



GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATIONS®

**Verbal Reasoning Practice Questions  
with Explanations**

Large Print (18 point) Edition



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## **Verbal Reasoning Practice Questions with Explanations**

This document accompanies the separate document Verbal Reasoning Practice Questions with Answers. That document presents the questions, followed by answer keys for quick reference. In this document, each question is followed immediately by its explanation.

## Easy Discrete Questions

Directions for questions 1 through 3:

**Each of the following questions includes a short text with a blank, indicating that something has been omitted. Select the entry that best completes the text.**

1. Dominant interests often benefit most from \_\_\_\_\_ of governmental interference in business, since they are able to take care of themselves if left alone.

- (A) intensification
- (B) authorization
- (C) centralization
- (D) improvisation
- (E) elimination

### **Explanation**

The sentence explains why dominant interests often benefit from a certain condition. Since the explanation is that they are able to take care of themselves if left alone, it follows that the condition is one in which interference is absent. Thus the best answer is “elimination.” None of the other answer choices suggests an absence of interference—indeed “intensification,” “authorization,” and “centralization” suggest quite the opposite.

Thus the correct answer is **elimination** (choice E).

2. Kagan maintains that an infant's reactions to its first stressful experiences are part of a natural process of development, not harbingers of childhood unhappiness or \_\_\_\_\_ signs of adolescent anxiety.

- (A) prophetic
- (B) normal
- (C) monotonous
- (D) virtual
- (E) typical

### **Explanation**

The sentence contrasts the infant's reactions, part of a normal developmental process, with future unhappiness and anxiety. The missing word describes signs of adolescent anxiety as they relate to the infant. Choice A is correct: "prophetic" signs, like harbingers, foretell future occurrences, and for the infant, adolescent anxiety is a future occurrence. Since an infant cannot literally display signs of adolescent anxiety, "normal," "monotonous," and "typical" are all incorrect. And "virtual" is incorrect, because virtual signs are not real signs, and what Kagan is denying is that the infant's reactions are not real signs of later unhappiness.

Thus the correct answer is **prophetic** (choice A).

3. An investigation that is \_\_\_\_\_ can occasionally yield new facts, even notable ones, but typically the appearance of such facts is the result of a search in a definite direction.

- (A) timely
- (B) unguided
- (C) consistent
- (D) uncomplicated
- (E) subjective

### **Explanation**

As the words “can occasionally” and “but typically” indicate, the missing word describes an investigation that contrasts with a “search in a definite direction.” Among the answer choices, only “unguided” provides a contrasting description; none of the other choices suggests an appropriate contrast.

Thus the correct answer is **unguided** (choice B).

Directions for questions 4 and 5:

**Each of the following questions includes a short text with two or three blanks, each blank indicating that something has been omitted. Select one entry for each blank from the corresponding column of choices. Fill all blanks in the way that best completes the text.**

4. It is (i)\_\_\_\_\_ that so many portrait paintings hang in art museums, since the subject matter seems to dictate a status closer to pictures in the family photograph album than to high art. But perhaps it is the artistic skill with which the portraits are painted that (ii)\_\_\_\_\_ their presence in art museums.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
<input type="radio"/> A surprising	<input type="radio"/> D challenges
<input type="radio"/> B understandable	<input type="radio"/> E justifies
<input type="radio"/> C irrelevant	<input type="radio"/> F changes

## **Explanation**

In the part following “since,” the first sentence of the paragraph suggests that the subject matter of portraits might not seem to fit with the idea of “high art.” So the suggestion is that the presence of portrait paintings in art museums is in that sense odd or unfitting. Of the choices available for blank (i), “surprising” is the one that expresses this sense. The second sentence, in contrast to the first, offers a point in favor of portraits—“artistic skill.” So the second sentence is offering a reason why portraits should be in art museums. Of the choices for blank (ii), “justifies” is the one that completes that thought.

Thus the correct answer is **surprising** (choice A) and **justifies** (choice E).

5. In stark contrast to his later (i) \_\_\_\_\_, Simpson was largely (ii) \_\_\_\_\_ politics during his college years, despite the fact that the campus he attended was rife with political activity.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
<input type="radio"/> A activism	<input type="radio"/> D devoted to
<input type="radio"/> B apathy	<input type="radio"/> E indifferent to
<input type="radio"/> C affability	<input type="radio"/> F shaped by

### **Explanation**

The sentence tells us that there is a contrast between the way Simpson related to politics in his college years and how he related to politics later in life. So the choices that complete the blanks must contrast with each other. The part of the sentence beginning with “despite” indicates that Simpson’s relation to politics in his college years did not involve engagement in the political activity that was “rife.” Of the choices for blank (ii), only “indifferent to” conveys that nonengagement. And of the choices for blank (i), only “activism” supplies the required contrast with “indifferent to.”

Thus the correct answer is **activism** (choice A) and **indifferent to** (choice E).



Directions for questions 6 through 8:

**Each of the following questions includes a sentence with a blank indicating that something has been omitted. Following the sentence will be a list of six words or phrases, each of which could be used to complete the sentence. Select the two answer choices that, when substituted for the blank, fit the context and produce the two sentences most nearly alike in meaning.**

6. As my eyesight began to \_\_\_\_\_, I spent a lot of time writing about it—both poems and “eye journals”—describing what I saw as I looked out through damaged eyes.

A deteriorate

B sharpen

C improve

D decline

E recover

F adjust

**Explanation**

The author has “damaged” eyes, and any word that fills the blank must reflect that fact. The words that best do so are “deteriorate” and “decline” (choices A and D), which generate sentences alike in meaning. “Sharpen” and “improve” produce sentences alike in meaning, but neither word makes sense when inserted into the blank. Though “adjust” makes some sense when inserted into the blank, no other option produces a sentence similar in meaning.

Thus the correct answer is **deteriorate** (choice A) and **decline** (choice D).

7. The judge's standing in the legal community, though shaken by phony allegations of wrongdoing, emerged, at long last, \_\_\_\_\_.

- A unqualified
- B undiminished
- C undecided
- D undamaged
- E unresolved
- F unprincipled

### **Explanation**

The use of the word “though” establishes a contrast between the blank, which requires a description of the judge’s standing, and “phony allegations of wrongdoing.” Thus the words that best complete the blank must indicate that the judge’s reputation was not adversely affected by these allegations. The only words that do so are “undiminished” and “undamaged” (choices B and D), which produce sentences alike in meaning. “Undecided” and “unresolved” also produce sentences alike in meaning, but neither word makes sense when inserted into the blank.

Thus the correct answer is **undiminished** (choice B) and **undamaged** (choice D).

8. Modern agricultural practices have been extremely successful in increasing the productivity of major food crops, yet despite heavy use of pesticides, \_\_\_\_\_ losses to diseases and insect pests are sustained each year.

A incongruous

B reasonable

C significant

D considerable

E equitable

F fortuitous

### **Explanation**

The word “despite” suggests the level of losses is somehow surprising given the heavy use of pesticides. The only words that describe an appropriate level of losses are “significant” and “considerable” (choices C and D), which produce sentences alike in meaning. “Reasonable” and “equitable” also produce sentences alike in meaning, but neither word generates the contrast necessary for the sentence to make sense.

Thus the correct answer is **significant** (choice C) and **considerable** (choice D).

## Verbal Practice Questions with Explanations

### Easy Reading Comprehension Sets

For questions 1 through 9, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.

