



ACT Reading Course

For The New Enhanced ACT

Taught by Matthew Stroup

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Table of Contents

Introduction to the Reading Test	1
What is on the ACT Reading Test	
What Will You Learn in This Course?	
Chapter 1: 7 Core Principles for ACT Reading	3
7 Core Principles to Understand	
Chapter 2: 3 Strategies for Finding the Correct Answer	5
Put Your Finger on The Evidence	
Read Like a Lawyer	
Eliminate Incorrect Answer Choices	
Chapter 3: How to Approach the Reading Test – Finding the Right Approach for You	6
Approach #1 – The Big Read	
Approach #2 – The Big Read with Notes	
Approach #3 – Label Then Read	
Approach #4 – The Speed Reader	
Approach #5 – First and Last	
Approach #6 – Working Backwards	
How to Approach Dual Text Passages	
Chapter 4: Pacing and 10 Time Management Skills.....	25
Pacing	
10 Time Management Skills	
Common Test Day Mistake to Avoid	
Chapter 5: How to Spot and Approach the 7 Most Common Types of Questions	29
Broad Passage Questions	
Clear Evidence Questions	
Inference Questions	
Purpose Questions	
Main Idea Questions	
Words in Context Questions	
Comparing Passages Questions	
Chapter 6: Breaking Down Questions – How to Identify Exactly What the ACT is Asking You.....	35
Skill #1 – Identify the Type of Question	
Identify the Type of Question Practice	
Skill #2 – Identify the Keywords	
Primary and Secondary Keywords	
Skill #3 – Rephrase the Question in Your Own Words (If Necessary)	

Tips for When to Rephrase the Question
 Breaking Down Questions Practice

Chapter 7: How to Approach the Answer Choices 49

- When to Read the Answer Choices Right Away
- When to Go Straight to the Passage
- How to Read the Answer Choices Most Effectively
- Our Recommended Approach – Work Both Forward and Backwards

Chapter 8: Correct vs. Incorrect Answer Choices – How to Effectively Find The Correct Answer 54

- 5 Common Types of Incorrect Answer Choices
- Not in the Passage
- Too Specific
- Too Broad
- Opposite or Slant of the Passage
- In the Passage but Not Answering the Question

Chapter 9: Words in Context Questions 67

- How to Approach Words in Context Questions
- Tips for Words in Context Questions
- Words in Context Practice

Chapter 10: Tips for Comparing Passages Questions 70

- How to Approach Dual Text Passages
- Comparing Passages Questions
- 4 Tips for Comparing Passages Questions

Chapter 11: Working Backwards 73

- Is Working Backwards for Me?
- How to Work Backwards
- Should I Answer This Question Right Away or Save for Later?
- 3 Question Types to Always Answer Last
- How to Work Backward on Dual Text Passages
- 7 Tips for Working Backwards
- Working Backwards Practice Passages

Chapter 12: 7 Tips to Maximize Your Reading Score 89

- Tip #1 – Keep it Moving
- Tip #2 – Circle Guesses, Box Non-Confident Answers
- Tip #3 – Never Worry About Patterns in the Answer Choices
- Tip #4 – Boring is Better
- Tip #5 – Beware of Keyword Matching
- Tip #6 – Do Not Over-Annotate
- Tip #7 – Make the Most of Practice ACTs

Chapter 13: Practice Passages 91

Tips for Practice Passages
8 Practice Reading Passages

Answer Key 111

Introduction to Reading Test

What is on the ACT Reading Test?

The ACT Reading Test consists of 36 questions, which you have 40 minutes to complete with normal time and 60 minutes to complete with extended time. The Reading Test is broken down into four long passages with 9 questions each. The 4 passages and the order you will see them on the ACT are listed below:

1. **Literary Narrative** – a passage adapted from a short story, novella, or novel.
2. **Informational** – a passage that provide information on a topic related to social science, humanities, or natural science.
3. **Informational** – a passage that provide information on a topic related to social science, humanities, or natural science.
4. **Informational** – a passage that provide information on a topic related to social science, humanities, or natural science.

On the old version of the ACT, the ACT Reading always had 4 passages that appeared in the following order. On all 4 of the practice ACTs released by the ACT in 2025 for the Enhanced ACT, the passages still followed the old order listed below. It is still to be determined if the passages will always follow this order or if they order will be shifted.

1. **Literary Narrative** – a passage adapted from a short story, novella, or novel.
2. **Social Science** – a passage on a topic from history, political science, economics, anthropology, sociology, or psychology.
3. **Humanities** – a passage covering music, visual arts, theater, philosophy, architecture, or dance.
4. **Natural Science** – a passage focused on a topic in biology, chemistry, physics, or earth sciences.

Based on all the information we have so far, we expect that the passages on the ACT will still follow the order listed above.

1 of the 4 passages will be a dual text passage and will have two texts labelled as Passage A and Passage B. The dual text passage can be any of the 4 passages above.

Although the passages are on different topics, they are all testing the same reading comprehension skills and can all be approached the same way. No passage type is inherently more difficult, but certain passages may be more difficult for you based on the types of passages that you find easier (or more interesting) to read.

What Will You Learn in This Course?

In this course, we will teach you how to understand the Reading Test at a much higher level. Right now, you are probably reading the passages, looking at the answer choices, and trying and pick which one seems correct to you without too much other knowledge. That approach only gets you so far and very much depends on your level of reading.

In this course, we will cover the best approaches and strategies for the ACT Reading Test, improve your understanding of how to spot the different types of questions, learn how to break down questions and use the key words to find the correct answers, and clarify what make right answers right and wrong answers wrong, and much much more. **By the end of the course, you will approach the Reading Test with much more confidence and will hopefully see big increases in your score.**

Before starting this course, you may have some or all of the following questions and/or thoughts about the ACT Reading Test:

- **How should I approach each passage? Should I read the passage first? Read the questions first?**
- **I have trouble finishing the Reading Test. How can I better manage time or improve my speed?**
- **I feel like I am supposed to pick the answer choice the ACT says is the best, but I can never tell. What can I do differently?**
- **How can I tell which answer choice is correct when I am between two answer choices? I always pick the wrong one.**
- **I have trouble focusing for so much reading. How do I better stay focused?**
- **I keep completing practice Reading Tests, and my score is stuck. What am I doing wrong?**

By the end of this course, you will know the answers to all these questions and many more.

The course is broken up into 13 chapters. The topics and skills that we will cover in this course are:

- 1) **7 Core Principles for ACT Reading**
- 2) **3 Strategies for Finding the Correct Answer**
- 3) **How to Approach the Reading Test – Finding the Right Approach for You**
- 4) **Pacing and 10 Time Management Skills**
- 5) **How to Spot and Approach the 7 Most Common Types of Questions**
- 6) **Breaking Down Questions – How to Identify Exactly What the ACT is Asking You**
- 7) **How to Approach the Answer Choices**
- 8) **Correct vs. Incorrect Answer Choices – How to Effectively Find the Correct Answer**
- 9) **Words in Context Questions**
- 10) **Tips for Comparing Passages Questions**
- 11) **Working Backwards**
- 12) **7 Tips to Maximize Your Reading Score**
- 13) **Practice Passages**

Let's Get Started!

We are very excited to have you in this course and hope that you will see huge increases in your ACT Reading scores. As you work through this course, keep in mind that improving your reading score is a journey. The Reading test can be difficult and frustrating at times for students of all levels. Stay positive, learn from your mistakes, and be patient.

Your goal here is to improve with each chapter and on each practice test. This course will be challenging at times, but if you stick with it and work hard, you will improve!

Chapter 1: 7 Core Principles for ACT Reading

Before we start learning all the best approaches, strategies, and test-taking tips to maximize your Reading score, let's start by understanding 7 core principles about the ACT Reading Test. These principles will help you start to understand how the Reading Test works. Keep these core principles in mind as you work through the rest of the course!

Students who struggle on the Reading Test generally do so for 2 reasons: issues with time management and difficulty understanding the key difference between correct and incorrect answer choices. We will focus more on time management later in this course. For now, the following 7 core principles will help you start to better understand the difference between correct and incorrect answer choices.

7 Core Principles to Understand

To start, let's go over 7 very important core principles that we must understand about the Reading Test.

Principle #1 – The correct answer must be supported by evidence in the passage.

For an answer choice to be correct, we must be able to point to evidence in the passage. **The ACT must be able to support the correct answer and say, “look, here is why this answer choice is correct,” so there is ALWAYS evidence in the passage.** In general, once you find the correct evidence in the passage, the correct answer choice will become obvious.

Principle #2 – The correct answer must be 100% correct. That means every single word in the answer choice must be correct.

As you read the answer choices, read every single word carefully and make sure that each word is correct. The correct answer must be 100% correct. **Keep an eye out for strong or specific statements in each answer choice that may not be supported by the passage and can make the answer choice incorrect.**

For example, if an answer choice says, “sea turtles eat a diet consisting mostly of fish during migration,” you need to make sure the passage actually says that sea turtles eat mostly fish during migration. If the passage says, “sea turtles eat fish, crabs, and seagrass during their annual migration,” that is not 100% correct because including fish is not eating mostly fish. While this may seem like a small difference, reading this carefully can make a huge difference in your score.

Principle #3 – A single word can make the entire answer choice incorrect.

This is really important, so we will repeat it. A single word can make the entire answer choice incorrect! **Anything wrong with an answer choice makes the entire answer choice incorrect.** Even if 90% of an answer choice matches exactly what the passage says, an incorrect word makes the entire answer choice incorrect. **Be very picky and consider every single word as you assess each answer choice.**

Principle #4 – Do not just match words from the passage. Match the entire answer choice.

Many students make the mistake of picking an incorrect answer choice because it has an exact word or phrase from the passage. Sometimes the answer choice with the exact word or phrase from the passage matches the evidence and is correct. However, other times the answer choice is incorrect because it does not 100% match the passage. **The ACT often includes incorrect answer choices that have exact word(s) from the passage to trick you.**

Make sure that you do not get too excited when you find an exact word or phrase from the passage in the answer choices. Instead, use Principles #2 and #3 and match the entire answer choice to the evidence in the passage. As we already said, the correct answer must be 100% correct.

Principle #5 – Find Your Waldo (over and over again)!

If you find the right evidence in the passage, the correct answer should be obvious. The challenge is finding the right evidence – and finding it quickly! If you have ever done a “Where’s Waldo” book, you know exactly what I mean. You know Waldo is in there, but sometimes he is so hard to find! ACT Reading is the exact same; the evidence is in there, but sometimes it is hard to find. Once you find the evidence, you will know which answer choice is correct!

For most students who answer a question on a Reading passage incorrectly, if I tell them what line(s) to look at, they will likely be able to look at the answer choices and go, “Oh, I see it now. The answer is A.” As we said before, the difficulty of the ACT Reading for most students is the speed of the test and not the comprehension of the passages.

Principle #6 – No storytelling!

If you are telling a story to convince yourself why an answer choice is correct or could be correct, the answer is probably wrong. There is always evidence in the passage to support the correct answer, so you should never have to go through a long justification of why an answer choice is correct.

Instead, **put your finger on the right answer (Find Your Waldo!).** As we said earlier, there is always evidence in the passage, so you should always aim to point to a specific part of the passage and say, “this is why my answer is correct.”

Principle #7 – The ACT Reading Test is more about speed than comprehension.

If you have an extra 5 minutes for the Reading Test, it would be so much easier! **The hardest thing about the ACT Reading for most students is time management.** Finishing 4 long passages with 9 questions each in only 40 minutes is challenging. Most students do not find the passages themselves that difficult. Instead, the challenge is that you do not have enough time to answer all the questions.

As you work through this course, keep this principle in mind. **Do not feel the need to read for depth,** as the questions are likely not going to require deep knowledge of the passage. **Instead, the questions will require you to remember specific details from throughout the passage.** As a result, you can read ACT Reading passages a bit faster than you might normally read other texts where you need a deeper understanding of what you are reading.

Chapter 2: 3 Strategies for Finding the Correct Answer

Now that you have started to better understand the difference between correct and incorrect answer choices, let's introduce 3 important strategies to use to find the correct answer as consistently and efficiently as possible. You should always use these 3 strategies on the ACT Reading Test.

3 Strategies for Finding the Correct Answer

Strategy #1 – Put Your Finger on The Evidence

There is always evidence for the correct answer in the passage. As we said in Chapter 1, the ACT Reading is like "Where's Waldo" book...the challenge is just finding the Waldo quickly enough. **If you can put your finger on the evidence that matches the answer choice, you will know that you found the correct answer.** And if you can put your finger on the evidence for every single question, you will get a fantastic ACT Reading score!

Now, finding the Waldo for every single question can be difficult and time consuming, so do not rely only on this strategy. Sometimes, you just cannot find that evidence and will need to move on. This is an important time management strategy that we will discuss more later in this course.

Strategy #2 – Read Like a Lawyer

When reading the question and the answer choices, read and consider every single word carefully. As you read, the question, make sure you read the question carefully and know exactly what the question is asking you. As you read the answer choices, read critically and look for any specific details that could make the answer choice incorrect. Remember, the correct answer must be 100% correct; reading like a lawyer is important to make sure you do not pick an answer choice that seem correct but is not 100% correct.

Strategy #3 – Eliminate Incorrect Answer Choices

The instant that you spot anything wrong with an answer choice, cross off the answer choice and never read it again. And yes, we do mean physically cross it off! Eliminating incorrect answer choices helps you save time, as you will not waste time re-reading answer choices you already decided were incorrect. In addition, if you are not confident on your answer and return to the question later, you will know which answer choice(s) you have already eliminated.

Chapter 3: How to Approach the Reading Test – Finding the Right Approach for You

Let's discuss the most common approaches to the Reading Test that we recommend for our students. As you complete this chapter, keep in mind that **there is no single best approach to the ACT Reading, but there is a best approach for you.** The right approach depends on your reading speed, your reading level, and a variety of other factors, all of which we will discuss in this chapter.

The best way to find your favorite method is trial and error. Try different methods on practice ACTs and see which one you find the most effective. Once you find your preferred method, use that same method over and over on practice ACTs so you feel confident in your approach for test day.

Our 6 Approaches for ACT Reading Passages

We have 6 different approaches that we recommend for our students, all of which we will learn shortly in this chapter. In the rest of this chapter, we will go into each approach and teach you the method. In addition, we will tell you the type of student that each approach is generally good or bad for.

Our 6 approaches for the ACT Reading Test are:

- 1) The Big Read**
- 2) The Big Read with Notes**
- 3) Label Then Read**
- 4) The Speed Reader**
- 5) First and Last**
- 6) Working Backwards**

After learning the approaches, you will likely have one or two approaches that sound like they may be a good fit for you. **As you work through passages in this course and on practice tests, try different methods to find which method is the best for you.** With practice, you will find the approach that is the best for you.

Approach #1 – The Big Read

The first approach is the simplest: read the entire passage at once and then work through the questions.

- **Read the entire passage including the short intro above the passage.**
- **Read to understand the passage; do not skim the passage.**
- **Read the passage in 2-4 minutes (3-6 minutes for extended time)** at a medium pace. Do not speed read the passage as fast as you can. Do not read the passage slowly like it is your favorite book. The best pace for most students is somewhere in between. The exact time depends on your reading speed and the passage.
- **Be an active reader.** At minimum, move your finger or pencil along as you read. Many students stay more focused when they annotate as they read. Exactly how much, how little, or if you annotate is up to you. For many students, it is helpful to do at least some annotation.
- After you complete the big read, work through the questions.
- **Skip any broad passage questions (main idea, best summarizes the passage, the passage can be best described as...) and save them for last.** These are commonly the first question in each passage. After answering the rest of the questions, you will better understand the entire passage, and broad passage questions will be easier to answer correctly.
- **Go back to the passage** to find the evidence that supports the correct answer to each question.
- **Follow the 30-second Rule.** If you cannot find the evidence to answer the question in 30 seconds, bubble in your best guess, circle the question number, and move on.
- **You do not need to answer the questions in order.** The questions on the ACT Reading are not strictly chronological, so you can skip a question if you have no idea where to look, are having trouble finding the evidence, or know the question will be better to answer later. We will discuss this skill in much more depth later in this course.
- **Once you are done answering all 9 questions, check your watch.** If you still have time left on the passage, you can go back to any questions that you circled. If not, go to the next passage.

3**3****Passage III**

HUMANITIES: This passage is adapted from the article "Winslow Homer: His Melancholy Truth" by John A. Parks (©2006 by VNU Business Media).

The images in the paintings of Winslow Homer epitomize a peculiarly American 19th-century world. Through Homer's eyes, it is a world in which people live in close contact with nature and natural forces, a world where landscape and ocean are viewed not as a paradise but as powers and presences that can be enjoyed and whose threats can sometimes be overcome. And, particularly in his later paintings, it is a world imbued with a stark and melancholy atmosphere.

10 In 1867, two of Homer's canvases were chosen to hang at the Great Exposition in Paris. The artist spent 10 months in the city, which later proved to have a profound effect on his art. A large display of Japanese prints was exhibited in the same building as his own 15 paintings, and the process of simplification that it revealed and the wealth of pictorial invention it provided made a deep impression on the artist. The influence of Japanese art on Homer's painting was immediately apparent upon his return to the United 20 States. The weakness of earlier compositions is replaced by a boldness and lucidity in which simple shapes are massed into powerful designs.

Although Homer's work of the 1870s gained strength, the artist continued to paint his genre subjects: 25 tourist scenes, schoolchildren, and farm life. It wasn't until 1881, however, that he found the subject matter that would inspire him most. In that year, for reasons unknown, Homer went to England, where he elected to spend the summer at the town of Tynemouth on the 30 coast of the North Sea. It is possible that he was searching for a town filled with the type of tourists and bathers that made his paintings of the Jersey shore successful back home. But Tynemouth was also a community of fishermen who wrested their livelihood from the 35 dangerous and unpredictable waters of the North Sea. Moreover, the light and weather in that part of the world, so much farther north than Atlantic City, is much gloomier and more dramatic than that of the Jersey coast. It was there that Homer became enthralled by the dramas of the people who make their living from the ocean: the fishermen's wives staring out to sea as they wait for their men, the launch of the lifeboat to 40 rescue sailors from a foundering ship, the agonizingly fragile fishing boats being tossed on angry waves. Here at last was a subject matter that matched the artist's 45 deepest feelings. The dynamic and dangerous relationship between human activity and natural forces exposed in this setting would occupy Homer for many years to come. On his return to America he elected to leave New 50 York and relocate to the rural town of Prouts Neck, Maine.

The legend of Winslow Homer is that he left New York civilization to become a recluse on the coast of Maine for the last 25 years of his life. In reality, the

55 property at Prouts Neck—which included a large, rambling hotel building—was purchased by his brother Charles for the whole extended Homer family. The artist also built a studio with an ocean view just yards away from the family house so throughout the summers 60 he could enjoy the company of his father, his brothers and their wives, as well as the year-round guests of the many local people whose friendship he valued. Homer continued to travel frequently, spending parts of the winter in the Caribbean. But the artist always lived 65 alone, and when he was working, which was the large part of most of his days, he could be extremely short-tempered when interrupted.

The sea outside his window now inspired the artist to create what came to be known as his greatest paintings. The Maine coast is extremely rocky and prone to monstrous gales that—at their most powerful—can whip up the waves to 40 or 50 feet. Screaming winds can rip across the breakers, creating long horizontal trails of spray. Homer rendered this sea with all the 70 understanding of a painter who knows to simplify and synthesize. In paintings such as *Eastern Point* and *Cannon Rock* the construction of the water has been reorganized into clear graphic shapes and strong directional lines that echo the Japanese printmaking that had 75 such a lasting effect on his work. The rocks in the paintings are massed into powerful, almost flat, designs and the brushing has become energetic, as though feeding from the physical strength of the ocean. These 80 paintings take on an abstract grandeur that has justly 85 made them famous. They remain, however, haunting evocations of the eternal power of the ocean.

21. The main purpose of the passage is to:

- A. describe an artist's most famous painting and the experience that inspired it.
- B. explore the relationship between the natural world and the fine arts.
- C. provide an overview of an artist's career and important influences on that artist's work.
- D. describe the work of artists who epitomized a peculiarly American nineteenth-century world.

22. It can reasonably be inferred from the passage that which of the following scenes would most likely be the subject of a painting created by Homer late in his life?

- F. A family strolling along the boardwalk in Atlantic City
- G. A fishing boat being violently pitched about on a stormy ocean
- H. A farm nestled in the idyllic countryside
- J. A tourist sipping coffee at a Parisian café

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

Who it's good for:

- Stronger readers who can stay focused for the entire long passage.
- Faster readers who can read the entire passage and remember details from throughout the passage.
- Students who find it more difficult to understand the passage when they do not read the entire passage at once.

Who it's bad for:

- Slower readers who cannot finish the passage in time with this method.
- Weaker readers who cannot stay focused for the entire long passage.
- Students who do not remember the entire passage if they read the whole passage in one read.

Approach #2 – The Big Read with Notes

The second approach is identical to the Big Read except that you write down a quick note after every 10-15 lines or after each paragraph that summarizes what is being discussed.

- **Read the entire passage including the short intro above the passage.**
- **Read to understand the passage; do not skim the passage.**
- **Read the passage in 2-4 minutes (3-6 minutes for extended time)** at a medium pace. Do not speed read it as fast as you can. Do not read it slowly like it is your favorite book. The best pace for most students is somewhere in between. The exact time depends on your reading speed and the passage.
- **Write down a note after every 10-15 lines or after each paragraph.** The note can be a single word or a short phrase. Having to write down a note forces you to stay focused on the passage and helps you more quickly find the correct part of the passage when answering the questions.
- After you read the entire passage, work through the questions.
- **Skip any broad passage questions (main idea, best summarizes the passage, the passage can be best described as...) and save them for last.** These are commonly the first question in each passage. After answering the rest of the questions, you will better understand the entire passage, and broad passage questions will be easier to answer correctly.
- **Go back to the passage and use your notes** to find the evidence in the passage that supports the correct answer for each question.
- **Follow the 30-second Rule.** If you cannot find the evidence to answer the question in 30 seconds, bubble in your best guess, circle the question number, and move on.
- **You do not need to answer the questions in order.** The questions on the ACT Reading are not strictly chronological, so you can skip a question if you have no idea where to look, are having trouble finding the evidence, or know the question will be better to answer later. We will discuss this skill in much more depth later in this course.
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 - A tourist sipping coffee at a Parisian café

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

Who it's good for:

- Students who like to read the whole passage but have trouble staying focused.
- Students who do not remember what happens in which parts of the passage without taking notes.
- Students who find the notes helpful when answering the questions.

Who it's bad for:

- Students who do not need the notes to remember what happens where in the passage. If you have strong enough recall that you know where to go in the passage without notes, the notes are wasting time.
- Students who find that writing notes makes them read the passage less effectively.
- Slower readers who cannot finish the passage in time with this method.

Approach #3 – Label Then Read

The third approach involves looking at the questions first. However, **you are NOT reading all the questions. Instead, you are looking for any questions that reference a specific line or paragraph and labelling where those questions are in the passage.** Make sure to label where the line is with the question number. For example, if question 3 says “in lines 30-33,” go put a 3 next to lines 30-33. As you read the passage, you will know to read closely when you get to the lines for question 3.

Note: This method can be used with either The Big Read or The Big Read with Notes.

- **Skim the questions and look for line references in the questions or specific references to a paragraph.** This skim should only take a maximum of 20-30 seconds. If a question says, “in lines 45-46” or “the third paragraph,” we label where those questions are. **Do NOT read the entire question. Only look for line references.**
- **Label where the lines for questions are in the passage with the question number.** If question 25 is in lines 45-46, put a 25 next to those lines.
- **Read the passage.**
- **As you get to lines that are labelled, there are 2 options:**
 - 1) **Read the context carefully and then answer the question.** Make sure to always read before and after the labelled lines to get enough context.
 - 2) **Read the question first and then read the lines carefully.** By reading the question first, you know what you are looking for and can often answer the question more quickly.
- If you do not have enough context to answer the question from what you have read so far, skip the question and save it for later.
- **For purpose questions with line references, be careful!** Make sure you have read enough context to answer the question properly. If you do not have enough context, skip the question, and save it for later.
- Continue to read the passage, repeating this process for any other labelled lines.
- After you have read the entire passage, **answer questions that you have not answered yet.**
- **Save broad passage questions (main idea, best summarizes the passage, the passage can be best described as...) for last.** These are commonly the first question in each passage. After answering the rest of the questions, you will better understand the entire passage, and broad passage questions will be easier to answer correctly.

The 2-Sentence Rule

For any question with a line reference or when you find the appropriate keywords, read 2 sentences before and 2 sentences after. The evidence is most commonly in the 2 sentences before or after the line reference or the keywords.

3**3****Passage II**

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from the article "Travels with R.L.S." by James Campbell (©2000 by The New York Times Company).

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) preferred to circumnavigate civilization, with its increasing reliance on contraptions, and steer toward the rougher fringes. He self-consciously turned his back on the Victorian idol, progress. In similar spirit, he chose the past more often than the present as a setting for fiction. His most popular novels—*Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, *The Master of Ballantrae*—are set in a semimythical realm, where the fire of adventure catches on every page. Stevenson loved the sound of clashing swords; he didn't want them getting tangled up in telephone wires overhead.

Stevenson, though, was destined to be a modern man. He was born into a Scottish family of civil engineers, esteemed for its technological genius. His grandfather, also Robert, was Britain's greatest builder of lighthouses, and his graceful towers continue to guide sailors today. Three of Robert's sons followed him into the profession, including Robert Louis Stevenson's father, Thomas, who made his own mark in the field of optics—his louvre-boarded screens for the protection of thermometers are still in use today.

It was expected that Robert Louis would enter the family business in turn, and a great wringing of hands greeted his announcement to the contrary. He told his father that he wanted to be a writer, which Thomas Stevenson regarded as no profession at all. We can imagine the consternation when Stevenson's letters arrived bearing pleas such as "Take me as I am . . . I must be a bit of a vagabond." And a vagabond was precisely what he set out to be: longhaired, careless about food, walking through France or planning an epic ocean voyage, a far cry from the offices of D. & T. Stevenson, Engineers. He was forging the template for generations of college-educated adventurers to come. "I travel not to go anywhere, but to go," he wrote in *Travels With a Donkey* (1879). "I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move."

Stevenson would not be an engineer, but he left his own lights, in Scotland and across the world, by which it is possible to trace his unceasing movement. No other writer, surely, is as much memorialized by the words "lived here" as he is. There are five houses with Stevenson associations in Edinburgh alone, not to mention the little schoolhouse he attended as a child and the lavish gardens opposite the family home in Heriot Row, where he played and, the fanciful will have you believe, first acted out the quest for Treasure Island. I have shadowed Stevenson up to the northeast of Scotland, 50 where he tried his hand at being an apprentice engineer, back down to the Hawes Inn at South Queensferry, where David Balfour is tricked into going to sea in *Kidnapped*. There are landmarks in Switzerland, France and on the Pacific Islands where the adventure of his final years took place.

13. The main idea of the second paragraph (lines 13–22) is that:
 - A. Stevenson's grandfather insisted his sons become educated in civil engineering.
 - B. Stevenson was a modern man whose engineering talents were suppressed by his desire to be a writer.
 - C. Stevenson's father earned greater esteem for his louvre-boarded screens than Stevenson's grandfather did for his lighthouses.
 - D. Stevenson was the grandson, son, and nephew of men respected for their technological genius.
14. The main idea of the fifth paragraph (lines 56–70) is that:
 - F. the plot of one of Stevenson's books was inspired by his vision of electric lights in London.
 - G. Stevenson envisioned the use of electric streetlights in London before they became reality.
 - H. Stevenson longed for a time when electricity would replace flickering gas lamps.
 - J. Stevenson realized that his father's improvements in optics would become the "technological miracle of the future."
15. According to the passage, which of the professions listed below did Stevenson enter into?
 - I. Apprentice engineer
 - II. Lamplighter
 - III. Mariner
 - IV. Writer
 - V. Builder
 - A. IV only
 - B. I, II, and IV only
 - C. I, III, and IV only
 - D. III, IV, and V only
16. The passage author most likely uses the description in lines 10–12 in order to:
 - F. emphasize how little technological progress had taken place during Stevenson's lifetime.
 - G. stress that Stevenson was increasingly dependent on modern inventions.
 - H. create a visual image that helps make Stevenson's opinion about progress more vivid.
 - J. illustrate that Stevenson was an avid sword fighter.

Recently, I stumbled across Abernethy House where Stevenson lived briefly in London when he was 23. It stands in a secluded corner of Hampstead, high up on a hill, and separated from foggy London by farms 60 and heath. It was while standing on Hampstead Hill one night that he gazed down on London and imagined a technological miracle of the future, "when in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the design of the monstrous city flashes into vision—a glittering hieroglyph." He is 65 anticipating the effects of electricity and a time when the streetlamps would be lighted "not one by one" by the faithful old lamplighter, but all at once, by the touch of a button. Not for him improvements in optics; give him the flickering gas lamp and the "skirts of civilization" any day.

Lamps occur frequently in Stevenson's writing. There are the essays "A Plea for Gas Lamps" and "The Lantern Bearers," and his poem for children, "The Lamplighter," which celebrates an old custom: "For we 75 are very lucky, with a lamp before the door, / And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many more." Then there is his memoir in which he describes how, when a child and sick, his nurse would take him to the window, "whence I might look forth into the blue night 80 starred with street lamps, and see where the gas still burned behind the windows of other sickrooms." And the lights shine again, with a subdued glow, in the obituary he wrote of his father. Thomas Stevenson's name may not have been widely known, yet "all the time, his 85 lights were in every part of the world, guiding the mariner."

A year later, Stevenson chartered a schooner and became a mariner himself, sailing circuitously through the South Seas. He had, in a sense, entered the family 90 business at last.

11. As it is used in line 3, the phrase "the rougher fringes" most nearly means the same as which of the following phrases?
 - A. "The fire of adventure" (line 9)
 - B. "An epic ocean voyage" (lines 32–33)
 - C. "A glittering hieroglyph" (line 64)
 - D. "Skirts of civilization" (lines 69–70)
12. It can reasonably be concluded that the passage author is a credible source of biographical information about Stevenson because the passage author:
 - E. traveled to several towns and countries where Stevenson lived and worked to research him.
 - G. has read Stevenson's two most popular novels, *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island*.
 - H. worked for a time in the offices of D. & T. Stevenson, Engineers, as Stevenson had.
 - J. comes from Edinburgh, where the adventure of Stevenson's final years took place.
13. As it is used in line 24, the phrase "a great wringing of hands" most nearly refers to the Stevenson family's:
 - A. dismay over Stevenson's announcement that he wasn't joining the family business.
 - B. disapproval of Stevenson's slovenly appearance and poor diet.
 - C. humiliation at Stevenson publicly renouncing the family business in favor of traveling.
 - D. consternation at receiving Stevenson's letters pleading to have his family accept his choice.
14. It can most reasonably be inferred from the passage that as a traveler, Stevenson:
 - F. thought reaching the destination was what made the trip worthwhile.
 - G. encouraged other young men to take up traveling rather than pursue an education.
 - H. was searching for a model for the character David Balfour in *Kidnapped*.
 - J. was happiest when he was on an adventure with no itinerary.
15. As it is used in line 56, the phrase *stumbled across* most nearly means:
 - A. found by accident.
 - B. staggered toward.
 - C. unearthed.
 - D. tripped over.

