

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reading Comprehension

The medieval period in history was between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Also called the Middle Ages, it was a time of change in Western Europe. It began with the fall of the Roman Empire to invading German tribes. Western Europe broke into many separate kingdoms. Trade collapsed, people made their living from the land, and the feudal system began. The early Middle Ages are called the “Dark Ages” because the learning and culture of ancient Greece and Rome almost disappeared. The medieval period ended when the Renaissance swept across Europe.

For safety and for defense, people in the Middle Ages formed small communities around a central lord or master. Most people lived on a manor, which consisted of the castle, the church, the village, and the surrounding farm land. These manors were isolated, with occasional visits from peddlers, pilgrims on their way to the Crusades, or soldiers from other fiefdoms.

1. The period between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries is known as the  
(A) Renaissance  
(B) Middle Ages  
(C) Western Europe  
(D) period of change  
(E) Roman Empire
2. The order of events that occurred are most likely  
(A) called the Middle Ages  
(B) called the Dark Ages  
(C) in the Medieval period  
(D) during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries  
(E) when the Roman Empire fell and the German tribes invaded
3. When the learning and culture of Ancient Greece and Rome disappeared, this was referred to as the  
(A) Dark Ages  
(B) Renaissance  
(C) Middle Ages  
(D) Medieval period  
(E) change in Western Europe
4. In order to build a safe community, people formed small \_\_\_\_\_ around a central lord or master.  
(A) houses    (B) groups    (C) teams    (D) villages    (E) defenses
5. Which word can replace the word “manor” without changing its meaning in the sentence?  
(A) manner    (B) land    (C) farm    (D) estate    (E) mansion

Etymology, the study of words and word roots, may sound like the kind of thing done by boring librarians in small, dusty rooms. Yet etymologists actually have a uniquely interesting job. They are in many ways just like archaeologists digging up the physical history of people and events. The special aspect of etymology is that it digs up history, so to speak, through the words and phrases that are left behind.

The English language, in particular, is a great arena in which to explore history through words. As a language, English has an extraordinary number of words. This is in part due to its ability to adapt foreign words so readily. For example, “English” words such as *kindergarten* (from German), *croissant* (from French), and *cheetah* (from Hindi) have become part of the language with little or no change from their original sounds and spellings. So English language etymologists have a vast world of words to explore.

Another enjoyable element of etymology for most word experts is solving word mysteries. No, etymologists do not go around solving murders, cloaked in intrigue like the great fictional detective Sherlock Holmes. What these word experts solve are mysteries surrounding the origins of some of our most common words.

One of the biggest questions English language experts have pursued is how English came to have the phrase *OK*. Though it is one of the most commonly used slang expressions, its exact beginning is a puzzle even to this day. Even its spelling is not entirely consistent – unless you spell it *okay*, it’s hard even to call it a word.

Etymologists have been able to narrow *OK*’s origin down to a likely, although not certain, source. It became widely used around the time of Martin Van Buren’s run for president in 1840. His nickname was Old Kinderhook. What troubles word experts about this explanation is that the phrase appeared in some newspapers before Van Buren became well known. As a result, it’s unlikely that Van Buren could be called its primary source. Like bloodhounds following a faint scent, etymologists will doubtless keep searching for the initial source. However, it is clear that *OK*’S popularity and fame have exceeded those of the American president to whom it has been most clearly linked.

1. In the second paragraph, etymologists are compared with which of the following?

- (A) Librarians are in a dark room
- (B) Explorers of an immense world
- (C) Expert drivers
- (D) Talented teachers
- (E) Respected scientists

2. The author uses the words “kindergarten,” “croissant,” and “cheetah” to illustrate

- (A) words with unknown origins
- (B) examples of difficult English vocabulary
- (C) words similarly spelled or spoken in two languages
- (D) areas of dispute among etymologists
- (E) words rarely used in English

3. Which of the following best describes an etymologist?

- (A) Pursuer of the source of words
- (B) Lover of vocabulary words
- (C) Scientist of the five senses
- (D) Archaeologist of extinct language
- (E) Creator of dictionaries

4. The author uses the example “OK” to illustrate

- (A) another non-English word
- (B) a troublesome definition
- (C) an interesting aspect of etymology
- (D) a common American phrase
- (E) a legacy of Martin Van Buren

5. This passage is primarily about

- (A) the history of the English language
- (B) enjoyable aspects of the study of words
- (C) the use of language in the American presidency
- (D) the origin of the phrase “OK”
- (E) ways to distinguish English and non-English

Bob Dylan was born on May 24, 1941 in Duluth, Minnesota, but his name wasn't Dylan. He was born Robert Allen Zimmerman, one of two sons born to Abraham and Betty Zimmerman. Nineteen years later, he moved to New York City with his new name and a passion to pursue his dream of becoming a music legend.

Bob Dylan's career began like those of many musicians. He began to play in New York City at various clubs around Greenwich Village. He began to gain public recognition as a singer/songwriter and was even reviewed by the New York Times his first year in New York. He signed his first record deal with Columbia Records a mere ten months after moving to New York. From that point on, his career skyrocketed.

