

Reading Explanations: Sections 1 and 3

Section 1: Critical Reading

Sentence Completions

- 1) D) The blank requires a word that describes the profession of a member of the House of Representatives. Because representatives make and pass laws (legislation) for a living, D is the correct answer.
- 2) C) The blank requires a word that fits the description after the colon, so you need a word that means conventional, or lacking in creativity.
- 3) E) Because Nathan decided to shop elsewhere, he must have become angry or offended, so E is the only answer choice that works for the second blank. Also, the first blank must mean dismissed or downplayed, so only B or E could work for the first blank. E is therefore the correct answer, since it is the only option that works for both blanks.
- 4) C) The part of the sentence after the comma reveals that the second blank must feature a word that is the opposite of “center,” so C or E could work for the second blank. Because her art is now garnering the attention of critics, the first blank must feature a word that means increase, so A, C, or D could work for the first blank. C is therefore the correct answer, since it is the only option that works for both blanks.
- 5) B) Here you need a synonym of unselfishness, so B is the only option that works.
- 6) C) The word “although” tells you that the portion of the sentence after the comma will be questioning the reports described in the first part of the sentence. Therefore, the first blank requires a word that means questionable or unsubstantiated, so C and possibly A or E could work for the first blank. The second blank requires a word that describes the property of snowflakes that makes reports of extremely large snowflakes tough to substantiate. Clearly, this property is the fact that snowflakes melt or mix with other snowflakes on the ground and therefore cease to exist as individual flakes. Therefore, the second blank requires a word that means fleeting or impermanent, so C is the only option that works for the second blank.
- 7) D) Here you need a word that fits the description after the colon, so you need an adjective that describes a work that shows great foresight. Therefore, D is the only option that works.
- 8) D) The structure of the sentence indicates that the first blank must be the opposite of the “rank-and-file,” or ordinary, members. Therefore, the first blank must mean leaders, so D is the only option that works for the first blank. The contrast made in the sentence also makes it apparent that the second blank must feature a near synonym of the word “rights” from the first part of the sentence. In the context of the sentence, A or D could fit this meaning. D is therefore the correct answer, since it is the only option that works for both blanks.

Passage Based Reading

9) A) In this passage, the author describes his view that minimalism is undesirable in art and that “completeness” (line 4) is preferable. This viewpoint could be summarized as the author’s artistic “philosophy,” so A is the best answer. B could be tempting because the author relates this philosophy to some ideas he found in Africa, but he does not describe Africa as the ultimate origin of this philosophy; instead, he makes it clear that he preferred completeness to minimalism well before his Africa trip. On questions like this that use vague terms to refer to specific things, it is important to know exactly what specific things the vague terms refer to before choosing your answer.

10) D) In this analogy, the author compares the repetition in his art to the repetition of a blues singer, so D is the correct answer. E could be tempting, since the author does seem to admire blues singers for the fact that they, like him, value repetition; however, answer choice D more accurately describes the main purpose of the comparison as it relates the passage as a whole.

11) D) Lines 4-9 indicate that Benny was unhappy with the rain because it was interfering with his ability to finish filming the film he was working on.

12) B) Undeniable textual evidence supports the fact that Benny is working on a film (line 6) and that the studio is putting pressure on him to finish making it quickly (lines 6-9), so B is the correct answer. Answer choice A could be quite tempting, but the passage does not go in depth into Benny’s overall psychology; it simply notes his frustration in dealing with the weather that is interfering with his ability to satisfactorily complete his film.

13) C) On questions like this that use vague terms to refer to specific things, it is important to know exactly what specific things the vague terms refer to before choosing your answer. C is the correct answer because Passage 1 outlines the “idea” that hydrogen fuel cell technology can eliminate our dependence on foreign oil, while Passage 2 takes a more even-handed approach, describing both the pros and cons of hydrogen fuel cells as an energy solution for automobiles. Answer choice A is incorrect because Passage 2 is uncertain about whether fuel cells are a practical solution. B is incorrect because Passage 2 does not primarily describe the problem of our dependence on foreign oil, which is the problem that Passage 1 outlines a solution to. D is incorrect because Passage 1 does not describe the difficulties of using fuel cells as an energy solution. E is incorrect because neither passage focuses on “cost savings.”

14) B) If this situation is a “menace” and poses a danger to our “national security,” answer choice B offers the best description.

15) B) These lines indicate that both congress and scientists did what was necessary to make the program successful, so B is the correct answer. A is incorrect because nothing in lines 12-15 indicates caution. C is incorrect because nothing in these lines indicates fear. D is incorrect because neither word fits with the description in these lines. E is incorrect because there is no uncertainty in these lines.