Who it's good for:

- Students who have issues with time management. Answering the questions as you first read the passage can save time since you do not need to reread the passage later.
- Students who find reading the entire passage without any breaks difficult. Stopping to answer the questions allows you to read the passage in smaller chunks.
- Students who have trouble focusing on the passage. When you see the labelled lines and know you are about to answer a question, it is generally easier to read more carefully and pay closer attention to the passage.

Who it's bad for:

- Strong readers who read quickly and can retain all the important details in the passage in one big read.
- Students who find that stopping during reading to answer questions makes it more difficult for them to understand the passage.

Approach #4 – The Speed Reader

The fourth approach is our first method that does not require reading the entire passage. **With this approach, you read the first few sentences of a paragraph until you get an idea of what the paragraph is about, write down a quick note, and then skip ahead to the start of the next paragraph and repeat. You do not read (or even skim) the entire paragraph.** The goal with The Speed Reader is to, of course, get through the passage faster and have more time to answer the questions.

- **Read the first sentence(s) of the paragraph. Read only enough to get an idea of what topic(s) the paragraph is about.** Usually, you should be reading 1-3 sentences. Once you feel like you have an idea of what the paragraph is about, stop reading.
- **Write a note next to the paragraph.** The note can be a single word or a short phrase. You will use your notes as you answer the questions.
- **Go to the start of the next paragraph and repeat the process.** Repeat the process until you have read the entire passage and written down notes for each paragraph.
- **Skip any broad passage questions (main idea, best summarizes the passage, the passage can be best described as...) and save them for last.** These are commonly the first question in each passage. After answering the rest of the questions, you will better understand the entire passage, and broad passage questions will be easier to answer correctly.
- **Answer questions with line references first.** Use the 2-sentence rule. As you answer line reference questions, you will read more of the passage, which will likely help you with other questions.
- **Next, read the remaining questions and use your notes to find where to go in the passage.**
 - If you remember where to read in the passage to answer the question, answer it right away.
 - If you think you have a good guess as to where to read, try to answer the question. If you cannot find the evidence after 30 seconds, bubble in your best guess, circle the question number, and go to the next question.
 - If you have no idea where to read, skip the question and save it for later.
- **Return to any questions that you have skipped and try to find the evidence.** Again, follow the 30 second rule. If you cannot find the evidence to answer the question in 30 seconds, bubble in your best guess, circle the question number, and move on.
- **Finally, answer any broad passage questions.**
- **Once you are done answering all 9 questions, check your watch.** If you still have time left on the passage, you can go back to any questions that you circled. If not, go to the next passage.

Passage I

LITERARY NARRATIVE: This passage is adapted from the novel *The Cat's Table* by Michael Ondaaatje (©2011 by Michael Ondaaatje).

The ship *Oronsay* is departing from Colombo, Ceylon (a city in what is today Sri Lanka), in the early 1950s.

Michael was eleven years old that night when, green as he could be about the world, he climbed aboard the first and only ship of his life. It felt as if a city had been added to the coast, better lit than any town or village. He went up the gangplank, watching only the path of his feet—nothing ahead of him existed—and continued till he faced the dark harbour and sea. There were outlines of other ships farther out, beginning to turn on lights. He stood alone, smelling everything, then came back through the noise and the crowd to the side that faced land. A yellow glow over the city. Already it felt there was a wall between him and what took place there. Stewards began handing out food and cordials. He ate several sandwiches, and after that he made his way down to his cabin, undressed, and slipped into the narrow bunk. He'd never slept under a blanket before, save ones in Nuwara Eliya. He was wide awake. The cabin was below the level of the waves, so there was no porthole. He found a switch beside the bed and when he pressed it his head and pillow were suddenly lit by a cone of light.

He did not go back up on deck for a last look, or to wave at his relatives who had brought him to the harbour. He could hear singing and imagined the slow and then eager parting of families taking place in the thrilling night air. I do not know, even now, why he chose this solitude. Had whoever brought him onto the *Oronsay* already left? In films people tear themselves away from one another weeping, and the ship separates from land while the departed hold on to those disappearing faces until all distinction is lost.

I try to imagine who the boy on the ship was. Perhaps a sense of self is not even there in his nervous stillness in the narrow bunk, in this green grasshopper or little cricket, as if he has been smuggled away accidentally, with no knowledge of the act, into the future.

the Mediterranean, I would arrive one morning on a small pier in England and my mother would meet me there. It was not the magic or the scale of the journey that was of concern to me, but that detail of how my mother could know when exactly I would arrive in that other country.

And if she would be there.

1. The passage can most reasonably be described as being divided into two sections that, taken together, explore:
 - A. Michael's first week on the *Oronsay* as told from two perspectives, one being that of Michael's mother.
 - B. elements of Michael's journey as told from two perspectives, one being that of Michael as a young boy.
 - C. two outcomes of Michael's journey, both presented from the perspective of Michael as an adult.
 - D. Michael's relationship with his family, presented from the perspective of two of Michael's relatives.
2. The description of the *Oronsay* as having seven levels, nine cooks, a veterinarian, a small jail, and chlorinated pools (lines 52–56) most strongly supports which of the following statements about the *Oronsay* or its passengers?
 - E. "It felt as if a city had been added to the coast" (lines 3–4).
 - F. "The cabin was below the level of the waves, so there was no porthole" (lines 18–19).
 - G. "I do not know, even now, why he chose this solitude" (lines 26–27).
 - H. "But now it had been arranged I would be travelling to England by ship" (lines 47–48).
3. As it is used in lines 65–66, the phrase "introduce me to the situation of the journey" most nearly means:
 - A. list for the narrator the people he will likely meet on his trip.
 - B. explain to the narrator what his mother knows about his trip.
 - C. draw for the narrator a map of the exact route of his trip.
 - D. prepare the narrator in general for the circumstances of his trip.
4. Based on the passage, Michael's relatives arrange for and approach Michael's journey to England in a manner that can best be described as:
 - E. fearful and tense.
 - F. excited and frantic.
 - G. meticulous and generous.
 - H. understated and matter-of-fact.

What had there been before such a ship in my life? A dugout canoe on a river journey? A launch in Trincomalee harbour? There were always fishing boats on our horizon. But I could never have imagined the grandeur of this castle that was to cross the sea. The longest journeys I had made were car rides to Nuwara Eliya and Horton Plains, or the train to Jaffna, which we boarded at seven a.m. and disembarked from in the late afternoon. We made that journey with our egg sandwiches, a pack of cards, and a small Boy's Own adventure.

But now it had been arranged I would be travelling to England by ship, and that I would be making the journey alone. No mention was made that this might be an unusual experience or that it could be exciting or dangerous, so I did not approach it with any joy or fear. I was not forewarned that the ship would have seven levels, hold more than six hundred people including a captain, nine cooks, engineers, a veterinarian, and that it would contain a small jail and chlorinated pools that would actually sail with us over two oceans. The departure date was marked casually on the calendar by my aunt, who had notified the school that I would be leaving at the end of the term. The fact of my being at sea for twenty-one days was spoken of as having not much significance, so I was surprised my relatives were even bothering to accompany me to the harbour. I had assumed I would be taking a bus by myself and then change onto another at Borella Junction.

There had been just one attempt to introduce me to the situation of the journey. A lady named Flavia Prins, whose husband knew my uncle, turned out to be making the same journey and was invited to tea one afternoon to meet with me. She would be travelling in First Class but promised to keep an eye on me. I shook her hand carefully, as it was covered with rings and bangles, and she then turned away to continue the conversation I had interrupted. I spent most of the hour listening to a few uncles and counting how many of the trimmed sand-

wiches they ate.

On my last day, I found an empty school examination booklet, a pencil, a pencil sharpener, a traced map of the world, and put them into my small suitcase.

As I got into the car, it was explained to me that after I'd crossed the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea, and gone through the Suez Canal into

5. The passage makes clear that once Michael boards the *Oronsay*, he feels that the city he is leaving has become:
 - A. morally corrupt.
 - B. physically shut off from him.
 - C. aesthetically beautiful.
 - D. figuratively lifted and carried with him.
6. The main point of the second paragraph (lines 22–31) is for the narrator to analyze the circumstance of:
 - F. Michael's relatives leaving the harbor as soon as Michael had boarded the *Oronsay*.
 - G. Michael enjoying listening to families singing but refusing to join in with them.
 - H. Michael not returning to the deck to wave goodbye to his relatives.
 - J. Michael's relatives weeping as the *Oronsay* departed.
7. The interaction between Michael and Flavia Prins that is described in the passage most strongly suggests that although Prins has promised to keep an eye on Michael during his journey, she is:
 - A. fairly indifferent to him and not particularly focused on his well-being.
 - B. likely going to retract her promise as a result of Michael's rude behavior during tea.
 - C. planning to make sure someone else provides him with constant attention and care.
 - D. intending to ignore him, if not make certain that his journey is difficult.
8. In the passage, Michael is metaphorically referred to as:
 - F. a smuggler.
 - G. rings and bangles.
 - H. green grass.
 - J. a little cricket.
9. The passage indicates that Michael's journey to England will require:
 - A. relying on the expertise of a team of captains.
 - B. disembarking the *Oronsay* midjourney.
 - C. avoiding traveling on the Red Sea.
 - D. spending twenty-one days at sea.

Who it's good for:

- Slower readers who cannot finish the passages in time when using The Big Read, The Big Read with Notes, or Label Then Read.
- Students who read the entire passage but do not remember where to go in the passage when answering the questions. If you read the entire passage but do not recall the passage well enough to know where to go as you answer the questions, you are wasting your time reading the entire passage.

Who it's bad for:

- Strong readers who read quickly and can use The Big Read, The Big Read with Notes, or Label Then Read and complete the passages in time.
- Students who find it difficult to understand the passage using The Speed Reader.
- Slower readers who score worse using The Speed Reader than other methods.

Approach #5 – First and Last

The fifth approach is our second method that does not require reading the entire passage. **With this approach, you read the first 1-2 sentences of a paragraph and the last 1-2 sentences of a paragraph to get an idea of what the paragraph is about, write down a quick note, and then repeat on the next paragraph.** You do not read (or even skim) the middle portions of the paragraph. The goal with The First and Last is to get through the passage faster and have more time to answer the questions.

Compared to The Speed Reader, you are reading slightly more of the passage with First and Last. As a result, you should understand the passage better than with The Speed Reader, but you will spend more time reading and will have somewhat less time on the questions.

- **Read the first 1-2 sentences of the paragraph and the last 1-2 sentences of the paragraph.** Use your best judgment regarding how much of the first and last sentences of the paragraph to read. If the first sentence already gives you an idea of what the paragraph is about, skip to the last sentence(s). If not, keep reading until you have a rough idea of the paragraph's topic.
- **Write a note next to the paragraph.** The note can be a single word or a short phrase. You will use your notes as you answer the questions.
- **Go to the start of the next paragraph and repeat the process.** Repeat the process until you have read the entire passage and written down notes for each paragraph.
- **Skip any broad passage questions (main idea, best summarizes the passage, the passage can be best described as...) and save them for last.** These are commonly the first question in each passage. After answering the rest of the questions, you will better understand the entire passage, and broad passage questions will be easier to answer correctly.
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- Students who read the entire passage but do not remember where to go in the passage when answering the questions. If you read the entire passage but do not recall the passage well enough to know where to go as you answer the questions, you are wasting your time reading the entire passage.
- Slower readers who find they understand the passage better or score better using First and Last compared to The Speed Reader.

Who it's bad for:

- Strong readers who read quickly and can use The Big Read, The Big Read with Notes, or Label Then Read and complete the passages in time.
- Students who still find it difficult to understand the passage using First and Last.
- Slower readers who score worse using First and Last than other methods.

Approach #6 – Working Backwards

The final method is going straight to the questions and then working backwards. **We recommend this method if you cannot finish the passages in time with another method we have discussed or if you find yourself getting to the end of the passage and not recalling what you read.** Students we generally advise to work backwards are slower readers who cannot finish all 4 passages in time or do not retain what they have read well. Even if that is you, make sure to only use this method if it helps you increase your score.

The other time we recommend this method is if you have mismanaged time and get to the final passage with 4 minutes left or less (or 7 minutes left or less for extended time). If you have that little time left, reading the passage will use up most of your time. You will most likely be able to answer more questions correctly by going straight to the questions.

- **Go straight to the questions before reading the passage.**
- **Skip any broad questions that ask about the entire passage. Save those for last.**
- **Look for questions to answer first that reference specific lines or a paragraph of the passage.**
Other easy questions to answer right away are words in context questions.
- **Next, look for clear evidence questions.** We will learn how to spot these questions in Chapter 5.
- **Next, answer inference questions and then purpose questions.** We will learn how to spot these questions in Chapter 5.
- **Use the 2-Sentence Rule. Always read 2 sentences before and after the line reference or keywords,** as that is most commonly where the evidence is located. In addition, you will read most of the passage as you work through the questions, so you will be ready to answer the broad passage questions at the end.
- **Save the broad passage questions for last.** If you are running out of time, skip the inference questions and answer the broad passage questions using the information you know about the passage.

We will discuss this method more later in the course in Chapter 11. After you have learned more about keywords and question types, we will revisit Working Backwards and explain this method in more depth.

Who it's good for:

- Students who cannot finish the passages with any of the other methods.
- Students who find that they do not remember important details after reading the passage.
- Students who mismanaged time and do not have enough time to use their normal approach on the final passage.
- Students who have already been using this method and are scoring very well.

Who it's bad for:

- Students who can finish the Reading Test with The Big Read, The Big Read with Notes, or Label Then Read. The ACT Reading Test requires you to find specific evidence from the passage. It is much more difficult to find the evidence in the passage consistently when working backwards. If you are currently working backwards and missing 4-8 questions on the entire Reading Test, you may be able to increase your score with one of the other methods.
- Generally, students aiming for 32-36 on the Reading Test. To score a 32-36, you can usually only miss 0-3 questions. If you never read the passage, you are far more likely to get questions wrong because you did not find the correct evidence. That being said, **we have had students score perfectly Working Backwards, so it is all about finding what approach is best for you.**

How to Approach Dual Text Passages

Each ACT Reading Test will have 1 dual text passage with two shorter passages labelled as Passage A and Passage B. The two passages discuss similar topics and will somehow be related. For example, a Literary Narrative passage could have two authors discussing two similar experiences, and a Natural Science passage could have two scientists offering differing opinions on a recent discovery.

When working on a dual text passage, **we recommend that you read each passage separately. Do not read both passages before starting the questions.** Instead, you should use the following approach:

1. Read Passage A and answer questions for Passage A.
2. Read Passage B and answer questions for Passage B.
3. Answer questions about both passages.

When reading the passage, **you should still apply whatever method you prefer from the ones we already discussed** (The Big Read, The Big Read with Notes, Label Then Read, The Speed Reader, First and Last, or Working Backwards).

In Dual Text Passages, the questions go in the following order:

- Passage A Questions
- Passage B Questions
- Questions about both passages.

3 ■ ■ ■ 3 ■ ■ ■ 3

READING TEST

35 Minutes—40 Questions

DIRECTIONS: There are several passages in this test. Each passage is accompanied by several questions. After reading a passage, choose the best answer to each question and fill in the corresponding oval on your answer document. You may refer to the passages as often as necessary.

Passage I

LITERARY NARRATIVE: Passage A is adapted from the autobiography *A Reporter's Life* by Edna Ferber (1919) by Morris L. Cohn et al. (Translators). Passage B is adapted from the memoir *Pull Me Up: A Memoir* by Dan Barry (©2004 by Dan Barry).

Passage A by Edna Ferber

The printing shop and pressroom were separated from the rest of the office by a doorway, and the author never was closer. The work—type found and tables, the linotype machine (a new and fearsome invention to me), the small press, the big newspaper press, the boiler pipe, the trash—was all there. The author's office was made to look like the heart of a small-town newspaper. The front room was in its head, but without the back room it could not function at all. The linotype and the type cases took up all day for their daily adventure. It was 45 once a small friend of mine went for a swim in the fountain in the middle of the floor. The water was set up and printed, as well as handbills, programs, all the odds and ends classified as job printing. Mac, who rated this as his best work, had the example of a printing company, but I doubted it. He had come in years before, his brown 15 hair curly over a milky brow, his limp shirt seemed perfectly clean. But he was not the sort of boy that any shrill and strident marrer of the sequence of Mac's copy. His voice was soft, gentle, and he was boss of the office. He used to eat to the limit. He ate 20 atoms. Mac seldom talked but sometimes—rarely—he appeared in the front office, a drooping figure, with a piece of paper in his hand, looking for a quiet way. Standing at the side of the city editor's desk he would deliver himself of this information, looking mildly 25 and slightly romantic. It always proved to be a bombshell.

Such was the make-up of the Appleton, Wisconsin, Daily Crescent.

In the past thirty years all sorts of ex-newspaper 30 men from Richard Harding Davis to Vincent Sheean and John Gunther have written about the lure of the reporter's life, the smell of printed ink, the adventure of reporting. If it's true, it's been said, it's silly, but it's true—or it was, at least, in my newspaper experience. To this day I can't smell the scent of white paper, wet ink, oil, hot lead, metaltype and cats that goes to make up the peculiar odor of any newspaper plant; be

it Appleton, Wisconsin, or Cairo, Egypt, that I don't get a pang of nostalgia for the old reporting days. "I was 40 once a newspaper man myself" has come to be a fun phrase, but practically everyone seems to have, or to want to be, a newspaper reporter.

Passage B by Dan Barry

Ink. The building smelled of ink, spilled and bled. It was a tart and sharp smell, and the ink seeped 45 into the fabric of your clothes and then under your skin, the kind that comes home with you, sits with you at the dinner table, tells you constantly what it is you do. Car stylists, nurses and short-order cooks. You are a man 50 who chases halibut, a woman who perms hair. You smell of ink.

I inhaled into that invisible veil of ink, inhaled it deeply, allowed it to wash over me. It smelled of words and phrases, rants and ideas, sports scores and felony 55 arrests, announcements of marriage and notices of death. Maybe the smell of the ink was just a strong hallucination, but I doubted it. In a small concrete building, different from all the others in a drab Connecticut industrial park, I was experiencing a dreamlike reverie, an epiphany, really, at the age of twenty-five.

This is what I do.

Printed like a manifesto to a bulletin board in the center of this ink-perfumed building was a typewritten 60 note from my new employer, announcing that on this day, October 17, 1983, I would begin working as a reporter for the *Daily News*. It was the first step in my career. Standing at the side of the city editor's desk he would deliver himself of this information, looking mildly 65 and slightly romantic. I was experiencing a dreamlike reverie, an epiphany, really, at the age of twenty-five.

This is what I do.

70 *Dan is a former intern at the Daily News in New York and a graduate assistant for the journalism department at the University of Connecticut. His work has appeared in the Daily News, the New York Times and the Rocky Mountain News. Soon it will appear in truancies throughout north-central Connecticut. Please make him feel welcome.*

Reading the note, I thought, I'm home.

3 ■ ■ ■ 3 ■ ■ ■ 3

Questions 5–7 ask about Passage B.

5. What is the epiphany the narrator of Passage B experienced at the age of twenty-five?
 A. He couldn't live in his parents' basement forever.
 B. His dream of being a reporter had finally been realized.
 C. He would rather write news stories than work for a lawn company.
 D. His success as a reporter would depend on his work ethic.

6. Based on Passage B, the note that the narrator's employer wrote can best be described as:
 E. mildly sarcastic
 F. neutral
 G. bluntly apologetic
 H. particularly optimistic.

7. The last sentence of Passage B mainly serves to indicate that the narrator:
 A. had disdain for most northeastern newspapers.
 B. was familiar with the newspapers published in the area.
 C. was desperate to find a newswriting job.
 D. had extensive newswriting experience.

Questions 8–10 ask about both passages.

8. Compared to the description of the newspaper office mentioned in Passage A, the description of the newspaper office mentioned in Passage B provides less information about:
 F. types of machines used to print the newspaper.
 G. exterior appearance of the office building.
 H. number of people who work in the office.
 J. types of stories being written and printed for the newspaper.

9. Compared to Passage A, the style of Passage B is more strongly characterized by its use of:
 A. technical jargon.
 B. figurative language.
 C. formal diction.
 D. figurative language.

10. Based on the passages, who would be most likely to associate the smell of ink with pleasant memories?
 E. The narrator of Passage A only.
 F. The narrator of Passage B only.
 G. Both narrators.
 J. Neither narrator.

If you use Working Backwards, then use the following approach:

1. Answer questions for Passage A.
2. Answer questions for Passage B.
3. Answer questions about both passages.

Chapter 4: Pacing and 10 Time Management Skills

Proper time management is critical to success on the Reading Test. The Reading Test is the section on the ACT that students most commonly struggle finishing. It is important that you not only know your pacing but also learn some skills and tips to improve your time management skills.

Pacing

The ACT Reading Test is composed of 4 passages you must complete in 40 minutes (60 minutes for extended time). On average, **you have 10 minutes per passage. For extended time, you get 15 minutes per passage.** Memorize the pace and the breakdowns below to help you keep pace on test day.

Normal Time	
Passages Completed	Time (min.)
1	10
2	20
3	30
4	40

Extended Time	
Passages Completed	Time (min.)
1	15
2	30
3	45
4	60

These timing breakdowns are general estimates and should not be treated strictly. You are not going to complete every passage in the same amount of time. Some passages will take you longer than the average while you may complete others more quickly. That being said, you should never get more than 1-2 minutes behind the pace breakdown in the tables above.

At the end of each passage, check your watch. If you are on pace or ahead of pace, keep working as you have been. If you are behind pace, take note of that and pick up the pace. Try to avoid freaking out and rushing too much, as that is when students commonly miss lots of questions.

10 Time Management Skills

To score your best, you want to make sure that you finish all 4 passages. What follows are 10 skills that will help you learn to manage your time more effectively on the ACT Reading Test.

1) Know Your Order

You do not need to complete the passages in the order that they are presented on the ACT. **We recommend completing your favorite passage(s) first and saving your least favorite passage for last.** There are no passages that are necessarily easier or harder, but there may be passages that feel easier or harder to you. The ACT passages appear in the following order:

New Enhanced ACT

- Passage 1 – Literary Narrative
- Passage 2 – Informational
- Passage 3 – Informational
- Passage 4 – Informational

Old ACT

- Passage 1 – Literary Narrative
- Passage 2 – Social Science
- Passage 3 – Humanities
- Passage 4 – Natural Science

We do not know if the new ACT will follow the same order as the old ACT, but we expect you will still see the same 4 types of passages. As you complete practice ACTs, keep in mind what passage(s) you like and what passage(s) you find more challenging. Even if the passages are not in order, you should be able to

identify the type of passage based on the quick description at the very top of each passage. With practice, you can come up with your own order to use on test day. In case you run out of time or need to rush to finish the final passage, **it is better to run out of time on a passage that you find more challenging rather than a passage that is typically easier for you.**

2) Skip Broad Passage Questions

The first question (and sometimes the first 2 questions) in the passage often asks about the passage as a whole. You should **always skip broad passage question(s) and answer them last.** After answering the rest of the questions in the passage, you will understand the passage better, and, therefore, will be more likely to answer the broad passage questions correctly.

This is also a time-saving tip because **you can answer these questions more quickly after answering all other questions in the passage.** By placing these questions first, the ACT is trying to trick you into answering these questions first, which can be very time consuming since most students need to go back and re-read or skim the passage. In addition to wasting time, you are also more likely to get broad passage questions wrong if you answer them first.

3) Get to Know the Pace

Knowing how much time you have per passage is not good enough. **It is important to really get to know the pace, so you can tell when you are on pace, ahead or pace, or behind pace without having to constantly check your watch.** Once you know the pace, you will have an internal voice in your head tell you when you have more time on a question or when you need to move on. **The only way to accomplish this is practice, practice, practice!**

4) Follow The 30-Second Rule. Do Not Get Stuck

One of the most common mistakes students make is getting stuck on a question for too long. **If you get stuck on a question for more than 30 seconds, bubble in your best guess and move on.** It is far better to take your best guess on any question(s) that give you trouble and finish the Reading Test than it is to run out of time and completely guess on a bunch of questions as time is running out. **If you have time after answering the rest of the questions in the passage or find the evidence as you answer the rest of the questions in the passage, you can come back to the question and change your answer.**

5) Circle Guesses, Box Non-Confident Answers

What should you do if you cannot find the Waldo and need to move on? Or if you run out of time on a passage and move to the next passage? **If you completely guess on a question, circle the question number.** You may also have to answer some questions before you are 100% sure that you have found the correct answer and the evidence in the passage. It is important to not get stuck on a question for too long when you cannot find the “Waldo” or are picking between two answer choices. **If you answer a question but are not confident in your answer, box the number.** It is better to make some educated guesses along the way and finish the test than get stuck and not finish the final passage.

If you finish the Reading Test with time left, go back to any questions where you circled the number. After answering those questions, if you still have time left, go back to any questions where you boxed the number.

The goal is that with practice you will have a sense of when you have time to stick with a question and when you need to move on. Again, the only way to get this sense is with practice!

6) Answer Questions Out of Order

You do not need to answer the questions in the order that they are presented on the test. In fact, you probably should not always answer the questions in order! Instead, **be open to answering the questions out of order.** **For some students, it is best to start with questions with line references and other questions that you can find quickly.** If you cannot find the right part of the passage quickly for a question, skip the question and come back to it. As you go back to the passage for other questions, you may come across the evidence in the passage that you could not find and can go back and answer the question you skipped.

Remember, **the questions on the ACT Reading are not strictly chronological**, so the questions are not in the order of where the evidence appears in the passage.

7) Know Where Waldo Is More Likely Going to Be Based on the Question Number

The 9 questions in each passage are not chronological, but there is a rough pattern that might help you find the evidence more quickly. If you read a question and do not remember where it is, start looking in the parts of the passage listed below:

Questions 1-3: Start of the passage, most likely in the first third of the passage.

***Note: This does not count broad passage questions.**

Questions 4-7: Could be anywhere but start looking somewhere in the middle of the passage.

Questions 8-9: End of the passage, most likely in the last 2 paragraphs.

These are rough guidelines and absolutely NOT RULES! These are just the locations where the Waldo is most likely going to be. Sometimes, the Waldo for question 8 is in the middle of passage, and sometimes the Waldo for question 6 is in the very first sentence. So, if you do not find your evidence, keep looking elsewhere in the passage. Knowing where the evidence is most likely going to be is just a method to use to save time.

Now, let's look at this example passage to demonstrate how to use Tips #6 and #7:

3 ■ ■ ■ **3** ■ ■ ■ **3** ■ ■ ■

Passage II

INFORMATIONAL: This passage is from the book *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World* by Michael Pollan.

Originally cultivated in the Ottoman Empire, tulips were introduced to Europe at the end of the sixteenth century and became wildly popular in the seventeenth century.

One crucial element of the beauty of the tulip that intoxicated the Dutch, the Turks, the French, and the English has been lost. To their eyes, the tulip was a masterpiece of color; it was possible to spontaneous and brilliant eruptions of color. In a planting of a hundred tulips, one of them might be so possessed, opening to reveal a single, self-sufficient jewel of its petals, as if by the finest brush and steadiest hand, with intricate feathers or flames of a vividly contrasting hue.

When this happened, the tulip was said to have "broken." The tulip was considered to be at its most manner—if the flames of the applied color reached clear to the petal's lip, say, and its pattern symmetrical, the tulip was "broken." For the effect that the bulb would inherit its bents and hues and command a fantastic price. The fact that broken tulips for some unknown reason produced fewer and smaller offsets than ordinary tulips did not deter prices still higher. Semper Augustus was the most famous such tulip.

The closest thing to a broken tulip today is the group known as the Rembrandt tulips, named because Rembrandt painted some of the most admired breaks of his time. But these latter-day tulips, with their heavy petals and lack of one or more petals, look clumsy by comparison, as if painted in haste with a thick brush. To judge from the paintings we have of the originals, the petalless broken tulip could be as fine and interesting, mathematically speaking, the exact 30 swirls of color somehow managing to seem both bold and delicate at once. In the most striking examples—such as the first canvas that Semper Augustus splashed on its pure white ground, the outburst of color juxtaposed with the orderly, linear form of the tulip could be breathtaking, with the leaping, wayward patterns just barely contained by the petal's edge.

Anon. Paword records the extraordinary lengths to which Dutchmen would go to make their tulips break, sometimes borrowing a technique from 40 alchemists, who faced what must have seemed a comparable challenge. Over the earth above a bed planted with white tulips, gardeners would liberally spray paint or ink to encourage the tulip to believe that rainwater would wash the color down to the roots, 45 when it would be taken up by the bulb. Christians sold receipts for the use of various colors, while 50 pigeon droppings were thought to be an effective agent, as was plaster dust taken from the walls of old houses. Unlike the alchemists, when attempts to change base 55 metals into gold, silver, and copper failed, the would-be tulip changers would be rewarded with a good break, inspiring everybody to redouble their efforts.

What the Dutch could not have known was that a 55 virus was responsible for the tulip's broken lip. In fact, that is just as it was discovered, decoded the beauty it had made possible. The color of a tulip actually consists of two pigments working in concert—a base color that is always yellow or white and a second 60 overlay color that is added by a virus. The ratio of these two hues determines the unitary color we see. The virus works by partially and irregularly suppressing the anthocyanin gene, leaving a portion of the underlying color to show through. Not until the 1920s, 65 after the invention of the electron microscope, that scientists discovered the virus was being spread from tulip to tulip by *Myzus persicae*, the peach potato aphid. Peaches were a common feature of seventeenth-century gardens.

By the 1920s the Dutch regarded their tulips as commodities to trade rather than jewels to display, and since the virus weakened the bulb it infected (the reason why the offsets of broken tulips were sparse and few), the tulip growers were about ridding their 75 fields of the infection. Color breaks, when they did occur, were promptly destroyed, and a certain peculiar manifestation of natural beauty abruptly lost its claim on human affection.

I am not suggesting that the virus was supplying 80 something to the broken tulip nodding, has the touch of abandon the flower's chilly formality called for. Maybe that's why the broken tulip became such a treasure in seventeenth-century Holland: the wayward color loosed on a tulip by a good break, perfected the flower, even as the virus responsible set about destroying it.

On the face of the story of the virus and the tulip 85 seem to throw a wrench into any evolutionary understanding of beauty.

Excerpt from THE BOTANY OF DESIRE: A PLANT'S-EYE VIEW OF THE WORLD by Michael Pollan, copyright © 2001 by Michael Pollan. Used by permission of Random House, an imprint and division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.

