

Reading Comprehension

Questions 1, 2 and 3 are based on the following paragraph.

Donna's memo caused much contention around the office last week. She may have meant well, but her usually caustic tone offended almost everybody. She has become a consistent nuisance at work, and probably should be fired.

1. Based on the tone of the passage, which of the following words best describes the author's attitude towards Donna?

- a. exasperated b. admiring c. patronizing d. isolated

2. The underlined word caustic, as used in this passage, most nearly means

- a. cause and effect b. reoccurring c. biting d. unclear

3. What is the meaning of the underlined word contention as it is used in this passage?

- a. theorizing b. discord c. gossip d. calm

Read the following paragraphs and carefully determine what the main idea is for each. The best way to approach these questions is to first read the paragraph and then, in your own words, restate what you think the author is trying to say. From the five choices, select the one statement that best supports the author's point.

The best recipes for clam chowder all include onions and a bay leaf. The onions add a sharpness and zest to the blandness of the clams, and also help remove their slimy texture. The bay leaf complements the onion's strong flavor.

4. This paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. onions were once thought to be poisonous.
b. bay leaves are essential in many soups.
c. clam chowder is very nutritious.
d. onions and bay leaves go well with clams.
e. clams should not be overcooked

One New York publisher has estimated that 50,000 to 60,000 people in the United States want an anthology that includes the complete works of William Shakespeare. And what accounts for this renewed interest in Shakespeare? As scholars point out, the psychological insights he portrays in both male and female characters are amazing even today.

5. This paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. Shakespeare's characters are more interesting than fictional characters today.
b. people today are interested in Shakespeare's work because of the characters.
c. academic scholars are putting together an anthology of Shakespeare's work.
d. New Yorkers have a renewed interest in the work of Shakespeare.
e. Shakespeare was a psychiatrist as well as a playwright.

Critical reading is a demanding process. To read critically, you must slow down your reading and, with pencil in hand; perform specific operations on the text. Mark up the text with your reactions, conclusions, and questions. When you read, become an active participant.

6. This paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. critical reading is a slow, dull, but essential process.
b. the best critical reading happens at critical times in a person's life.
c. readers should get in the habit of questioning the truth of what they read.
d. critical reading requires thoughtful and careful attention.
e. critical reading should take place at the same time each day.

There are no effective boundaries when it comes to pollutants. Studies have shown that toxic insecticides that have been banned in many countries are riding the wind from countries where they remain legal. Compounds such as DDT and toxaphene have been found in remote places like the Yukon and other Arctic regions.

7. This paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. toxic insecticides such as DDT have not been banned throughout the world.**
- b. more pollutants find their way into polar climates than they do into warmer areas.
- c. studies have proven that many countries have ignored their own anti-pollution laws.
- d. DDT and toxaphene are the two most toxic insecticides in the world.
- e. even a worldwide ban on toxic insecticides would not stop the spread of DDT pollution.

The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution protects citizens against unreasonable searches and seizures. No search of a person's home or personal effects may be conducted without a written search warrant issued on probable cause. This means that a neutral judge must approve the factual basis justifying a search before it can be conducted.

8. This paragraph best supports the statement that the police cannot search a person's home or private papers unless they have

- a. legal authorization.**
- b. direct evidence of a crime.
- c. read the person his or her constitutional rights.
- d. a reasonable belief that a crime has occurred.
- e. requested that a judge be present.

Mathematics allows us to expand our consciousness. Mathematics tells us about economic trends, patterns of disease, and the growth of populations. Math is good at exposing the truth, but it can also perpetuate misunderstandings and untruths. Figures have the power to mislead people.

9. This paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. the study of mathematics is dangerous.
- b. words are more truthful than figures.
- c. the study of mathematics is more important than other disciplines.
- d. the power of numbers is that they cannot lie.
- e. figures are sometimes used to deceive people.**

Black-and-white camera film, in the old days of film photography, was very sensitive to blue light but not to red light. Blue skies would often show very little detail, because the film couldn't record all that it was seeing. To compensate, photographers would put a red filter on the lens, darkening the sky enough that the film could record its fluffy clouds.

10. This paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. red filters were very popular in the old days of photography.
- b. infrared rays are invisible to the naked eye.
- c. black-and-white photography used to be very popular.
- d. red filters cut out some blue light on black and white film.**
- e. blue filters cut out red light.

Today's postal service is more efficient than ever. Mail that once took months to move by horse and foot now moves around the country in days or hours by truck, train, and plane. If your letter or package is urgent, the U.S. Postal Service offers Priority Mail and Express Mail services. Priority Mail is guaranteed to go anywhere in the United States in two days or less. Express Mail will get your package there overnight.

11. This paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. more people use the post office for urgent deliveries than any other delivery service.

