FOCUS: Recognizing the most important topics and ideas of paragraphs and answering complete-the-summary questions.

Continue

TOEFL iBT® Online Prep Course | Activity 4 | Reading

Continue

DIRECTIONS: Read each passage. As you are reading, take brief notes on the main idea of each paragraph. At the end of the passage, you will find the introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage. Complete the summary by dragging **three** of the answer choices that express the most important ideas of the passage next to the bullet points in the box. Three answer choices will not be used. *On an actual test, these questions would be worth 2 points each.*

Continue

Mosaics

Continue

As an art form, *mosaic* had a rather simple and utilitarian beginning, seemingly invented primarily to provide an inexpensive and durable flooring. Originally, small beach pebbles were set, unaltered from their natural form and color, into a thick coat of cement. Artisans soon discovered, however, that the small stones could be arranged in decorative patterns. At first, *pebble mosaics* were uncomplicated and were confined to geometric shapes. Generally, the artists used only black and white stones. Examples of this type, dating to the eighth century B.C.E., have been found at Gordion in Turkey. Eventually, artists arranged the stones to form more complex pictorial designs, and by the fourth century B.C.E., the technique had developed to a high level of sophistication. Mosaicists depicted elaborate figural scenes using a broad range of colors--yellow, brown, and red in addition to black, white, and gray--and shaded the figures, clothing, and setting to suggest volume. Thin strips of lead provided linear definition.

By the middle of the third century B.C.E., artists had invented a new kind of mosaic that permitted the best mosaicists to create designs that more closely approximated true paintings. The new technique employed *tesserae* (Latin for "cubes" or "dice"). These tiny cut stones gave the artist much greater flexibility because their size and shape could be adjusted at will, eliminating the need for lead strips to indicate contours and interior details. Much more gradual gradations of color also became possible, and mosaicists finally could attempt to rival the achievements of panel painters, even use tesserae to copy complex paintings.

In the late first century C.E., Roman mosaicists began to reject the illusionism of Greek figural mosaics and experimented

In the late first century C.E., Roman mosaicists began to reject the illusionism of Greek figural mosaics and experimented with limiting the color scheme to only black and white. In larger rooms, where the mosaics would be seen from several **vantage** points, the mosaicists usually created compositions that would be intelligible regardless of the viewer's position. These multiple-viewpoint mosaics, like the Neptune mosaic in the Baths of Neptune at Ostia, soon succeeded in popularity, although never completely replaced, the single-viewpoint mosaics the Greeks favored.

Neptune was a popular subject in all contexts where water played an important role. In the Baths of Neptune, the sea god is shown racing across the sea pulled by a team of seahorses. He floats over the waves, accompanied by dolphins and other inhabitants of the sea. Although the mosaic is of unusually high quality, it is typical of the second- and third-century mosaics of Ostia in being restricted only to black and white tesserae. Black-and-white mosaics were also used in the offices of the Piazzale delle Corporazioni. In these mosaics, the artists rendered the interior details of the anatomy and garments of the twisting and foreshortened figures by inserting white lines in the black silhouettes, much the way black-figure vase painters in Archaic Greece used incisions through black **glaze** to draw details of musculature and costumes. The restricted **palette** was more than a money-saving device compared with the cost of polychromatic mosaics. The resulting flatter look of the mosaic was also better suited as a pavement decoration than the more illusionistic compositions that were achieved with many colors and shading. The Neptune mosaic and many like it at Ostia were also designed to be seen from different angles. Like the royal figures on modern playing cards, some figures in the mosaic were always right side up no matter where the viewer was in the room. As such, Roman black-and-white mosaics were surface decorations, not windows onto the world.

1 Various techniques were used to construct early types of mosaics.

-
-
-

Even after multiple-viewpoint mosaics became popular, single-viewpoint mosaics continued to be produced.

Although mosaics arose from the need to produce lasting flooring, they later became a form of artistic expression.

By the third century B.C.E., mosaicists could do complex paintings using a new technique that involved tesserae.

Roman mosaicists turned away from illusionism, preferring the decorative possibilities offered by black-and-white compositions.

The mosaic of Neptune at Ostia, combining illusionism with a limited color scheme, is typical of mosaics from the late first century C.E.

Early artisans used simple geometric designs and only black and white stones in their mosaics.