10. The main purpose of the passage is to:

- F. highlight changes in the flower industry from the seventeenth century through today.
- G. examine how certain plants have been represented in art over the centuries.
- H. provide a history of plant viruses and the way they affect the flower market.
- J. explain a particular flower variation and how it has been perceived historically.

11. The main point of the second paragraph (lines 21–36) is that:

- A. modern Rembrandt tulips have been painted by many of today's most famous artists.
- B. compared to seventeenth-century broken tulips, today's multicolored tulips are less visually appealing.
- C. the tulip break known as Semper Augustus was a striking example of the seventeenth-century broken tulip.
- D. Rembrandt was responsible for painting the most famous tulip breaks of his time.

12. It can reasonably be inferred from the passage that some seventeenth-century tulip growers believed tulip breaks were mainly caused by:

- F. suppliers' storage conditions.
- G. diseased tulip bulbs.
- H. certain growing techniques.
- J. certain weather patterns.

13. The information in lines 57–64 primarily functions to:

- A. describe the range of potential tulip colors.
- B. explain how the color variation in a broken tulip took place.
- C. argue that yellow and white are the only natural tulip colors.
- D. indicate why broken tulips contain no anthocyanin.

14. The sixth paragraph (lines 79–85) differs from the rest of the passage in that it:

- F. questions whether the virus that caused broken tulips was harmful to bulbs.
- G. argues that growers should have dealt with broken tulips differently.
- H. challenges the idea that broken tulips were beautiful.
- J. presents a personal meditation on broken tulips.

15. According to the passage, in the seventeenth century, the fact that broken tulip bulbs tended to produce smaller offsets compared to typical tulip bulbs resulted in:

- A. a decrease in the demand for broken tulips.
- B. a fear among growers that broken tulips were diseased.
- C. an increase in prices for broken tulips.
- D. a desire among growers to plant a wider variety of crops.

16. In the passage, the author compares broken tulips as they are represented in Rembrandt's paintings to:

- F. peach-tree blossoms.
- G. paint powders sprinkled on the ground.
- H. paper designs done with a thick brush.
- J. intricately marbled papers.

17. The passage author most likely mentions that peach trees were a staple of seventeenth-century gardens to:

- A. highlight a crop favored by growers who did not cultivate tulips.
- B. emphasize that peach trees are not as popular in gardens today.
- C. explain how peach potato aphids spread the tulip virus.
- D. compare tulips to another popular seventeenth-century crop.

18. As it is used in line 80, the word *abandon* most nearly means:

- F. uninhibitedness.
- G. relinquishment.
- H. retreat.
- J. denial.

8) Wear a Watch and Check Your Watch After Each Passage

Wear a watch on test day. You cannot bring a smart watch, and your watch cannot make noise.

We know this is a repeat from earlier in this chapter, but we will say it again for emphasis: **check your watch at the end of each passage.** A quick watch check along with memorizing the timing breakdown at the start of this chapter tells you if you are ahead of pace, right on pace, or behind pace. You can then adjust accordingly to make sure you finish all 4 passages.

9) Do Not Freak Out If You Fall Behind the Pace

This is a very important one! **If you check your watch and see that you are behind the pace, do not freak out!** In this situation, most students panic, start to rush, read the next passage as quickly as possible, and answer questions too quickly, which usually leads to a bunch of incorrect answers. The other major mistake is focusing so much on the time that you can no longer retain what you are reading. Do not let this be you!

When you notice that you are behind the pace, make minor adjustments to your approach. **Try to read a little bit more quickly but do not read so fast that you cannot understand what you are reading.** This will help you catch up a little bit.

More importantly, **make quicker decisions when answering the questions.** If you read a question and the answer choices and think you know the answer right away, bubble in that answer and move on. **It is okay to answer questions from memory if you are confident that you know the right answer.** For other questions, you may have to select an answer before you are 100% sure of your answer. That is okay. Some 50-75% sure answers and finishing all the questions is still better than having to guess on a bunch of questions at the end.

10) Know When to Go with Your Gut

For our final skill, you should **(1) know how confident you need to be to accurately pick the correct answer and (2) know if you can answer the question from memory or if you need to go back to the passage.** Students who have strong recall can rely on their memory to know what is right vs. wrong. If you know the answer right away, bubble it in and move on without going back to the passage. If you think you know the answer but are not 100% confident, go back to the passage and double-check to make sure you get the answer correct. If you know that you do not remember where the details are in the passage, either go back to the passage and look for the Waldo or skip the question and come back to it later.

Knowing when to trust your gut versus when you need to go back to the passage is a very powerful skills to help manage your time correctly.

Common Test Day Mistake To Avoid

With practice, you will know when to go with your gut and answer a question right away, when you to back to the passage and look for the evidence, and when to skip the question and answer it later. Knowing when to trust your gut and when to go back to the passage is an essential skill to build.

Many students stop trusting their gut on test day and start finding the “Waldo” every time. If you do this, you will suddenly have timing issues on the real ACT when you are normally finishing the Reading Test on your practice tests.

Chapter 5: How to Spot and Approach the 7 Most Common Types of Questions

Knowing the type of question that you are being asked to answer is a critical skill to maximize your Reading score. In this chapter, we will teach you the 7 most common types of questions on the ACT, how to spot each type on the test, and the best methods for approaching each one.

ACT Reading questions can be broken into 7 types of questions:

- 1) **Broad Passage**
- 2) **Clear Evidence**
- 3) **Inference**
- 4) **Purpose**
- 5) **Main Idea**
- 6) **Words in Context**
- 7) **Comparing Passages**

These categories cover 95+% of questions on the ACT, but there can still be some other miscellaneous question types. If you see a question that does not fall into one of these categories, read the question carefully and use the principles that you learn during this course to find the correct answer.

Now, let's learn how to spot and approach each type of question.

1) Broad Passage Questions

Broad passage questions are often the first question (and sometimes the first 2 questions) in a passage. Some common broad passage questions are:

- The passage can be best described as
- The main idea of the passage is
- The main purpose of the passage is to
- The author's central claim is
- The passage is written from the point of view of
- A central theme of the passage is
- Which choice best describes the narrator?
- Which choice best describes the overall structure of the passage?

This list includes some of the most common types of broad passage questions, but there can be many more. In general, it will be easy to tell when a question is a broad passage question.

Remember, **we recommend skipping broad passage questions and answering them last.** After completing the rest of the questions, you will understand the passage better and are more likely to answer broad passage questions correctly. You will also save time since it will be easier to answer the question(s) more quickly.

2) Clear Evidence Questions

For clear evidence questions, **the correct answer is a restatement or rephrasing of evidence directly stated in the passage**. Once you find your Waldo, **the correct answer will most commonly be “slap-you-in-the-face” obvious**. In other words, the correct answer is the exact same words from the passage or a simple rephrasing of the evidence in the passage.

Clear evidence questions almost always have at least one of the following keywords in the question:

- **Indicates**
- **States**
- **Argues**
- **Describes**
- **Claims**
- **According to the passage(s)/author/narrator**
- **Based on the passage(s)**
- **In the passage(s)**

Other less common clear evidence keywords that have appeared on the ACT before are below:

- **Characterizes**
- **Clarifies**
- **As presented in the passage(s)**

Clear evidence questions can look like this:

1. The passage **indicates** that the best methodology for increasing plant growth is to
2. **Based on the passage**, which choice best **describes** what happened when the molten glass mixture was cooled too quickly?

Whenever we spot a clear evidence question, we know that we are looking for clear evidence in the passage. **Do not make any inferences when answering the question!** This is one of the most common mistakes that students make.

Clear evidence questions usually are easier because the evidence directly matches the correct answer. However, clear evidence questions can still be challenging when the evidence is well hidden in the passage, so make sure to still guess and move on to the next question if you get stuck and cannot find the evidence.

3) Inference Questions

For inference questions, **the correct answer is most commonly not directly stated in the passage. Instead, the correct answer is demonstrated in the passage. There is still strong evidence from the passage to support the correct answer, but the evidence is not going to directly match the answer choice.**

Once you find your Waldo, the answer choice is still generally pretty clear, but it is not going to be as obvious as with the clear evidence questions that we just discussed.

Inference questions always have at least one of the following keywords in the question:

- **Inferred**
- **Implies**
- **Suggests**
- **Assumed**
- **Most reasonably**
- **Most likely**
- **Most clearly**
- **Most nearly**
- **Most strongly**
- **Best supports**

As an example, consider the following passage and questions:

His mother, standing across the room, smiled warmly at Elijah. His grandfather, a man known for his short temper and intimidating appearance, knelt and reached out his hand.

1. In the passage, the actions of Elijah's mother **suggest** that she
 - A. wishes to support Elijah's interaction with his grandfather.

Notice that passage never directly states that Elijah's mother supports the interaction with the grandfather, but the "smiling warmly" at this interaction demonstrates her support. This is the type of evidence we can see for inference questions.

Inference questions are generally more difficult because you must select an answer choice that is demonstrated but not directly stated in the passage. Remember that **there still needs to be evidence (and usually strong evidence) from the passage to support the correct answer. You cannot tell too much of a story as to why the answer is correct; you still need to find your Waldo!**

Once you find the evidence in the passage, **make sure you read for enough context and use the 2-sentence rule!** This is always important on the ACT Reading and especially true for inference questions.

4) Purpose Questions

Purpose questions ask us to think about WHY a sentence, quotation, or paragraph is included in the passage.

Purpose questions always have at least one of the following keywords in the question:

- **Purpose**
- **Serve(s) to**
- **In order to**
- **Mainly to**
- **Function**
- **Primarily to**

Purpose questions can look like this:

1. The author includes the quotation in the third paragraph **in order to**
2. In the first paragraph, the references to the Hulk and Ironman **primarily serve to**

To answer purpose questions correctly, **we must read for context and think about WHY the information is included in the passage.** If you read just the lines or the paragraph in the question, you will likely not have the context that you need to answer the question correctly.

5) Main Idea Questions

Main idea questions ask us to figure out WHAT a portion of the passage or paragraph is saying. The correct answer to a main idea question summarizes the part of the passage the question is asking about.

Main idea questions most commonly have the following keywords in the question:

- **Main idea**
- **Best summarizes**
- **Central claim**
- **Paraphrases**

Main idea questions can look like this:

1. Which of the following **best summarizes** the author's justification for the British rule over India?
2. The **main idea** of the fifth paragraph (lines 60-73) is

For main idea questions, **focus on the part of the passage the question is asking you to consider and summarize what is being said.** You should still read for a little bit of context (this is always good practice on the ACT), but the context for main idea questions is not as important.

6) Words in Context Questions

Words in context questions ask us to select what a word or phrase most nearly means in the context of the passage. Usually, we are being asked about the meaning of a word or phrase that is being used in an uncommon way in the passage, so we must go back and read the context to find what it means. Most often, the correct answer is not the actual definition of the word but an alternate meaning based on the context.

Words in context questions always have the phrase “most nearly means” and look like this:

1. As used in line 61, “audible” most nearly means
 - A. Noisy
 - B. Detectable
 - C. Noticeable
 - D. Clear

To find the correct answer, you must read for context. We recommend that you read the sentence before, the sentence the word or phrase is included in, and the following sentence. If it is still not clear what the word or phrase should mean, read for more context earlier and later in the paragraph.

How to Approach Words in Context Questions

There are two approaches that are effective for words in context questions.

Method #1: Pick Your Own Word

1. Read for context.
2. Pick your own word to replace the word.
3. Look at the answer choices and pick the word that best matches your word.

Method #2: Plug the Answer Choices Back into the Passage

1. Read each answer choice back in the passage. Make sure to read for context.
2. Pick the answer choice that best replaces the word.

Both approaches are equally effective so which one you use is a matter of preference.

TIP – Do Not Assume the Hard Vocabulary Word is Correct

Words in context questions are one place the ACT commonly tests vocabulary knowledge. **If you see any word(s) that you do not know in a words in context question, do not assume the hard word is correct.** Many students mistakenly think, “Oh, this is the ACT...it must be the hard word since they are testing my vocabulary.” Wrong! Sometimes, the ACT is testing your vocabulary and the hard word is correct. Other times, the hard word is just a decoy and a simpler word that you know fits correctly.

On these questions, **do the best you can with the words you know.** If there is a word you know and it works, pick that word. If you know a word and it does not work, cross it off. If you are stuck between two words you do not know, bubble in your best guess and move on.

7) Comparing Passages Questions

At the end of the dual text passage, there are 3 comparing passages questions. These questions ask us to compare the dual text passages in a variety of ways, including many of the question types we have covered already in this chapter. **In general, you should approach comparing passages questions with the same methods that we will learn for the questions in a normal passage.**

These questions are easy to spot because **the question will clearly indicate that you are using both passages by referencing the passages or the authors of the passages.**

Comparing passages questions can look like this:

1. Which choice best describes the relationship between the **two passages**?
2. One similarity between **passage A** and **passage B** is that both passages argue

In chapter 10 of this course, we will give some more advanced tips for how to best handle comparing passages questions.

Chapter 6: Breaking Down Questions – How to Identify Exactly What the ACT is Asking You

The most important skill for success on the Reading Test is effectively breaking down each question to identify exactly what the ACT is asking you. Many students believe that they are doing are already doing this, but most are not doing it effectively enough or at all.

Let us give you an example to better explain what we mean. Imagine that you are taking an ACT Reading Test and are working on a question. You read the question and go back to the passage to look for the evidence. All of the sudden, I reach across the table and take your ACT away and ask you, “what exactly are you looking for?” If you cannot tell me EXACTLY what you are looking for, you are not doing a good enough job breaking down the question. And if you are not doing a good enough job breaking down the question, you do not know exactly what the ACT is asking, which of course makes it much more difficult to consistently find the correct answer and means that you are wasting time!

In this chapter, we will teach you the skills and methods that you need to effectively break down questions and identify exactly what you are looking for when you go to the passage. **The better you get at breaking down questions, the easier the Reading Test becomes.** In addition, **you will improve your time management skills and answer more questions correctly.**

Skill #1 – Identify the Type of Question

When you read a question, you first need to identify the type of question. **You should memorize all the key words and approaches we learned in Chapter 5** to make identifying question types easy. Knowing what type of question you are looking at is critical to knowing how to approach the question and the type of evidence to look for in the passage.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. The passage indicates that Austin had what reaction when Mr. Amar told him his cabinet was not up to industry standards? | 3. The author discusses dual insulation in water bottles in order to : |
|--|---|

Question Type:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2. It can be inferred that the first attempt to fix the water contamination issue failed because it: | 4. According to the passage , Terry would occasionally appear at the tennis courts to: |
|---|---|

Question Type:

Question Type:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2. It can be inferred that the first attempt to fix the water contamination issue failed because it: | 4. According to the passage , Terry would occasionally appear at the tennis courts to: |
|---|---|

Question Type:

Practice: For each question below, identify the question type. You can reference the list of question types on page 29 in Chapter 5.

<u>Question</u>	<u>Question Type</u>
1. The author suggests that a potential danger in the Universal Rights doctrine is that it:	1. _____
2. The quotation from Johnson (lines 8-11) primarily serves to:	2. _____
3. As used in line 39, “patriotic” most nearly means:	3. _____
4. The use of the phrase “overexaggerated nonsense” (line 76) primarily serves to:	4. _____
5. According to the passage, Yasmeeni is doubtful that biodiesel fuels can be:	5. _____
6. The main purpose of the discussions of red and green algae is to:	6. _____
7. It can be inferred that the author supports the idea that apex predators can lead to species extinction because:	7. _____
8. Based on the passage, how would the author most likely respond to Rose’s discovery about adult kangaroos?	8. _____
9. The passage indicates that Aubrey is excited to meet:	9. _____
10. According to the passage, what percentage of survey participants who purchased a dietary program followed the program for more than 8 weeks?	10. _____
11. The main idea of the passage is:	11. _____
12. The series of questions in lines 25-33 serve primarily to show:	12. _____
13. It can be inferred that Elliot and Rinket’s experiment did not include butterflies over 6 months old because:	13. _____
14. According to the passage, how would Tanner most likely explain the results presented in the table?	14. _____
15. The passage states that men in Virginia in 1850 believe that a woman’s role in owning a house is:	15. _____

Skill #2 – Identify the Keywords

To find the evidence in the passage quickly, we want to identify the keyword(s) in the question. The keyword(s) are the words or phrases that we can skim for in the passage. On the ACT, the keyword(s) from the question are almost always right nearby the evidence. If you can find the keyword(s) in the passage, the evidence is almost always right nearby. **The keywords are like little flags saying, “Look over here for the evidence!”** After you find the keyword(s), use the 2-sentence rule – read the 2 sentences before and 2 sentences after. **If you find the keyword(s) and use the 2-sentence rule, you will be able to find your Waldo and answer the question correctly.**

Identifying Keywords

As you read a question, we recommend that you underline the important keyword(s) in the question.

Once the keywords are underlined, you will know what words or phrases to skim for in the passage.

1. In the passage, the narrator describes a brick wall of an abandoned restaurant as:
 - A. trying to escape the rest of the building.
 - B. telling a story.
 - C. hiding behind a layer of paint.
 - D. being a good listener.
2. The passage suggests that one difference between a white dwarf and a red giant is that a red giant:
 - A. is more often studied with a photometer.
 - B. has a larger inner core.
 - C. relies more on helium for fuel.
 - D. has a higher surface temperature.

In the first example above, “brick wall” and “abandoned restaurant” are the keywords. We should also notice that this is a clear evidence questions since it starts with “in the passage.” If you can find where the passage discusses the brick wall of the abandoned restaurant, the Waldo should be right nearby and clearly match one of the answer choices.

In the second example, we are looking for a difference between a white draft and red giant. We see the question says “suggests,” so this is an inference question; the answer will not be as clearly stated in the passage. To find the evidence, we need to look for “white draft” and “red giant” in the passage and then look for a difference.

Practice: Underline the keyword(s) in the question below.

1. According to the passage, compared to the temperature of a volcano undergoing an eruption, the temperature of a blue flame is:
2. Clark mentions the roots of a certain kind of bamboo in order to illustrate the:
3. In the passage, Millie states that the toys lost during the move most likely:
4. The author most likely quotes the book *Pilgrim* to support her position that:
5. The passage indicates that scientists have been able to determine the rotational axis of Mars and Venus despite:
6. It can be most reasonably inferred that to determine the age of the painting using Prichard’s method, the researchers must analyze:
7. According to the passage, the farmers in Minnesota seems desperate because:
8. Based on the passage, who would most likely be excited for a thunderstorm?

Primary and Secondary Keywords

After we identify the keywords, we want to identify the primary and secondary keywords. **The primary keywords are the one(s) that are (1) easiest to locate in the passage and (2) more unique to the question.** These are the most important keyword(s) to find when answering the question.

Once you see the primary keyword(s) in the passage, **finding the secondary keyword(s) will confirm that you are in the right area.** If you find the secondary keyword(s) right nearby, you are in the right spot in the passage. If you do not find the secondary keyword(s) nearby, you should keep looking at other parts of the passage.

Learning how to identify primary and secondary keywords can help you find your Waldo more quickly and consistently. When we read any question, we want to use the following steps:

- 1) Underline the keyword(s) as you read the question.**
- 2) Identify the primary keyword(s).** The primary keyword(s) are the one(s) that will be easiest to locate in the passage and are more unique to the question.
- 3) Look for the primary keyword(s) in the passage.** When you are looking for the primary keywords, you should be skimming the passage and not reading carefully.
- 4) Once you find the primary keyword(s), use the 2-sentence rule. Read 2 sentences before and after and look for the secondary keyword(s).**
 - a. If you find the secondary keywords, you are very likely in the right part of the passage, so you are ready to answer the question.**
 - b. If you do not find the secondary keyword(s), you are not in the right part of the passage yet. Go back to step 3 and keep skimming for the primary keyword(s) elsewhere in the passage.**
- 5) Find the evidence in the passage (the Waldo) and answer the question.**

To see how this works, let's look at the example questions below:

1. The passage indicates that **covering themselves in mud** might **benefit** some **mammals** by:
 - A. controlling their body temperatures.
 - B. improving their camouflage.
 - C. protecting their skin.
 - D. signaling other animals.

Primary Keyword(s): covering themselves in mud

Secondary Keyword(s): benefit, mammals

In this question, “covering themselves in mud,” “benefits,” and “mammals” are the keywords. The primary keywords to look for are “covering themselves in mud.” This is most likely only discussed once in the passage and will be easier to locate. Find where the passage discusses animals covering themselves in mud.

Once we find that, look for the secondary keywords “benefit” and “mammals.” If we find anything about “benefit” or “mammals,” we know that we are in the right part of the passage. Now, look for how covering mud benefits some mammals and answer the question.

The keywords “benefits” and “mammals” are likely going to appear more commonly throughout the passage, so it would be harder to find the right part of the passage quickly if you started by skimming for those words instead of “covering themselves in mud.”

2. The passage most strongly suggests that the antennas on top of the **Willis Tower** are notable because of material's:
- strength.
 - color.
 - cost.
 - cheapness.

Primary Keyword(s): Willis Tower

Secondary Keyword(s): antenna, material

The primary keyword is “Willis Tower” because it is going to be the easiest to find in the passage. Skim for “Willis Tower.” Once we find “Willis Tower,” look for the secondary keywords “antenna” and “material.” If we find something about the antenna material, we know you are in the right part of the passage. If we do not, skim for “Willis Tower” again.

Once we know you are in the right part of the passage, looks evidence for why the antennas on the top of the Willis Tower are notable and answer the question.

Primary Keywords

Below are a 3 common types of keywords that you should (almost) always select as a primary keyword.

1) Capitalized words (Names, locations, etc.)

Names, locations, or any other capitalized words are always good keywords to prioritize, especially when answering a question without a line reference. **Capitalized words are easier to find when skimming through the passage.**

To demonstrate this, let's consider the example below:

- Based on the passage, regarding his business, **King Curtis'** attitude can be best described as:
 - resentful.
 - patient.
 - involved.
 - protective.

Primary Keyword(s): King Curtis

Secondary Keyword(s): business, attitude

The name “King Curtis” will be easy to find when skimming the passage. Once we find “King Curtis,” then use the 2-sentence rules and look for any statements about the business and his attitude.

Even if “King Curtis” appears multiple times in the passage, using the name as a primary keyword will still likely be much faster to find than looking for “business” or “attitude,” which will be harder to locate. This is why we should always make capitalized words a primary keyword.

2) Numbers

Numbers are always a primary keyword. Just like capitalized words, **numbers are always easy to find** in the passage, making them great keywords for any question without a line reference.

To demonstrate this, let's consider the example below:

2. According to the passage, which group recycled the most aluminum cans in the 1980s?
 - A. The Salvation Army.
 - B. The Pacific Northwest.
 - C. Private aluminum companies.
 - D. Public recycling collection programs.

Primary Keyword(s): 1980s

Secondary Keyword(s): aluminum cans, recycled

Skimming for “1980s” in the passage should be the easiest keyword to find. Once we find “1980s” (or a specific year in the 1980s), look for “aluminum cans.” After we find “1980s” and “aluminum cans,” look for anything about which group recycled the most aluminum cans.

3) Unique Keyword(s)

Look for unique keyword(s) in the question that are not consistently used in the passage. Once you find the unique keyword(s) in the passage, read for context. **The evidence is usually within a few sentences of the unique keyword(s).**

As an example, let's consider the question below:

3. According to the passage, heliocentrism is a theory about the solar system that:
 - A. was first proposed by the Ancient Greeks.
 - B. supports Kepler's observations.
 - C. was conclusively proven by Copernicus in the 16th Century.
 - D. proposes the sun is the center point of the entire solar system.

Primary Keyword(s): heliocentrism

Secondary Keyword(s): none

In this question, the primary (and only) keyword is “heliocentrism. **This question is somewhat vague, so it is a good example of a question where we should read the answer choices more quickly.** We will discuss this skill more later in this course.

Skim for “heliocentrism” in the passage. Once you find it, use the 2-sentence rule and, if you have not already done so, read the answer choices. Look for evidence in the passage that matches one of the statements in the answer choices.

TIP – Look for Synonyms of Keywords

The exact keywords from the question are not always in the passage, so **you should also look for synonyms of the primary and secondary keywords.** For most questions, the exact keywords from the question will be in the passage, but that is not always the case. For example, if a question asks:

1. The passage suggests that the narrator's relationship with her **family** is:
 - A. strained and not a factor in her decision to move back to New York.
 - B. distant but one that she hopes to improve in the future.
 - C. reserved but fulfilling.
 - D. loving despite the challenging of living apart.

Primary Keyword: family

Synonyms: mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter, siblings, cousin, etc.

When we go back to the passage, you cannot just look for the word “family.” Any of the synonyms above also refer to the narrator’s family, so we should look for the word “family” along with any of the synonyms above. It is possible that the word “family” never appear in the passage. But if we find a statement about the narrator’s siblings, we find the evidence that tells us about the narrator’s relationship with her family.

2. In the passage, the narrator is uneasy about:
 - A. the meeting next week with the publisher.
 - B. finishing his book by the deadline.
 - C. how his father may respond to the book’s title.
 - D. how the book will be reviewed by the Washington Post.

Primary Keyword: uneasy

Synonyms: anxious, worry, concern, etc.

When we go to the passage, we cannot just look for the word “uneasy” but also need to look for any synonyms as well. It is possible the word “uneasy” never appears in the passage. As you skim the passage, look for anything showing the author is feeling uneasy.

Skill #3 – Rephrase the Question in Your Own Words (If Necessary)

For many questions on the ACT, the keyword(s) are enough to know exactly what you are looking for. For these questions, there is no need to rephrase the question in your own words. For example, let's say a question asks:

1. According to the passage, the Egyptians invented addition at the same time as:
 - A. the Mayans invented zero.
 - B. the Babylonians invented addition.
 - C. the Europeans invented numbers.
 - D. the Minoans set sail on their first ships.

For this question, the question itself makes it very clear what you are looking for. Skim for “Egyptians inventing addition,” find the date, and then see which of the answer choices is at the same time.

For shorter/simpler questions like the example above, there is no need to rephrase the question in your own words.

When to Rephrase the Question In Your Own Words

For more complicated questions that are a bit more challenging to break down, it can be important to rephrase the questions in your own words. **If you can rephrase the question in your own words, you know exactly what you are looking for when you go back to the passage.** To show you when and how to do this, let's look at the following questions:

1. The narrator indicates that which of the following potential risks that doctors face while at work is a concern to her father?
 - A. Diseases that result from long-term exposure to radiation.
 - B. Loss of practice income because of a disability.
 - C. Exposure to an incurable illness.
 - D. Accidents due to limited sleep and high stress.

Rephrase: What risk that doctors face is a concern for her father?

With this question, there is not a clear primary keyword(s) that we can easily skim for in the passage. Instead, it is important to be clear on exactly what you are looking for. The best primary keyword here is probably “father.” However, if you just go skim for “father” in the passage and are not clear that you are looking for “risks that doctors face that concern her father,” you are likely going to have much more trouble finding the right part of the passage.

Now, let's look at a second example question:

2. In the passage, it can most reasonably be inferred that Austin's teammates liked playing with him in part because, in contrast with other teammates, Austin:
 - A. understands each teammates' individual strengths.
 - B. allows his teammates to showcase their talents during games.
 - C. played professionally for five years.
 - D. is familiar with a variety of strategies and set plays.

Rephrase: Why do Austin's teammates like playing with him?

The primary keyword here is "Austin." But what if Austin appears a lot in the passage? Or the entire passage is about Austin? The only other keyword you can look for is "teammates." If you look for "teammates" and are not clear on what you are looking for specifically, finding the Waldo is going to be very difficult and time consuming.

Rephrasing the question makes it easier to know exactly what you are looking. You need to find why Austin's teammates like playing with him. Keeping this in the front of your mind as you skim the passage for "Austin" and "teammates" will make it much easier for you to know when you have found the correct part of the passage.

Tips For When to Rephrase the Question in Your Own Words

1. **If you read a question and are unclear exactly what the question is asking, rephrase the question in your own words before going back to the passage.**
2. **For long questions with many keywords, rephrase the question.** This will help you frame what you are looking for and prioritize what keyword(s) are the most important to find in the passage.
3. **Generally speaking, the longer the question is, the more likely you should rephrase the question in your own words.**
4. **Find what works for you!** There is no set of rules for when to rephrase the question vs. when to use the keywords. Practice and find what works for you.

Now that we have learned the basics, let's try to work on rephrasing with some more examples. **For each example below, (1) identify the question type, (2) identify the primary and secondary keyword(s), and (3) rephrase the question in your own words if necessary. If you do not need to rephrase the question, leave the spot blank.** In addition, think about what approach you would use for the question and what type of evidence you would look for. You can refer to the list of question types on page 29.

1. The author suggests that the Brown pelican's beak shape evolved in what way?

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

2. Based on the passage, the residents of Orange County in the 1950s would be best described as:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

3. The author includes information about the walnut oil painting not being legitimate primarily to:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

4. According to the passage, Sarah feels slighted during the graduation ceremony because:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

5. The author most likely includes information about Henry VII primarily to:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

6. The passage makes clear that each taste bud on the tongue of a dog's mouth responds most strongly to:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

7. The passage most strongly suggests the British Commander refused to share his report on the status of his platoon despite direct orders from Parliament due to:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

8. According to Dylan and Lin, increases in electric battery capacity since 2015 have led to:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

9. The passage author most directly connects her knowledge of the distinctions between the Māori and Samoan nations to her experiences as:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

10. The discussion of pheromones in caterpillars in the fourth paragraph (lines 60-75) can be best summarized as:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

11. Which of the following choices best characterizes Fant's criticism of "emission capture technologies" (lines 64-65)?

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

12. According to Sarah, why did she return to Kansas?

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

13. What does the author imply about farmers' views on the Populist movement in the 1890s?

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

14. The passage most strongly implies that wigwams are places for:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

15. According to the passage, Rylee has the wrong guitar onstage during "Summertime Blues" because:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

16. The information about the durability of narrator's daughter's toy car primary serves to:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

17. In Passage B, Miller states that distortion of images in a low magnification mirror has which consequence?

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

18. Which of the following best describes the narrator's brother's mood during the events in lines 20-27?

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

19. The third paragraph (lines 40-58) most strongly suggests that an arctic fox can locate lemmings underneath the snowpack mainly because:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

20. Which of the following behaviors of a dolphin does the author provide as the strongest evidence of the dolphin's ability to strategize with other dolphins while hunting?

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

21. The author most strongly suggests that the reason the townspeople distrust Mayor Pryce is due to:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

22. The author indicates that one reason Altwin's theory was rejected by the scientific community was that it:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

23. According to the passage, what was the reason that Tim did not attend the block party?

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

24. Based on the passage, it can most reasonably be assumed that the optimal pH for cacti in Southern California is:

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

25. Based on the passage, which of the following statements most accurately compares a human's ability to locate an aquifer compared to a horse's ability to do so?