What is unique about Bob Dylan, given his huge success, is his vocal quality. Dylan's singing voice was untrained and had an unusual edge to it. Because of this, many of his most famous early songs first reached the public through versions by other performers who were more immediately palatable. Joan Baez was one of these musicians who performed many of Dylan's early songs. She furthered Dylan's already rising performance career by inviting him onstage during her concerts, and many credit her with bringing Dylan to his vast level of national and international prominence.

In his career, which spans more than four decades, Dylan has produced 500 songs and more than 40 albums. This king of songs has thirteen songs on Rolling Stone Magazine's Top 500 Songs of all time, including his most famous song, “Like a Rolling Stone,” which tops the list. In 2004, Bob Dylan was ranked second in Rolling Stone Magazine's 100 Greatest Artists of All Time, surpassed only by the Beatles.

In a recent television interview, Bob Dylan was asked why he became a musician. He replied that from a very early age, he knew it was his destiny to become a music legend. Certainly, that destiny has been realized!

1. Which of the following best states the main idea of the passage?

- (A) The beginning of Bob Dylan's music career is similar to the beginnings of the careers of most other musicians.
- (B) It is extremely important to follow your dreams.
- (C) Bob Dylan never really knew what he wanted to be in life.
- (D) Bob Dylan had great success despite his unusual style of singing.
- (E) People hated hearing Bob Dylan sing his own songs.

2. The word "prominence" at the end of the third paragraph most nearly means

- (A) perception
- (B) status
- (C) obviousness
- (D) protrusion
- (E) failure

3. The passage most strongly supports which of the following statements about Joan Baez?

- (A) She was jealous of Bob Dylan's superior vocal training.
- (B) She grew up in Minnesota.
- (C) She has performed more of Bob Dylan's songs than of her own.
- (D) She was destined to become a music legend.
- (E) She was a struggling, undiscovered artist.

4. The phrase "king of songs" at the beginning of the fourth paragraph refers to

- (A) Bob Dylan's prolific nature as a singer/songwriter
- (B) Bob Dylan's ownership of *Rolling Stone Magazine*
- (C) how most musicians regarded Bob Dylan as a king.
- (D) Bob Dylan's perception of himself.
- (E) how no other artist has ever made so many songs

5. Which of the following is best supported by the passage?

- (A) Bob Dylan has two brothers.
- (B) Bob Dylan was reviewed by Columbia Records his first year in New York.
- (C) "Like a Rolling Stone" is considered by some to be the best song of all time.
- (D) Without Joan Baez, Bob Dylan would never have succeeded.
- (E) Bob Dylan beat the Beatles to become the greatest artist of all time.

### 3. Verbal Skills – Synonyms

1. FATIGUE

- (A) grow weary
- (B) become fluid
- (C) increase in height
- (D) recede from view
- (E) improve

3. ANTIDOTE

- (A) foundation
- (B) vacation
- (C) poison
- (D) learning experience
- (E) antitoxin

5. PROPOSE

- (A) speak up
- (B) marriage
- (C) fall away
- (D) suggest
- (E) lease

7. INCREDIBLE

- (A) mundane
- (B) uncivilized
- (C) sophisticated
- (D) believable
- (E) extraordinary

9. VIGILANT

- (A) observant
- (B) sleepy
- (C) overly anxious
- (D) brutal
- (E) moving

2. FRET

- (A) listen
- (B) provide
- (C) worry
- (D) require
- (E) stash

4. VERSATILE

- (A) peaceful
- (B) disruptive
- (C) adaptable
- (D) truthful
- (E) charming

6. ASSIST

- (A) support
- (B) bring
- (C) distrust
- (D) yearn
- (E) destroy

8. REPRIMAND

- (A) praise
- (B) insure
- (C) liberate
- (D) chide
- (E) forgive

10. TATTERED

- (A) unkempt
- (B) neat
- (C) exuberant
- (D) unruly
- (E) pressed

#### 4. Reading Comprehension

It is easy to lose patience with science today. The questions are pressing: How dangerous is dioxin? What about low-level radiation? When will that monstrous earthquake strike California? And why can't we predict weather better? But the evidence is often described as "inconclusive," forcing scientists to base their points of view almost as much on intuition as on science.

When historians and philosophers of science listen to these questions, some conclude that science may be incapable of solving all these problems any time soon. Many questions seem to defy the scientific method, an approach that works best when it examines straightforward relationships: If something is done to variable A, what happens to variable B? Such procedures can, of course, be very difficult in their own ways, but for experiments, they are effective.

With the aid of Newton's laws of gravitational attraction, for instance, ground controllers can predict the path of a planetary probe – or satellite – with incredible accuracy. They do this by calculating the gravitational tugs from each of the passing planets until the probe speeds beyond the edge of the solar system. A much more difficult task is to calculate what happens when two or three such tugs pull on the probe at the same time. The unknowns can grow into riddles that are impossible to solve. Because of the turbulent and changing state of the earth's atmosphere, for instance, scientists have struggled for centuries to predict the weather with precision.

