were tight under the arms. She had also brought me two new pairs of drawstring pajamas, a letter from my brother, and a packet of loose Darjeeling tea.

1. Why does the author say that such a mishap would soon be his concern?
A) Because he was an Indian living in America
B) Because he wanted to protect the Indian lady
C) Because it was his duty to take care of Mala
D) Because his bride was coming from India to join him.

2. Why does the author feel that he would have to tell many things to Mala?
A) Because he wanted her to avoid the experience of the India lady
B) Because he wanted her to learn American ways.
C) Because he did not want that she be an embarrassment to him
D) None of the above.

3. Why was the author disappointed with Mrs. Croft's reaction?
A) Because she did not display any emotion
B) Because he did not expect any display of emotion.
C) Because he was only a boarder
D) Because he was leaving the apartment

4. It can be inferred from the passage that:
A) Mala is a vegetarian B) The author is a student at MIT
C) The author has had an arranged marriage
D) None of the above.

5. The author before receiving Mala at the airport would agree with which of the following statement
A) Living in Massachusetts will be a cultural shock for Mala
B) With the author's help, Mala's cultural assimilation will be a piece of cake.
C) Mala's passion for oxtail soup is matched by Mrs. Croft's emotional outburst for her boarder.
D) The author is very comfortable living with Mala in Massachusetts.