Question Type: _____

Primary Keyword(s):

Secondary Keyword(s):

Rephrase the Question:

Chapter 7: How to Approach the Answer Choices

After identifying the question type, finding the primary and secondary keywords, and rephrasing the question (if necessary), we are ready to go back to the passage, find the Waldo, and answer the question. Part of that process involves reading the answer choices, so in this chapter we will teach you how to approach the answer choices most effectively.

After we break down the question like we just learned in Chapter 6, we will use the following steps to answer a question:

- Go to the passage and skim for the primary keyword(s).
- Find the keyword(s) in the passage and use the 2-sentence rule. Look for secondary keyword(s)
- Find your Waldo.
- Read the answer choices.
- Eliminate incorrect answer choices.
- Find the correct answer choice that is supported by evidence from the passage.

Note that the steps above are not numbered! There is no exact order to go through the steps. The order that you will go through these steps will depend on the question type, how easily you can find the correct part of the passage, and your own personal preference. Remember, there is no single right or wrong way to approach the reading test. Find what works for you! We will discuss how and when to change the order of those steps in this chapter and later in this course.

When to Read the Answer Choices

After reading the question, **should I read the answer choices right away or go back to the passage first? The answer is it depends on the question type, your reading comprehension skills, and your recall of the passage.** Just like with most of the ACT Reading Test, there is not a 100% right or wrong time to read the answer choices. That being said, there are some general recommendations we have about when to read the answer choices right away versus when to go to the passage first.

1. For “which of the following” questions, read the answer choices right away.

“Which of the following” questions can look like this:

1. Which of the following statements best describes the author’s view of Grier’s theory on internet marketing?
 - A. He believes that Grier’s theory oversimplifies a more complicated topic.
 - B. He is unsure if Grier’s theory can ever be proven scientifically.
 - C. He is excited by Grier’s findings and finds his theory compelling.
 - D. He believes Grier’s theory is problematic but cannot disprove his theory.

Without reading the answer choices, it is impossible to know what you are looking for to answer the question. In this example, we know we are looking for something about “Grier’s theory on internet marketing,” but that is a very broad topic that could be discussed throughout the passage.

For any “which of the following” questions, read the answer choices before going back to the passage. **Knowing the 4 options before you read the passage makes it easier to find the correct answer or eliminate incorrect answer choices and usually allows you to answer the question more quickly.**

2. For purpose questions, read the passage first and come up with YOUR answer.

For purpose questions, we recommend going back to the passage, reading for context, and coming up with your own answer. **Once you have your answer, look at the answer choices to see which one best matches your reasoning.** If none of your answer choices match your answer, you may have misunderstood the passage. Now that you have read the answer choices, go back and reread the portion of the passage to see which answer choice best matches.

3. For broad passage questions, try to come up with YOUR own answer first.

After reading the entire passage and answering all other questions, you will likely understand the passage pretty well, so you can come up with your own answer when asked about the passage as a whole. **Once you have your answer, look at the answer choices to see which one best matches yours.**

If you found the passage difficult to understand and cannot come up with your own answer, read the answer choices right away. Knowing the 4 options can make it easier to go back to the passage and find the answer choice that matches or to eliminate answer choices that are incorrect.

4. For clear evidence and inference questions, try both methods below and find what is better for you.

After you read the question, you can either (1) read the answer choices right away or (2) go back to the passage first. Let's go over both methods that you can try for clear evidence and inference questions.

Method #1 – Reading the answer choices right away.

1. The author indicates that becoming skilled at using Google can:
 - A. make people uncertain about their health.
 - B. increase a person's social network.
 - C. undermine a person's self-confidence.
 - D. reduce a person's independent thinking.
2. It can be inferred whether classical guitarists approve of playing while standing during a concert depends on the:
 - A. skill and popularity of the artist.
 - B. acoustics and size of the concert venue.
 - C. number of guitarists playing at the same time.
 - D. age and experience of the guitarist.

This can be helpful because you know the 4 options that you are looking for in the passage before going back to the passage. As you read, you may come across the Waldo and recognize that it matches an answer choice you just read. Likewise, you may read evidence and realize it does not quite match what you just read and can eliminate it as incorrect. **Knowing the 4 options before you read can help save time** since you can often recognize the correct answer choice more quickly than if you read for evidence and then read the answer choices.

In addition, **this method can help you save time if you remember the answer right away.** Answering questions based on memory is always somewhat of a risk, but if you are confident that you know the answer, it can be a great way to improve your speed!

Note that this method does not work if reading the answer choices distracts you from knowing EXACTLY what the question is asking. This is often why students get lost in the answer choices. Imagine that you read the question, read all 4 answer choices, and then go back to the passage. Right as you go back to the passage, I take your test away and ask you “what exactly are you looking for?” If you cannot tell me what you are looking for, reading the answer choices did not help you; instead, it is hurting your score. Because of this, **some students find it helpful to reread the question again after reading all 4 answer choices** to make sure you know exactly what the question is asking you before you go back to the passage.

Method #2 – Go back to the passage first.

1. The author indicates that becoming skilled at using Google can:
 - A. make people uncertain about their health.
 - B. increase a person's social network.
 - C. undermine a person's self-confidence.
 - D. reduce a person's independent thinking.
2. It can be inferred whether classical guitarists approve of playing while standing during a concert depends on the:
 - A. skill and popularity of the artist.
 - B. acoustics and size of the concert venue.
 - C. number of guitarists playing at the same time.
 - D. age and experience of the guitarist.

If reading the answer choices distracts you from what the question is asking, go back to the passage first, look for evidence, and then read the answer choices. Clear evidence and inference questions are usually quite specific, so you will likely know where in the passage you need to read. **By reading before looking at the answer choices, you are 100% focused on answering the question.**

Once you have found what you think may be the Waldo, read the answer choices. Eliminate any incorrect answer choices and see if you have found the correct evidence. If you have, bubble it in. If not, go back to the passage and search for evidence that is related to the keywords from the question or the answer choices that remain.

If you use method #2 and cannot find the evidence for a clear evidence or inference question in the first 20-30 seconds, read the answer choices. The answer choices may trigger your memory of something you read. If you still cannot find the evidence in the passage, eliminate any answer choices you can, take your best guess, and move on.

5. Read the answer choices right away when you do not have primary keywords.

For any vague questions that do not have any primary keywords, read the answer choices right away. The answer choices may help you identify where in the passage to go or may trigger your memory from something that you have already read. As an example, if a question asks:

1. Based on the passage, how did narrator's personality affect her research?
 - A. His talkative, approachable personality was misunderstood as snobbish, so he struggled to collaborate with other scientists.
 - B. His shy, introspective personality was endearing, but his career suffered because other more outspoken scientists got more attention than he did.
 - C. His bold, outspoken personality was off-putting to other scientists, so he did not get the recognition he deserved.
 - D. His easygoing and modest personality made him admired by his peers, who would hesitate to give him honest feedback.

If this passage discusses the narrator's personality and research throughout the passage, we have no primary keywords to skim for. Here, reading the answer choices right away and knowing the 4 options makes it much easier to (1) eliminate incorrect answer choices and (2) know what to look for as we go back to the passage.

6. Let the answer choices help on passages you have trouble understanding.

For any passage that you have trouble understanding, read the answer choices more quickly. If you read a passage and feel like you just do not know what is going on, let the answer choices help you. **For any questions in a passage you do not understand, read the answer choices right away.**

Let's say you are asked a question about the main idea of a paragraph. After reading the paragraph, you have no idea what the paragraph is saying. Read the 4 answer choices and then reread the paragraph. **Now that you know the 4 options, you may be able to recognize what the main idea of the paragraph is.** The more you can use the answer choices to help, the more you will understand the passage, and the more questions you will answer correctly.

****Remember, these are all just suggestions and not rules to follow. There is no right or wrong way to use the answer choices. Try different methods on practice passages and practice tests and find what works best for you!**

How to Read the Answer Choices Most Effectively

Now that we have discussed when to read the answer choices, let's go over how to read the answer choices most effectively to find the correct answer choice as quickly and consistently as possible.

Our Recommended Approach – Work Both Forwards and Backwards

We recommend working forwards (look for evidence in the passage) and backwards (eliminate incorrect answer choices) at the same time.

Work Forwards – Look for the Evidence in the Passage

Working forwards is looking for the evidence in the passage that matches the correct answer choice. **When working forwards, put your finger on the evidence (the Waldo!) and match it to the correct answer choice.** In an ideal world, you could work forwards and find Waldo all the time but finding the evidence in the passage that supports the correct answer for every single question is difficult. We do not want to only look for the correct answer choice.

Work Backwards – Eliminate Incorrect Answer Choices

Working backwards is eliminating incorrect answer choices. **Anytime you see an answer choice that is incorrect for any reason, cross it off.** We will cover the 5 types of incorrect answer choices and learn more about how to effectively spot and eliminate incorrect answer choices in Chapter 8.

For some questions, **it is easier to eliminate three answer choices as incorrect than it is to find the evidence that supports the correct answer.** Even if you cannot find evidence in the passage, if you can eliminate 3 answer choices as incorrect, you have found the correct answer.

How to Work Forwards and Backwards

As you read each answer choice, you should be simultaneously working forward and backwards. Ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) Is there evidence in the passage the matches what this answer choice says?**
- 2) Is there any specific detail or strong statement in this answer choice that could make it incorrect?**

The first question is working forwards. You will need to go back to the passage to answer this question properly. If you find Waldo, you will know the correct answer. If there is no evidence from the passage to support the answer choice, it is incorrect; cross it off.

The second question is working backwards. As you read each answer choice, look for any word(s) that could make the answer choice incorrect. Be cautious about specific details or strong statements in the answer choices. In general, **stronger and more specific answer choices are usually incorrect** because they cannot be supported by the passage. Oppositely, **more boring answer choices are more commonly correct.** The problem is that we like to pick specific answer choices when we are struggling on a question because it is easier to justify why the specific answer choice could be correct. Boring answer choices are, well, just boring. Nobody wants to pick the boring answer choices. The writers of the ACT know this and take advantage of it to make questions more difficult.

***TIP – If you are stuck between two answer choices and cannot find any evidence to support either one, always pick the less detailed answer choice.**

Boring is usually better on the ACT Reading Test!

Chapter 8: Correct vs. Incorrect Answer Choices – How to Effectively Find the Correct Answer

One of the most important skills in the Reading Test is understanding what makes an answer choice correct or incorrect. Many students struggle with this when first taking the Reading Test and feel like they are being asked to somehow find what the ACT says is the “best” answer. This is not the case! **There is always 1 correct and 3 incorrect answer choices.** The challenge is knowing what makes the correct answer right and the incorrect answer wrong. **You should NOT approach the Reading Test by looking for the best answer.** Instead, we are looking for the 1 correct answer choice or why 3 answer choices are incorrect.

In this chapter, we will teach you how to breakdown each answer choice to identify the difference between correct and incorrect answer choices.

The 5 Common Types of Incorrect Answer Choices

For success on the Reading Test, you must be able to explain what makes an answer choice incorrect. **Remember, for an answer choice to be correct, it must be supported by evidence in passage and answer the question being asked.** If you can understand not only what makes an answer choice correct but also what makes the others incorrect, finding the correct answer choice becomes much easier.

The 5 most common types of incorrect answers on the ACT Reading Test are

- 1) Not in the Passage**
- 2) Too Specific**
- 3) Too Broad**
- 4) Opposite or Slant of the Passage**
- 5) In the Passage but Not Answering the Question**

In the rest of this chapter, we will go through these 5 types of incorrect answers and some example passages to teach you how to properly think about the answer choices and more effectively find the correct answer.

1) Not in the Passage

Many incorrect answer choices include information that is not in the passage. **If the answer choice includes details that are not in the passage, the answer is incorrect.**

For example, let's say there is a question about Adam's clothing from the following passage:

Adam rolled up the tattered sleeves of his sweater, exposing the winding snake tattoos on both of his forearms. He had gotten them after he returned from his first tour in Iraq – an homage to his fallen comrades. Despite now living in upstate New York, he still wore his Army boots every day, the tops of which were hidden below his faded black jeans, the only pair that he owns because, as he says, “they’re the only ones that fit me just right.”

1. Based on the passage, which of the following can be assumed about Adam's clothing?
 - A. He only wears the most comfortable clothing that he can buy.
 - B. The army provided him with free clothes after he returned home from Iraq.
 - C. His clothes are old and worn out.
 - D. He only owns one sweater.

Here, the only answer that has evidence we can point to in the passage is C. The “tattered sleeves” and “faded black jeans” both demonstrate that his clothing is old and worn out. All other answer choices are not supported by evidence from the passage. Could you picture Mr. Johnson’s jeans as the most comfortable that he could afford? Could he have received free clothing from the Army? Could he own just one sweater? Sure, all of these are possible, but we do not know any of this for sure from the passage. We cannot point to any evidence in the passage that supports A, B, or D. We can only tell a story of why we think it could be true. As we said in Chapter 1, there is no storytelling! If an answer choice is not clearly supported by evidence in the passage, then it is always wrong! **The answer is C.**

Passage 1

The best way to describe Ms. Upton is like a collared shirt that is buttoned all the way up. Sure, that top button might bring about malaise, but it was well worth it to upkeep her stellar reputation within
 5 the community and especially amongst her peers. How else would everybody know that she is the best? The only problem was it was all a facade – a coy attempt to prove her superiority when in reality she was just like the rest of us with our top buttons
 10 undone. If only she would stop feigning superiority, maybe we would invite her back to the book club...maybe.

Passage 2

The term purebred was coined in 1890, but pure breeding got its start well before that when people decided to selectively breed dogs of a certain pedigree to amplify specific traits.
 5 Breeders would selectively mate dogs of certain health, attributes, and sagacity to produce a new “purer” breed. However, the centuries of closed breeding have led purebred dogs to have many problems, as selective breeding favors both genes
 10 of excellence and deleterious genes; this has resulted in significant health problems for modern purebred dogs. As a result, many breeders are now beginning to create new “pure breeds” through cross breeding (first generation crosses of two purebred dogs).

- 1) Based on the passage, which of the following can we infer about Ms. Upton?
 - A. Her coworkers hold her in the highest regard.
 - B. She is extremely well dressed.
 - C. The community regards her as the best businesswoman in the town.
 - D. She used to attend a book club.

- 2) Which of the following statements would the author of the passage most likely support?
 - A. Pure breeding over a long period of time can produce dogs that are superior in certain ways but inferior in others.
 - B. The origins of pure breeding began back in the 1800s.
 - C. Modern purebred dogs are far healthier and have better attributes than their ancestors.
 - D. Cross breeding will successfully fix all of the problems associated with purebred dogs.

2) Too Specific

Incorrect answer choices are very commonly too specific. Often, a single word or a short phrase in an answer choice makes the entire answer choice incorrect. **If the answer choice is too specific and goes beyond what the passage says, it is always incorrect.**

As you read each answer choice, look for specific details and strong statements that could make the answer choice incorrect. Ask yourself, “Does the passage really say that?” Remember, the more specific and stronger an answer choice is, the more likely it will be incorrect.

For example, let’s say you are reading a passage about pelicans’ fishing habits:

Pelicans fish by using their long beaks and large throat pouches to scoop up prey from the water’s surface. Pelicans’ diets include fish, amphibians, small turtles, crabs, and even other small birds. Most pelicans use a technique called “dive-bombing,” where the birds will tuck their wings and dive directly into the water at unsuspecting fish. However, pelicans have also been known to hunt cooperatively, especially when hunting near the shores. The groups of birds will form a line to drive schools of smaller fish into the shallower waters, beating their wings near the surface, and then scooping up their favorite prey.

1. Which of the following statements can be inferred from the passage?
 - A. Pelicans prey predominantly on fish during the summer months.
 - B. Great White pelicans are the only species of pelicans that hunt for turtles.
 - C. Small ocean fish are the main prey for pelicans.
 - D. Pelicans do the majority of their hunting in shallow waters near the coast.

Here A, B, and D are incorrect because they are too specific. For A, the passage does say that fish are the predominant prey, but it did not at any point specify anything about summer months. For B, the passage never discussed Great White pelicans. For D, the passage never details where the pelicans do the majority of their hunting; it just mentions that pelicans hunt along the shallow waters near the shores. At the end of the passage, “scooping up their favorite prey” refers to smaller fish as the favorite prey; therefore, the small ocean fish are the main prey. **The answer is C.**

On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the act creating the National Park Service, a new federal bureau in the Department of the Interior responsible for protecting the 35 national parks and monuments then managed by the department and those yet to be established. This “Organic Act” states that “the Service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations...by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

An Executive Order in 1933 transferred 56 national monuments and military sites from the Forest Service and the War Department to the National Park Service. This action was a major step in the development of today’s truly national system of parks—a system that includes areas of historical as well as scenic and scientific importance. Congress declared in the General Authorities Act of 1970 “that the National Park System, which began with the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, has since grown to include superlative natural, historic, and recreation areas in every region...and that it is the purpose of this Act to include all such areas in the System....”

The National Park System of the United States now comprises more than 400 areas covering more than 84 million acres in 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Saipan, and the Virgin Islands. These areas are of such national significance as to justify special recognition and protection in accordance with various acts of Congress.

Additions to the National Park System are now generally made through acts of Congress, and national parks can be created only through such acts. But the President has authority, under the Antiquities Act of 1906, to proclaim national monuments on lands already under federal jurisdiction.

1. The passage states that the National Park Service took what role from the Department of the Interior in 1916?
 - A. Protection of the current 35 national parks and monuments and those yet to be established.
 - B. Overseeing only the 35 national parks and monuments established by 1916.
 - C. Management of 56 national monuments and military sites and future sites yet to be established.
 - D. Identify and propose new lands to be protected as national parks, monuments, or reservations.

2. According to the passage, what is one purpose of the National Park Service?
 - A. To conserve national parks and encourage an increase in the number of visitors to the parks.
 - B. To create a safe haven for wildlife from hunters and human development.
 - C. To preserve lands in their natural form and protect lands for future generations.
 - D. To protect lands from the damaging practices of logging and gold mining.

3. The list of locations in the National Park System in lines 35-37 serves to:
 - A. highlight that one goal of the National Park System is to protect international lands.
 - B. point out the locations Congress and the President have decided are the most important to protect.
 - C. contrast the US National Park System with similar systems in other countries.
 - D. show how widespread the lands preserved by National Park System are today.

4. According to the passage, today’s system of parks:
 - A. protects areas that are historically, scenically, and scientifically important.
 - B. provides an example of a successful national parks system for other countries.
 - C. is composed of lands across the country that Presidents Wilson chose to conserve.
 - D. fulfills Woodrow Wilson’s dream of preserving nature in its original state for future generations.

3) Too Broad

Sometimes, an answer choice is incorrect because it is too broad. This occurs when the answer choice does not specifically answer the question being asked (more common) or does not match a more specific statement made in the passage (less common). **While broad answer choices are better in general, make sure that the answer choice you pick is always specific enough to answer the exact question you are being asked.**

For example, let's consider this excerpt from a passage about Darwin's finches and evolution.

Dr. Anders Robert became fascinated with evolution after reading Charles Darwin's *Theory of Evolution* in graduate school. But he was never fully satisfied with Darwin's explanation of evolution and his survival of the fittest model. Dr. Robert always felt there was another missing piece – a something that he termed "micro-evolution," evolution on a tiny scale that can occur over much shorter time periods. While Darwin's evolution occurs over many generations due to the pressures of natural selection, Dr. Robert postulates that every 2 to 3 generations small changes occur to key characteristics of a population and that over time enough of these small changes lead to new subspecies and species forming in a shortened time frame. To test his theory, Dr. Robert will travel to the Galapagos Islands to study changes in the beaks of some of the same species of finches that Darwin studied over one hundred years ago.

1. The main idea of the passage is to:
 - A. research the theory of evolution using Darwin's finches.
 - B. test a new idea about evolution by studying finches' beaks.
 - C. highlight Dr. Robert's lifelong fascination with evolution.
 - D. recreate Darwin's research on the Galapagos Islands.

Here, A is incorrect because it is too broad. For A, does the passage discuss the theory of evolution? Yes, but researching the theory of evolution is not the main idea of the passage, so A does not answer the question. C is incorrect because it is too broad and includes a detail that is not supported by the passage. While the first sentence directly states that Dr. Anders Robert is fascinated with evolution, his fascination is not the main idea of the passage. Additionally, the passage never states he has a "lifelong fascination," so C is incorrect. D is incorrect because the word "recreate" does not match the passage, as there is nothing about Dr. Robert recreating Darwin's research. The main idea of the passage is about Dr. Robert's research to test his new theory, so **B is the correct answer.**

The following passage is about honeybees in the United States.

Honeybees are dying. Decimated by Colony Collapse Disorder in the mid-2000s, bees remain under assault from pesticides, climate change, mites, and habitat destruction. Between 2014 and 5 2017, about a quarter of bees in the nation's commercial colonies died each winter, significantly higher than the 15% previously considered normal. This troubling trend, along with the importance of honeybees to successful crop growth and overall 10 product yield, has led many farmers to rethink how they will pollinate their crops.

Most people know that honeybees are important for the pollination of flowers, and therefore essential in the farming of fruits and nuts that grow 15 on flowering trees, but few know that honeybees can be big business. The recent and alarming decrease in the honeybee population around the world has created a huge demand for honeybees from farmers, who need the bees to pollinate their 20 acres and acres of flowering trees. Without bees, crops like apples, peaches, cranberries, and almonds, just to mention a few, would fail.

Terrence Jones, an organic Peach farmer in rural Georgia, has over five thousand Peach trees, 25 each of which can produce up to 1,000 flowers that need to be pollinated. To pollinate the 5 million flowers on his farm, Terrence needs some serious help. He has five hives of his own, but last winter three of his five hives had mass bee deaths due to 30 Varroa mites – one of the most common parasites and a big problem for all beekeepers. The remaining bees are not nearly enough to get the massive job done. So, what does Terrence do? He calls up his friend Ellis out in California.

35 Ellis is a professional beekeeper who keeps 500 beehives. Every year in the spring, Ellis packs up his hives in specialty bee transport trucks and ships them all over the country. Based on the size of Terrence's farm and the number of flowers that 40 need to be pollinated, Ellis is bringing ten hives to Terrence's farm. This will be these bees' second stop – they, along with 55 other hives, already helped another farmer in Pennsylvania pollinate his 700 acres of early-blooming apple trees. After 45 arriving, the bees are carefully transported to the peach fields in the middle of the night, when the bees are all asleep in the hives. Shortly after sunrise, there is an audible buzzing in the orchard, where the bees are visiting thousands of blossoms 50 on the peach trees to harvest the nectar, pollinating the flowers as they go. This will be the bees' new

home for the next 10 days, until they are loaded back onto the trucks in the middle of the night.

Since there is no other way to pollinate so many flowers, farmers like Terrence will pay beekeepers 55 like Ellis over \$5,000 each week for bees. In addition to helping solve the pollination problem farmers face due to the recent decline in bee populations and ongoing issues with mass bee death events in farmers' hives, professional beekeepers 60 are also able to help maintain the food yield for orchards of flowering trees and ensure a bountiful harvest each year, all while making a good living for themselves.

1. The primary purpose of the passage is to:
 - A. describe one man's quest to become a professional beekeeper.
 - B. explain a largely unknown business.
 - C. describe the difficulties that peach farmers face today.
 - D. explore the historical relationship between bees and farming in the United States.

2. Which of the following statements about honeybees is best supported by the passage?
 - A. The reason that honeybee populations have been decreasing is still largely unknown.
 - B. Professional beekeeping is a large and growing industry in the United States.
 - C. Honeybees can travel to multiple farms each year to pollinate the flowers of fruit trees.
 - D. Honeybees are essential to produce all types of fruits and nuts.

3. The first paragraph serves to:
 - A. propose a solution to a challenge that is introduced later in the passage.
 - B. identify an issue that motivates the solution discussed later in the passage.
 - C. provide an example of a phenomena that is explained later in the passage.
 - D. explain the factors that led to a damaging trend discussed in the rest of the passage.

4. According to the passage, honeybees are essential for:
 - A. vegetable farms that do not have any beehives of their own.
 - B. any type of farm that does not have enough local bees to pollinate the flowers.
 - C. farms that have decreased food yield due to pests and parasites.
 - D. fruits and nuts that grow on flowering trees.
5. The passage indicates that Ellis is bringing how many hives to Terrence's farm?
 - A. 10
 - B. 55
 - C. 500
 - D. The passage does not specify.
6. It can most reasonably be inferred that the size of Terrence's farm compared to the apple famer in Pennsylvania is:
 - A. slightly larger.
 - B. about the same size.
 - C. slightly smaller.
 - D. much smaller.
7. Based on the passage, what can be inferred about the location of Ellis's beehives that are not at Terrence's farm?
 - A. The beehives are at other farms at unspecified locations across the United States.
 - B. The beehives are at other peach farms in Georgia.
 - C. The beehives are at the apple orchards in Pennsylvania since apple trees take longer to pollinate.
 - D. The location of the beehives is a secret that Ellis refuses to share.
8. The passage states that the pollination problem farmers face is a result of:
 - A. declining bee populations and mass bee death events in farmers' hives.
 - B. Varroa mites and bacterial infections in the farmers' hives.
 - C. bee's having lowered pollination activity after being placed in a shipping container.
 - D. increased average daily temperatures due to climate change.

4) Opposite or Slant of the Passage

Many incorrect answers on the ACT are the opposite or a slant of what the passage states. **These answer choices often look correct because they include exact words or phrases from the passage; however, they are incorrect because the answer choice is the opposite or a slant of what is in the passage.** Remember, you should not pick an answer choice just because you find a word or phrase that is directly in the passage, as these are often incorrect answer choices. Always make sure the answer choice is 100% correct.

Let's look at the passage about ocean currents below as an example:

Ice triggers the movement of ocean currents. As water freezes in the North and South Poles, the water surrounding the ice becomes saltier and colder since the salt leaves the water upon freezing. The newly formed ice then cools the surrounding water. The cold, salty water sinks due to its increased density. Once it gets to the bottom of the ocean floor, the water must move somewhere – so it travels southward to spread across the submerged surface of the earth. This is a cold current. Warm water replaces it on the surface and moves to the north. This motion is known by scientists as the global conveyor belt, a globe-wide current that circulates cold and warm water around the earth.

1. Which of the following statements about the global conveyor belt is best supported by the passage?
 - A. Cold, salty water at the North and South Poles comes to the surface and replaces the water that turned into ice.
 - B. The ocean currents that make up the global conveyor belt change with the seasons.
 - C. Melting ice at the North and South Poles is the first step in the chain reaction that causes the ocean currents.
 - D. Cold, salty water travels south on the ocean floor and warm water moves north on the surface.

A is incorrect because the answer choice is opposite of the passage. A says that the cold, salty water comes to the surface, but the passage says the cold, salty water sinks. B is incorrect because it is not in the passage; there is nothing about the currents changing with the seasons. C is incorrect because the answer choice is opposite of the passage. The first two sentences of the passage say that freezing water, not melting ice, is the first step in the process that causes the oceans currents.

The correct answer here is D, as it is the only one that is supported by the passage. The passage states the cold, salty water travels southward across the ocean floor and that warm water moves north on the surface.

This passage is adapted from Ashley Yeager, “Slingshot Spiders Pull More Gs than Cheetahs Do.” © 2020 by The Scientist.

Leg over leg, a furry brownish-black spider tugs on a single silk thread, tightening the frame of its web. It pulls and pulls, as if removing slack from a slingshot, and then it waits. Minutes pass, sometimes hours. Then, when an unsuspecting insect flies by, the spider releases the thread, springing itself and its satellite dish-shaped web toward its prey. All of this happens in the blink of an eye, with the spider and its web hurtling through the air at more than 4 meters per second (9 miles per hour) with accelerations exceeding 130 g. That’s 130 times the acceleration experienced in freefall, and an order of magnitude greater than that of a sprinting cheetah.

Those eye-watering numbers led Georgia Tech chemical engineer Saad Bhamla to wonder: how the heck are these tiny spiders achieving such fast movements? Bhamla’s lab is “obsessed with ultra-fast motions in biology,” he says, so when he spotted one of these spiders flying past his face a few years ago while he was hiking through the Peruvian rainforest, he knew he had to investigate. He checked the literature and found only a few papers on Theridiosomatidae, the arachnid family comprising spider species that use their webs as slingshots. The papers were decades old and only described the slingshot motion, not the speeds or g-forces the spiders experienced. So Bhamla enlisted the help of his postdoc, Symone Alexander, and together they went out hunting for spiders in the Amazon rainforest.

After locating one of the spiders, which measure roughly 2 millimeters in length, the researchers would set up portable high-speed cameras with magnifying lenses to zoom in on and record their motions. Then, either Alexander or Bhamla would snap their fingers to get the spider to catapult itself through the air. Only later did the pair learn that a human finger-snap closely matches the frequency of a buzzing mosquito – and that seemed to be the only frequency that set the spiders’ spring off. “It’s just amazing that we can snap our fingers and get this magical thing,” Bhamla says.

Analyzing the footage, Alexander and Bhamla could watch exactly how the spiders oriented themselves on the tension line at the front of their webs. Facing away from the web, the spider grips its silk net with its four back legs and pulls itself up the tension line with its four front legs,

bundling it up in two front appendages called pedipalps as it goes. On sensing the sounds of prey nearby – most likely via its web, which appears to act like a small antenna – the spider releases the tension line. Although researchers had previously assumed it let go of the silk thread altogether, Alexander and Bhamla’s videos show that the spider in fact only releases some of the line while keeping hold of a part of it with its pedipalps, making it easier to reset its slingshot to trap its next victim. Again and again, the spider captures an insect, wraps it in silk for later, then “comes right back to that tension line and bundles it up again. That allows it to reset and reload quickly,” Alexander says. The spider can usually slingshot itself several times before the web is destroyed.

The speeds and accelerations of this spider are impressive, but so is the fact that, unlike most web-building spiders, it’s actively hunting, Bhamla says. “It’s changed the function of its web,” he says. “Instead of waiting for something to collide with it, the spider is going after things...actually catching flying insects in midair.”

“To see the video of this little spider pull on its line, load its web, sense its prey, and then fly through the air to trap it is humbling,” says Sheila Patek, a biologist at Duke University who studies tiny spring mechanisms across the natural world. Spiders are using an external tool, a web, to snare their prey, and they’re working at speeds faster than their nervous systems can monitor, so they have to plan ahead and essentially let their spring and latch system control what happens after they let go of the tension thread. “It’s superpower-type stuff,” Patek says.

“What’s fascinating is the amount of energy the spiders can store in their web and then unleash to catch their prey,” says Bhamla. Next, he wants to investigate how the webbing material, typically thought to disperse energy, can, in fact, store energy, a characteristic that might inform the design of synthetic silk. Now that high-speed camera footage can offer scientists a frame-by-frame view of what the arachnids are doing, Patek says, “it just opens up a myriad of areas of research in evolution, neuroscience, materials science, and human engineering.”