**Question 1 is based on the following reading passage:**

A person who agrees to serve as mediator between two warring factions at the request of both abandons by so agreeing the right to take sides later. To take sides at a later point would be to suggest that the earlier presumptive impartiality was a sham.

1. The passage above emphasizes which of the following points about mediators?
  - (A) They should try to form no opinions of their own about any issue that is related to the dispute.
  - (B) They should not agree to serve unless they are committed to maintaining a stance of impartiality.
  - (C) They should not agree to serve unless they are equally acceptable to all parties to a dispute.
  - (D) They should feel free to take sides in the dispute right from the start, provided that they make their biases publicly known.
  - (E) They should reserve the right to abandon their impartiality so as not to be open to the charge of having been deceitful.

## **Explanation**

By pointing out the consequences of abandoning impartiality, the paragraph points out the importance for mediators of maintaining impartiality at all times. This is the point made in choice B, which is therefore the correct answer. Choice A is incorrect, because it goes further than anything asserted in the passage. The passage does not rule out the possibility that one can have an opinion about issues related to a dispute without taking sides in the actual dispute. Choice C is incorrect because it is a presupposition on which the passage is based rather than the point of the passage; that is, the fact that the mediator is acceptable to both parties is a given, since they both ask the mediator to serve. Choices D and E are both inconsistent with the main point of the passage, the importance of impartiality at all times, so both are incorrect.

Questions 2 through 5 are based on the following reading passage.

Was Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847) a great composer? On its face, the question seems absurd. One of the most gifted prodigies in the history of music, he produced his first masterpiece at sixteen.

*Line* From then on, he was recognized as an artist of preternatural  
5 abilities, not only as a composer but also as a pianist and conductor. But Mendelssohn’s enduring popularity has often been at odds—sometimes quite sharply—with his critical standing. Despite  
10 general acknowledgement of his genius, there has been a noticeable reluctance to rank him with, say, Schumann or Brahms. As Haggin put it, Mendelssohn, as a composer, was a “minor master . . . working on a small scale of emotion and texture.”

### **Description**

The passage starts by outlining the popular view that Mendelssohn was a great composer and then points out that critics do not generally accord him that status.

2. The seven sentences in the passage are repeated below, in their original order, with each one assigned a letter. Select and indicate a sentence in the passage whose function is to indicate the range of Mendelssohn's musical talents.

- Ⓐ Was Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847) a great composer?
- Ⓑ On its face, the question seems absurd.
- Ⓒ One of the most gifted prodigies in the history of music, he produced his first masterpiece at sixteen.
- Ⓓ From then on, he was recognized as an artist of preternatural abilities, not only as a composer but also as a pianist and conductor.
- Ⓔ But Mendelssohn's enduring popularity has often been at odds—sometimes quite sharply—with his critical standing.
- Ⓕ Despite general acknowledgement of his genius, there has been a noticeable reluctance to rank him with, say, Schumann or Brahms.
- Ⓖ As Haggin put it, Mendelssohn, as a composer, was a “minor master . . . working on a small scale of emotion and texture.”

## **Explanation**

This question asks which sentence in the passage serves to indicate the range of Mendelssohn's musical talents. The correct answer is choice D, the fourth sentence ("From then on, he was recognized as an artist of preternatural abilities, not only as a composer but also as a pianist and conductor."), the only sentence in the passage that mentions Mendelssohn's achievements across three different realms: composing, piano performance, and conducting. All the other sentences can be eliminated because, while they consider the question of Mendelssohn's claim to greatness, they do not specifically discuss the broad range of his musical talents.



3. The passage suggests that anyone attempting to evaluate Mendelssohn's career must confront which of the following dichotomies?
- Ⓐ The tension between Mendelssohn's career as a composer and his career as a pianist and conductor
  - Ⓑ The contrast between Mendelssohn's popularity and that of Schumann and Brahms
  - Ⓒ The discrepancy between Mendelssohn's popularity and his standing among critics
  - Ⓓ The inconsistency between Mendelssohn's reputation during his lifetime and his reputation since his death
  - Ⓔ The gap between Mendelssohn's prodigious musical beginnings and his decline in later years

**Explanation**

The passage clearly presents the discrepancy between Mendelssohn's popularity and his critical standing as an interpretive problem. Therefore, choice C is correct. The other answer choices are incorrect because the passage never indicates that there was any conflict among the different aspects of Mendelssohn's professional life; never discusses Schumann's and Brahms's popularity; does not discuss any differences between Mendelssohn's reputation during his lifetime and after his death; and makes no mention of a decline in Mendelssohn's later life.

4. It can be inferred that the “reluctance” mentioned in the passage is being ascribed to
- (A) most composers since Mendelssohn
  - (B) Schumann and Brahms
  - (C) the music-listening public
  - (D) music critics generally
  - (E) Haggin exclusively

**Explanation**

Choice D is correct. The “reluctance” is mentioned in the context of a discussion about Mendelssohn’s critical standing and thus is being ascribed to music critics generally. Choices A and B can be eliminated because the passage does not discuss any composers’ views of Mendelssohn. Choice C is incorrect because the word “reluctance” is mentioned only after the passage turns from discussing the popular view of Mendelssohn to the critical view. Choice E is incorrect because the words “As Haggin put it” indicate that Haggin is only one example of critics who have this reluctance.

5. The author mentions Schumann and Brahms primarily in order to
- (A) provide examples of composers who are often compared with Mendelssohn
  - (B) identify certain composers who are more popular than Mendelssohn
  - (C) identify composers whom Mendelssohn influenced
  - (D) establish the milieu in which Mendelssohn worked
  - (E) establish a standard of comparison for Mendelssohn as a composer

### **Explanation**

Schumann and Brahms are mentioned as a way of explaining how critics rank Mendelssohn—that is, as less accomplished than some other composers who are widely acknowledged as major. Therefore, choice E is correct. Choice A might look like a correct answer at first glance. However, careful consideration reveals that the point the author is making when Schumann and Brahms are mentioned is not the frequency of that comparison but the results of it. Therefore, choice A can be eliminated. Choices B, C, and D are incorrect because the passage does not discuss Schumann’s and Brahms’s popularity, Mendelssohn’s influence on other composers, or the milieu in which Mendelssohn worked.

Questions 6 and 7 are based on the following reading passage.

While most scholarship on women's employment in the United States recognizes that the Second World War (1939–1945) dramatically changed the role of women in the workforce, these  
*Line* studies also acknowledge that few women remained in  
5 manufacturing jobs once men returned from the war. But in agriculture, unlike other industries where women were viewed as temporary workers, women's employment did not end with the war. Instead, the expansion of agriculture and a steady decrease in the number of male farmworkers combined to cause the industry  
10 to hire more women in the postwar years. Consequently, the 1950s saw a growing number of women engaged in farm labor, even though rhetoric in the popular media called for the return of women to domestic life.

### **Description**

The first sentence states that the Second World War led to significant changes in women's employment, but that these changes were largely reversed in manufacturing after the war. The second sentence discusses the fact that unlike in other industries, employment of women in agriculture was more permanent; the third provides more detail regarding the trend in agriculture and the reasons for it; and the fourth summarizes the consequences of the trend.