This spectrum of questions – from simple problems to those impossibly complex – has resulted in nicknames for various fields of study. "Hard" sciences, such as astronomy and chemistry, are said to yield precise answers, whereas "soft" sciences, such as sociology and economics, admit a great degree of uncertainty.

1. Which of the following best tells what this passage is about?

- (A) How the large variety of factors scientists deal with makes absolute scientific accuracy impossible
- (B) How Newton solved the problem of accuracy and science
- (C) How "hard" science is more important than "soft" science
- (D) Why historians do not study astronomy
- (E) Why science now uses less and less conclusive evidence

2. According to the passage, it can be inferred that the scientific method would work best in which of the following situations?

- (A) Predicting public reactions to a set of policy decisions
- (B) Identifying the factors that will predict a California earthquake
- (C) Predicting the amount of corn that an acre will yield when a particular type of fertilizer is used
- (D) Determining the dangers of low-level radiation
- (E) Calculating how much a cubic centimeter of water will weigh when cooled under controlled conditions

3. The author suggests that accurately predicting the path of a planetary probe is **more** difficult than
- (A) forecasting the weather
  - (B) determining when an earthquake will occur
  - (C) predicting economic behavior
  - (D) explaining why people behave the way they do
  - (E) determining the gravitational influence of one planet
4. According to the passage, “hard” science can be distinguished from “soft” science by which of the following characteristics?
- (A) Seeking precise answers to its questions
  - (B) Identifying important questions that need answers
  - (C) Making significant contributions to human welfare
  - (D) Creating debates about unresolved issues
  - (E) Formulating theories to explain certain phenomena
5. The author implies that when confronted with complex questions, scientists base their opinions
- (A) on theoretical foundations
  - (B) more on intuition than on science
  - (C) on science and intuition, in varying degrees
  - (D) on observations and past experience
  - (E) on experimental procedures

In 2004, Americans alone spent nearly \$1.9 billion on Easter candy – so much so that supermarkets had to double the shelf space they allot to Easter candy and holiday-related merchandise. Manufacturers produced as many as sixty million chocolate Easter bunnies. And, if you take all the Easter jelly beans sold and lined them up end to end, they would circle the earth three times. In short, judging from the candy sales, people certainly seem to enjoy celebrating Easter.

Interestingly, though, most people do not know the origin of Easter celebration practices. After all, most people consider Easter a religious holiday, a day devoted to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What do Easter bunnies have to do with religion? Why do we associate chicks and eggs with church doctrine? Why do we color Easter eggs and arrange them carefully in Easter baskets? We’re glad you asked.

The Easter holiday dates back to a pagan holiday called Ostara, a holiday dedicated to the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring and fertility. Over time, language changes changed the spelling (and pronunciation) from Ostara to Easter. Legend has it that Ostara, wanting to please some children, changed her pet bird into a rabbit; the rabbit then laid colored eggs for the children. The children wove birds’ nests out of grass and put the colored eggs inside. Then, the children continued the ritual yearly, thinking that having colored eggs in the baskets brought good luck.

1. The best title for this passage would be \_\_\_\_\_
- (A) Here Comes Peter Cottontail!
  - (B) What Does Easter Have to Do with Nests, Anyway?
  - (C) The Evolution of Faberge Eggs

- (D) From Ostara to Easter: An Overview of Easter  
(E) Neither of the above answers.

2. The author's use of the word **allot** implies that the word can be defined as

- (A) few  
(B) many  
(C) devote  
(D) respond  
(E) All of the above

3. How much money did Americans spend on Easter last year?

- (A) sixty million dollars  
(B) one hundred thousand dollars  
(C) one point nine billion dollars  
(D) one and ninth million dollars  
(E) Nothing; Americans boycotted the event.

4. Which of the following statements is implied by the passage?

- (A) People are wise not to investigate the reasons why they spend money  
(B) Because people spent a lot of money on Easter, Easter is a popular holiday.  
(C) People will most likely spend a lot more money on Easter next year.  
(D) We have never before spent so much money on a holiday.  
(E) Easter is a popular holiday so we need to understand the history behind Easter.

## 5. Vocabulary Words

- Write each vocabulary word **3 times** on the space beside the word.
- Find the definitions for each word using the definitions provided in the box below.
- Write your own synonyms for each vocabulary words.
- Write the vocabulary words in your **flashcards notebook** for homework. There will be a **quiz next week** on the definitions from the vocabulary words below.

**1. fatigue** \_\_\_\_\_

Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. fret** \_\_\_\_\_

Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. antidote** \_\_\_\_\_

Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_



**4. versatile** \_\_\_\_\_

Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. propose** \_\_\_\_\_

Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. assist** \_\_\_\_\_

Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. incredible** \_\_\_\_\_

Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. reprimand** \_\_\_\_\_

Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

**9. vigilant** \_\_\_\_\_

Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. tattered** \_\_\_\_\_

Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_