1. The passage can be best described as:
 - A. a series of scientific experiments focusing on a newly discovered species.
 - B. a description of an observational study on a species with a unique characteristic.
 - C. a summary of how a certain species of spider evolved to hunt in an unusual way.
 - D. an overview of the differences between slingshot spiders and web-building spiders.
2. According to the passage, what led Bhamla to first decide to study the Theridiosomatidae spiders?
 - A. Bhamla wanted to discover a new species of spiders.
 - B. Bhamla saw a spider flying past him while in the rainforest in Peru.
 - C. Bhamla runs a lab that studies ultra-fast motions in biology.
 - D. Bhamla wanted to understand how slingshot spiders store energy in their webs.
3. Based on the passage, what previously held assumption about Theridiosomatidae spiders did Bhamla's study disprove?
 - A. The spiders completely release the tension line after launching into the air.
 - B. The spiders can use the web as a slingshot several times in a row.
 - C. The spiders only hunt mosquitos.
 - D. The spiders are unable to store any energy in their web.
4. What is the purpose of the reference to the cheetah in lines 12-14?
 - A. Highlight the unconventional hunting technique used by the spiders.
 - B. Emphasize the high speeds that spiders reach by comparing them to a more commonly known animal.
 - C. Highlight the impressive accelerations the spiders achieve by providing a reference that readers are likely familiar with.
 - D. Point out that spiders are more effective hunters than other well-known predators.
5. The author suggests that spiders most likely sense their prey by:
 - A. sight, the spiders see the prey with their excellent eyesight.
 - B. touch, the spiders sense the prey as it contacts the web.
 - C. vibration, the spiders can discern different types of prey based on frequency.
 - D. feel, the spiders use their web as a tool to perceive the sound of prey nearby.
6. The passage most strongly suggests that Bhamla and Alexander were the first scientists to study the Theridiosomatidae spider's:
 - A. speeds.
 - B. slingshot motion.
 - C. webs.
 - D. diet.
7. The passage makes clear that snapping a finger made the spiders jump because:
 - A. the visible movement of the finger triggers their hunting instincts.
 - B. the spiders hear the snapping noise in the same way they hear a flying insect.
 - C. the pressure wave created by the snapping fingers releases the tension line.
 - D. a human-finger snap closely matches the frequency a mosquito.
8. The description of the spiders having "superpower-type stuff" (lines 85-86) most nearly refers to:
 - A. spiders hunting at speeds faster than they can perceive.
 - B. spider webs both storing and dispersing energy.
 - C. spiders controlling their flight in the air after letting go of the tension thread.
 - D. the slingshot spider's nervous system operating faster than those of web-building spiders.

9. Which of the following statements best describes the process by which the Theridiosomatidae spiders build tension in the line?
- A. The spider faces the web, grabs the line with its pedipalps, and pulls itself down the line.
 - B. The spider wraps the line in its pedipalps, turns to face the web, and pulls itself up the line.
 - C. The spider faces away from the web, pulls itself up the line, and wraps the line up in its pedipalps.
 - D. The spider grabs the web with its four back legs, pulls itself down the line, and faces away from the web.
10. What is the main idea of the last paragraph (lines 87-98)?
- A. The methods with which the slingshot spiders hunt require more analysis to fully comprehended.
 - B. The slingshot spiders possess a unique ability to use stored energy to hunt insects.
 - C. A spider web's ability to transfer energy may have applications to other areas of science.
 - D. The slingshot spiders should be researched by scientists in a variety of fields.

5) In the Passage but Not Answering the Question

This final type of incorrect answer choice is often the most difficult to avoid. These are answer choices that are directly stated in the passage but do not answer the question being asked. You will be able to go to the passage, find the information, and match it with the answer choice. However, it will still be incorrect!

This is a good spot to reiterate two important tips we have learned already:

- 1. Do not select an answer choice because it has a word or phrase that matches the passage. Make sure the answer choice is 100% correct.** The ACT will often put exact words or phrases from the passage in incorrect answer choices to try to trick you.
- 2. Finding evidence for an answer choice in the passage does not mean you found the correct answer. You still need to make sure you are answering the question the ACT is asking.**

We will see some examples of these questions as we work through some full practice passages in chapter 13.

Chapter 9: Words In Context Questions

Words in context questions ask you to select what a word or phrase “most nearly means” in the context of the passage. Usually, you are asked to determine the meaning of a word or phrase that is being used in an unusual or uncommon way in the passage, so you must go back and read the context to find the meaning. Most often, **the correct answer is not the actual definition of the word but instead an alternate meaning based on the context.**

Words in context questions always have the phrase “most nearly means” and look like this:

1. As used in line 9, “critical” most nearly means
 - A. grave
 - B. negative
 - C. urgent
 - D. important

To find the correct answer, read for context. We recommend that you read the sentence before, the sentence the word or phrase is in, and the following sentence. If you are still not clear on what the word or phrase means, read for more context – as much as you need to understand the context.

How to Approach Words in Context Questions

There are two approaches that are effective for these questions.

Method #1: Pick Your Own Word

1. **Read for context.** Read at least 1 sentence before and after the word or phrase in the question and more if necessary.
2. **Pick your own word(s) to replace the word or phrase in the question.** Write your word(s) down.
3. **If you are having trouble picking a specific word, try to pick a tone.** Decide if the tone of the word or phrase is positive, negative, or neutral based on the surrounding text.
4. **Look at the answer choices and pick the one that best matches your word(s) or tone.**

Method #2: Read the Answer Choices Back in the Passage

1. **Read each answer choice back in the passage.** Make sure to still read for context when you plug in each answer choice.
2. **Pick the answer choice that best replaces the word in the passage.**

Both approaches are equally effective, so which one you use is a matter of preference.

Tips for Words in Context Questions

Before we move onto the practice passage, let's go over a few more tips for words in context questions.

Tip #1 – Do not assume the hard vocabulary word is correct.

Words in context questions are one place the ACT commonly tests vocabulary knowledge. **If you see any word(s) that you do not know, do not assume the hard word is correct.** Many students mistakenly think, "Oh, this is the ACT...it must be the hard word since they are testing my vocabulary." Wrong! Sometimes, the ACT is testing your vocabulary and the hard word is correct. Other times, the hard word is just a decoy and a simpler word that you know fits correctly.

Tip #2 – Do not pick the answer choice that defines the word.

The correct answer is rarely the definition of the word. **Most commonly, the word or phrase in the passage is used in an uncommon or unusual way that differs from the definition.** However, this is not always the case. Sometimes, the correct answer is the definition of the word. This occurs most commonly for hard vocabulary words.

Tip #3 – Do the best you can with the words you know.

On words in context questions, **do the best you can with the words you know.** If there is a word you know and it works, pick that word. If you know a word and it does not work, cross it off. If you are stuck between two words that you do not know, bubble in your best guess and move on.

Do not waste time trying to figure out the definitions of words that you do not know. You either know what a word means, or you don't. No amount of time thinking about what the word means will help you. **Move on and use your time answering other questions.**

This passage is adapted from "Opening of the Panama Canal," an article published by The Times-Picayune, a New Orleans newspaper, in August 1914.

The Panama Canal was officially opened yesterday when a large vessel of the War Department, the Ancon, went through from ocean to ocean. The event was celebrated
 5 locally – it was a public holiday along the isthmus – and from New Orleans and other cities interested in the canal and expecting to use it and profit by it, congratulatory telegrams poured in. The big affair will not come for
 10 several months. It has been expected and arranged for that every maritime nation should send some of its crack men-of-war to take part in a great naval parade through the canal next year, and naval displays were proposed for New
 15 York, New Orleans and San Francisco. Invitations had been extended to all countries, and even Switzerland had been asked to have some vessel as its representative at Panama.
 What the celebration will be in the face of
 20 present European conditions, it is impossible to say. It may be confined to our own fleet and

that of our immediate neighbors. Even if the war is ended, the chances are against such an international display as had been planned and as
 25 that attending the opening of the Suez Canal. Europe will be tired out, with no fever of festival and no desire for naval demonstrations. In the meanwhile, although the canal is now open, and vessels can operate through it, the
 30 government will continue to improve, to deepen it for larger vessels, and to make it wider, especially at the Culebra cut, which has been the most difficult portion of the canal from the very beginning.
 35 Because of the European trouble and the generally demoralized condition of the world's merchant marine, the canal will not be used for commerce at the start to the extent that we had hoped for, and it will not be fair to take the first
 40 few months' form as giving any idea what it will do. It is probable that a very large amount of the steamship tonnage going through the canal will be American coastwise vessels running between our Pacific and the Atlantic
 45 and Gulf coasts. It fills the bill to know that

these vessels will include one or more lines from New Orleans, so that this city will get the share of the canal business it has expected.

While there may be some slight

- 50 disappointment over the fact that the canal was settled during a period of war, when it will not receive the attention it deserves, Americans will realize how much it means for us, how opportune it is. We can now send vessels to the
 55 Atlantic or Pacific as we wish and be ready for any emergency in either ocean. Let us note that it is completed just in time, when, because of the European war, America has been given an opportunity to extend its merchant marine and
 60 its commerce. We will enter the trade of the Pacific under the most encouraging circumstances and conditions.

All Americans will hail this great work of American genius, enterprise, courage, and skill,
 65 the greatest engineering feat ever accomplished or even attempted by any land. In that rejoicing, New Orleans, as the nearest American port to the canal, heartily and enthusiastically joins.

1. As used in line 7, “interested in” most nearly means:

- A. cautiously intrigued by.
- B. financially invested in.
- C. completely captivated with.
- D. patiently focused on.

2. As used in line 9, “affair” most nearly means:

- A. incident.
- B. phenomenon.
- C. event.
- D. adventure.

3. As used in line 12, “crack men-of-war” most nearly means:

- A. trained servicemen.
- B. armed warships.
- C. decorated veterans.
- D. diplomatic leaders.

4. As used in line 20, “conditions” most nearly means

- A. stability.
- B. surroundings.
- C. context.
- D. conflicts.

5. As used in line 26, “fever of” most nearly means:

- A. enthusiasm for.
- B. finances for.
- C. trepidation about.
- D. longing to.

6. As used in line 32, “cut” most nearly means:

- A. curve.
- B. divide.
- C. gash.
- D. narrowing.

7. As used in line 35, “trouble” most nearly means:

- A. ongoing combat.
- B. unpredictable weather.
- C. slumping economy.
- D. shipping woes.

8. As used in line 40, “form” most nearly means:

- A. configuration.
- B. disposition.
- C. record.
- D. transactions.

9. As used in line 45, “fills the bill” most nearly means:

- A. is concerning.
- B. is gratifying.
- C. is corroborating.
- D. is exacerbating.

10. As used in line 51, “settled” most nearly means:

- A. sorted out.
- B. agreed to.
- C. ignored.
- D. completed.

11. As used in line 63, “hail” most nearly means:

- A. renounce.
- B. accost.
- C. extol.
- D. lament.

Chapter 10: Tips for Comparing Passages Questions

In this chapter, we are focusing on how to best answer the 3 comparing passages questions at the end of the dual text passages. Before we get to the tips, let's review what dual text passages are and how to best approach them.

Each ACT has 1 dual text passage that includes two short passages labelled as Passage A and Passage B. The two passages discuss similar topics and are somehow related. For example, an Informational Passage could have two scientists offering differing opinions on a recent discovery.

In Dual Text Passages, the questions go in the following order:

- Passage A Questions
- Passage B Questions
- Comparing Passages Questions (3 questions)

How to Approach Dual Text Passages

When working on dual text passages, **we recommend that you read each passage separately. Do not read both passages before starting the questions.** Instead, you should use the following approach:

- 1) Read Passage A and answer questions for Passage A.
- 2) Read Passage B and answer questions for Passage B.
- 3) Answer Comparing Passages Questions.

Since the passages are shorter, most students find it easier to read the entire passage. **You should still apply whatever method you prefer from the ones we discussed in Chapter 2 when reading each passage.**

If you work backwards, use the following approach:

- 1) Answer questions for Passage A.
- 2) Answer questions for Passage B.
- 3) Answer Comparing Passages Questions.

Comparing Passages Questions

At the end of each dual text passage, there are 3 questions that ask about both passages – we call these comparing passages questions. These questions are always the last 3 questions in the dual text passage. Comparing passages questions can look like this:

Which of the following statements best captures the main difference in the purposes of the **two passages?**

Which of the following statements about instruments is most strongly supported by details provided in **Passage A and Passage B?**

The ACT will have a box telling you that the question asks about both passages, so it is clear when you are looking at comparing passages questions.

4 Tips for Comparing Passages Questions

To answer comparing passages questions correctly, you must use information from both passages. There are a variety of question types that can appear in comparing passages questions, so we will just focus on the best tips for how to approach these questions and find the correct answer.

Please note, **these tips are in addition to all the other methods we have covered so far. You should still be using the skills that you learned in Chapters 1-8 when answering comparing passages questions.** The 4 tips below are additional tips that can help you better answer comparing passages questions.

Tip #1 – Read the Answer Choices Right Away

Comparing passages questions are generally quite broad, so **you should always read the answer choices right away.** Once you have read the answer choices and know what the 4 options are, it is much easier to (1) eliminate any answer choices that are clearly incorrect and (2) know what to look for in Passage A and Passage B.

Tip #2 – Work Backwards More Actively with the Answer Choices

Comparing passages questions generally have longer answer choices because the answer choice must refer to information in both passages. **When you see longer answer choices, work backwards more actively and look for specific details that do not match the passage.** Often, multiple answer choices are partly correct, so it is easier to look for what is incorrect about each answer choice rather than to focus on which answer choice seems to be the most correct.

For example, if you see a question like this

1. The primary purpose of both passages is to
 - A. resolve a long-standing debate on the evolution of vampire bats.
 - B. celebrate the findings of recent research by Brazilian scientists.
 - C. present two competing theories on the development of echolocation in vampire bats.
 - D. catalog evidence from multiple studies that supports a finding about vampire bats.

we need to pick an answer choice that matches both passages. Rather than looking for the correct answer, it is often easier to eliminate answer choices that do not match one passage. For example, if Passage A only presents one theory about the development of echolocation in bats, C is incorrect. Or if Passage B discusses a long-standing debate but does not resolve the debate, A is incorrect. Working backwards with this type of thinking makes finding the correct answer easier for questions like the example above.

Tip #3 – Beware of Half-Right Answer Choices

For comparing passages questions, the ACT loves writing answer choices that are halfway correct. **Part of the answer choice perfectly answers the question; however, there is something wrong with the remaining portion of the answer choice.** Students often pick these incorrect answer choices because they get excited over the part that is correct and do not read the rest of the answer choice carefully enough. As always, we need to be very picky when assessing each answer choice. This is especially true for comparing passages questions.

The most common half-right answer choices appear in questions like this:

1. Which choice best states the relationship between the two passages?
 - A. Passage A provides an overview of a scientific discovery, while Passage B summarizes the experiments that led to that discovery.
 - B. Passage A summarizes a scientific finding, while Passage B focuses on the potential applications of that finding.
 - C. Passage A presents conflicting points of view on an issue, while Passage B presents evidence supporting a single view on that issue.
 - D. Passage A considers how to best test two hypotheses, while Passage B argues that only one of the hypotheses is valid.

Notice how the first half of answer choices A and B are both very similar. These could both accurately describe passage A, but only one can be correct – meaning that one of these answer choices must be half-right. In this situation, it is important to focus on the second half of the answer choices to determine which one is correct. As always, the correct answer must be 100% correct!

Tip #4 – Do Not Focus on the Identical Parts of the Answer Choices

Many comparing passages questions have portions of multiple answer choices that are identical, as we just saw in the example on the previous page. **When you see identical parts in the answer choices, do not focus on the similarities; instead, focus on the differences.** Students make the mistake of trying to figure out which identical part is more correct, which is often impossible. Instead, you should focus on the differences in the rest of the answer choice, as this is what actually determines which answer choice is the correct one.

To better illustrate how this can occur, let's look at the example question below:

1. How do the two passages differ in the attitudes of each author towards women serving in the army?
 - A. Smith implies that women should be prevented from serving in the army, whereas Jones supports women serving in the army in non-combat roles.
 - B. Smith believes that women with certain physical abilities can be considered for service in the army, whereas Jones assumes that physical ability is unrelated to any person's ability to serve.
 - C. Smith argues that service should be a personal choice regardless of gender, whereas Jones contends that women are unsuitable to serve due to emotional instability.
 - D. Smith asserts that anyone who can serve in the army should be able to do so, whereas Jones argues that men and women should serve in gender-specific roles.

Here, the first half of answer choices C and D are both saying the same thing: anyone should be able to serve in the army. Let's assume Smith argues that in Passage A. If that is the case, there is no way to tell if C or D is correct by focusing on the first half alone. Instead, we need to look at the rest of the answer choices and focus on the differences.

Similarly, the second half of answer choices A and D are also making almost identical statements: men and women should have separate roles in the army. These statements are not quite as identical as our first example, but they are still very similar and could both be supported by Jones in Passage B. Again, if Jones did argue that in Passage B, we should not focus on trying to determine which of those answer choices is more correct. Instead, we should look at the first half of those answer choices and focus on the differences to find which one is correct.

Chapter 11: Working Backwards

As promised, we are back to working backwards! Now that you have a much better understanding of the ACT Reading Test, you are ready to learn how to work backwards. **Working backwards is not recommended for all students, but it is an approach that may help you improve your score.**

We do recommend that all students know how to work backwards in case you mess up the pacing on test day and need to work backwards on the final passage, so do not just skip this chapter if working backwards is not your preferred method.

Is Working Backwards for Me?

What Types of Students Should Work Backwards?

In general, we recommend working backwards in 4 situations:

- 1) **You cannot finish the passages in time with any method that involves reading the passage first.** If using the other methods that we discussed in Chapter 3 are too slow for you, working backwards might be a good fit for you.
- 2) **You find yourself not recalling what you read at the end of the passage.** If you do not have good recall of what you read, you are probably wasting time reading the passage.
- 3) **You score better working backwards.** For students who are able to finish the passages but are tight on time or barely finish and feel that timing and not comprehension is their biggest issue, working backwards might help you improve your score. If this sounds like you, try it out and see if working backwards is a good fit for you.
- 4) **You mismanage time and have less than 4 minutes to complete the final passage.** If you have that little time left, reading the passage will use up most of your time. You will most likely be able to answer more questions correctly by going straight to the questions.

What Types of Students Should Not Work Backwards?

We do not recommend working backwards for the following 2 situations:

- 1) **You can finish the passages in time with the Big Read, the Big Read with Notes, or Label then Read.** If you are a faster reader and time management is not an issue for you, reading the entire passage will likely help you score higher than working backwards. It's usually harder to find the Waldo if you have not read the entire passage.
- 2) **You are aiming for a score of 32-36.** To score a 32-36, you can usually only miss 0-3 questions. If you never read the passage, you are far more likely to get questions wrong because you did not find the correct evidence. That being said, **we have had students score perfectly Working Backwards, so it is all about finding what approach is best for you.** If you have high scoring goals and cannot finish the passages with any other methods, working backwards still may be best for you.

How To Tell If Working Backwards Is for You?

The best way to see if working backwards helps you is to try it on practice passages and practice tests. If working backwards sounds like it might help you, try it out on! You may find that it improves your score, or you may find that you hate it.

How to Work Backwards

With working backwards, you go straight to the questions and never read the entire passage. **Working backwards successfully requires answering the questions out of order, making quick decisions about which questions to answer, knowing when to give up on a question and move on, and a lot of thinking on the fly.** It is somewhat of a chaotic approach at times, and the exact approach you use will vary based on the types of questions in the passage and on your own personal reading and skimming skills. Because of this, **working backwards is certainly not a method that all students will enjoy, and it generally takes lots of practice to master.**

Let's go over the general steps for working backwards. As we go over these steps, remember **this is not an exact order but a general recommendation**, so do not feel the need to stick to the exact order below as you work through practice passages.

- 1) Go straight to the questions before reading the passage.**
- 2) Skip any broad passage questions that ask about the entire passage. Save those for last.**
- 3) Skip any questions that require reading various parts of the passage. Save those for later.**
 - Chronological Order
 - Example: Which of the following events occurs in the passage first chronologically?
 - Questions that require finding various details in the passage.
 - Example: The author would most likely agree with which of the following statements?
 - Vague questions that have no good keywords to skim for.
 - Example: As summarized in the passage, the study focuses primarily on:
- 4) Start with line reference questions or questions that references a specific paragraph (Ex: The main idea of the third paragraph...).** Other easy questions to answer right away are words in context questions. Use the 2-sentence rule for these questions and read for more context if necessary.
- 5) Next, look for clear evidence questions with strong primary keywords.** Look for capitalized words, numbers, other unique keywords that are easier to find in the passage.
 - **Look for clear evidence questions with shorter answer choices**, as these are often easier to find and faster to answer.
 - **Skip clear evidence questions with weak keywords** and save those for later unless you already know where to find the evidence from the part of the passage you have already read.
- 6) Next, answer inference questions. Start with inference questions with strong primary keywords.**
 - **Skip inference questions with weak keywords and save those for later** unless you already know where to go in the passage from the portions of the passage you have already read as you have answered other questions.
 - **Use the answer choices more actively.** For inference questions the Waldo will not be as clear, so knowing the 4 options can make it easier and faster for you to find the evidence in the passage, eliminate incorrect answer choices, and answer the question correctly.

- 7) **Purpose questions are generally best saved for answering later, but it depends on the keywords.**
 - **If a purpose question has line references, you can usually answer the question right away.** Be sure to read for enough context to answer the question properly. If you do not have enough context yet to answer the question, save it for later.
 - **If a purpose question has a strong primary keyword, go look for that keyword, read for as much context as necessary, and answer the question.** If you cannot find the keyword after 30 seconds, move on to the next question and come back the question later.
 - **If a purpose question is vague and/or you do not have strong keyword(s) to skim for in the passage, skip the question and save it for later.**
 - Regardless of the keywords, if you read a purpose question and know where to go in the passage, you can answer the question at that time (as long as you have read for enough context).
- 8) **Answer the broad passage questions or any other questions that you have skipped last.** If you are running out of time, answer the broad passage questions using the information you know about the passage before answering other ones you have skipped.

Should I Answer This Question Right Away or Save for Later?

One essential skill to working backwards is learning how to tell when you should answer a question right away and when you should skip the question and save it for later. Learning this skill takes lots of practice because there is no simple set of rules to follow. Every question is a judgment call that depends on the wording of the question, the keywords (or lack thereof) in the question, the parts of the passages you have read so far, and the answer choices.

To give you a better sense of how to know when it is best to answer the question right away and when it is best to save it for later, let's go over a few questions for each of the major question types.

Line Reference Questions

Always answer line reference questions right away. Since these questions tell you where to go, you never need to search for these questions. Read for context and answer the question. It is important to take time to read for enough context to answer these questions correctly, so **you can (and often should) read more than 2 sentences before and after the lines in the question.**

Clear Evidence Questions

Clear evidence questions are usually easier to answer right away, but it depends on the strength of the keywords and the answer choices. Let's go over some examples to highlight the differences.

Answer Right Away

1. According to the passage, Jupiter lost its water due to:
 - A. loss of atmosphere.
 - B. changes in its magnetic field.
 - C. rising levels of carbon dioxide.
 - D. unchecked wind currents on its surface.
2. Based on the passage, before it reached Amsterdam, Shelly's manuscript was sent to:
 - A. New York, but the British objected and brought it to Italy.
 - B. London, but was intercepted by the Spanish and brought to Portugal.
 - C. New York, but the British stole it and brought it to Spain.
 - D. London, but the Spanish purchased it and brought it to Italy.

Answer clear evidence questions with strong primary keyword(s) right away.

Save For Later

3. The passage indicates that the maps were beneficial in that they:
 - A. encouraged explorers to sail farther off the coast of Indonesia.
 - B. served as the basis for the first European maps of Southeast Asia.
 - C. provided accurate locations of port cities Surat and Melaka.
 - D. included 18 islands that had not been in Raymond's map.
4. In the passage, one challenge facing Clark in designing his fuel alternative is the:
 - A. lack of technology to split water into hydrogen and oxygen.
 - B. competition for government funding from other alternative fuel companies.
 - C. high price of lithium and manufactured crystals.
 - D. design flaws in photovoltaic solar cell

Save questions without strong primary keywords and questions with answer choices that may be scattered throughout the passage for later.

Hard To Tell

1. The narrator indicates that what the narrator remembers most about Lin is Lin's:
 - A. high-pitched voice.
 - B. unique hairstyle.
 - C. expensive jewelry.
 - D. expressive storytelling.
2. The passage makes clear that sensory evaluators who specialize in ice cream:
 - A. rarely work on market research panels for multiple companies.
 - B. undergo multiple years of specialized training with culinary experts.
 - C. have unique taste buds that can better perceive flavors at lower temperatures.
 - D. are heavily involved in the design of new flavors.

Many other clear evidence questions may fall in between. **For these questions, use your best judgment based on what you have read.** If you think you have good keyword(s) from the question and/or answer choices or already know where to go based on what you have read so far, answer the question right away. If not, skip the question and save it for later. Questions like these can be easy to get stuck on for too long, so be sure to **always follow the 30-second rule.**

Inference Questions

Inference questions are usually saved for later. As with clear evidence questions, it depends on the strength of the keyword(s) and the answer choices. **In general, you should almost always look at the answer choices for inference questions right away.** Let's go over some examples to highlight the differences.

Answer Right Away

1. It can be inferred that the Ben's response to the standing ovation is intended to point out that:
 - A. Ben did not expect the audience's reaction.
 - B. Ben's piano doesn't play by itself.
 - C. The audience isn't qualified to judge the quality of Ben's performance.
 - D. The audience grasps the meaning of the piece Ben selected to play.
2. The passage most strongly suggests that dark chocolate:
 - A. contains enough caffeine to have a minor impact on mood and energy.
 - B. supports the immune system.
 - C. increases blood flow to the brain.
 - D. provides 6 types of essential vitamins.

Answer inference questions with strong primary keyword(s) that point to a specific part of the passage right away.

Save For Later

3. Which of the following assertions about fabric is most strongly supported by details in the passage?
 - A. Thread count is not directly proportional to the softness rating of a fabric.
 - B. Fabric should be revered and never treated like clothing.
 - C. Maintaining proper humidity levels is essential to storing bolts of fabric.
 - D. Selling bolts of partially used fabric is disrespectful to the original creator.
4. The passage most strongly suggests that Goya would have gained more notoriety in his lifetime if he:
 - A. painted in a style that was more popular in the 18th century.
 - B. sold more of his artwork at public auctions.
 - C. had not spent his early years drawing cartoons.
 - D. had a less rebellious character.

Save questions without strong primary keywords and questions with answer choices that may be scattered throughout the passage for later.

Hard To Tell

5. It can most reasonably be inferred that the author's statements about the use of photographs in neuroscience apply to photographs taken in what time period?
- Only in the twenty years after the invention of the camera.
 - Any time period since digital photographs were first taken.
 - In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
 - Any time period prior to the digital age, but not beyond.
6. The passage most strongly implies that one way cable subscribers are similar to baseball fans is that the fans:
- have diverse taste in entertainment.
 - are willing to pay more for streaming content.
 - display strong time management skills.
 - organize their schedules to watch television.

Many other inference questions may fall in between. **For these questions, use your best judgment based on what you have read.** If you think you have good keyword(s) from the question and/or answer choices or already know where to go in the passage based on what you have read so far, answer the question right away. If not, skip the question and save it for later. Questions like these can be easy to get stuck on for too long, so be sure to **always follow the 30-second rule.**

Purpose Questions

Any purpose question that requires an understanding of the greater context of the passage should be saved for later (Ex: question 1 below). Until you have read more of the passage, you do not have the context to answer the question properly. Questions like this should be answered right before broad passage questions. **Some purpose questions have line references within a specific paragraph (Ex: question 2 below). You can answer these questions right away.** As always, make sure that you read for enough context and read the entire paragraph if necessary.

Save for Later

- The main function of the third paragraph (lines 25-33) is to:
 - make clear the Mary's admiration for the clothing in the windows.
 - illustrate Mary's fascination with the neon signs that shine through the fog.
 - present Mary's thoughts on the shops she has visited several times before.
 - describe Mary's memories of a place that she once called home.

Answer Right Away

- The last sentence of the fifth paragraph serves to:
 - call into question the methods for assessing the sugar content in fruits.
 - explain how to improve the sweetness of oranges.
 - summarize Burnett's recommendation for orange farmers
 - emphasize that farmers are ultimately responsible for their own decisions.

When answering purpose questions, **it is important to always read for context – as much as you need.** You will often need to read an entire paragraph or more. Make sure that you take the time to do that and do not answer purpose questions too quickly.

Purpose questions without line references or references to a specific paragraph are usually answered in the middle or saved for later depending on how strong the keyword(s) in the question are.

Answer Right Away

1. The author most likely includes the list of mammals that live in Giant Sequoia trees in order to:
 - A. highlight the need to limit the number of visitors to the national forests.
 - B. demonstrate the number of species that rely on the trees for food.
 - C. suggest that the local governor is naïve about preserving natural habitats.
 - D. verify that the protective measures are working.

Hard To Tell

2. The details about the initial response to the water treatment plant opening serve to:
 - A. present specific examples of criticism from experts.
 - B. provide support for the author's opinion that the new plant was prone to failure.
 - C. emphasize the ongoing conflict between the rich and poor members of the community.
 - D. provide evidence to undermine Hess's position.

For purpose questions with stronger keyword(s) that you can likely find in the passage quickly, answer the question right away. Or if you remember where to go in the passage from what you have already read, answer the question right away. If you have trouble finding the right part of the passage, skip the question and come back to it later.

For purpose questions with keyword(s) that may be harder to find, skip the question and save the question for later. In general, if you read a purpose question and feel like it might be hard to locate the right part of the passage, skip it and come back to it later. As you answer more questions, you will continue to read more of the passage, so you will be able to more quickly find where to go when you return to this question later.

Question Types to Always Answer Last

At this point in this course, **you already know to save broad passage questions for last.** What are some other types of questions that you should always save for last when working backwards?

1) Chronological Order

Save any questions that ask about the chronological order of events in the passage for last. For example, a chronological order question might look like this:

1. Which of the following events referred to in the passage occurred last chronologically?
 - A. Maya went surfing in the Pacific Ocean.
 - B. Maya's brother came home from Paris.
 - C. Maya and Emily arrived at the art museum.
 - D. Maya's mother discovered her passion for painting.

Answering these questions requires you to find 4 events in the passage, so it is time consuming and will be faster and easier to answer last. **Chronological Order questions are very difficult when working backwards, so you may have to make an educated guess on these questions.**

2) Questions That Require Finding Various Details in The Passage

Certain questions require that you find various details from the answer choices in multiple parts of the passage. **These questions must be saved for last**, as finding multiple pieces of evidence in the passage is challenging and time-consuming when working backwards. For example, if a question asks:

1. Which of the following details from the passage best supports the author's claim about the importance of posture in ballet performance?
 - A. Posture is the first thing taught in introductory dance classes.
 - B. The awards Misty Copeland received for her performance during *Swan Lake*.
 - C. The first ballet slippers were described as "flying machines" by the inventor.
 - D. Training for ballet focuses on lengthening the spine and keeping strong body alignment.