6. It can be inferred from the passage that the manufacturing and agricultural sectors in the United States following the Second World War differed in which of the following respects?
- (A) The rate of expansion in each sector
  - (B) The percentage of employees in each sector who were men
  - (C) The trend in the wages of men employed in each sector
  - (D) The attitude of the popular media toward the employment of women in each sector
  - (E) The extent to which women in each sector were satisfied with their jobs

### **Explanation**

The correct choice for this question is choice B. We are told that few women remained in the manufacturing sector once men returned from the war, while the number of women who worked in agriculture increased after the war as the number of men in agriculture decreased. It is therefore inferable that the percentage of employees working in manufacturing who were men increased while the percentage of employees working in agriculture who were men decreased. Choices A, C, and E are incorrect because the passage provides no information about rates of expansion, wage trends, or women's job satisfaction. Choice D is incorrect because the only mention of the popular media occurs in the final sentence, and no distinction is made between the sectors there.

7. Which of the following statements about women's employment in the United States during and after the Second World War is most clearly supported by the passage?
- (A) Most women who joined the workforce during the Second World War wanted to return to domestic life when the war ended.
  - (B) The great majority of women who joined the workforce during the Second World War were employed in manufacturing jobs.
  - (C) The end of the Second World War was followed by a large-scale transfer of women workers from manufacturing to agriculture.
  - (D) The increase in women's employment that accompanied the Second World War was longer lasting in agriculture than it was in manufacturing.
  - (E) The popular media were more forceful in calling for women to join the workforce during the Second World War than in calling for women to return to domestic life after the war.

## **Explanation**

The correct choice for this question is choice D. We are told in the passage that women's employment in manufacturing fell quickly after men returned from the war. However, not only did women's employment in agriculture not decline after the end of the war, it actually increased. The other choices are incorrect because the passage provides no information about what women who joined the workforce wanted to do; about the distribution of women across industries; about what happened to women who left manufacturing; nor about media appeals for women to join the wartime workforce.

Questions 8 and 9 are based on the following reading passage.  
(A sentence is shown underlined and in boldface in the second paragraph for reference in answering question 9).

Since the Hawaiian Islands have never been connected to other land masses, the great variety of plants in Hawaii must be a result of the long-distance dispersal of seeds, a process that requires both  
*Line* a method of transport and an equivalence between the ecology of  
5 the source area and that of the recipient area.

There is some dispute about the method of transport involved. Some biologists argue that ocean and air currents are responsible for the transport of plant seeds to Hawaii. **Yet the results of flotation experiments and the low temperatures of air currents**  
*10* **cast doubt on these hypotheses.** More probable is bird transport, either externally, by accidental attachment of the seeds to feathers, or internally, by the swallowing of fruit and subsequent excretion of the seeds. While it is likely that fewer varieties of plant seeds have reached Hawaii externally than internally, more varieties are known  
*15* to be adapted to external than to internal transport.

### **Description**

The passage raises the question of how seeds reached the Hawaiian Islands. It introduces one possible method—ocean and air currents—but refers to evidence that casts doubt on that method. It then introduces a second method—bird transport—and discusses two ways in which that might occur.



8. The author of the passage is primarily concerned with
- (A) discussing different approaches biologists have taken to testing theories about the distribution of plants in Hawaii
  - (B) discussing different theories about the transport of plant seeds to Hawaii
  - (C) discussing the extent to which air currents are responsible for the dispersal of plant seeds to Hawaii
  - (D) resolving a dispute about the adaptability of plant seeds to bird transport
  - (E) resolving a dispute about the ability of birds to carry plant seeds long distances

### **Explanation**

Given the description of the passage above, it is clear that choice B is correct: the passage focuses on “different theories about the transport of plant seeds to Hawaii.” Choice A can be eliminated: while the passage does refer to flotation experiments, it does not elaborate on experimental methods. Choice C identifies an idea that is part of the passage’s main concern, but since this is only one of the competing theories discussed in the passage, not the primary focus, choice C is incorrect. Choices D and E are incorrect because the passage does not resolve any disputes.

9. The author mentions the results of flotation experiments on plant seeds in the underlined and boldfaced sentence (lines 8–10) most probably in order to
- (A) support the claim that the distribution of plants in Hawaii is the result of the long-distance dispersal of seeds
  - (B) lend credibility to the thesis that air currents provide a method of transport for plant seeds to Hawaii
  - (C) suggest that the long-distance dispersal of seeds is a process that requires long periods of time
  - (D) challenge the claim that ocean currents are responsible for the transport of plant seeds to Hawaii
  - (E) refute the claim that Hawaiian flora evolved independently from flora in other parts of the world

### **Explanation**

This question asks why the author mentions flotation experiments. Flotation experiments are mentioned in the passage in order to show that some evidence casts doubt on the claim that ocean currents were the means by which seeds were transported to Hawaii. Thus, choice D is correct. Choice A is incorrect since the claim that plant distribution in Hawaii is the result of long-distance dispersal of seeds is a given in the passage, not an idea that the author feels a need to substantiate. Choice B is eliminable since the flotation experiments are introduced at a point where the author is challenging, rather than lending credibility to, the air current hypothesis and because flotation experiments would more likely reflect on ocean currents than air currents. Choice C is eliminable since the passage does not address the length of time required for long-distance seed dispersal. Finally, choice E is eliminable since it too describes an idea that is not discussed in the passage.

## Verbal Practice Questions with Explanations

### Medium-difficulty Discrete Questions

**Question 1 includes a short text with a blank, indicating that something has been omitted. Select the entry that best completes the text.**

1. It comes as no surprise that societies have codes of behavior; the character of the codes, on the other hand, can often be \_\_\_\_\_.
- (A) predictable
  - (B) unexpected
  - (C) admirable
  - (D) explicit
  - (E) confusing

### **Explanation**

The words “on the other hand” indicate that while the existence of societal codes of behavior is no surprise, their character may be quite surprising. Thus the correct answer is choice B, **unexpected**, which means the same as surprising. “Predictable” is the very opposite of surprising, and none of the other answer choices means “surprising.”

Again, the correct answer is **unexpected** (choice B).

Directions for questions 2 through 5:

**Each of the following questions includes a short text with two or three blanks, each blank indicating that something has been omitted. Select one entry for each blank from the corresponding column of choices. Fill all blanks in the way that best completes the text.**

2. Like Béla Bartók, Ruth Crawford not only brought a composer's acumen to the notation of folk music, she also had a marked (i) \_\_\_\_\_ the task. This was clear in her agonizing over how far to try to represent the minute details of a performance in a written text, and this (ii) \_\_\_\_\_ makes her work a landmark in ethnomusicology.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
<input type="radio"/> A reverence for	<input type="radio"/> D fastidiousness
<input type="radio"/> B detachment from	<input type="radio"/> E didacticism
<input type="radio"/> C curiosity about	<input type="radio"/> F iconoclasm

## **Explanation**

In this example, both blanks can be filled by focusing on the statement that Crawford agonized over the details in her representations of folk music performances. The only choice for blank (ii) that matches this description is “fastidiousness”; neither “didacticism” nor “iconoclasm” reflects the notion of agonizing over details. Similarly, only “reverence for” fits in blank (i), since neither “detachment from” nor “curiosity about” reflects the degree of care Crawford took.

Thus the correct answer is **reverence for** (choice A) and **fastidiousness** (choice D).

