

THE BEST SAT PREP COURSE EVER
SKILLS SECTION: Literature Reading Passage

Directions: Take this passage on your own (pacing is approximately 12 minutes for the passage and all questions). Then, review our videos on Evidence Based Reading Skills and we'll discuss all the strategies to use in order to crack questions like these.

This passage is adapted from *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy, originally published in 1878.

Line She had scarcely entered the ballroom and reached the
throng of ladies, all tulle, ribbons, lace, and flowers,
waiting to be asked to dance—Kitty was never one of that
throng—when she was asked for a waltz, and asked by the
5 best partner, the first star in the hierarchy of the ballroom,
a renowned director of dances, a married man, handsome
and well-built, Yegorushka Korsunsky...

10 “It’s a rest to waltz with you,” he said to her, as they
fell into the first slow steps of the waltz. “It’s
exquisite—such lightness, precision.” He said to her the
same thing he said to almost all his partners whom he
knew well.

15 She smiled at his praise, and continued to look about
the room over his shoulder. She was not like a girl at her
first ball, for whom all faces in the ballroom melt into one
vision of fairyland. And she was not a girl who had gone
the stale round of balls till every face in the ballroom was
familiar and tiresome. But she was in the middle stage
between these two; she was excited, and at the same time
20 she had sufficient self-possession to be able to observe. In
the left corner of the ballroom she saw the cream of
society gathered together. There—incredibly naked—was
the beauty Lidi, Korsunsky’s wife; there was the lady of
the house; there shone the bald head of Krivin, always to
be found where the best people were. In that direction
25 gazed the young men, not venturing to approach. There,
too, she descried Stiva, and there she saw the exquisite
figure and head of Anna in a black velvet gown. And *he*
was there. Kitty had not seen him since the evening she
refused Levin. With her long-sighted eyes, she knew him
30 at once, and was even aware that he was looking at her.

“Another turn, eh? You’re not tired?” said Korsunsky,
a little out of breath.

“No, thank you!”

35 “Where shall I take you?”

“Madame Karenina’s here, I think ... take me to her.”

“Wherever you command.”

40 And Korsunsky began waltzing with measured steps
straight towards the group in the left corner, continually
saying, “Pardon, mesdames, pardon, pardon, mesdames”;
and steering his course through the sea of lace, tulle, and
ribbon, and not disarranging a feather, he turned his partner
sharply round, so that her slim ankles, in light transparent
stockings, were exposed to view, and her train floated out
in fan shape and covered Krivin’s knees. Korsunsky
45 bowed, set straight his open shirt front, and gave her his
arm to conduct her to Anna Arkadyevna. Kitty, flushed,
took her train from Krivin’s knees, and, a little giddy,
looked round, seeking Anna. Anna was not in lilac, as Kitty
had so urgently wished, but in a black, low-cut, velvet
50 gown, showing her full throat and shoulders, that looked as
though carved in old ivory, and her rounded arms, with
tiny, slender wrists. The whole gown was trimmed with
Venetian guipure. On her head, among her black hair—her
own, with no false additions—was a little wreath of
55 pansies, and a bouquet of the same in the black ribbon of
her sash among white lace. Her coiffure was not striking.
All that was noticeable was the little wilful tendrils of her
curly hair that would always break free about her neck and
temples. Round her well-cut, strong neck was a thread of
60 pearls.

Kitty had been seeing Anna every day; she adored her,
and had pictured her invariably in lilac. But now seeing her
in black, she felt that she had not fully seen her charm. She
saw her now as someone quite new and surprising to her.
65 Now she understood that Anna could not have been in lilac,
and that her charm was just that she always stood out
against her attire, that her dress could never be noticeable
on her. And her black dress, with its sumptuous lace, was
not noticeable on her; it was only the frame, and all that
70 was seen was she—simple, natural, elegant, and at the same
time gay and eager.

1. The passage is primarily focused on the
 - A) struggle of a character to understand others
 - B) competitive nature of a social hierarchy
 - C) popularity of a particular character
 - D) impressions others make upon a young woman
2. The first paragraph mainly serves to establish the
 - A) the social acumen of the narrator
 - B) unconventional personality of a character
 - C) basis of a relationship between two characters
 - D) status a character enjoys
3. The passage suggests that Korsunsky views Kitty as
 - A) one of many romantic interests
 - B) more exceptional a dancer than most
 - C) similar to others in his social circle
 - D) particularly observant of her surroundings
4. Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?
 - A) Lines 8-10 (“It’s...precision”)
 - B) Lines 10-11 (“He...well”)
 - C) Lines 17-19 (“But she...observe”)
 - D) Lines 27-30 (“And *he*...at her)
5. In line 31, “turn” most nearly means
 - A) change in rotation
 - B) short dance
 - C) dramatic twirl
 - D) measured walk
6. The passage indicates that Kitty finds Anna’s attire to be
 - A) overly solemn
 - B) relatively ordinary
 - C) wonderfully dramatic
 - D) appropriately natural

7. Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?
- A) Lines 51-52 (“The whole... guipure”)
 - B) Lines 55-56 (“Herstriking”)
 - C) Lines 61-63 (“But... her”)
 - D) Lines 67-69 (“And...she”)
8. In the context of the passage, the description of how Korusky waltzes in lines 37-46 mainly serves to
- A) Illustrate his sense of self possession
 - B) Convey the subtle militancy of his nature
 - C) Demonstrate his dramatic style
 - D) Show that he is not influenced by his surroundings
9. The passage suggests that Kitty is best described as
- A) outwardly considerate but privately petty
 - B) financially successful but occasionally self conscious
 - C) generally optimistic but sensibly receptive
 - D) socially composed but physically feeble
10. The last paragraph primarily serves to
- A) suggest contradictions in Kitty’s attitude
 - B) introduce an important character
 - C) question a fashion choice
 - D) reveal a character’s growing admiration

Answer Key:

1. D
2. D
3. C
4. B
5. B
6. B
7. D
8. A
9. C
10. D