We need to find where all 4 answer choices are in the passage to determine which best supports the author's claim about the importance of posture in ballet. For a question like this, the answer choices are most often scattered throughout the passage, making them hard to find. **These questions are very difficult to do when working backwards, so you may have to make an educated guess and move on to stay on pace.**

3) Vague Questions That Have No Good Keywords to Skim For.

For vague questions that have no good keyword(s) to skim for, we need to use the answer choices. For these questions, the answer choices may not make it clear where to look in the passage. The answer choices also may seem like they can be scattered throughout the passage. In this situation, finding the Waldo quickly is very difficult. **We want to save these questions for last to maximize the chance that we read the relevant part of the passage while answering the rest of the questions.**

1. Which of the following statements about muscle atrophy is best supported by the passage?
 - A. Muscle atrophy does not occur until age 30 and then increases at a constant annual rate.
 - B. Muscle atrophy is accompanied by decreasing levels of calcium in the bones.
 - C. The severity of muscle atrophy depends on diet and exercise.
 - D. Genetics do not play a significant role in muscle atrophy.

Based on the question and the answer choices, we do not have anything specific to look for other than "muscle atrophy." If the passage discusses muscle atrophy throughout, we have no specific place in the passage to look. To answer this question, we need to find a Waldo in the passage that matches one of the answer choices. Without having read the passage, this is extremely difficult, so we save this question for last. After answering the rest of the questions and reading parts of the passage, we have a much better chance of having already read the relevant part of the passage or having an idea of where to look for the Waldo. **If you cannot find the evidence and need to move on, eliminate any incorrect answer choices, bubble in your best guess, and move on.** It is important to not get stuck on these questions for too long.

****Note: No matter what method you use, these 3 types of questions are often good to skip and answer later!**

How To Work Backward on Dual Text Passages

On dual text passages, there are 2 methods for working backwards. For either method, you want to focus on one passage at a time.

Method #1 – Classic Approach (Passage A, Passage B, then Comparing Passages)

For the first method, you will answer Passage A questions, Passage B questions, and then questions about both passages.

- 1) **Answer questions for Passage A.** You do not need to answer the questions in order. Use the same approaches we have discussed for the regular passages.
- 2) **Answer questions for Passage B.**
- 3) **Answer Comparing Passages Questions.** Go back to passages A and B and read more as necessary. Be sure to use the answer choices to your advantage on both passage questions. **Reading the answer choices right away is often helpful.** Comparing passages questions are difficult when working backwards, so make sure you go not get stuck on these questions.

Method #2 – Elimination for Comparing Passages Questions

With this method, you will go to comparing passages questions after reading each passage to eliminate any incorrect answer choices. Eliminating answer choices as you go, rather than saving comparing passages questions for last, can help make sure you remember what each passage is about more clearly as you assess if the answer choices match the passage or not.

- 1) **Answer questions for Passage A.** You do not need to answer the questions in order. Use the same approaches we have discussed for the regular passages.
- 2) **Go to comparing passages questions. Read the questions and the answer choices.**
- 3) **As you read each question, eliminate any answer choice that does not match what you know from Passage A.** Since you just did Passage A, you will remember passage A well at this point. Cross-out any incorrect answer choices. **Only eliminate answer choices that you are sure are incorrect.**
- 4) **Answer questions for Passage B.**
- 5) **Go to comparing passages questions. Read the questions and the remaining answer choices.**
- 6) **As you read each question, eliminate any answer choice that does not match what you know from Passage B.** Cross-out any incorrect answer choices. If you know the correct answer choice, bubble it in.
- 7) **If you cannot tell which answer choice is correct, go back to the passages.** This is a good time to check your watch. Read more (if you have time) and try to find the correct answer.
- 8) If you are out of time and need to move on, **make an educated guess, circle the question number, and move on.** Both passage questions are difficult when working backwards, so make sure you do not get stuck on these questions.

To show you how method #2 works, let's consider the following question:

1. The authors of passage A and passage B praise Hunt for his use of:
 - A. texture in his collages.
 - B. sand and shells in his modern art.
 - C. creative lighting in his gallery.
 - D. interactive artwork in his shows.
2. Which of the following statements best captures a difference in the purpose of the passages?
 - A. Passage A provides a glimpse into the design of the Tesla, while Passage B criticizes Tesla's manufacturing process.
 - B. Passage A provides an overview of how Tesla manufactures its cars, while Passage B provides a glimpse into Tesla's creative process.
 - C. Passage A provides a narrative concerning how Tesla differs from other electric vehicles, while Passage B provides an overview of Tesla's battery technology.
 - D. Passage A provides a critique of the interior design of Tesla cars, while Passage B provides a summary of how Tesla builds its cars.

This method can be used for almost all both passages questions. As always, **there is no best method. Try both approaches and see which one work best for you on both passage questions.**

7 Tips for Working Backwards

Here are 7 tips that are crucial for mastering working backwards. These tips are ones you can use in addition to all the tips we have already learned in this course.

Tip #1: Follow the 30-Second Rule

Time management is crucial with working backwards. The biggest mistake students make when working backwards is getting stuck on a question for too long. This most commonly occurs when students are skimming the passage and cannot find the keyword(s). **If you cannot find the keyword(s) that you are looking for after 30 seconds, circle the number, skip the question, and come back to it.**

As you answer the rest of the questions, you may come across the keyword(s) and can come back and answer the question. **If you find the keyword(s), come back to the question, bubble in the correct answer, and put a slash through the circle**, so you know that you found the evidence and did not guess.

If you come back to the question, still cannot find the keyword(s), and need to move on, bubble in your best guess. It is better to guess on some questions and finish all 4 passages than it is to get stuck and not finish all 4 passages.

Tip #2: Read for More Context

The 2-sentence rule is a good start, but you may need to read more than that to understand the part of the passage you are in. Since you are not taking time to read the entire passage, you have more time to read for context as you answer the questions. For some questions, you may need to read the entire paragraph. Do it! **Do not limit yourself with the 2-sentence rule; read for as much context as you need to find the Waldo and answer the question correctly.**

Tip #3: The Answer Choices Are Your Friends

When working backwards, you should rely on the answer choices more than with any of our other methods. In general, **you should read most answer choices quickly when working backwards**. That does not mean that you need to read the answer choices immediately, but the information in the answer choices can help you in a variety of ways. **How quickly you read the answer choices is a judgment call that you can make after you read the question.**

Let's show you how the answer choices can help with the example below:

1. The passage indicates that which of the following is true of the first land mammals?
 - A. They appeared during the early Triassic period.
 - B. They preceded the first reptiles.
 - C. They had many specializations.
 - D. They are present in the fossil record up to 160 million years ago.

Reading the answer choices can help you identify where to go in the passage, find other keyword(s) to potentially search for, and identify the Waldo more quickly. If you know the 4 options for the correct answer, you can more quickly recognize when you found Waldo. In addition, as you read the answer choice you might realize that you already have read the part of the passage you are looking for.

Tip #4: Know When to Give Up and Move On.

This directly relates to tip #1. As you practice, try to find your give-up point. **You should have a voice in your head that goes, “Ok, I cannot find this one. It is time to move on” and you need to listen to that voice on test day!** I know this is difficult since you know that the answer is somewhere right in the passage, but it is important to know your give-up point and move on. This will help you improve your time management and make sure that you stay on pace to finish all 4 passages.

Tip #5: Work Backwards (Especially When You Can’t Find Waldo)

It is likely that you will not be able to find the Waldo every time working backwards, and that is okay. **For any question where you cannot find the Waldo, read the answer choices like a lawyer and eliminate incorrect answer choices.** You will most likely use this method for the questions that you have skipped and saved for last. By this time, you should have a general idea of what the passage is about, and you can use this knowledge to eliminate answer choices that seem incorrect. Remember, if you know that 3 answers are incorrect, you have found the correct answer! Even if you cannot tell which answer is correct, working backwards can help you improve your chances of guessing the right answer.

Tip #6: Educated Guesses Are Better Than Not Finishing

The goal with working backwards is to finish all 36 questions. You are most likely not going to be 100% confident on all your answer choices; that is expected with working backwards. To work backwards properly, you will need to answer some questions when you are 80% sure or even 50% sure that you have found the right answer. **You need to get comfortable with making an educated guess and moving on.** This is essential to managing your time well and staying on pace. **For any questions where you are making an educated guess, box the question number.**

It is better to finish all 36 questions and make some educated guesses along the way than to run out of time and blindly guess on questions at the end. Also, if you finish the test and still have some time left, you can always go back to the boxed questions to see if you can find the evidence in the passage.

Tip #7: Working Backwards Takes Practice

Do not expect working backwards to feel easy the first time (or even 5 times) you try it. For most students, working backwards feels like a struggle at first. That is not unexpected, as you are trying to use an entirely new method to complete a reading comprehension passage. It takes lots of practice to master all the skills we have just discussed. As you practice, you will improve your ability to break down the questions, skim for the keywords, use the answer choices to your advantage, and properly manage time.

After each practice passage, try to ask yourself the following questions:

- How was my pacing?
- Did I miss a keyword that could have helped me find the Waldo more quickly or easily?
- Did I answer the questions in the best order possible?
- Did I read for enough context?
- Did I get stuck on a question for too long?
- Could I have used the answer choices better?

As you answer these questions, take note of what you can do better on your next practice passage. With practice, working backwards will start to feel more natural and your scores will improve if this is the right method for you.

Working Backwards Practice Passage #1: Try the following passage working backwards.

Literary Narrative: This passage is adapted from the novel *The Fisher King* by Paule Marshall.

It was nearing the end of the second set, the jazz now winding down when Hattie heard Abe Kaiser at the microphone call Everett Payne's name. Heard his name and, to her surprise, saw him slowly stand up in the 5 bullpen up front. She hadn't seen him join the other local musicians, including Shades Bowen with his tenor sax, in what was called the bullpen, which was simply a dozen or so chairs grouped near the bandstand. The young locals gathered there each Sunday evening 10 hoping for a chance to perform because toward the end of the final set, the custom was to invite one or two of them to sit in with the band. They sometimes even got to choose the tune they wanted to play.

This Sunday, Everett Payne, not long out of the 15 army, was the one being invited to sit in.

Breath held, Hattie watched him separate himself from the hopefules and approach the stand, taking his time, moving with what almost seemed a deliberate pause between each step. The crowd waiting.

20 That was his way, Hattie knew. His body moving absentmindedly through space, his head, his thoughts on something other than his surroundings, and his eyes like a curtain he occasionally drew aside a fraction of an inch to peer out at the world. A world far less 25 interesting than the music inside his head.

She watched now as he slowly mounted the bandstand and conferred with the bassist and drummer, those two were all he would need. Then, without announcing the name of the tune he intended playing, 30 without in any way acknowledging the audience, he sat down at the piano and brought his hands – large hands, the fingers long and played and slightly arched – down on the opening bars of "Sonny Boy Blue."

"Sonny Boy Blue!" That hokey-doke tune!

35 Around her, the purists looked at each other from behind their regulation shades and slouched in their chairs in open disgust.

At first, hokey though it was, he played the song straight through as written, the rather introduction, verse, and 40 chorus. And he did so with great care, although at a slower tempo than was called for and with a formality that lent the Tin Pan Alley tune a depth and thoughtfulness no one else would have accorded it.

Quickly taking their cue from him, the bassist 45 reached for his bow, the drummer for his brushes, the two of them also treating the original as if it were a serious piece of music.

Everett Payne took his time paying his respects to the tune as written, and once that was done, he hunched closer 50 to the piano, angled his head sharply to the left, completely closed the curtain of his gain, and with his hands commanding the length and breadth of the keyboard he unleashed a dazzling pyrotechnic of chords (you could almost see their colors), polyrhythms, seemingly unrelated 55 harmonies, and ideas – fresh, brash, outrageous ideas. It was an outpouring of ideas and feeling informed by his own brand of lyricism and lit from time to time by flashes of the recognizable melody. He continued to acknowledge the little simple-minded tune, while at the 60 same time furiously recasting and reinventing it an image all his own.

A collective in-suck of breath throughout the club.

Where, Hattie wondered, did he come by the dazzling array of ideas and wealth of feeling? What was the 65 source? It had to do, she speculated, listening intently, with the way he held his head, angled to the left like that, tilted towards both heaven and earth. His right side, his right ear directed skyward, hearing up there, in the Upper Room among the stars Mahalia sang about a new kind of 70 music: splintered, atonal, profane, and possessing a wonderful dissonance that spoke to him, to his soul-case. For him, this was the true music of the spheres, of the maelstrom up there. When at the piano, he kept his right ear tune to it at all times, letting it guide him, inspire him. 75 His other ear? It remained earthbound, trained on the bedrock that for him was Bach and the blues.

Again and again he took them on a joyous, terrifying roller coaster of a ride it seemed to Hattie, and when he finally deposited them on terra firma after twenty minutes, 80 everyone in the Putnam Royal could only sit there as if they were in church and weren't supposed to clap. Overcame. Until finally Alvin Edwards, who lived on Decatur Street and played trumpet in the school band, leaped to his feet and renamed him.

85 Alvin brought everyone up with him, including the purists who normally refused to applaud even genius. They too stood up in languid praise of him.

1. It can be reasonably inferred from the passage that Shades Bowen:
 - A. did not accompany Everett Payne as he played “Sonny Boy Blue.”
 - B. had been in the army with Everett Payne.
 - C. was the oldest musician in the bullpen
 - D. did not usually allow local musicians to play with the band

2. The main purpose of the statement in lines 62 is to:
 - F. illustrate the high expectations the audience initially had for Everett Payne’s performance.
 - G. inform the reader of the audience’s reaction to Everett Payne’s performance.
 - H. counteract the narrator’s description of Everett Payne’s performance.
 - J. provide proof that Everett Payne was well known to the audience.

3. The passage most strongly suggests that the second set of the jazz shows at the club is:
 - A. the final set.
 - B. much longer than the first set.
 - C. followed by a third set on Sunday nights.
 - D. performed solely by musicians in the bullpen.

4. Which of the following details is used in the passage to indicate how the purists in the audience initially reacted to Everett Payne’s choice of music?
 - F. The overall silence of the audience, including the purists.
 - G. The description of the audience’s collective insufficiency of breath.
 - H. The posture the purists assumed in their seats.
 - J. The fact that the purists stood up.

5. According to the narrator, what did Hattie see Everett Payne do prior to playing “Sonny Boy Blue”?
 - A. Move quickly from his seat to the bandstand.
 - B. Study the audience around him.
 - C. Confer with the bassist and drummer.
 - D. Announce the name of the tune he was going to play.

6. The passage initially portrays the purists most nearly as:
 - F. knowledgeable and open minded.
 - G. snobbish and intolerant.
 - H. rational and well-educated.
 - J. inexperienced and uninhibited.

7. It can reasonably be inferred from the passage that Hattie believed Bach and the blue (line 76) were the:
 - A. musical influences that Everett Payne tried to avoid representing when he played piano.
 - B. foundation of Everett Payne’s inventive Piano playing.
 - C. true music of the heavens that inspired Everett Payne’s creativity as a piano player.
 - D. reason why Everett Payne’s piano-playing abilities limited him to Tin Pan Alley tunes.

8. According to the passage, when Everett Payne first played “Sonny Boy Blue” straight through, he did so:
 - F. more slowly than was intended by the composer.
 - G. after it had been suggested by Abe Kaiser.
 - H. against the wishes of the bassist and drummer.
 - J. without following the original tune.

9. According to the passage, Hattie speculated that the source of Everett Payne’s musical ideas and feeling during “Sonny Boy Blue” was in:
 - A. the way he tilted his head.
 - B. the simplemindedness of the song.
 - C. his ability to play with great formality.
 - D. his connection with the silent audience.

10. The narrator states that to Hattie, Everett Payne’s performance was:
 - F. overly slow and formal.
 - G. deliberate yet absentminded.
 - H. like a song played in a church.
 - J. a roller coaster of a ride.

Working Backwards Practice Passage #2: Try the following passage working backwards.

Humanities: This passage is adapted from the essay “My Life with a Field Guide” by Diana Kappel-Smith.

I was seventeen when it started. My family was on vacation, and one day we went on a nature walk led by a young man a few years older than I. Probably I wanted to get his attention – I’m sure I did – so I pointed at a flower and asked, “What’s that?”

“Hmmm? Oh, just an aster,” he said.

Was there a hint of a sniff as he turned away? There was! It was just an aster and I was just a total ignoramus!

10 And I remember the aster. Its rays were a brilliant purple, its core a dense coin of yellow velvet. Its focused light as a crystal will. It faced the sun; it was the sun’s echo.

Later that day, a book with a green cover lay on the 15 arm of a chair under an apple tree. It was the same volume that our guide had carried as he marched us through the woods. The book had been left there by itself. It was a thing of power. In the thin summer shadow of the tree, quivering, like a veil, the book was 20 revealed, and I reached for it. A FIELD GUIDE TO WILD FLOWERS – PETERSON & MCKENNY, its cover said. Its backside was ruled like a measuring tape, its inside was full of drawings of flowers. By the end of that week, I had my own copy. I have it still.

25 Over the next several years, this guide would become my closest companion, a slice of worldview, as indispensable as eyes or hands. I didn’t arrive at this intimacy right away, however. This wasn’t going to be an easy affair for either of us.

30 I’ll give you an example of how it went. After I’d owned the Peterson’s for about a week, I went on a hike with some friends up a little mountain, taking the book along. Halfway up the mountains, there by the trailside was a yellow flower, a nice opportunity to take my new 35 guide for a test drive. “Go on ahead!” I said to my hiking companions, “I’ll be a minute...” Famous last words.

I had already figured out the business of the book’s colored tabs. I turned in an authoritative way to the 40 Yellow part and began to flip through. By the time the last of my friends had disappeared up the trail, I’d arrived at a page where things looked right. Five petals? Yes. Pinnate leaves? Whatever. Buttercup? There are,

amazingly, eleven buttercups. Who would have thought? 45 However hard I tried to make it so, my item was not one of them. Next page.

Aha! This looked more like it. Bushy cinquefoil? Nope, leaves not quite right, are they? As the gnats descended, I noticed that there were six more pages ahead, 50 each packed with five-petaled yellow flower – St. Johnsworts, loose-strifes, puccons.

Why I persisted in carrying it around and consulting its crowded pages at every opportunity, I have no idea. The book was stubborn; well, I was stubborn too, that was 55 part of it. And I had no choice really, not if I wanted to get in. A landscape may be handsome in the aggregate, but this book led to the particulars, and that’s what I wanted. A less complete guide would have been easier to start with, but more frustrating in the end. A more 60 complete book would have been impossible for me to use. So I persisted in wrestling with the Peterson’s, and thus by slow degrees the crowd of plant stuff in the world became composed of individuals. As it did, the book changed: its cover was stained by water and snack food, the spine grew 65 invitingly lax, and some of the margins sprouted cryptic annotations.

By the time the next summer came, I had fully discovered the joy of the hunt, and every new species had its trophy date – name and place and date – to be jotted 70 down. If I’d found a flower before, I was happy to see it again. I often addressed it with enthusiasm: *Hi there, Solidago hispida!* I discovered early on that a plant’s Latin name is a name of power by which the plant can be uniquely identified among different spoke tongues, across 75 continents, and through time. The genus name lashes it firmly to its closest kin, while its species name describes a personal attribute – *rubrum* meaning red, *officinale* meaning medicinal, *odoratus* meaning smelly, and so on. It all makes such delightful sense!

80 My friend Julie and I identified individual plants in our rambles, but from the particulars we began to know the wholes. Bogs held one community, montane forests held another, and the plants they held in common were clues to intricate dreams of climate change and continental drift. So from plant communities it followed that the 85 grand schemes of things, when they came our way, arrived rooted in real place and personal experience: quaternary geology, biogeography, evolutionary biology all lay on the road that we had begun to travel.

1. The passage is best described as being told from the point of view of someone who is:
 - A. tracing her developing interest in identifying flowers and in the natural world.
 - B. reexamining the event that led her to a lifelong fascination with asters.
 - C. reviewing her relationships with people who have shared her interest in flowers.
 - D. describing how her hobby of identifying flowers became a profitable career.

2. As portrayed by the author, the young man responded to her question about the flower with what is best described as:
 - F. acceptance
 - G. surprise
 - H. condescension
 - J. anger

3. What name, if any, does the author report assigning to the yellow flower she came across during a mountain hike?
 - A. St. Johnswort
 - B. Loosestrife
 - C. Puccoon
 - D. The passage doesn't name the flower.

4. As it is used in line 56, the phrase *get in* most nearly means:
 - F. arrive at a physical location.
 - G. be chosen for group membership.
 - H. truly understand the subject.
 - J. be friendly with someone.

5. Looking back at her early experiences with the Peterson's, the author most strongly implies that the guide was:
 - A. daunting at first, but in retrospect preferable to either a more or less complete guide.
 - B. easy to use in the beginning, but more frustrating in the end than a more complete guide would have been
 - C. impossible for her to follow until she started pairing it with a different guide written for beginners
 - D. appealing initially until she realized how poorly illustrated its crowded pages were.

6. The passage best supports which of the following conclusions about Julie?
 - F. She has more experience than the author has in identifying flowers.
 - G. She owns a house that's close to either a bog or a montane forest.
 - H. She sees value in understanding the various communities of plants.
 - J. She stopped using Peterson's as her primary source of flower information.

7. The author states that the Peterson's became her closest companion over the period of several:
 - A. days
 - B. weeks
 - C. months
 - D. years

8. In the context of the passage, the author's statement in lines 56-58 ("A landscape...wanted.") most nearly means that she:
 - F. learned to understand landscapes by looking at their overall patterns rather than their details.
 - G. found that landscapes lost their appeal the more she tried to understand them logically.
 - H. hoped to paint attractive portraits of landscapes by paying careful attention to details.
 - J. sought a deeper knowledge of landscapes through learning about their individual parts.

9. The details in lines 63-66 primarily serve to suggest the:
 - A. poor craftsmanship the publishing company used in producing the Peterson's.
 - B. transformation the author's copy of Peterson's underwent as the result of heavy use.
 - C. strange writing the author often encountered in reading the Peterson's.
 - D. carelessness with which the author used the Peterson's, much to her later regret.

10. The author refers to *Solidago hispida* as an example of a flower that she:
 - F. had great trouble identifying the first time she stumbled upon it.
 - G. hopes to finally come across on one of her nature walks.
 - H. was pleased to encounter again after she had learned to identify it.
 - J. feels has an inappropriate name given the plant's characteristics.

Chapter 12: 7 Tips to Maximize Your Reading Score

Before we go to the practice passages, let's discuss 7 tips that can help you maximize your score. Some of these will be review from what we have already covered in this course while others will be brand new tips and skills that you can use to further improve your scores. Try to use these tips on the practice passages in the next chapter and on practice ACTs. If you understand and use these tips, you will be prepared for your best ACT Reading score ever!

7 Tips to Maximize Your Reading Score

Tip #1 – Keep it Moving

Time management is critical for success on the Reading Test. Remember, **you have 9 minutes per passage for normal time and 15 minutes per passage for extended time**, and you want to make sure that you finish all 4 passages. To do this consistently, it is important to **know when to guess and move on to the next question**.

In general, **you should never spend more than 1 minute on any single question (1.5 minutes for extended time)**. At first, it may be hard to manage time and know when to move on, but you will get a better sense of time management as you complete practice ACTs. With practice, you will develop a voice in your head saying, "It's time to bubble in your best guess and move on."

This is especially true on the first 4-6 questions of each passage, where you need to follow the 30-second rule! If you cannot find the correct part of the passage quickly, circle the question number and move on. You may come across the evidence as you answer questions in the rest of the passage. You can always go back and change your answer if you find the evidence later.

We know it feels weird moving on without being confident in your answer choice but **knowing when to move on will increase your score**. You will be able to answer more questions and avoid guessing as time is running out.

Tip #2 – Circle Guesses; Box Non-Confident Answers

Whenever you guess on a question, circle the question number on your test. If you finish with time left, go back to the circled questions you guessed on and spend more time looking for the Waldo. The question may also seem easier when you come back to it a second time.

If you are not confident in your answer, box the question number on your test. If you have time left after going back to the circled questions you guessed on, you can look over these boxed questions again. **Only change your answer if you have a very good reason!** You are usually correct on your first attempt. However, if you realize you misread the question, did not notice a detail in the passage, or notice something that makes the answer choice you selected incorrect, change your answer.

Tip #3 – Never Worry About Patterns in the Answer Choices

"I bubbled in A and F for the last 4 questions. There is no way this one can be A again, right??" WRONG! **When answering a question, only focus on that question. Never let any pattern in the answer choices affect which answer choice you pick.** Sometimes, the same spot on the scantron sheet is correct 4 or even 5 times in a row on the ACT. It is also possible that you answered one of the previous questions incorrectly, and there are not supposed to be 4 or 5 in a row. There is no way for you to know on test day, so just focus on selecting what you think is correct for each question.

Tip #4 – Boring is Better

Boring answer choices are usually better on the ACT. **If you are ever between two answer choices, always pick the more boring answer choice!** The more specific an answer choice is, the more likely something in that answer choice is incorrect. Remember, an answer choice must be 100% correct to be correct.

The challenge is that we do not like to pick boring answer choices, especially on challenging questions. An answer choice with more details is much easier to come up with a story as to why the answer could be correct, which makes you feel better bubbling it in. Your job is to pick the answer choice that is supported by the passage, not the one that feels best to you. So again, when you are between two answer choices, pick the boring one with fewer details.

Tip #5 – Beware of Keyword Matching

Anytime you see words in an answer choice that directly match words from the passage, proceed with caution. Make sure the entire answer choice is correct. Matching keywords may be in the correct answer choice, but they can also be in incorrect answer choices that are half-truths, where part of the answer choice perfectly matches the passage but another part is incorrect. Students often mistakenly pick these incorrect answer choices because the keywords match. **Never just match keywords; always make sure the answer choice you select is 100% correct.**

Tip #6 – Do Not Over-Annotate

Some students annotate a lot. Others make no annotations at all. There is no right or wrong way to annotate, so you need to find what works best for you. What is most important is to **make sure that annotating is helping you better understand the passage and work through the questions more efficiently**. If you are underlining 50% of the passage, those are not helpful annotations. If you are writing down notes after each paragraph but never use those notes, you are wasting time.

Proper annotations should help you maintain focus as you read, increase your comprehension of what you read, and know where in the passage to go when working through the questions. As we discussed earlier in this course, there is no best way to annotate for everyone: how much you annotate and what types of annotations you use varies from student to student. **On practice ACTs, try different methods for annotation and find what works best for you.**

Tip #7 – Make the Most of Practice ACTs

Practice ACTs are the best way to improve on the Reading Test...if you are using and reviewing them properly. Here are some tips for how to make the most of your practice ACTs:

1. **Always time practice ACTs strictly.** Never give yourself extra time to finish the section and see how you would have scored. It will give you false confidence for how much you are improving.
2. **Review your mistakes thoroughly.** Whenever you answer a question incorrectly, go back to the passage and find the evidence for the correct answer. Make sure you identify why your answer choice was incorrect. It is critical to learn from every single mistake you make to continuously improve.
3. **Be obsessive about improving.** Students who improve the most on the Reading Test are the ones who are most obsessive about learning from their mistakes. After each question, try to figure out why you missed the question. Did you not read the question carefully enough? Were you answering your own question and not exactly what the ACT was asking you? Did you not recognize the type of question? Once you figure out why you made the mistake, think about how you can avoid the mistake in the future. If necessary, go review any topic(s) from the chapters we have already covered.

Chapter 13: Practice Passages

Now that you have learned everything you need to know about the ACT Reading Test, let's put it all together in full practice passages. **The following 8 practice passages you on all the skills and question types we have covered in this course.**

As you work through these passages, keep these few tips in mind:

- 1. Complete these passages 1 at a time and watch the video explanation right after you complete each passage.** Right after you complete the passage, you will remember exactly what you were thinking as you answered each question. As you watch the video explanation, you can identify exactly what you did correctly, where you made any mistakes in your thinking, and how you can improve on the next passage. If you complete a bunch of passages in a row or watch the video explanation much later, you will not learn as effectively.
- 2. Try different approaches to find the one that works for you.** We discussed a variety of approaches in Chapter 2 (now is a good time to review that chapter if you do not remember the details of the different approaches!). If you are not sure what approach is best for you, try different approaches on different passages. **Once you find your favorite approach, stick with that approach for the rest of your practice passages and practice ACTs to perfect that approach.**
- 3. Do not worry about strictly timing the first 4 practice passages.** You have 10 minutes per passage (15 minutes with extended time), but you can take more time on these passages as you work on applying all the skills we have learned. **Your goal on these passages is to try your best to answer all the questions correctly. Focus on applying what you have learned.** If you need to take a bit more time to do so at first, that is fine! Do not worry about the pacing yet. You will learn to work more quickly as you improve your Reading skills.
- 4. Set a timer for the last 4 practice passages and work on your pacing skills.** Try to apply the pacing skills that we discussed in Chapter 2 and the time management tips from Chapter 3. Set a timer according to the times below:

Regular Time = 10 minutes

Extended Time = 15 minutes

Do your best to complete the passage in time. **If you do not finish in time, complete the rest of the questions for practice and think about how you could have better managed your time.** Make notes of what you can do to improve on the next passage.

- 5. Learn from your mistakes. Review any topic(s) that you need to before going to the next practice passage.** Students who improve the most are the ones who are the most obsessive about learning from their mistakes. **After each passage, try to identify why you missed the questions that you answered incorrectly.** If there is any topic(s) from the course that you need to review, go back and review before working on the next practice passage. For example, if you notice that you are struggling on spotting the different question types, go back to Chapter 3. This course has covered tons of information in a short period of time, so a quick review can be effective to help you continue to improve.
- 6. Be patient!** ACT Reading is a very difficult section for some students, and it is easy to get discouraged if you are missing a lot of questions. Do your best and use the video explanations to learn how to improve your skills. You will not immediately start answering all questions correctly. It is a journey to get to the score you want. **Your goal is to get a little bit better with each passage.**

Individual Recorded Answer Explanations

For each practice passage, **there are recorded answer explanations for every single question**. After you complete each practice passage, use the answer key in the back to check your answers. **For any questions that you answer incorrectly, found challenging, or were not confident you were approaching the question in the best way possible, watch the video answer explanations.** The explanations teach you how to use all the skills that we have learned in the class. Even for questions you answer correctly, watching the answer explanations can help you further improve your skills.