3. Political advertising may well be the most (i)\_\_\_\_\_ kind of advertising: political candidates are usually quite (ii)\_\_\_\_\_, yet their campaign advertisements often hide important differences behind smoke screens of smiles and empty slogans.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
<input type="radio"/> A polemical	<input type="radio"/> D interchangeable
<input type="radio"/> B effective	<input type="radio"/> E dissimilar
<input type="radio"/> C deceptive	<input type="radio"/> F vocal

## **Explanation**

Looking at blank (i), it is hard to select a correct answer, since all three answer choices fit the immediate context well. Looking to the second part of the sentence, however, we can see such expressions as “hide” and “smoke screens,” both of which suggest that the correct answer for blank (i) is “deceptive.” Making that assumption, we can go on to see that the answer for blank (ii) is “dissimilar,” since what is deceptive about political advertisements is that they hide important differences. Reading the sentence again with “deceptive” and “dissimilar” in place confirms those choices.

Thus the correct answer is **deceptive** (choice C) and **dissimilar** (choice E).

4. Richard M. Russell said 52 percent of the nation’s growth since the Second World War had (i)\_\_\_\_\_ invention. He said, (ii)\_\_\_\_\_ research, the government’s greatest role in assuring continuing innovation is promoting a strong, modern patent office. “Unless we can (iii)\_\_\_\_\_ original ideas, we will not have invention,” Mr. Russell said. Speculating on the state of innovation over the next century, several inventors agreed that the future lay in giving children the tools to think creatively and the motivation to invent.

Blank (i)

Blank (ii)

Blank (iii)

<p>(A) been at the expense of</p>	<p>(D) in addition to restricting</p>	<p>(G) evaluate</p>
<p>(B) no bearing on</p>	<p>(E) aside from supporting</p>	<p>(H) protect</p>
<p>(C) come through</p>	<p>(F) far from exaggerating</p>	<p>(I) disseminate</p>



## **Explanation**

A quick overview of the paragraph shows that its topic is the encouragement of invention and innovation. This implies that Blank (i) should be filled with “come through,” which emphasizes the importance of invention; the other choices suggest that invention is irrelevant or somehow harmed by growth. Again, the only one of the choices for blank (ii) that continues the theme of encouraging invention is “aside from supporting.” Finally, the second sentence emphasizes the importance for innovation of a strong patent office, and this thought is reaffirmed in the following quotation from Mr. Russell, which requires “protect” in blank (iii).

Thus the correct answer is **come through** (choice C), **aside from supporting** (choice E), and **protect** (choice H).

5. Statements presented as fact in a patent application are (i)\_\_\_\_\_ unless a good reason for doubt is found. The invention has only to be deemed “more likely than not” to work in order to receive initial approval. And, although thousands of patents are challenged in court for other reasons, no incentive exists for anyone to expend effort (ii)\_\_\_\_\_ the science of an erroneous patent. For this reason the endless stream of (iii)\_\_\_\_\_ devices will continue to yield occasional patents.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
(A) presumed verifiable	(D) corroborating	(G) novel
(B) carefully scrutinized	(E) advancing	(H) bogus
(C) considered capricious	(F) debunking	(I) obsolete

## **Explanation**

The paragraph appears to be explaining some odd or unexpected aspect of the patent process. The third sentence helps to clarify what this aspect is; it discusses challenges to patents. The only choice for blank (ii) that is concerned with challenging a patent is “debunking,” since “corroborating” and “advancing” suggest support instead. This in turn provides the answer for the third blank, since the preceding sentence does explain how “bogus” devices may nonetheless get a patent. And we can also now better understand the first sentence—it too must help explain how bogus devices get patents, which it can do only if the blank is filled with “presumed verifiable,” suggesting that patent applications are taken at face value and not dismissed out of hand nor subjected to careful scrutiny.

Thus the correct answer is **presumed verifiable** (choice A), **debunking** (choice F), and **bogus** (choice H).

Directions for questions 6 through 8:

**Each of the following questions includes a sentence with a blank indicating that something has been omitted. Following the sentence will be a list of six words or phrases, each of which could be used to complete the sentence. Select the two answer choices that, when substituted for the blank, fit the context and produce the two sentences most nearly alike in meaning.**

6. Ever a demanding reader of the fiction of others, the novelist Chase was likewise often the object of \_\_\_\_\_ analyses by his contemporaries.

- A exacting
- B copious
- C respectful
- D acerbic
- E scathing
- F meticulous

## **Explanation**

The use of the word “likewise” indicates that the analyses of Chase’s work by contemporaries were like the readings he gave the fiction of others. Since he is described as a “demanding reader,” the words that best fit the blank will be similar in meaning to “demanding.” The words that meet this requirement are “exacting” (choice A) and “meticulous” (choice F), and they produce sentences that are alike in meaning. Although “acerbic analyses” means close to the same thing as “scathing analyses,” both “acerbic” and “scathing” have meanings that are quite different from “demanding,” so neither fits well in the blank.

Thus the correct answer is **exacting** (choice A) and **meticulous** (choice F).

7. Her \_\_\_\_\_ should not be confused with miserliness; as long as I have known her, she has always been willing to assist those who are in need.

- A stinginess
- B diffidence
- C frugality
- D illiberality
- E intolerance
- F thrift

### **Explanation**

The sentence explains that the person spoken of is not miserly, since she is quite prepared to be generous. So for the sentence to make sense, the word filling the blank has to be something that is consistent with generosity and yet might, by those without a full understanding of her behavior, be mistaken for miserliness. The words “frugality” and “thrift” fulfill this requirement and yield two sentences that are alike in meaning, so that pair forms the correct answer. Neither “stinginess” nor “illiberality” makes sense in the sentence, since they are synonymous with “miserliness” and inconsistent with generosity. Other choices, such as “diffidence,” might perhaps make a sensible sentence if placed in the blank but do not form part of the correct answer since they have no companion word that would make a sentence of similar meaning.

Thus the correct answer is **frugality** (choice C) and **thrift** (choice F).

8. A misconception frequently held by novice writers is that sentence structure mirrors thought: the more convoluted the structure, the more \_\_\_\_\_ the ideas.

- A complicated
- B engaged
- C essential
- D fanciful
- E inconsequential
- F involved

### **Explanation**

Because the second half of the sentence illustrates the idea that “structure mirrors thought,” any word that fills the blank must be similar in meaning to “convoluted.” The two words that are similar to “convoluted” are “complicated” and “involved” (choices A and F), which produce sentences alike in meaning. “Fanciful,” while somewhat similar in meaning to “convoluted,” is not as similar to either “complicated” or “involved” as those words are to each other. The other answer choices are not similar in meaning to “convoluted,” and thus do not produce coherent sentences.

Thus the correct answer is **complicated** (choice A) and **involved** (choice F).

## Verbal Practice Questions with Explanations

### Medium-difficulty Reading Comprehension Sets

For questions 1 through 9, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.

Questions 1 and 2 are based on the following reading passage. (The second sentence is underlined and boldfaced for reference in answering question 2.)

I enjoyed *A Dream of Light & Shadow: Portraits of Latin American Women Writers* for the same reasons that, as a child, I avidly consumed women’s biographies: the fascination  
*Line* with how the biographical details of another female’s life are  
5 represented and interpreted.

**A Dream offers a rich read, varied in both the lives and texts of the women portrayed, and the perspectives and styles of the sixteen essayists.** Yet, as an adult, I have come to demand of any really “great” book a self-consciousness about the tenuous  
*10* nature of representations of reality, a critical contextualization of florid detail, and a self-awareness of the role of ideology in our lives. In these critical senses, *A Dream* is inadequate.