- b. Express Mail is a good way to send urgent mail.
- c. Priority Mail usually takes two days or less.
- d. mail service today is more effective and dependable.**
- e. mail was once delivered by horse and foot.

Reality TV shows will have an adverse effect on traditional dramas and comedies. As reality TV increases in popularity, network executives will begin canceling more traditional programs and replacing them with the latest in reality TV.

12. This paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. reality TV is low quality.
- b. reality TV shows get the highest ratings.
- c. more and more people love to watch and participate in reality TV.
- d. as reality TV gets more popular, more traditional television shows may be threatened.**
- e. network executives make hasty and unwise decisions.

When winding an old clock, it is important not to overwind it. Overwinding occurs when the mainspring is almost fully wound, but the operator continues to turn the winding key. This causes the main spring to coil too tightly, and might even break it.

13. This paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. clocks have changed over the years.
- b. old-fashioned clocks become fragile with age.
- c. old-fashioned clocks were operated by an internal spring.**
- d. overwinding clocks used to be a common mistake.
- e. time flies when you're having fun.

*Some of the questions following the passages ask you to make inferences from the passages. To infer means to arrive at a conclusion by reasoning from evidence. Synonyms for infer are deduce, judge, or conclude. If you are told to infer something from a passage, you are basically being asked what conclusions can be drawn from the content of the story. **Tip: If you replace the word infer with conclude in a question, it may make more sense to you.***

In cities throughout the country, there is a new direction in local campaign coverage. Frequently in local elections, journalists are not giving voters enough information to understand the issues and evaluate the candidates. The local news media devotes too much time to scandal and not enough time to policy.

14. This paragraph best supports the statement that the local news media

- a. is not doing an adequate job when it comes to covering local campaigns.**
- b. does not understand either campaign issues or politics.
- c. should learn how to cover politics by watching the national news media.
- d. has no interest in covering stories about local political events.

The use of desktop computer equipment and software to create high quality documents such as newsletters, business cards, letterhead, and brochures is called Desktop Publishing, or DTP. The most important part of any DTP project is planning. Before you begin, you should know your intended audience, the message you want to communicate, and what form your message will take.

15. The paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. Desktop Publishing is one way to become acquainted with a new business audience.
- b. computer software is continually being refined to produce high quality printing.
- c. the first stage of any proposed DTP project should be organization and design.**
- d. the planning stage of any DTP project should include talking with the intended audience.

The entire low-carbohydrate versus low-fat diet argument is so prevalent that one would think that these are the only two options available for losing weight and staying healthy. Some experts even feel that the low-carb/low-fat debate distracts us from an even more important issue—our culture’s reliance on processed and manufactured foods.

16. The paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. experts state that not all fats are equal, so we need not reduce our intake of all fats; just those that contain partially hydrogenated oils.
- b. important health concerns get overlooked when we focus exclusively on the low-fat versus low-carb question.**
- c. low-carbohydrate diets lead to significant and sustained weight loss.
- d. processed foods can lead to many adverse health problems including heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and obesity.

Every year, Americans use over one billion sharp objects to administer healthcare in their homes. These sharp objects include lancets, needles, and syringes. If not disposed of in puncture-resistant containers, they can injure sanitation workers. Sharp objects should be disposed of in hard plastic or metal containers with secure lids. The containers should be clearly marked and be puncture resistant.

17. The paragraph best supports the idea that sanitation workers can be injured if they

- a. do not place sharp objects in puncture-resistant containers.
- b. come in contact with sharp objects that have not been placed in secure containers.**
- c. are careless with sharp objects such as lancets, needles, and syringes in their homes.
- d. do not mark the containers they pick up with a warning that those containers contain sharp objects.

Litigation is not always the only or best way to resolve conflicts. Mediation offers an alternative approach and it is one that can be quite efficient and successful. Mediation can be faster, less expensive, and can lead to creative solutions not always possible in a court of law. Additionally, mediation focuses on mutually acceptable solutions, rather than on winning or losing.

18. This paragraph best supports the idea that

- a. there is too much reliance on litigation in our society.
- b. litigation is expensive, slow, and limited by its reliance on following the letter of the law.
- c. mediation is the best way to resolve a crisis.
- d. mediation can be an effective way to resolve conflicts.**

One of the missions of the Peace Corps is to help the people of interested countries meet their need for trained men and women. People who work for the Peace Corps do so because they want to, but to keep the agency dynamic with fresh ideas, no staff member can work for the agency for more than five years.

19. The paragraph best supports the statement that Peace Corps employees

- a. are highly intelligent people.
- b. must train for about five years.
- c. are hired for a limited term of employment.**
- d. have both academic and work experience.

More and more office workers telecommute from offices in their own homes. The upside of telecommuting is both greater productivity and greater flexibility. Telecommuters produce, on average, 20% more than if they were to work in an office, and their flexible schedule allows them to balance both their family and work responsibilities.