16) D) Passage 1 frames its argument for the widespread use of fuel cells primarily in terms of the need to achieve independence from foreign oil, as is shown in lines 16-32. Therefore, the author of Passage 1 would argue that even if fuel cells are not more environmentally friendly than existing technologies, as suggested by Passage 2 in lines 92-95, fuel cells would still have the enormous benefit of eliminating our dependence on foreign oil.

17) A) The use of the word “only” in both sentences in lines 33-38 shows that the author is resolute in his stance that hydrogen fuel cell technology is the solution to our dependence on foreign oil. Therefore, A is the best answer, since the author is unwavering in his stance.

18) B) On vocabulary in context questions, examine the context of the word as it is used in the passage and come up with your own idea of what it means before looking at any of the answer choices. It is important to do so even if you think you know what the word means, because these questions often feature uncommon secondary definitions of words. Having your own idea of what the word means before looking at the answer choices will help prevent you from being tempted by words that sound good but are ultimately incorrect. Here, “conducted” means poised or set, so B is the correct answer.

19) C) C is the correct answer because the fact that fuel cell technology allows a car to travel much further using a given amount of energy, compared with the internal combustion engine, is a reason why fuel cells could make sense in automobiles. A is incorrect because these lines do not get into the science of how fuel cells work. B is incorrect because although battery powered cars are mentioned as a comparison to fuel cell cars, these lines primarily compare fuel cell cars with gasoline powered cars. D is incorrect because these lines state that fuel cell cars can travel further, not faster, than conventional cars. E is incorrect because these challenges are not mentioned in these lines.

20) D) In these lines, the passage describes three necessary characteristics of automobiles that could present challenges in the incorporation of fuel cell technology. Up until this sentence, the passage deals primarily with the promise of fuel cell technology in automobiles. Beginning with this sentence, the passage moves to a discussion of the challenges and problems with fuel cell technology, so D is the correct answer.

21) A) Passage 1 is extremely enthusiastic about the potential of fuel cell technology, so C and E can be immediately eliminated. The correct answer is A because much of Passage 1’s argument in favor of fuel cells is based on their efficiency, as is shown in lines 38-43. Therefore, Passage 1 would argue that their efficiency makes up for the energy used to procure the hydrogen. D is a tempting answer, but it is incorrect because Passage 1 argues that hydrogen is “plentiful” (line 43), indicating that its production is not a serious concern.

22) C) These lines indicate that “reforming” is not particularly beneficial because it negates the environmental benefits of fuel cell technology, so C is the correct answer.

23) D) On vocabulary in context questions, examine the context of the word as it is used in the passage and come up with your own idea of what it means before looking at any of the answer choices. It is important to do so even if you think you know what the word means, because these questions often feature uncommon secondary definitions of words. Having your own idea of what the word means before looking at the answer choices will help prevent you from being tempted by words that sound good but are ultimately incorrect. Here, “yield” means create or offer, so D is the correct answer.

24) C) Passage 2 describes both the pros and cons of fuel cell technology in automobiles, while Passage 1 describes fuel cell technology as the ideal solution to our dependence on foreign oil, so C is the correct answer.

Section 3: Critical Reading

Sentence Completions

25) C) If the Greeks thought music could cure certain ailments, the blank must feature a word that means medicinal or therapeutic, so C is the only answer choice that works.

26) C) Here you need a word that describes a speaker who is “eloquent” or “clear,” so C is the only answer choice that works.

27) C) In this question, your only clue is the relationship of the blanks to each other; they must be synonyms. If the buildings helped the seeds spread, the first blank would mean accelerate or help and the second blank would mean accelerating or enhancing. However, none of the answer choices offers this option. If, on the other hand, the buildings interfered with the spread of seeds, the first blank would mean interfere with or slow down, and the second blank would mean disrupting or interfering with. Answer choice C fits with this meaning, so it is the correct answer.

28) E) The portion of the sentence after the comma describes ways in which Collins was different from other blues musicians, so the second blank must mean unique or innovative. Therefore, E is the only option that really works for the second blank. (B is close to working, but is far too strong to fit with the overall tone of the sentence.) The word “although” reveals that the first part of the sentence is a contrast to the fact that Collins was an innovator, so the first blank must feature a word that means copied or studied, so D or E could work for the first blank. E is the correct answer because it is the only option that works for both blanks.

29) E) The first blank requires a word that means a “shy and reserved” nature, so A, E, and possibly C could work for the first blank. The second blank requires a word that means “detached,” so E and possibly B could work. E is the correct answer because it is the only option that works for both blanks.