### Description

The passage follows the following structure: the first sentence discusses a collection of biographical sketches and what the author found particularly appealing about similar works as a child; the second sentence describes several positive aspects of this particular collection and how it satisfies the author’s early interests;



the third sentence describes a demanding set of criteria that the author now applies when assessing such work; and in the fourth sentence the author says the collection being discussed does not meet those criteria.

**For the following question, consider each of the choices separately and select all that apply.**

1. The author of the passage suggests that *A Dream* falls short in which of the following respects?
  - A It does not appear to recognize that representations of reality can be unreliable.
  - B It seems to focus on stylistic variety at the expense of accuracy of detail.
  - C It offers a wealth of detail without sufficient critical examination of that detail.

### **Explanation**

We know from the final sentence that the collection falls short of several criteria established by the author.

Choice A is correct: the book does not demonstrate sufficient awareness of the “tenuous nature of representations of reality.”

Choice B is incorrect: there is no mention in the passage of any concern on the part of the author about the accuracy of detail.

Choice C is correct: the book does not offer an adequate “critical contextualization of florid detail.”

2. Which of the following best describes the function of the second sentence (shown underlined and boldfaced at the beginning of the second paragraph) in the context of the passage as a whole?
- Ⓐ To give examples of how *A Dream* presents fascinating portraits that display awareness of the tenuous nature of representations of reality
  - Ⓑ To elaborate on how *A Dream* fulfills the author's childhood criteria for a pleasurable book
  - Ⓒ To suggest that the author enjoyed *A Dream* for reasons more sophisticated than the reasons she enjoyed certain books as a child
  - Ⓓ To illustrate ways in which the author finds *A Dream* to be inadequate in certain critical senses
  - Ⓔ To imply that *A Dream* is too varied in focus to provide a proper contextualization of the biographical details it offers

## **Explanation**

This question asks about the function of the second sentence. The correct choice is choice B. As discussed in the description of the passage, that sentence describes what is appealing about the collection in the context of the author's childhood tastes. Choice A is incorrect both because the sentence does not provide examples and because the collection does not display an awareness of the tenuous nature of representations of reality. Choice C is not correct: although one might suspect that the author's enjoyment of collections as an adult would be on a more sophisticated level than when she was young, there is no discussion or even suggestion of that in the passage. Choice D is incorrect because the sentence describes the virtues of the collection. The aspects of the collection that the author finds inadequate are not addressed until later. Choice E is incorrect because, according to the passage, the fact that the collection is varied makes it a "rich" read. There is no suggestion that the variety hinders proper contextualization.

3. During the day in Lake Constance, the zooplankton D. hyalina departs for the depths where food is scarce and the water cold. D. galeata remains near the warm surface where food is abundant. Even though D. galeata grows and reproduces much faster, its population is often outnumbered by D. hyalina.

Which of the following, if true, would help resolve the apparent paradox presented above?

- (A) The number of species of zooplankton living at the bottom of the lake is twice that of species living at the surface.
- (B) Predators of zooplankton, such as whitefish and perch, live and feed near the surface of the lake during the day.
- (C) In order to make the most of scarce food resources, D. hyalina matures more slowly than D. galeata.
- (D) D. galeata clusters under vegetation during the hottest part of the day to avoid the Sun's rays.
- (E) D. galeata produces twice as many offspring per individual in any given period of time as does D. hyalina.

### **Description**

The paragraph presents an apparent paradox: the zooplankton that spends the day in less hospitable conditions often outnumbers the one that stays in more hospitable conditions.

## **Explanation**

The presence of predators of zooplankton feeding near the surface during the day would suggest that D. galeata is consumed at a higher rate than D. hyalina: this would explain why D. hyalina is often more numerous, so choice B is correct. Choices C and E are incorrect because although they help to explain why the two zooplankton reproduce at different rates, they do not help to resolve the apparent paradox. Choices A and D are incorrect because nothing is said in the paragraph to show the relevance of the presence of other species of zooplankton, nor of the habit of clustering under vegetation, to the relative population size of the two species.

Questions 4 and 5 are based on the following reading passage.

Tocqueville, apparently, was wrong. Jacksonian America was not a fluid, egalitarian society where individual wealth and poverty were ephemeral conditions. At least so argues E. Pessen in his  
*Line* iconoclastic study of the very rich in the United States between  
5 1825 and 1850.

Pessen does present a quantity of examples, together with some refreshingly intelligible statistics, to establish the existence of an inordinately wealthy class. Though active in commerce or the professions, most of the wealthy were not self-made but had  
10 inherited family fortunes. In no sense mercurial, these great fortunes survived the financial panics that destroyed lesser ones. Indeed, in several cities the wealthiest one percent constantly increased its share until by 1850 it owned half of the community's wealth. Although these observations are true, Pessen overestimates their  
15 importance by concluding from them that the undoubted progress toward inequality in the late eighteenth century continued in the Jacksonian period and that the United States was a class-ridden, plutocratic society even before industrialization.

### **Description**

The passage describes Pessen's argument that Jacksonian America was not fluid and egalitarian but class-ridden and plutocratic, and criticizes it for leaping to an unjustified conclusion.

4. According to the passage, Pessen indicates that all of the following were true of the very wealthy in the United States between 1825 and 1850 EXCEPT:
- (A) They formed a distinct upper class.
  - (B) Many of them were able to increase their holdings.
  - (C) Some of them worked as professionals or in business.
  - (D) Most of them accumulated their own fortunes.
  - (E) Many of them retained their wealth in spite of financial upheavals.

### **Explanation**

For this question, you are to identify the one statement that CANNOT be correctly attributed to Pessen. Therefore, you must first determine which of the statements given can be attributed to Pessen. According to the passage, Pessen maintains all of the following: there was a class of “inordinately wealthy” Americans (choice A); in some places that class “constantly increased its share” (choice B); its members were “active in commerce or the professions” (choice C); and “these great fortunes survived the financial panics that destroyed lesser ones” (choice E). However, Pessen also maintains, in contradiction to choice D, that “most of the wealthy were not self-made but had inherited family fortunes.” Therefore **choice D** is correct.

5. Which of the following best states the author's main point?

- (A) Pessen's study has overturned the previously established view of the social and economic structure of early-nineteenth-century America.
- (B) Tocqueville's analysis of the United States in the Jacksonian era remains the definitive account of this period.
- (C) Pessen's study is valuable primarily because it shows the continuity of the social system in the United States throughout the nineteenth century.
- (D) The social patterns and political power of the extremely wealthy in the United States between 1825 and 1850 are well documented.
- (E) Pessen challenges a view of the social and economic systems in the United States from 1825 to 1850, but he draws conclusions that are incorrect.

### **Explanation**

It is important to realize that although most of the passage is devoted to describing Pessen's study, the author's main point is to criticize the conclusion Pessen draws. Choices A, C, and D omit any reference to the author's critical evaluation of Pessen's study, and hence are not statements of the author's main point. Choice B is also incorrect. Because Pessen criticizes Tocqueville and the author criticizes Pessen, it might seem that the author's main point is to defend Tocqueville's analysis. However, the passage does not indicate that Tocqueville's analysis is definitive. Choice E is correct. According to the first paragraph, Pessen challenges Tocqueville's view, but according to the second paragraph, Pessen's conclusions are incorrect.



Questions 6 through 9 are based on the following reading passage.  
(A phrase is underlined and boldfaced for reference in answering question 6.)