20. The paragraph best supports the statement that telecommuters

- a. get more work done in a given time period than workers who travel to the office.**
- b. produce a better quality work product than workers who travel to the office.
- c. are more flexible in their ideas than workers who travel to the office.

d. would do 20% more work if they were to work in an office.

Sushi, the thousand-year-old Japanese delicacy, started small in the United States, in a handful of restaurants in big cities. Today, sushi consumption in America is 50% greater than it was ten years ago and not just in restaurants. Sushi is also sold at concession stands in sports stadiums, university dining halls, and in supermarkets throughout the country.

21. This paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. sushi is now a fast food as popular as hot dogs, burgers, and fries.
- b. more sushi is sold in restaurants than in supermarkets.
- c. Americans are more adventurous eaters than they were in the past.
- d. sushi wasn't always widely available in the United States.**

Today's shopping mall has as its antecedents historical marketplaces, such as Greek agoras, European piazzas, and Asian bazaars. The purpose of these sites, as with the shopping mall, is both economic and social. People not only go to buy and sell wares, but also to be seen, catch up on news, and be part of the human drama.

22. The paragraph best supports the statement that

- a. modern Americans spend an average of 15 hours a month in shopping malls.
- b. shopping malls serve an important purpose in our culture.
- c. shopping malls have a social as well as commercial function.**
- d. there are historical antecedents for almost everything in contemporary society.

Many animals hibernate during parts of the year, entering a state that is similar to a very deep sleep. But hibernation is more than simply a deep sleep. The animal's body temperature drops well below its normal range, the animal does not wake up for a long period of time, and its metabolism slows to the point that the animal does not need to eat or relieve itself during that period. In order to prepare for hibernation, the animal must build up its body weight and increase its body fat. This is important, since the animal will be living off its own body fat during the months of hibernation. Of course, once the period of hibernation is over, the animal "wakes up" to find itself slim and trim once again!

23. How does an animal prepare for hibernation?

- a. It exercises for two months.
- b. It gradually increases its sleeping habits.
- c. It grows extra fur.
- d. It eats more food than usual.**

24. This passage best supports the statement that

- a. All animals hibernate to some degree.
- b. Food is scarce in the winter.
- c. Hibernation is very different from normal sleep.**
- d. Bears hibernate every year.

Patrick Henry is considered one of the great patriots of America's early history. He was a leader in every protest against British tyranny and in every movement for colonial rights, openly speaking against the unfair taxation and overly burdensome regulations imposed upon the American colonists by the British Parliament. In March 1775, Patrick Henry urged his fellow Virginians to arm themselves in self-defense. He spoke boldly in Richmond, Virginia, during the meeting of the state legislature. He closed that famous speech with the immortal words, "I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death."

25. This passage best supports the statement that

- a. Patrick Henry later became a governor of West Virginia.
- b. The Virginia legislature was not listening to Henry's speech.

c. Patrick Henry was willing to lay down his life for his country.

d. People in Colonial times faced harsh living conditions.

26. Which of the following would be the most appropriate title for this passage?

a. The Speeches of Patrick Henry

b. Patrick Henry, American Patriot

c. Early American Patriots

d. History of the Virginia Legislature

Ratatouille is a dish that has grown in popularity over the last few years. It features eggplant, zucchini, tomatoes, peppers, and garlic chopped, mixed, sautéed, and finally, cooked slowly over low heat. As the vegetables cook slowly, they make their own broth, which may be extended with a little tomato paste. The name ratatouille comes from the French word touiller, meaning to stir or mix together.

27. Which of the following is the correct order of steps for making ratatouille?

a. chop vegetables, add tomato paste, stir or mix together

b. mix the vegetables together, sauté them, and add tomato paste

c. cook the vegetables slowly, mix them together, add tomato paste

d. add tomato paste to extend the broth and cook slowly over low heat

28. Ratatouille can best be described as a

a. French pastry.

b. sauce to put over vegetables.

c. pasta dish extended with tomato paste.

d. vegetable stew.

The competitive civil-service system is designed to give candidates fair and equal treatment and to ensure that federal applicants are hired based on objective criteria. Hiring has to be based solely on a candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities (which you'll sometimes see abbreviated as ksa), and not on external factors such as race, religion, sex, and so on. Whereas employers in the private sector can hire employees for subjective reasons, federal employers must be able to justify their decision with objective evidence that the candidate is qualified.

29. The paragraph best supports the statement that

a. hiring in the private sector is inherently unfair.

b. ksa is not as important as test scores to federal employers.

c. federal hiring practices are simpler than those employed by the private sector.

d. the civil service strives to hire on the basis of a candidate's abilities.

30. The federal government's practice of hiring on the basis of ksa frequently results in the hiring of employees

a. based on race, religion, sex, and so forth.

b. who are unqualified for the job.

c. who are qualified for the job.

d. on the basis of subjective judgment.