Passage Based Reading

30) A) Passage 1 argues that humans have very little free will and little power to make actual decisions, as is shown by the experiments referenced in the quote from line 10. Passage 2 states that modern science agrees that humans have very little free will, but that writers and artists dispute this notion. Because these writers dispute the notion that humans have very little free will, Passage 1 would argue that these writers have fooled themselves into thinking they have free will, so the correct answer is A.

31) C) The people who ascribe to the neuroscience described in Passage 2 believe that humans have very little free will and that the New Year’s resolutions described in Passage 1 are therefore worthless and ineffective, since humans cannot actually make real decisions. Since such resolutions are ineffective in the eyes of these people, the correct answer is C.

32) B) Both of these quotes represent metaphors for living a predetermined life that is devoid of significant free will.

33) D) Passage 1 makes the “fundamental claim” that humans have very little free will and little power to make actual decisions. Passage 2 restates this claim and then proceeds to point out that writers and artists dispute this claim.

34) C) In this passage, the author marvels at the power and the intricacies of language, so C is the best answer. A is incorrect because, although the author describes some of the building blocks of Modern English in lines 10-11, this is hardly the focus of the passage. B is incorrect because the last paragraph (lines 38-48) describes the narrator’s daughter, Lisa, having difficulty learning language as a child. D and E are incorrect because, although they can be found in the third paragraph, they hardly represent the focus of the passage.

35) B) In this sentence, the narrator expresses “relief” at finally remembering the word she had forgotten: “curtain.” C or D could be tempting because both answers accurately describe the narrator’s feelings while unable to remember the word; however, the sentence in question shows her reaction to finally remembering the word.

36) B) This sentence describes the numerous antiquated languages that have contributed to Modern English, so B is the correct answer.

37) D) The simile of marbles in lines 22-23 reveals that the narrator liked these words because they were intrinsically pleasurable to the senses when spoken.

38) E) Taken in the context of lines 30-38, in which the narrator ponders the “immeasurable” number of words in existence, this simile is used to describe the vast number of words that exist.

39) B) Lisa’s question showed that she recognized her mother’s point that the animal in question was a “horse” and not a “gee-gee,” realizing that she must give up the nonsensical baby words she had learned and begin to use real language.

40) B) These lines described how the buildings in Machu Picchu were built using the most advanced techniques the Incas had, which shows that it was a place that was indeed important to the Incas.

41) C) Lines 9-16 show that this “romantic rubbish” refers to incorrect theories about the purpose of Machu Picchu, which are largely a product of the magnificence of the ruins. The correct answer is C, since “fanciful” is a close synonym of “romantic” in this context.

42) C) The question in these lines is why the Incas put the terraces in the mountain. Lines 53-61 outline the author’s theory that the terraces were built for the purpose of conducting agricultural experiments, so C is the correct answer.

43) B) In these lines, the author uses the analogy of carrying dirt from the bottom of the Grand Canyon up to its rim in order to grow crops on the rim to show how labor intensive it was for the Incas to fill the terraces with soil from the river. This analogy can best be described as a “comparison,” so B is the correct answer.

44) A) On questions like this that use vague terms to refer to specific things, it is important to know exactly what specific things the vague terms refer to before choosing your answer. In this case, line 39 marks a transition from the a discussion of the “enigma,” or mystery, of why the Incas built the terraces

and what purpose of Machu Picchu served, to the author's "hypothesis" that it was built for agricultural research.

45) E) On vocabulary in context questions, examine the context of the word as it is used in the passage and come up with your own idea of what it means before looking at any of the answer choices. It is important to do so even if you think you know what the word means, because these questions often feature uncommon secondary definitions of words. Having your own idea of what the word means before looking at the answer choices will help prevent you from being tempted by words that sound good but are ultimately incorrect. Here, "watered" is used in the context of making the valley moist and green, so E is the correct answer.

46) D) Lines 50-56 shows that each layer, or terrace, contained different plants, so D is the correct answer.

47) D) On vocabulary in context questions, examine the context of the word as it is used in the passage and come up with your own idea of what it means before looking at any of the answer choices. It is important to do so even if you think you know what the word means, because these questions often feature uncommon secondary definitions of words. Having your own idea of what the word means before looking at the answer choices will help prevent you from being tempted by words that sound good but are ultimately incorrect. Here, "patches" means spots or areas, so D is the correct answer.

48) C) In this passage, the author first describes the mystery of Machu Picchu and its terraces and then offers his own theory to explain its purpose, so C is the best answer. E could be tempting, but the purpose of the passage is not simply descriptive; it is primarily intended to offer a theory regarding a long-standing mystery.