The evolution of intelligence among early large mammals of the grasslands was due in great measure to the interaction between two ecologically synchronized groups of these animals, the hunting carnivores and the herbivores that they hunted. The interaction  
*Line* 5 resulting from the differences between predator and prey led to a general improvement in brain functions; however, certain components of intelligence were improved far more than others.

The kind of intelligence favored by the interplay of increasingly smarter catchers and increasingly keener escapers is defined by  
*10* attention—that aspect of mind carrying consciousness forward from one moment to the next. It ranges from a passive, free-floating awareness to a highly focused, active fixation. The range through these states is mediated by the arousal system, a network of tracts converging from sensory systems to integrating centers in the brain  
*15* stem. From the more relaxed to the more vigorous levels, sensitivity to novelty is increased. The organism is more awake, more vigilant; this increased vigilance results in the apprehension of ever more subtle signals as the organism becomes more sensitive to its surroundings. The processes of arousal and concentration give  
*20* attention its direction. Arousal is at first general, with a flooding of impulses in the brain stem; then gradually the activation is channeled. Thus begins concentration, the holding of consistent images. One meaning of intelligence is the way in which these images and other alertly searched information are used in the  
*25* context of previous experience. Consciousness links past attention to the present and permits the integration of details with perceived ends and purposes.

The elements of intelligence and consciousness come together marvelously to produce different styles in predator and prey.

30 Herbivores and carnivores develop different kinds of attention related to escaping or chasing. Although in both kinds of animal, arousal stimulates the production of adrenaline and norepinephrine by the adrenal glands, the effect in herbivores is primarily fear, whereas in carnivores the effect is primarily aggression. For both,

35 arousal attunes the animal to what is ahead. Perhaps it does not experience forethought as we know it, but the animal does experience something like it. The predator is searchingly aggressive, inner-directed, tuned by the nervous system and the adrenal hormones, but aware in a sense closer to human consciousness than,

40 say, a **hungry lizard's** instinctive snap at a passing beetle. Using past events as a framework, the large mammal predator is working out a relationship between movement and food, sensitive to possibilities in cold trails and distant sounds—and yesterday's unforgotten lessons. The herbivore prey is of a different mind. Its

45 mood of wariness rather than searching and its attitude of general expectancy instead of anticipating are silk-thin veils of tranquility over an explosive endocrine system.

### **Description**

The passage describes improvements in certain components of intelligence among early large mammals of the grasslands. The second paragraph focuses on attention as a primary area of improvement, and the third paragraph outlines how attention differs in predator and prey species.

6. The author refers to a hungry lizard (shown underlined and boldfaced in line 40) primarily in order to
- (A) demonstrate the similarity between the hunting methods of mammals and those of nonmammals
  - (B) broaden the application of the argument by including an insectivore as an example
  - (C) make a distinction between higher and lower levels of consciousness
  - (D) provide an additional illustration of the brutality characteristic of predators
  - (E) offer an objection to suggestions that all animals lack consciousness

### **Explanation**

Choice C is correct. The “hungry lizard’s instinctive snap” is contrasted with the mammal’s higher level of awareness. Choices A and B are incorrect. The example of the hungry lizard provides a contrast; it does not demonstrate a similarity or extend the author’s argument. Choices D and E are incorrect. Brutality is not mentioned in the passage as a characteristic of predators, and there is no suggestion that all animals lack consciousness.

7. It can be inferred from the passage that in animals less intelligent than the mammals discussed in the passage
- (A) past experience is less helpful in ensuring survival
  - (B) attention is more highly focused
  - (C) muscular coordination is less highly developed
  - (D) there is less need for competition among species
  - (E) environment is more important in establishing the proper ratio of prey to predator

**Explanation**

Choice A is correct. In lines 23–25, the author defines intelligence in terms of an animal’s use of past experience. In the context of the entire passage, it can be inferred that more intelligent animals, such as the grassland mammals discussed, are better able to use past experience to help them survive than less intelligent animals are. Choice B is incorrect. The second paragraph of the passage indicates that attention is more highly focused in animals of greater, rather than less, intelligence. Choices C, D, and E are incorrect. The author does not discuss muscular coordination as an element in intelligence, gives no indication that in less intelligent species there is less need for competition, and does not discuss how a proper ratio of prey to predator is established.

8. According to the passage, improvement in brain function among early large mammals resulted primarily from which of the following?
- (A) Interplay of predator and prey
  - (B) Persistence of free-floating awareness in animals of the grasslands
  - (C) Gradual dominance of warm-blooded mammals over cold-blooded reptiles
  - (D) Interaction of early large mammals with less intelligent species
  - (E) Improvement of the capacity for memory among herbivores and carnivores

### **Explanation**

Choice A is correct. It directly paraphrases the statement in lines 4–7, which describes the author’s view of the development of improved brain function in early mammals. Choice B is incorrect. It is likely that the persistence of “free-floating awareness” played a part in the animals’ survival, but there is no indication in the passage that brain function improved because of it. Choices C and D are incorrect: the passage does not discuss the relationship between mammals and reptiles or the interaction between large mammals and less intelligent species. Choice E is incorrect. Improved capacity for memory is an improvement in brain function, rather than a reason for improved brain function.

9. According to the passage, as the process of arousal in an organism continues, all of the following may occur EXCEPT
- Ⓐ the production of adrenaline
  - Ⓑ the production of norepinephrine
  - Ⓒ a heightening of sensitivity to stimuli
  - Ⓓ an increase in selectivity with respect to stimuli
  - Ⓔ an expansion of the range of states mediated by the brain stem

### **Explanation**

This question asks you what does NOT occur during arousal. To answer the question, you must first determine what does occur. According to the passage, arousal does stimulate the production of adrenaline and norepinephrine (lines 31–33); does increase sensitivity to stimuli (lines 15–18); and does increase concentration on specific stimuli (lines 19–23). Thus choices A through D all describe consequences of arousal. Only **choice E** is correct. There is no indication in the passage that the range of states mediated by the brain stem expands during arousal.

## Verbal Practice Questions with Explanations

### Hard Discrete Questions

**Question 1 includes a short text with a blank, indicating that something has been omitted. Select the entry that best completes the text.**

1. For some time now, \_\_\_\_\_ has been presumed not to exist: the cynical conviction that everybody has an angle is considered wisdom.
- (A) rationality
  - (B) flexibility
  - (C) diffidence
  - (D) disinterestedness
  - (E) insincerity

### **Explanation**

The colon indicates that the second part of the sentence will explain the first part. The missing word will describe the opposite of the cynical conviction that “everybody has an angle,” that is, that each person is concerned primarily with his or her own interests. Since “disinterestedness” means lack of self-interest, Choice D is correct. None of the other answer choices means something that is contrasted with or opposed to being primarily concerned with one’s own interests.

Thus the correct answer is **disinterestedness** (choice D).