Full Passage Explanations Using Our 6 Approaches

Each passage also has a full passage explanation where you can watch me use the 6 approaches that we discussed in Chapter 3. The full passage explanations will show you how to use the 6 approaches. **You should watch the full passage explanations for any approaches that you are trying to see how to best use them. The full passage explanations help teach you critical skills such as answering questions out of order, how to use the answer choices to your advantage, what to do when you cannot find the Waldo, and much more.**

The approaches used for the full passage explanation for each practice passage are listed below:

Passage #1: The Big Read with Elimination for Comparing Passages Questions (Dual Text Passage)

Passage #2: The Big Read with Notes

Passage #3: The Speed Reader

Passage #4: Label Then Read

Passage #5: Working Backwards

Passage #6: First and Last

Passage #7: Big Read with Notes and Traditional Comparing Passages Approach (Dual Text Passage)

Passage #8: Speed Reader

Practice Passage #1

LITERARY NARRATIVE: Passage A is adapted from an essay by Marita Golden. Passage B is adapted from an essay by Larry L. King. Both essays are from the book *Three Minutes or Less: Life Lessons from America's Greater Writers* (©2000 by The PEN/Faulkner Foundation).

Passage A by Marita Golden

Writers are always headed or looking for home. Home is the first sentence, questing into the craggy terrain of imagination. Home is the final sentence, polished, perfected, nailed down. I am an American writer, and so my sense of place is fluid, ever shifting. The spaciousness of this land reigns and pushes against the borders of self-censorship and hesitation. I have claimed at one point or other everyplace as my home.

Like their creator, my fictional characters reject the notion of life lived on automatic pilot. The most important people in my books see life as a flame, something that when lived properly bristles and squirms, even as it glows. In the autobiography *Migrations of the Heart*, the heroine, who just happened to be me, came of age in Washington, D.C., and began the process of becoming an adult person everywhere else. If you sell your first piece of writing in Manhattan, give birth to your only child in Lagos, experience Paris in the spring with someone you love, and return to Washington after thirteen years of self-imposed exile to write the Washington novel nobody else had (and you thought you never would), tickets, visas, *lingua franca* will all become irrelevant. When all places fingerprint the soul, which grasp is judged to be the strongest? In my novel *A Woman's Place*, one woman leaves America to join a liberation struggle in Africa. In *Long Distance Life*, Naomi Johnson flees 1930s North Carolina and comes up south to Washington, D.C., to find and make her way. Thirty years later her daughter returns to that complex, unpredictable geography and is sculpted like some unexpected work of art by the civil-rights movement.

I am a Washington writer who keeps one bag in the closet packed, just in case. I am an American, who knows the true color of the nation's culture and its heart, a stubborn, wrenching rainbow. I am Africa's yearning stepchild, unforgotten, misunderstood, necessary. Writers are always headed or looking for home. The best of us embrace and rename it when we get there.

Passage B by Larry L. King

If you live long enough, and I have, your sense of place or your place become illusionary. In a changing world, our special places are not exempt. The rural Texas where I grew up in the 1930s and 1940s simply does not exist anymore. It exists only in memory or on pages or stages where a few of us have attempted to lock it in against the ravages of time. And it is, of course, a losing battle. Attempting to rhyme my work of an earlier Texas, with the realities of today's urban-tangle Texas, I sometimes feel that I am writing about pharaohs.

My friend Larry McMurtry a few years ago stirred up a Texas tornado with an essay in which he charged that Texas writers stubbornly insist on writing of old Texas, the Texas of myth and legend, while shirking our responsibilities to write of the complexities of modern Texas. Hardly the anguished cries of the wounded faded away on the Texas wind, until Mr. McMurtry himself delivered a novel called *Lonesome Dove*. A cracking good yarn, if a bit long on cowboy myths and frontier legends. And decidedly short of skyscraper observations or solutions to urban riddles. But not only did Larry McMurtry have a perfect right to change his mind, I'm delighted that he did.

I spent my formative years in Texas, my first seventeen years, before random relocation arranged by the U.S. Army. Uncle Sam sent me to Queens. I must admit, Queens failed to grow on me. But from it I discovered Manhattan, which did grow on me, and I vowed to return to Manhattan. And one day did. But before that, in 1954, at the age of twenty-five, I came to Washington, D.C., to work in Congress.

New York and Washington offered themselves as measuring sticks against the only world I had previously known. They permitted me to look at my natural habitat with fresh eyes and even spurred me to leave my native place. I have now tarried here in what I call the misty East for almost forty years. This has sometimes led to a confusion of place. I strangely feel like a Texan in New York and Washington, but when I return home to Texas, I feel like a New Yorker or Washingtonian. So if my native place has been guilty of change, then so have I. Yet when I set out to write there is little of ambivalence. The story speaks patterns, and values that pop out are from an earlier time and of my original place. I fancy myself a guide to the recent past. In an age when the past seems not much value, I think that is not a bad function for the writer.

Questions 1-3 ask about Passage A.

1. According to Passage A, for the author of the passage, being an American writer means that her sense of place is:
 - A. deeply personal.
 - B. constantly shifting.
 - C. tied to her family.
 - D. somewhat irrelevant.
2. Which of the following statements regarding the passage author's Washington novel is best supported by Passage A?
 - F. She wrote the novel about people she met while traveling.
 - G. She could not finish writing it.
 - H. She patterned it after other novels about Washington, DC.
 - J. She thought that she would never write it.
3. Based on how she presents herself in the third paragraph (lines 32-39), the author of Passage A can be best described as someone who:
 - A. overcame many obstacles before achieving success.
 - B. embraces the various elements of her identity.
 - C. gets inspiration from people and everyday things.
 - D. found a place to live that suits her personality.

Questions 4-7 ask about Passage A.

4. The "losing battle" in line 47 of Passage B most nearly refers to the passage author's efforts to:
 - F. inspire a new generation of Texas authors to write about their home state.
 - G. understand the lives of those who lived in 1930s and 1940s rural Texas.
 - H. preserve 1930s and 1940s rural Texas through his writing.
 - J. find new ways to write about his childhood.
5. In the context of Passage B, when the passage author states, "I sometimes feel that I am writing about pharaohs" (lines 49-50), he most nearly means that he feels as if he is writing about:
 - A. a well-known subject.
 - B. an influential time period.
 - C. powerful tyrants.
 - D. the distant past.

6. Based on Passage B, McMurtry's comments that Texas authors write about old Texas too much was received with what can be best described as:
 - F. ambivalence; several writers had already written books that followed McMurtry's suggestion.
 - G. indignation; most writers thought McMurtry was a hypocrite because of *Lonesome Dove*.
 - H. displeasure; many writers openly disagreed with McMurtry's suggestion.
 - J. surprise; many writers didn't know that McMurtry cared about Texas literature.

7. As it is used in line 85, the word *fancy* most nearly means:
 - A. consider.
 - B. theorize.
 - C. enjoy.
 - D. favor.

Questions 8-10 ask about both passages.

8. It can be reasonably inferred from the passages that regarding its effects on their lives, both passage authors would agree that leaving their native places:
 - F. led to their deciding to move away permanently.
 - G. influenced them to write about visiting new places.
 - H. changed their perspectives about home.
 - J. showed them the value of family.
9. The passages most strongly indicate that in their various moves, both passage authors have:
 - A. resided in Washington, DC.
 - B. written novels while living in New York City.
 - C. relocated because of the military.
 - D. lived in places outside of the United States.
10. Which of the following statements best compares the concluding lines of the passages?
 - F. Both passages end with the authors describing how they see their roles as writers.
 - G. Both passages end with the authors emphasizing the importance that history has for writers.
 - H. The author of Passage A describes her characters, whereas the author of Passage B emphasizes the value of home.
 - J. The author of Passage A describes her approach to starting new books, whereas the author of Passage B explains why his sense of place is illusionary.

Practice Passage #2

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from the article "Management Secrets of the Grateful Dead" by Joshua Green (©2010 by The Atlantic Monthly Group).

Since the 1970s, the Grateful Dead has invited academic examination. Musicologists showed interest, although the band's sprawling repertoire and tendency to improvise posed a significant challenge. Engineers 5 studied the band's sophisticated sound system, radical at the time but widely emulated today. Other disciplines have also found relevant elements of the band's history and cultural impact to be worth examining.

Oddly enough, the Dead's influence on the business 10 world may turn out to be a significant part of its legacy. Without intending to – while intending, in fact, to do just the opposite – the band pioneered ideas and practices that were subsequently embraced by corporate America. One was to focus intensely on its most loyal 15 fans. It established a telephone hotline to alert them to its touring schedule ahead of any public announcement, reserved for them some of the best seats in the house, and capped the price of tickets, which the band distributed through its own mail-order house. If you lived in 20 New York and wanted to see a show in Seattle, you didn't have to travel there to get tickets – and you could get really good tickets, without even camping out. "The 25 Dead were masters of creating and delivering superior customer value," Barry Barnes, a business professor at Nova Southeastern University, in Florida, told me. Treating customers well may sound like common sense. 30 But it represented a break from the top-down ethos of many organizations in the 1960s and 1970s. Only in the 1980s, faced with competition from Japan, did American CEOs and management theorists widely adopt a customer-first orientation.

As Barnes and other scholars note, the musicians who constituted the Dead were anything but naïve about their business. They incorporated early on, and 35 established a board of directors (with a rotating CEO position) consisting of the band, road crew, and other members of the Dead organization. They founded a profitable merchandising division and, peace and love notwithstanding, did not hesitate to sue those who 40 violated their copyrights. But they weren't greedy, and they adapted well. They famously permitted fans to tape their shows, ceding a major revenue source in potential record sales. According to Barnes, the decision was not entirely selfless: it reflected a shrewd assessment that 45 tape sharing would widen their audience, a ban would be unenforceable, and anyone inclined to tape a show would probably spend money elsewhere, such as on

merchandise or tickets. The Dead became one of the most profitable bands of all time.

50 It's precisely this flexibility that Barnes believes holds the greatest lesson for business – he calls it "strategic improvisation." It isn't hard to spot a few of its recent applications. Giving something away and earning money on the periphery is becoming the blue-
55 print for more and more companies doing business on the Internet. Today, everybody is intensely interested in understanding how communities form across distances, because that's what happens online.

Much of the talk about "Internet business models" 60 presupposes that they are blindingly new and different. But the connection between the Internet and the Dead's business model was made years ago by the band's lyricist, John Perry Barlow, who became an Internet guru. In 1994, Barlow posited that in the information econ-
65 omy, "the best way to raise demand for your product is to give it away." As Barlow explained to me: "What people today are beginning to realize is what became obvious to us back then – the important correlation is the one between familiarity and value, not scarcity and
70 value. Adam Smith taught that the scarcer you make something, the more valuable it becomes. In the physical world, that works beautifully. But we couldn't regulate [taping at] our shows, and you can't online. The Internet doesn't behave that way. But here's the thing:
75 if I give my song away to 20 people, and they give it to 20 people, pretty soon everybody knows me, and my value as a creator is dramatically enhanced. That was the value proposition with the Dead." The Dead thrived for decades, in good times and bad. In a recession,
80 Barnes says, strategic improvisation is more important than ever. "If you're going to survive an economic downturn, you better be able to turn on a dime," he says. "The Dead were exemplars." It can be only a matter of time until *Management Secrets of the
85 Grateful Dead* or some similar title is flying off the shelves of airport bookstores everywhere.

1. One main idea of the passage is that the Grateful Dead:
 - A. used an innovative, recession-proof approach to business that other companies have learned from.
 - B. wouldn't have become financially successful if they hadn't used the Internet for marketing.
 - C. displayed a talent for songwriting that few other bands have matched.
 - D. organized the band in a way that mimicked the structure of Japanese companies.

2. The passage most strongly implies that one way Grateful Dead fans are similar to some Internet users is that the fans:
- F. were willing to pay more for quality merchandise.
 - G. displayed a lack of generosity toward strangers.
 - H. formed communities across distances.
 - J. had diverse musical tastes.
3. The author includes quotations from Barnes and Barlow most likely in order to:
- A. illustrate that business leaders have implemented the Grateful Dead's methods.
 - B. provide expert support for the idea that the Grateful Dead used savvy business practices.
 - C. suggest that scholars find the band's history more instructive than that of other bands.
 - D. verify that the Grateful Dead were extremely naive about running a business.
4. The passage indicates that one component of the Grateful Dead's business model was that the band:
- F. increased its fan base by giving away tickets and merchandise at performances.
 - G. discovered that a fan given something for free would buy other merchandise.
 - H. appointed one member as CEO to streamline decision making.
 - J. resisted significant change because being consistent produced financial stability.
5. What connection does Barlow make between the Grateful Dead's business model and Smith's teachings?
- A. By delaying the release of its music, the Grateful Dead illustrated Smith's teaching that scarcity decreases profits.
 - B. By successfully marketing its music on the Internet, the Grateful Dead disproved Smith's teaching that new markets should be entered cautiously.
 - C. By running its own company, the Grateful Dead exemplified Smith's teaching that controlling the image of a brand adds value.
 - D. By choosing to allow fans to share copies of its songs, the Grateful Dead acted counter to Smith's teaching that scarcity increases value.
6. The main point of the first paragraph is that various scholars have studied the Grateful Dead because:
- F. few bands have produced such an extensive catalog of music.
 - G. the band's fans found ways to make the band relevant to their own careers.
 - H. the band displayed rare qualities in a number of different areas.
 - J. the band's traditional approach to music made its members attractive subjects.
7. As it is used in line 5, the word *radical* most nearly means:
- A. dangerous.
 - B. revolutionary.
 - C. characteristic.
 - D. awesome.
8. Which of the following questions is directly answered by the passage?
- F. What aspect of the Grateful Dead's music most appeals to fans?
 - G. How did the Grateful Dead maintain contact with its fans?
 - H. Which businesses decided to ignore the Grateful Dead's strategies?
 - J. Why haven't more economists studied the Grateful Dead's success?
9. The passage indicates that the Grateful Dead "were masters of creating and delivering superior customer value" (lines 23-24) in part because they:
- A. reserved some of the best seats for loyal fans and capped the price of tickets.
 - B. copied methods displayed by successful Japanese corporations.
 - C. disguised but still used the top-down organizational strategy of many firms.
 - D. provided travel assistance for fans to see shows far from home.
10. According to the passage, American CEOs revised their approach to customers in the 1980s in response to:
- F. shareholder desire for reorganization.
 - G. incorporation by smaller, faster businesses.
 - H. demand for better value from customers.
 - J. increased competition from Japan.

Practice Passage #3

HUMANITIES: This passage is adapted from the article "Out of Rembrandt's Shadow" by Matthew Gurewitsch (©2009 by Smithsonian Institution).

Telescopes trained on the night sky, astronomers observe the phenomenon of the binary star, which appears to the naked eye to be a single star but consists in fact of two, orbiting a common center of gravity. Sometimes, one star in the pair can so outshine the other that its companion may be detected only by the way its movement periodically alters the brightness of the greater one.

The binary stars we recognize in the firmament of art tend to be of equal brilliance: Raphael and Michelangelo, van Gogh and Gauguin, Picasso and Matisse. But the special case of an "invisible" companion is not unknown. Consider Jan Lievens, born in Leiden in western Holland on October 24, 1607, just 15 months after the birth of Rembrandt van Rijn, another Leiden native.

While the two were alive, admirers spoke of them in the same breath, and the comparisons were not always in Rembrandt's favor. After their deaths, Lievens dropped out of sight—for centuries. Though the artists took quite different paths, their biographies show many parallels. Both served apprenticeships in Amsterdam with the same master, returned to that city later in life and died there in their 60s. They knew each other, may have shared a studio in Leiden early on, definitely shared models and indeed modeled for each other. They painted on panels cut from the same oak tree, which suggests they made joint purchases of art supplies from the same vendor. They later showed the same unusual predilection for drawing on paper imported from the Far East.

The work the two produced in their early 20s in Leiden was not always easy to tell apart, and as time went on, many a superior Lievens was misattributed to Rembrandt. Quality aside, there are many reasons why one artist's star shines while another's fades. It mattered that Rembrandt spent virtually his entire career in one place, cultivating a single, highly personal style, whereas Lievens moved around, absorbing many different influences. Equally important, Rembrandt lent himself to the role of the lonely genius, a figure dear to the Romantics, whose preferences would shape the tastes of generations to come.

While Lievens' name will be new to many, his work may not be. The sumptuous biblical spectacular *The Feast of Esther*, for instance, was last sold, in 1952, as

an early Rembrandt, and was long identified as such in 20th-century textbooks. It is one of more than 130 works featured in the current tour of the international retrospective "Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master

50 Rediscovered."

The artworks, in so many genres, are hardly the works of an also-ran. "We've always seen Lieven through the bright light of Rembrandt, as a pale reflection," says Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., curator of 55 northern Baroque paintings at the National Gallery. "This show lets you embrace Lievens from beginning to end, to understand that this man has his own trajectory and that he wasn't always in the gravity pull of Rembrandt." Wheelock has been particularly struck by 60 the muscularity and boldness of Lievens, which is in marked contrast to most Dutch painting of the time. "The approach is much rougher, much more aggressive," he says. "Lievens was not a shy guy with paint. He manipulates it, he scratches it. He gives it a really 65 physical presence."

Lievens painted *The Feast of Esther* around 1625, about the time Rembrandt returned to Leiden. It is approximately four and a half by five and a half feet, with figures shown three-quarter length, close to the 70 picture plane. (At that time, Rembrandt favored smaller formats.) At the luminous center of the composition, a pale Queen Esther points an accusing finger at Haman, the royal councilor. Her husband, the Persian King Ahasuerus, shares her light, his craggy face set off by a 75 snowy turban and a mantle of gold brocade. Seen from behind, in shadowy profile, Haman is silhouetted against shimmering white drapery, his right hand flying up in dismay.

Silks, satins and brocades, elegant plumes and 80 gemstones—details like these give Lievens ample scope to show off his flashy handling of his medium. Not for him the fastidious, enamel-smooth surfaces of the Leiden *Fijnschilders*—"fine painters," in whose meticulously rendered oils every brush stroke 85 disappeared. Lievens reveled in the thickness of the paint and the way it could be shaped and scratched and swirled with a brush, even with the sharp end of a handle. This tactile quality is one of Rembrandt's hallmarks as well; there are now those who think he 90 picked it up from Lievens.

1. The main purpose of the passage is to:
 - A. argue that Lievens's artworks are superior to Rembrandt's and deserve to be shown in their own retrospective.
 - B. bring Lievens out of obscurity by discussing him as both a peer of Rembrandt and an artist in his own right.
 - C. criticize the art world's belated recognition of Rembrandt and Lievens as an artistic pair.
 - D. illustrate the profound differences between Lievens's artistic training and Rembrandt's.

2. In the passage, both the author and Wheelock describe the effect that Rembrandt's popularity had on Lievens by:
 - F. analyzing biographical similarities between the two artists.
 - G. comparing Lievens's early work to his later work.
 - H. personifying Lievens's painting style.
 - J. using astronomy metaphors.

3. In the context of the passage, the main purpose of the first paragraph is to introduce:
 - A. a scientific phenomenon that mirrors the relationship between Rembrandt and Lievens.
 - B. an exceptional painting by Lievens that was attributed to Rembrandt.
 - C. the innovative culture in which Rembrandt and Lievens lived.
 - D. a historical event that inspired both Rembrandt and Lievens.

4. The passage most nearly suggests that, in contrast to Rembrandt and Lievens, other artists who are considered members of artistic pairs have tended to:
 - F. build their reputations by staying in just one city.
 - G. be underappreciated during their lifetimes.
 - H. achieve equal recognition in the art world.
 - J. have few biographical similarities.

5. In the context of the passage, the description of the subjects featured in the painting *The Feast of Esther* (lines 71–78) mainly serves to:
 - A. provide an analogy for the tense relationship between Rembrandt and Lievens.
 - B. demonstrate how Lievens's art reflected Dutch political dynamics.
 - C. illustrate Lievens's bold painting style and attention to detail.
 - D. exemplify techniques common to Dutch painting of the time.

6. The passage indicates that Lievens's recognition in the art community declined most significantly at which of the following times?
 - F. When Lievens returned to Amsterdam
 - G. While Lievens was painting *The Feast of Esther*
 - H. When Rembrandt returned to Leiden
 - J. After Rembrandt and Lievens died

7. The passage most strongly suggests that Lievens might have attained more recognition if he had painted:
 - A. in collaboration with other artists.
 - B. more historical subjects.
 - C. in one specific style.
 - D. in smaller formats.

8. The passage indicates that Rembrandt appealed to the Romantics because:
 - F. he fit their ideal of the lonely and brilliant artist.
 - G. he traveled widely and absorbed many influences.
 - H. his artwork featured scenes of courtship and love.
 - J. his artwork shaped the tastes of later generations

9. The fact that *The Feast of Esther* was misidentified as an early Rembrandt painting is most directly used in the passage to support the author's claim that Lievens's work:
 - A. is considered by modern art critics to be inferior to Rembrandt's.
 - B. peaked in quality during Lievens's early adulthood.
 - C. may be familiar to some even though Lievens's name is not.
 - D. can be difficult for art exhibitors to obtain.

10. The last sentence of the passage most nearly serves to:
 - F. summarize the passage's arguments about why Lievens did not achieve lasting fame.
 - G. suggest that Lievens may have influenced Rembrandt artistically.
 - H. argue that Lievens and Rembrandt collaborated while they were in Leiden.
 - J. outline a controversy regarding the authenticity of some Rembrandt paintings.

Practice Passage #4

NATURAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from the article "Call of the Leviathan" by Eric Wagner (©2011 by Smithsonian Institution).

In 1839, in the first scientific treatise on the sperm whale, Thomas Beale, a surgeon aboard a whaler, wrote that it was "one of the most noiseless of marine animals." While they do not sing elaborate songs, like 5 humpbacks or belugas, in fact they are not silent. Whalers in the 1800s spoke of hearing loud knocking, almost like hammering on a ship's hull, whenever sperm whales were present. Only in 1957 did two scientists from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution 10 confirm the sailors' observations. Aboard a research vessel, the *Atlantis*, they approached five sperm whales, shut off the ship's motors and listened with an underwater receiver. At first, they assumed the "muffled, smashing noise" they heard came from somewhere on 15 the ship. Then they determined the sounds were coming from the whales.

Biologists now believe that the sperm whale's massive head functions like a powerful telegraph machine, emitting pulses of sound in distinct patterns. 20 At the front of the head are the spermaceti organ, a cavity that contains the bulk of the whale's spermaceti, and a mass of oil saturated fatty tissue. Two long nasal passages branch away from the bony nares of the skull, twining around the spermaceti organ and the fatty tissue. 25 The left nasal passage runs directly to the blowhole at the top of the whale's head. But the other twists and turns, flattens and broadens, forming a number of air-filled sacs capable of reflecting sound. Near the front of the head sit a pair of clappers called "monkey lips."

30 Sound generation is a complex process. To make its clicking sounds, a whale forces air through the right nasal passage to the monkey lips, which clap shut. The resulting *click!* bounces off one air-filled sac and travels back through the spermaceti organ to another sac nestled 35 against the skull. From there, the click is sent forward, through the fatty tissue, and amplified out into the watery world. Sperm whales may be able to manipulate the shape of both the spermaceti organ and the fatty tissue, possibly allowing them to aim their clicks.

40 Biologist Dr. Hal Whitehead has identified four patterns of clicks. The most common clicks are used for long-range sonar. So-called "creaks" sound like a squeaky door and are used at close range when prey capture is imminent. "Slow clicks" are made only by large males, 45 but no one knows precisely what they signify. ("Probably something to do with mating," Whitehead

guesses.) Finally, "codas" are distinct patterns of clicks most often heard when whales are socializing.

Codas are of particular interest. Whitehead has found 50 that different groups of sperm whales, called vocal clans, consistently use different sets; the repertoire of codas the clan uses is its dialect. Vocal clans can be huge – thousands of individuals spread out over thousands of miles of ocean. Clan members are not necessarily related. Rather, many 55 smaller, durable matrilineal units make up clans, and different clans have their own specific ways of behaving.

A recent study in *Animal Behaviour* took the specialization of codas a step further. Not only do clans use 60 different codas, the authors argued, but the codas differ slightly among individuals. They could be, in effect, unique identifiers: names.

Whitehead cautions that a full understanding of codas is still a long way off. Even so, he believes the differences represent cultural variants among the clans. "Think of 65 culture as information that is transmitted socially between groups," he says. "You can make predictions about where it will arise: in complex societies, richly modulated, among individuals that form self-contained communities." That sounds to him a lot like sperm whale society.

70 But most of a sperm whale's clicking, if not most of its life, is devoted to one thing: finding food. And in the Sea of Cortez, the focus of its attention is *Dosidicus gigas*, the jumbo squid.

The most celebrated natural antagonism between sperm 75 whales and squid almost certainly involves the jumbo squid's larger cousin, the giant squid, a species that grows to 65 feet long. The relationship between sperm whales and squid is pretty dramatic. A single sperm whale can eat more than one ton of squid per day. They do eat giant squid on 80 occasion, but most of what whales pursue is relatively small and overmatched. With their clicks, sperm whales can detect a squid less than a foot long more than a mile away, and schools of squid from even farther away. But the way that sperm whales find squid was until recently a 85 puzzle.

1. The main purpose of the passage is to:

- describe how sperm whales use clicks to hunt their prey.
- evaluate historical theories regarding sperm whale clicks.
- provide details about the antagonism between sperm whales and squid.
- explain how sperm whales generate and use clicks.

2. In the eighth paragraph (lines 70-73), the passage begins to focus on the relationship between:
- F. squid and their prey.
 - G. sperm whales and sonar.
 - H. sperm whales and codas.
 - J. squid and sperm whales.
3. The main purpose of the second paragraph (lines 17-29) is to:
- A. compare sperm whales to telegraph machines.
 - B. explain the function of the spermaceti organ.
 - C. outline how scientists came to understand the anatomy of the sperm whale.
 - D. describe the sperm whale anatomy involved in creating sound.
4. It can reasonably be inferred from the passage that codas are of particular interest because scientists don't yet fully understand:
- F. how codas help sperm whales hunt.
 - G. how codas function in sperm whale socialization.
 - H. why codas are emitted only by male whales.
 - J. why codas are so difficult to detect.
5. As it is presented in the passage, the study that appeared in *Animal Behaviour* concluded that sperm whale vocal clans:
- A. each use a distinct dialect, and individuals within each clan have unique codas.
 - B. can adopt the codas of other clans, but individuals within each clan maintain unique dialects.
 - C. each use many dialects, and individuals within each clan develop complex codas.
 - D. can adopt the codas of other clans, but individuals within each clan retain unique identifiers.
6. The passage indicates that compared to the sounds beluga whales and humpback whales make, the sounds sperm whales make are:
- F. more complex and varied.
 - G. more frequent and melodic.
 - H. less elaborate and songlike.
 - J. less enigmatic and repetitive.
7. According to the passage, who confirmed the observation that sperm whales make loud knocking noises?
- A. Beale
 - B. Nineteenth-century whalers
 - C. Woods Hole scientists
 - D. Whitehead
8. As it is used in line 25, the word *runs* most nearly means:
- F. acts.
 - G. hastens.
 - H. operates.
 - J. leads.
9. Based on the passage, the notion that slow clicks are related to sperm whale mating behavior is best described as a:
- A. fact that is supported by several scientific studies.
 - B. fact that whalers discovered in the 1800s.
 - C. reasoned judgment from an expert in biology.
 - D. reasoned judgment from the passage author.
10. Which of the following statements about the mystery of how sperm whales locate squid is best supported by the passage?
- F. The mystery was solved in the 1800s.
 - G. The mystery was solved recently.
 - H. The mystery is likely to be solved in the near future.
 - J. The mystery is likely to remain unsolved until better technology is invented.

Practice Passage #5

LITERARY NARRATIVE: This passage is adapted from the book *Flower Confidential* by Amy Stewart (©2007 by Amy Stewart).

"Holland" and "the Netherlands" refer to the same country.

I woke up at 5 a.m. and stared at the ceiling of my Amsterdam hotel room. Outside, the canal boats, which were rented to rowdy college students, had just gone quiet. This was a city of late risers. I got dressed and 5 walked gingerly through the lobby, not wanting to wake the innkeeper who slept on the ground floor, and stepped into the dark, empty streets. The fact is that if you want to go see someone in the flower trade, this is the hour at which you must rise. Even then, when you 10 finally show up at 6 or 7 a.m., blinking in the sudden daylight and trying to remember why you scheduled the meeting in the first place, the person you've gone to meet will look impatient, as though half the day is wasted already.

15 I was on my way to Aalsmeer to see the famous Dutch flower auction. It's known around the world as a remarkably high-tech, high-speed way to sell flowers, but it had modest beginnings: In a café outside of Amsterdam in 1911 some growers came up with the idea of 20 holding an auction to give them more control over how their flowers were priced and sold. They called their auction Bloemenlust. It was not long before a competing auction sprang up nearby—the history of flower markets everywhere is that as soon as there is one, there are 25 two—and each day as the auctions ended, flowers were piled onto bicycles and boats to be delivered along Holland's narrow canals and even narrower streets. This arrangement continued until 1968, the two auctions 30 thriving nearly side by side, until they finally merged and became what is known today as Blomenveiling Aalsmeer, the largest of a handful of major flower auctions going on year-round in the Netherlands.

The bus to Aalsmeer took me through the shuttered streets of Amsterdam and headed south, past the airport. 35 The world seemed to be coming to life at last, and on the road we passed dozens of trucks—some of them plastered with the same grower and wholesaler logos you'd see in Miami—carrying flowers to and from the auction. This next phase of a flower's life, after it leaves 40 the grower and before it settles into a vase on someone's hall table, is remarkable for both its duration and its complexity. A flower can spend a week making its way through a maze of warehouses, airports, auctions, and wholesale markets, and it will emerge from this

45 exhausting journey looking almost as fresh as the day it was picked.

The existence of this auction highlights one major difference between flowers destined for the European market and those sold in the United States. The flowers 50 that I saw arriving in Miami were headed in every direction at once: they were going by truck, rail, and plane to wholesale markets, distribution centers, bouquet makers, retailers, and even directly to customers. There is not a single, centralized market for flowers in 55 the United States. But the flowers that come into Schiphol Airport outside of Amsterdam, the major port of entry for European flowers, are almost all going to Aalsmeer. This is the very center of the flower trade, handling most of the flowers sold on the European 60 market and some of the goods going to Russia, China, Japan, and even the United States. The flowers going up for auction come from Kenya, Zimbabwe, Israel, Colombia, Ecuador, and European countries, making this a sort of global stopping-off point for most of the 65 industry. Every flower market around the world watches the Dutch auction, which acts as a sort of engine for the trade, setting prices and standards worldwide. If you want to follow a flower to market, you'll end up here eventually.

70 By the time the bus pulled into the large circular driveway at the public entrance to the auction, the day really was half over. Flowers and plants had been arriving since midnight. And bidding started before dawn. I stepped off the bus into a kind of floral rush 75 hour: trucks roaring past, people racing from one end of the complex to another, the morning sun glaring down. This place is a behemoth in the small town of Aalsmeer. It employs ten thousand people in a town of just twenty thousand and occupies almost 450 acres, an 80 area larger than Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom and Epcot theme parks combined. In fact, the auction is like a city in itself, one that runs twenty-four hours a day. All the major growers and wholesalers keep an office, and maybe a warehouse and a loading dock, at 85 Aalsmeer. A full 20 percent of the cut flowers in the world are sold at this very spot, and about half of the world's cut-flower supply moves through the Dutch auction system.