Directions for questions 2 through 6:

**Each of the following questions includes a short text with two or three blanks, each blank indicating that something has been omitted. Select one entry for each blank from the corresponding column of choices. Fill all blanks in the way that best completes the text.**

2. Human nature and long distances have made exceeding the speed limit a (i)\_\_\_\_\_ in the state, so the legislators surprised no one when, acceding to public demand, they (ii)\_\_\_\_\_ increased penalties for speeding.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
<input type="radio"/> A controversial habit	<input type="radio"/> D endorsed
<input type="radio"/> B cherished tradition	<input type="radio"/> E considered
<input type="radio"/> C disquieting ritual	<input type="radio"/> F rejected



## **Explanation**

The reference to human nature and long distances suggest that it is rather routine for drivers to exceed the speed limit in this state. “Cherished tradition” best fits this context for Blank (i), since there is nothing in the sentence to suggest that speeding here is “controversial” or “disquieting.” In blank (ii) we need to consider what the legislature would do that would surprise no one with regard to increased penalties for speeding. Given what we have learned so far, “rejected” is the best answer; it would be surprising if the legislature “endorsed” or even “considered” increased penalties for speeding.

Thus the correct answer is **cherished tradition** (choice B) and **rejected** (choice F).

3. Serling's account of his employer's reckless decision making (i)\_\_\_\_\_ that company's image as (ii)\_\_\_\_\_ bureaucracy full of wary managers.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
<input type="radio"/> A) belies	<input type="radio"/> D) an injudicious
<input type="radio"/> B) exposes	<input type="radio"/> E) a disorganized
<input type="radio"/> C) overshadows	<input type="radio"/> F) a cautious

## **Explanation**

The correct answer for Blank (i) must support, or at least be consistent with, the contrast between Serling's account, which emphasizes the recklessness of the company's decision making, and the company's image, that of a bureaucracy full of wary managers. For Blank (i), "belies" is the best choice since Serling's account would certainly belie or contradict the company's image. "Exposes" makes little sense since the image presumably is already out in the open, and there is nothing in the sentence that suggests Serling's account "overshadows" the company's image. As for blank (ii), "a cautious" is the most logical choice. Neither "an injudicious" nor "a disorganized" makes sense in blank (ii) as they both go against the notion of wariness.

Thus the correct answer is **belies** (choice A) and **a cautious** (choice F).

4. No other contemporary poet's work has such a well-earned reputation for (i)\_\_\_\_\_, and there are few whose moral vision is so imperiously unsparing. Of late, however, the almost belligerent demands of his severe and densely forbidding poetry have taken an improbable turn. This new collection is the poet's fourth book in six years—an ample output even for poets of sunny disposition, let alone for one of such (ii)\_\_\_\_\_ over the previous 50 years. Yet for all his newfound (iii)\_\_\_\_\_, his poetry is as thorny as ever.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
(A) patent accessibility	(D) penitential austerity	(G) taciturnity
(B) intrinsic frivolity	(E) intractable prolixity	(H) volubility
(C) near impenetrability	(F) impetuous prodigality	(I) pellucidity

## **Explanation**

Since the author of the paragraph has described the poet's reputation as "well-earned," the correct completion for Blank (i) must be something that is consistent with what the rest of the passage says about the poet's work. Only "near impenetrability" fulfills this requirement, since the next sentence tells us that the poet's work is "severe" and "densely forbidding," which rule out both accessibility and frivolity. The blank (ii) completion must contrast with "ample output," and of the available options, only "penitential austerity" does so. Finally, the word in blank (iii), since it is preceded by "newfound," must refer to the change that has occurred in the poet's work. The change the paragraph has described is an increase in output, so "volubility" is the correct choice.

Thus the correct answer is **near impenetrability** (choice C), **penitential austerity** (choice D), and **volubility** (choice H).

5. Managers who think that strong environmental performance will (i)\_\_\_\_\_ their company's financial performance often (ii)\_\_\_\_\_ claims that systems designed to help them manage environmental concerns are valuable tools. By contrast, managers who perceive environmental performance to be (iii)\_\_\_\_\_ to financial success may view an environmental management system as extraneous. In either situation, and whatever their perceptions, it is a manager's commitment to achieving environmental improvement rather than the mere presence of a system that determines environmental performance.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
(A) eclipse	(D) uncritically accept	(G) complementary
(B) bolster	(E) appropriately acknowledge	(H) intrinsic
(C) degrade	(F) hotly dispute	(I) peripheral

## **Explanation**

The first two sentences introduce two contrasting sets of managers. The managers identified in the second sentence view systems designed to help manage environmental concerns as “extraneous,” suggesting that they would view environmental performance to be “peripheral” (choice I) to financial performance. The other options for blank (iii)—“complementary” and “intrinsic”—are not consistent with the idea that environmental management systems are extraneous. With blank (iii) filled in, we can go back to blanks (i) and (ii) with greater confidence: “bolster” works best in blank (i), since the two sets of managers have contrasting views. Blank (ii) is not straightforward—clearly these managers would not “hotly dispute” this claim, but “appropriately acknowledge” is easily ruled out. “Uncritically accept” makes sense and is confirmed when we look at the final sentence in which the author warns that, in either situation, “the mere presence of a system” is not enough to achieve environmental improvement. In fact, a system is not even necessary. Thus the author of the paragraph does not regard the systems as particularly valuable, ruling out “appropriately acknowledge.”

Thus the correct answer is **bolster** (choice B), **uncritically accept** (choice D), and **peripheral** (choice I).

6. Philosophy, unlike most other subjects, does not try to extend our knowledge by discovering new information about the world. Instead it tries to deepen our understanding through (i) \_\_\_\_\_ what is already closest to us—the experiences, thoughts, concepts, and activities that make up our lives but that ordinarily escape our notice precisely because they are so familiar. Philosophy begins by finding (ii) \_\_\_\_\_ the things that are (iii) \_\_\_\_\_.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
(A) attainment of	(D) essentially irrelevant	(G) most prosaic
(B) rumination on	(E) utterly mysterious	(H) somewhat hackneyed
(C) detachment from	(F) thoroughly commonplace	(I) refreshingly novel



## Explanation

The first two sentences present a contrast between extending our knowledge by discovering “new information about the world”—which we are told philosophy does not do—and extending knowledge through some activity involving “things that are closest to us.” The first blank asks us to identify that activity, and although “attainment” makes little sense in context, both “rumination on” and “detachment from” have some appeal. However, the clear implication that philosophy attends to things that ordinarily escape our notice eliminates “detachment from” as a correct answer. Blank (ii) requires something that suggests the importance of familiar things as subjects of philosophical rumination, and “utterly mysterious” does just that. “Essentially irrelevant” and “thoroughly commonplace” do not fit logically since they suggest that these “familiar” things are unimportant. Similarly, blank (iii) needs to be consistent with the description of those things as familiar and close. “Most prosaic” fits that idea while “refreshingly novel” goes in the other direction. “Somewhat hackneyed” has some plausibility but is too negative given the overall tone of the sentence; there is no indication that those things are in any way trite.

Thus the correct answer is **rumination on** (choice B), **utterly mysterious** (choice E), and **most prosaic** (choice G).

Directions for questions 7 through 9:

**Each of the following questions includes a sentence with a blank indicating that something has been omitted. Following the sentence will be a list of six words or phrases, each of which could be used to complete the sentence. Select the two answer choices that, when substituted for the blank, fit the context and produce the two sentences most nearly alike in meaning.**

7. The government's implementation of a new code of ethics appeared intended to shore up the ruling party's standing with an increasingly \_\_\_\_\_ electorate at a time when the party is besieged by charges that it trades favors for campaign money.