1. Which of the following events referred to in the passage happened first chronologically?
 - A. The author woke up at 5:00 a.m.
 - B. The students on the canal boats quieted down.
 - C. The author's bus passed the Amsterdam airport.
 - D. Flowers and plants started arriving at the auction.

2. The main idea of the first paragraph is that:
 - F. the author is not accustomed to getting up very early in the morning.
 - G. the author is surprised by how quiet Amsterdam is early in the morning.
 - H. though Amsterdam in general is made up of late risers, the local flower trade is busiest in early morning.
 - J. because Amsterdam is usually bustling with activity, it is advisable to meet with people in the local flower trade early in the morning.

3. The author most strongly suggests that when meeting with a person in the flower trade in the morning, that person will look impatient because:
 - A. people in the flower trade are generally late risers.
 - B. he or she is anxious about wasting time.
 - C. he or she can't remember why the meeting was scheduled in the first place.
 - D. people living in Amsterdam are always on the go.

4. The information between the dashes in lines 23-25 most strongly suggests that flower markets generally tend to:
 - F. function best in small cities.
 - G. merge if both markets are successful.
 - H. operate in a competitive atmosphere.
 - J. suffer when competing vendors appear.

5. Based on the author's discussion of the "exhausting journey" (line 45) experienced by flowers sent to auction, the author would most likely agree with the idea that these flowers:
 - A. are surprisingly resilient.
 - B. are picked past their prime.
 - C. have remarkably complex biological needs.
 - D. should be shipped by plane to remain fresh.

6. Based on the passage, the main way the US flower market differs from the European flower market is that:
 - F. flowers in the United States are usually shipped directly to customers.
 - G. flowers in the United States are transported by truck, rail, and plane.
 - H. there are no wholesale flower markets in the United States.
 - J. there is no centralized flower market in the United States.

7. As it is used in line 18, the word *modest* most nearly means:
 - A. bashful.
 - B. simple.
 - C. middling.
 - D. decent.

8. Details in the third paragraph (lines 33-46) indicate that one similarity between the flower industry in the United States and the flower industry in Holland is that both:
 - F. have well-known high-tech flower auctions.
 - G. are supplied primarily by growers in Europe.
 - H. conduct major flower auctions all year long.
 - J. use some of the same growers and wholesalers.

9. The author refers to the Magic Kingdom and Epcot theme parks mainly to:
 - A. indicate that the Aalsmeer market is more crowded than the two theme parks combined.
 - B. provide support for the idea that the Aalsmeer market is a lot of fun to attend.
 - C. suggest that the Aalsmeer market employs as many people as the two theme parks do.
 - D. help emphasize the sprawling space the Aalsmeer market occupies.

10. According to the passage, which of the following numbers of flowers is sold at the Aalsmeer auction?
 - F. Ten thousand flowers per day
 - G. Half of the flowers grown in Holland
 - H. Twenty percent of the world's cut flowers
 - J. Eighty percent of the flowers in the European market

Practice Passage #6

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from the article "The Reluctant President" by Ron Chernow (©2011 by Ron Chernow).

On February 4, 1789, the 69 members of the Electoral College made George Washington the only president to be unanimously elected, but Congress was unable to meet until April to make the choice official.

The Congressional delay in certifying George Washington's election as president only allowed more time for his doubts to fester as he considered the herculean task ahead. He savored his wait as a welcome 5 "reprieve," he told his former comrade in arms and future Secretary of War Henry Knox, adding that his "movements to the chair of government will be accompanied with feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution." His "peaceful 10 abode" at Mount Vernon, his fears that he lacked the requisite skills for the presidency, the "ocean of difficulties" facing the country—all gave him pause on the eve of his momentous trip to New York. In a letter to his friend Edward Rutledge, he claimed that, in accepting 15 the presidency, he had given up "all expectations of private happiness in this world."

The day after Congress counted the electoral votes, declaring Washington the first president, it dispatched Charles Thomson, the secretary of Congress, to bear the 20 official announcement to Mount Vernon. The legislators had chosen a fine emissary. A well-rounded man, known for his work in astronomy and mathematics, the Irish-born Thomson couldn't have relished the trying journey to Virginia, which was "much impeded by 25 tempestuous weather, bad roads, and the many large rivers I had to cross." Yet he rejoiced that the new president would be Washington, whom he venerated as someone singled out by Providence to be "the savior and father" of the country. Having known Thomson since 30 the Continental Congress, Washington esteemed him as a faithful public servant and exemplary patriot.

Around noon on April 14, 1789, Washington flung open the door at Mount Vernon and greeted his visitor with a cordial embrace. Once in the privacy of the mansion, he and Thomson conducted a stiff verbal minuet, each man reading from a prepared statement. Thomson began by declaring, "I am honored with the commands 35 of the Senate to wait upon your Excellency with the information of your being elected to the office of President of the United States of America" by a unanimous vote. He read aloud a letter from Senator John Langdon 40 of New Hampshire, the president pro tempore. "Suffer

me, sir, to indulge the hope that so auspicious a mark of public confidence will meet your approbation and be 45 considered as a sure pledge of the affection and support you are to expect from a free and enlightened people." There was something deferential, even slightly servile, in Langdon's tone, as if he feared that Washington might renege on his promise and refuse to take the job. Thus 50 was greatness once again thrust upon George Washington.

Any student of Washington's life might have predicted that he would acknowledge his election in a short, self-effacing speech full of disclaimers. "While I 55 realize the arduous nature of the task which is conferred on me and feel my inability to perform it," he replied to Thomson, "I wish there may not be reason for regretting the choice. All I can promise is only that which can be accomplished by an honest zeal." This sentiment of 60 modesty jibed so perfectly with Washington's private letters that it could not have been feigned: he wondered whether he was fit for the post, so unlike anything he had ever done. The hopes for republican government, he knew, rested in his hands. As commander in chief of the 65 Continental Army, he had been able to wrap himself in a self-protective silence, but the presidency would leave him with no place to hide and expose him to public censure as nothing before.

Because the vote counting had been long delayed, 70 Washington, 57, felt the crush of upcoming public business and decided to set out promptly for New York on April 16, accompanied in his elegant carriage by Thomson and aide David Humphreys. His diary entry conveys a sense of foreboding: "About ten o'clock, I 75 bade adieu to Mount Vernon, to private life, and to domestic felicity and, with a mind oppressed with more anxious and painful sensations than I have words to express, set out for New York...with the best dispositions to render service to my country in obedience to its 80 call, but with less hope of answering its expectations." Waving goodbye was Martha Washington, who wouldn't join him until mid-May. She watched her husband of 30 years depart with a mixture of bittersweet sensations, wondering "when or whether he will ever 85 come home again." She had long doubted the wisdom of this final act in his public life. "I think it was much too late for him to go into public life again," she told her nephew, "but it was not to be avoided."

1. Which of the following statements best captures the broad, general message of the passage?
 - A. The most effective leader pairs strong inner confidence with public displays of humility.
 - B. Leaving a comfortable, familiar life for the unknown will likely have great rewards.
 - C. Even a leader who is strongly supported by the public may have deep, private insecurities.
 - D. Electing someone who is not prepared to lead may have dangerous consequences.

2. One function in the passage of including information about Mount Vernon and Martha Washington is to create a contrast between George Washington's:
 - F. carefree, casual demeanor around his family and his stern aspect with advisors and aides.
 - G. idyllic, established home life and the uncertainty of what was to come in his public life.
 - H. restlessness at home and his calm, collected sense of industriousness as president.
 - J. enjoyment of a private home life and his dislike of working without close advisors in government.

3. As it is used in line 35, the phrase "stiff verbal minuet" refers to the interaction between George Washington and Thomson as Washington:
 - A. writes a letter to Langdon, the president pro tempore.
 - B. excuses himself from Thomson so that he may say goodbye to his wife, Martha.
 - C. is officially told that he has been elected president of the United States and accepts the position.
 - D. formally resigns from his position as commander in chief of the army and appoints a replacement.

4. The passage author argues that the letter read to George Washington on April 14, 1789, suggests Langdon's concern that:
 - F. Washington would be forced by Congress to confer his duties to a president pro tempore for several months.
 - G. Washington had been behaving inappropriately as commander in chief of the army.
 - H. the problems facing the country were insurmountable for any new president.
 - J. there was a chance that Washington would reject the opportunity to become president.

5. The passage characterizes which of the following people as expressing a subtle acknowledgement of George Washington's burden?
 - A. Knox
 - B. Langdon
 - C. Rutledge
 - D. Thomson

6. According to the passage, the congressional delay in certifying George Washington's election allowed Washington time to:
 - F. steep himself in his doubts and fears, causing them to grow.
 - G. share with others his hopes for and confidence in the republican government.
 - H. closely consider the herculean task ahead, which eased some of his worry.
 - J. confer with his aides about the difficulties facing the country.

7. The passage indicates that Thomson's journey to Mount Vernon was made difficult by:
 - A. the lack of a party to accompany him, which left him vulnerable to bandits.
 - B. his need to return as quickly as possible to his duties as the secretary of Congress.
 - C. terrible weather and a route that included river crossings and bad roads.
 - D. his miscalculation of the route, which led to a long, arduous detour.

8. As it is used in line 43, the word *mark* most nearly means:
 - F. boundary.
 - G. sign.
 - H. impact.
 - J. stain.

9. The passage most strongly implies that while Washington was commander in chief of the army, one way he had preserved his good reputation was by:
 - A. giving speeches.
 - B. publishing pamphlets.
 - C. writing letters.
 - D. remaining silent.

10. The passage author makes clear Martha Washington's view that her husband's return to public life was:
- F. an inevitable event for him.
 - G. a subtle rejection of his private life with her.
 - H. an inexcusable decision for him.
 - J. a source of pride for her.

Practice Passage #7

HUMANITIES: Passage A is adapted from the article "A Million Little Pieces" by Andrea K. Scott (©2012 by Conde Nast Publications). Passage B is adapted from the article "Everything in Its Right Place" by Karen Rosenberg (©2011 by The New York Times).

Passage A by Andrea K. Scott

The artist Sarah Sze stood in the foyer on the second floor of the Asia Society, on the Upper East Side, amid dozens of crates, plastic storage bins, plastic tubs, and plastic bags. It was a late afternoon in December, and she and six assistants were completing the installation of eight new sculptures. The process was so labor-intensive that it had taken more than three weeks.

Sze arranges everyday objects into sculptural installations of astonishing intricacy. She joins things manufactured to help build other things (ladders, levels, winches, extension cords) with hundreds of commonplace items (cotton swabs, push-pins, birthday candles, aspirin tablets), creating elaborate compositions that extend from gallery walls, creep into corners, and surge toward ceilings. Duchamp paved the way for Sze's work when he made a sculpture by mounting a bicycle wheel on a wooden stool. But her virtuosic creations are equally indebted to the explosive energy of Bernini's Baroque masterpiece "The Ecstasy of St. Teresa," a marble statue that seems to ripple with movement.

Sze's show was about the relationships between landscape and architecture, and sculpture and line. She walked from the foyer into the galleries, and stood by a floor-to-ceiling window that had been concealed by a wall for a decade—the museum had uncovered it at her request. She began to confer with her studio manager, Mike Barnett. Sze was wondering about a branch that she had placed in the installation by the window, after pruning it from her roof-top garden, in downtown Manhattan. It rose from the floor like a sapling emerging from a crack in the sidewalk. Twilight had turned the window into a mirror, but in daylight the branch would compete with a view of Park Avenue median greenery, traffic, and apartment buildings.

"There's a nighttime view and a daytime view," she said to Barnett. "I want that to be a plus, not a minus. Is this getting lost?"

Barnett said, "I think it works."

There was a pause so long that it should have been awkward. Sze finally said, "Even if it's a loose end, that could be interesting. I like that it looks like a fragment—like it could just drift away."

Passage B by Karen Rosenberg

"Infinite Line," Sarah Sze's midcareer solo show at Asia Society Museum, promised a new angle on Ms. Sze's mesmerizing, minutely detailed installations. And it delivers one, though the art—much of it made for the occasion—doesn't always rise to the challenge.

The show makes the case that Ms. Sze, who is Chinese-American, has been profoundly influenced by many forms of Asian art. It also emphasizes her drawings, which have rarely been exhibited, and encourages you to see her three-dimensional artworks as drawings in space.

Implicitly, it de-emphasizes the prosaic nature of her art materials: the cotton swabs, toothpicks, bottle caps and other throwaway objects that she fashions, with gee-whiz structural ingenuity, into rambling landscapes and galactic spirals. Over the years viewers (myself included) have had a tendency to focus on all of this stuff—to see Ms. Sze's art as embodying a quintessentially American consumerism.

"Infinite Line" presents a more nuanced, intellectual and worldly artist: one who talks about space like an architect and vision like an ophthalmologist, who rhapsodizes about the shifting perspective in Chinese painting and makes her own Asian-inspired drawings on long scrolls of paper.

But while Ms. Sze says some fascinating things in a catalog interview, she's not at her best in these galleries. Nothing here is quite up to the level of her solo at the Tanya Bonakdar Gallery last year, which used cantilevered shelves laden with rocks, plants and office supplies to evoke a topsy-turvy green house or curiosity cabinet.

That's especially true of the works on paper, which are installed in a separate room and look physically and spiritually cut off from Ms. Sze's signature installations. Most of them find her in doodle mode, drawing clusters of architecture and tiny figures that can be expanded or contracted to suit any scale or purpose.

Pure drawing, as a medium, does not seem to excite Ms. Sze. It takes a hint of found objects, or a flirtation with the third dimension, to bring out her imagination, as in the collage "Guggenheim as a Ruin," which envisions a crumbling, entropic version of that museum, or the pop-up drawing "Notepad," whose laser-cut and folded pages form a series of cascading fire escapes.

Questions 1-5 ask about Passage A.

1. In Passage A, the first paragraph (lines 1-7) functions mainly to emphasize the:
 - A. leadership skills Sze demonstrated in relegating work to her assistants at the Asia Society.
 - B. ingenuity and problem solving Sze used to create her eight sculptures at the Asia Society.
 - C. amount of time and materials Sze needed to create her eight sculptures at the Asia Society.
 - D. amount of space Sze's eight sculptures took up on the second floor of the Asia Society.

2. Which of the following sculptural installations would be most conceptually similar to Sze's sculptural installations discussed in the second paragraph of Passage A (lines 8-20)?
 - F. An oversized tricycle hanging above a sofa
 - G. A large slab of marble with streams of water rippling over it
 - H. Rubber bands and nails joined together to form a network of cables
 - J. Paper clips strewn about randomly on a gallery floor

3. As it is used in line 13, the word *elaborate* most nearly means:
 - A. luxurious.
 - B. exact.
 - C. overdone.
 - D. complicated.

4. It can most reasonably be inferred from Passage A that the main reason Sze requested that the floor-to-ceiling window be uncovered is that she wanted the window to contribute to her exploration of the:
 - F. relationship between landscape and architecture.
 - G. influences of consumerism on cultural constructs.
 - H. differences between Asian and Western art.
 - J. effects of urban sprawl on the environment.

5. In Passage A, the author most likely references Bernini's "The Ecstasy of St. Teresa" in order to emphasize that Sze's installations appear:
 - A. antiquated.
 - B. symmetrical.
 - C. ornate.
 - D. lively.

Questions 6-7 ask about Passage B.

6. The author of Passage B is most critical of which artworks in Sze's show "Infinite Line"?
 - F. Two-dimensional works on paper
 - G. Three-dimensional works on paper
 - H. Sculptural installations
 - J. Collages

7. As it is used in line 55, the word *fashions* most nearly means:
 - A. accommodates.
 - B. initiates.
 - C. combines.
 - D. wears.

Questions 8-10 ask about both passages.

8. Which of the following statements best captures a difference in the purposes of the passages?
 - F. Passage A provides a critique of how Sze conceptualizes her art shows, while Passage B provides a comparison between Sze and other Asian American artists.
 - G. Passage A provides a glimpse into Sze's creative process, while Passage B provides a critique of her art show "Infinite Line."
 - H. Passage A provides a comparison of Sze's personal and public personas, while Passage B provides a narrative concerning how Sze discovered Asian art.
 - J. Passage A provides an overview of Sze's development as an artist, while Passage B provides an interpretation of Sze's artwork.

9. Compared to Passage B, Passage A provides more information regarding how Sze:
 - A. places objects within a gallery space.
 - B. feels about the artists Duchamp and Bernini.
 - C. reacts to critical interpretations of her artwork.
 - D. incorporates classical Chinese imagery into her sculptural installations.

10. The authors of Passage A and Passage B both praise Sze for her use of:
 - F. organic material in her collages.
 - G. detail in her sculptural installations.
 - H. proportion in her works on paper.
 - J. natural light in her sculpture gardens.

Practice Passage #8

NATURAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from the article "The Strangest Bird" by R. Ewan Fordyce and Daniel T. Ksepka (©2012 by Scientific American).

That the earliest penguins have turned up in New Zealand is probably no coincidence. Until humans arrived, less than 1,000 years ago, the islands there formed a temperate seabird paradise on the margins of
 5 the South Pacific and Southern oceans. The region was free of terrestrial predatory mammals and afforded space for breeding colonies, with abundant food in the surrounding seas.

Geologic evidence suggests that the area would
 10 have been equally conducive to the seabird way of life at the end of the Cretaceous. New Zealand today is the largest exposed area of a submerged mini continent known as Zealandia that broke off from the ancient supercontinent of Gondwana perhaps 135 million years
 15 ago. Thus liberated, Zealandia drifted northeast into the Pacific, carrying plants and animals, including dinosaurs, to its resting spot about halfway between the South Pole and tropics. As Zealandia drifted, it cooled and sank. Shallow seas flooded the land, and a broad
 20 continental shelf formed around its perimeter. Despite its isolation from other landmasses, Zealandia did not emerge from the end-Cretaceous extinction unscathed. Many of its marine and terrestrial organisms perished in that die-off. Yet what was bad for those creatures was
 25 good for penguins. With marine reptiles such as mosasaurs and plesiosaurs out of the picture, early penguins could swim the waters around Zealandia free of competition or predation.

Having gotten their sea legs in Zealandia, penguins
 30 soon expanded their domain dramatically, dispersing across thousands of miles and into new climate zones. Fossils of *Perudyptes devriesi* from Peru show that penguins arrived close to the equator about 42 million years ago, settling in one of the hottest places on earth
 35 during one of the hottest times in the planet's history. By 37 million years ago the birds had spread to almost every major landmass in the Southern Hemisphere,

Yet why, after restricting themselves to Zealandia for millions of years, did penguins suddenly start
 40 spreading across the Southern Hemisphere around 50 million years ago? Recently Daniel T. Ksepka discovered an important clue to this mystery: a long-overlooked feature on the surface of fossil flipper bones. The humerus bears a series of grooves that are easy to
 45 miss among the markings associated with tendons and muscles.

Those grooves form at the spot where a cluster of arteries and veins presses against the humerus. These 50 blood vessels make up a countercurrent heat exchanger called the humeral arterial plexus, which
 50 allows penguins to limit heat loss through the flippers and to maintain their core body temperature in cold water. In live penguins, hot blood leaving the heart gets cooled by the plexus before reaching the flipper tip, and cold blood returning from the flipper gets warmed
 55 before approaching the heart.

The identity of the grooves on the fossil flipper bones shed some surprising light on the origin of penguin thermoregulation. One of the most amazing aspects of modern penguin biology is the birds' ability
 60 to tolerate extreme cold. One would logically assume that the plexus evolved as an adaptation to frigid environments. But fossils suggest otherwise. Penguins such as the *Delphinomis* from Antarctica show that this feature evolved at least 49 million years ago. The early
 65 *Waimana* penguins from Zealandia show no hint of the trait at 58 million years ago, however. The plexus therefore must have evolved in the intervening time, when the earth was far warmer than it is today. Back then, Antarctica lacked permanent ice sheets and
 70 instead offered a temperate forested environment; Zealandia was even toastier.

What use did early penguins have for a heat-conserving plexus in this greenhouse world? Although sea-surface temperatures were high, early penguins
 75 probably foraged in cool upwelling regions, which are rich in nutrients and thus support a bounty of prey, including fish and squid. But because heat is lost more quickly in water than air, a warm-blooded animal such as the penguin risks going into hypothermia even in
 80 warm seas if the water is below core body temperature. Reducing heat loss through the flipper would have helped them conserve body heat on long foraging swims in chilly waters.

The humeral plexus may have also allowed penguins to survive the long open-water journeys by which they initially dispersed from Zealandia to other continents. Only much later would modern penguins co-opt this mechanism to invade the sea ice shelves that formed when the planet cooled.

1. One main purpose of the passage is to:
 - A. analyze why New Zealand has long been an ideal environment for penguins.
 - B. compare two leading theories about penguin habitats based on evidence from the fossil record.
 - C. present evidence that penguin populations have steadily declined since the late Cretaceous.
 - D. describe a particular fossil discovery that led to a better understanding of how penguins evolved.

2. Which of the following statements best summarizes the authors' claim about the relationship between the humeral arterial plexus and cold environments?
 - F. The early emergence of the humeral arterial plexus allowed penguins to later inhabit cold environments.
 - G. The humeral arterial plexus appears to have little to do with penguins' ability to survive in cold environments.
 - H. The humeral arterial plexus allows penguins to survive in cold environments by increasing penguins' heart rates.
 - J. Once penguins adapted to the sea ice shelves that formed when the planet cooled, they no longer had a need for the humeral arterial plexus.

3. It can reasonably be inferred from the passage that the phrase "what was bad for those creatures" (line 24) refers to:
 - A. a change in food sources for early penguins.
 - B. the end-Cretaceous die-off of the dinosaurs and other animals.
 - C. how Zealandia's isolation from the South Pole affected Zealandia's terrestrial mammals.
 - D. seabirds' exposure to new climate zones.

4. According to the passage, about 55 million years ago, how did the average temperatures of Zealandia compare to those of Antarctica?
 - F. Zealandia was generally cooler than Antarctica.
 - G. Zealandia was generally warmer than Antarctica.
 - H. Temperatures in Zealandia were about the same as those in Antarctica.
 - J. Temperatures in Zealandia were higher than Antarctica in the summer and lower in the winter.

5. In the passage, the authors conclude that the humeral arterial plexus mechanism emerged in penguins in conjunction with a need to:
 - A. survive in new climates closer to the equator.
 - B. adapt to a temperate forested environment.
 - C. forage in cool upwelling regions of the sea.
 - D. swim long distances on warm ocean surfaces.

6. According to the passage, which of the following occurred as Zealandia drifted into the Pacific?
 - F. A broad continental shelf formed around Gondwana, making Zealandia more isolated.
 - G. Gondwana warmed, becoming a seabird paradise.
 - H. Zealandia slowly became completely submerged.
 - J. Zealandia's climate cooled and the landmass sank lower in the seas.

7. The passage indicates that penguins living in the Cretaceous faced predation and competition for food from:
 - A. marine reptiles.
 - B. large fish.
 - C. other seabird species.
 - D. squid.

8. Based on the passage, which penguin fossil bones yielded the most significant information for the authors' study of penguins?
 - F. Feet
 - G. Chest
 - H. Flippers
 - J. Skull

9. As it is used in line 44, the word *bears* most nearly means:
 - A. produces.
 - B. endures.
 - C. exhibits.
 - D. merits.

10. The passage most strongly suggests that the markings from the humeral plexus had likely gone unnoticed on fossils because:
 - F. modern penguin bones do not have such markings.
 - G. the markings are difficult to distinguish from others on the humerus.
 - H. the markings easily deteriorate over time.
 - J. little scientific research has been devoted to early penguin fossils.

Answer Key

Chapter 6 – Breaking Down Questions

Page 36:

1. Inference
2. Purpose
3. Words in Context
4. Purpose
5. Clear Evidence
6. Purpose
7. Inference
8. Inference
9. Clear Evidence
10. Clear Evidence
11. Main Idea/Broad Passage
12. Purpose
13. Inference
14. Inference
15. Clear Evidence

Pages 44-48:

Note: For the questions below that needed to be rephrased, we have included an example of how we would rephrase the question. Please note the “Rephrase the Question” answer in the key is not the only way to rephrase the question. Your answer does not need to match this exactly, but it should be fairly similar to the one listed below to be correct.

1. Question Type: Inference
Primary Keyword(s): Brown pelican
Secondary Keyword(s): beak shape, evolved
Rephrase the Question: How did the Brown pelican's beaks evolve?
2. Question Type: Clear evidence
Primary Keyword(s): Orange County, 1950s
Secondary Keyword(s): resident
Rephrase the Question: None
3. Question Type: Purpose
Primary Keyword(s): walnut oil painting
Secondary Keyword(s): not legitimate
Rephrase the Question: None
4. Question Type: Clear evidence
Primary Keyword(s): Sarah
Secondary Keyword(s): graduation ceremony, slighted
Rephrase the Question: None
5. Question Type: Purpose
Primary Keyword(s): Henry VII
Secondary Keyword(s): None
Rephrase the Question: None

6. Question Type: Clear evidence
Primary Keyword(s): dog's mouth, taste buds, tongue
Secondary Keyword(s): respond
Rephrase the Question: What do the dog's taste buds respond strongly to?
7. Question Type: Inference
Primary Keyword(s): British Commander, Parliament
Secondary Keyword(s): platoon status, direct orders
Rephrase the Question: Why did the British Commander refuse to share the status?
8. Question Type: Clear evidence
Primary Keyword(s): Dylan, Lin, 2015
Secondary Keyword(s): increase, electric capacity
Rephrase the Question: None
9. Question Type: Clear evidence/Inference
Primary Keyword(s): Māori, Samoan
Secondary Keyword(s): connection, knowledge, distinctions
Rephrase the Question: How does the author know about the distinctions between the Māori and Samoan nations?
10. Question Type: Main idea
Primary Keyword(s): pheromones, caterpillars
Secondary Keyword(s): None
Rephrase the Question: None
11. Question Type: Clear evidence
Primary Keyword(s): Fant, criticism
Secondary Keyword(s): None
Rephrase the Question: None
12. Question Type: Clear evidence
Primary Keyword(s): Sarah, Kansas
Secondary Keyword(s): why return
Rephrase the Question: None
13. Question Type: Inference
Primary Keyword(s): Populist, 1890s
Secondary Keyword(s): farmers' views
Rephrase the Question: None
14. Question Type: Inference
Primary Keyword(s): wigwams
Secondary Keyword(s): None
Rephrase the Question: What wigwams are places for?
15. Question Type: Clear evidence
Primary Keyword(s): Rylee, Summertime Blues
Secondary Keyword(s): wrong guitar onstage
Rephrase the Question: None

16. Question Type: Purpose
Primary Keyword(s): daughter, toy car
Secondary Keyword(s): durability
Rephrase the Question: None
17. Question Type: Clear evidence
Primary Keyword(s): Miller, distortion, magnification mirror
Secondary Keyword(s): consequence
Rephrase the Question: None
18. Question Type: Clear evidence
Primary Keyword(s): brother's mood
Secondary Keyword(s): None
Rephrase the Question: What is the brother's mood?
19. Question Type: Inference
Primary Keyword(s): arctic fox, lemmings
Secondary Keyword(s): snowpack, locate
Rephrase the Question: How can the fox find the lemmings under the snowpack?
20. Question Type: Clear evidence/Inference
Primary Keyword(s): dolphins, strategize, hunting
Secondary Keyword(s): behavior
Rephrase the Question: What behaviors show how dolphins strategize while hunting?
21. Question Type: Inference
Primary Keyword(s): Mayor Pryce
Secondary Keyword(s): townspeople, distrust
Rephrase the Question: Why do the townspeople distrust Mayor Pryce?
22. Question Type: Clear evidence
Primary Keyword(s): Altwin's theory
Secondary Keyword(s): rejected, scientific community
Rephrase the Question: None
23. Question Type: Clear evidence
Primary Keyword(s): Tim, block party
Secondary Keyword(s): why did not attend
Rephrase the Question: None
24. Question Type: Inference
Primary Keyword(s): pH, Southern California
Secondary Keyword(s): cacti
Rephrase the Question: What is the optimal pH for cacti in Southern California?
25. Question Type: Clear evidence
Primary Keyword(s): aquifer
Secondary Keyword(s): human, horse, ability to locate
Rephrase the Question: Look for a comparison for a human's ability versus a horse's ability to find an aquifer.

Chapter 8 – Correct vs. Incorrect Answer Choices

Page 56:

- 1. D
- 2. A

Page 58:

- 1. A
- 2. C
- 3. D
- 4. A

Pages 60-61:

- 1. B
- 2. C
- 3. B
- 4. D
- 5. A
- 6. D
- 7. A
- 8. A

Pages 63-65

- 1. B
- 2. B
- 3. A
- 4. C
- 5. D
- 6. A
- 7. D
- 8. A
- 9. C
- 10. C

Chapter 9 – Words In Context Questions

Pages 68-69

- 1. B
- 2. C
- 3. B
- 4. D
- 5. A
- 6. D
- 7. A
- 8. C
- 9. B
- 10. D
- 11. C

Chapter 11 – Working Backwards

Pages 85-86: Working Backwards Practice
Passage #1

- 1. A
- 2. G
- 3. A
- 4. H
- 5. C
- 6. G
- 7. B
- 8. F
- 9. A
- 10. J

Pages 87-88: Working Backwards Practice
Passage #2

- 1. A
- 2. H
- 3. D
- 4. H
- 5. A
- 6. H
- 7. D
- 8. J
- 9. B

Chapter 13 – Practice Passages

Pages 93-94: Practice Passage #1

1. B
2. J
3. B
4. H
5. D
6. H
7. A
8. H
9. A
10. F

Pages 101-102: Practice Passage #5

1. D
2. H
3. B
4. H
5. A
6. J
7. B
8. J
9. D
10. H

Pages 95-96: Practice Passage #2

1. A
2. H
3. B
4. G
5. D
6. H
7. B
8. G
9. A
10. J

Pages 103-105: Practice Passage #6

1. C
2. G
3. C
4. J
5. B
6. F
7. C
8. G
9. D
10. F

Pages 97-98: Practice Passage #3

1. B
2. J
3. A
4. H
5. C
6. J
7. C
8. F
9. C
10. G

Pages 107-108: Practice Passage #7

1. C
2. H
3. D
4. F
5. D
6. F
7. C
8. G
9. A
10. G

Pages 99-100: Practice Passage #4

1. D
2. J
3. D
4. G
5. A
6. H
7. C
8. J
9. C
10. G

Pages 109-110: Practice Passage #8

1. D
2. F
3. B
4. G
5. C
6. J
7. A
8. H
9. C
10. G