- A aloof
- B placid
- C restive
- D skittish
- E tranquil
- F vociferous

## **Explanation**

The words filling the blank must be consistent with the idea that the ruling party needs to “shore up” its standing with the electorate. In their own way, choices A, C, D, and F are consistent with that idea, but only two of these when taken together—“restive” and “skittish”—produce sentences that are alike in meaning. “Aloof” fits the blank reasonably well, but there is no other word offered that is nearly alike in meaning. The same holds for “vociferous.” “Placid” and “tranquil” are similar in meaning but do not fit the context of the sentence.

Thus the correct answer is **restive** (choice C) and **skittish** (choice D).

8. Overlarge, uneven, and ultimately disappointing, the retrospective exhibition seems too much like special pleading for a forgotten painter of real but \_\_\_\_\_ talents.

- A limited
- B partial
- C undiscovered
- D circumscribed
- E prosaic
- F hidden

### **Explanation**

The sentence is explaining why the exhibition of the painter's work was unsatisfactory, and since it says that the painter's talents were real, the word in the blank has to indicate why those talents were not, in the opinion of the author of the sentence, good enough. The words "limited" and "circumscribed" do so and also produce sentences that are alike in meaning, so this pair forms the correct answer. Although "undiscovered" and "hidden" are similar in meaning, they do not make sense in the context of the sentence, since they do not indicate why the painter's talents were not adequate. Other choices, such as "partial" and "prosaic" might make sense in context, but none of the other choices that meets that criterion also has a companion choice that would produce another sentence alike in meaning.

Thus the correct answer is **limited** (choice A) and **circumscribed** (choice D).

9. Newspapers report that the former executive has been trying to keep a low profile since his \_\_\_\_\_ exit from the company.

- A celebrated
- B mysterious
- C long-awaited
- D fortuitous
- E indecorous
- F unseemly

### **Explanation**

The sentence needs to be completed with a word that suggests a reason for the executive to wish to keep a low profile. The words “indecorous” and “unseemly” both suggest such a reason, and the sentences completed with those two choices are alike in meaning. Therefore, that pair forms the correct answer. Although one might get a sensible sentence by filling the blank with another choice, such as “long-awaited,” none of the other choices that meets that criterion also has a companion choice that would produce another sentence alike in meaning.

Thus the correct answer is **indecorous** (choice E) and **unseemly** (choice F).

## Verbal Practice Questions with Explanations

### Hard Reading Comprehension Sets

For questions 1 through 8, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.

1. In the United States between 1850 and 1880, the number of farmers continued to increase, but at a rate lower than that of the general population.

Which of the following statements directly contradicts the information presented above?

- (A) The number of farmers in the general population increased slightly in the 30 years between 1850 and 1880.
- (B) The rate of growth of the United States labor force and the rate of growth of the general population rose simultaneously in the 30 years between 1850 and 1880.
- (C) The proportion of farmers in the United States labor force remained constant in the 30 years between 1850 and 1880.
- (D) The proportion of farmers in the United States labor force decreased from 64 percent in 1850 to 49 percent in 1880.
- (E) The proportion of farmers in the general population increased from 68 percent in 1850 to 72 percent in 1880.

## **Explanation**

The given sentence indicates that the proportion of farmers in the general population decreased from 1850 to 1880. Choice E says exactly the opposite—that this proportion increased—and therefore it contradicts the passage and is the correct response. Choice A is incorrect because it agrees with the given sentence, and choices B, C, and D are all incorrect because they refer to the labor force, about which the given sentence says nothing.

**Question 2 is based on the following reading passage:**

A ten-year comparison between the United States and the Soviet Union in terms of crop yields per acre revealed that when only planted acreage is compared, Soviet yields were equal to 68 percent  
*Line* of United States yields. When total agricultural acreage (planted  
5 acreage plus fallow acreage) is compared, however, Soviet yield was 114 percent of United States yield.

2. From the information above, which of the following can be most reliably inferred about United States and Soviet agriculture during the ten-year period?
- (A) A higher percentage of total agricultural acreage was fallow in the United States than in the Soviet Union.
  - (B) The United States had more fallow acreage than planted acreage.
  - (C) Fewer total acres of available agricultural land were fallow in the Soviet Union than in the United States.
  - (D) The Soviet Union had more planted acreage than fallow acreage.
  - (E) The Soviet Union produced a greater volume of crops than the United States produced.



## **Explanation**

If crop yield per planted acre was less in the Soviet Union than it was in the United States, yet crop yield per total (planted plus fallow) agricultural acreage was greater in the Soviet Union than it was in the United States, the percentage of the total acreage that was left fallow must have been lower in the Soviet Union than in the United States. Therefore, choice A is the correct answer. Since the information provided in the paragraph is given in terms of yield per acre, no conclusion can be drawn about actual acreage, so choices B, C, and D are all incorrect. Similarly, it is impossible to determine the total volume of crops produced in the Soviet Union, so choice E is incorrect.

Questions 3 and 4 are based on the following reading passage.

For hot desert locations with access to seawater, a new greenhouse design generates freshwater and cool air. Oriented to the prevailing wind, the front wall of perforated cardboard, moistened and cooled by a trickle of seawater pumped in, cools and moistens hot air blowing in. This cool, humidified air accelerates plant growth; little water evaporates from leaves. Though greenhouses normally capture the heat of sunlight, a double-layered roof, the inner layer coated to reflect infrared light outward, allows visible sunlight in but traps solar heat between the two layers. This heated air, drawn down from the roof, then mixes with the greenhouse air as it reaches a second seawater-moistened cardboard wall at the back of the greenhouse. There the air absorbs more moisture, which then condenses on a metal wall cooled by seawater, and thus distilled water for irrigating the plants collects.

### **Description**

The passage describes a greenhouse design and the process by which the design generates freshwater and cool air in a desert environment lacking in these things.

**For the following question, consider each of the choices separately and select all that apply.**

3. It can be inferred that the process described in the passage makes use of which of the following?

- A The tendency of hot air to rise
- B The directional movement of wind
- C The temperature differential between the sea and the desert

**Explanation**

This question asks the reader which of the three phenomena listed in the answer choices is used in the process described in the passage.

Choice A is incorrect: the passage does not indicate that the tendency of hot air to rise is used in the process, and in fact says that heated air is drawn down, not up, as part of the greenhouse design.

Choice B is correct: the second sentence describes the orientation of a perforated cardboard wall toward the prevailing wind so that hot air blows in and is moistened.

Choice C is correct: the passage describes the use of seawater to cool hot desert air and to provide moisture that is absorbed by heated air and then condensed on a seawater-cooled surface for the purpose of irrigating the plants.

**For the following question, consider each of the choices separately and select all that apply.**

4. It can be inferred that the greenhouse roof is designed to allow for which of the following?

- A The avoidance of intense solar heat inside the greenhouse
- B The entry of sunlight into the greenhouse to make the plants grow
- C The mixture of heated air with greenhouse air to enhance the collection of moisture

## **Explanation**

This question asks the reader which of the three effects listed in the answer choices are intended as part of the design of the greenhouse roof.

Choice A is correct: the purpose of the double-layered roof is to trap solar heat before it gets inside the greenhouse proper.

Choice B is correct: the coating on the inner layer of the roof allows visible sunlight into the greenhouse.

Choice C is correct: the last two sentences of the passage describe how heated air from the roof is drawn down to mix with greenhouse air, resulting in the collection of distilled water for irrigation purposes.

Questions 5 through 8 are based on the following reading passage.

Many critics of Emily Brontë’s novel Wuthering Heights see its second part as a counterpoint that comments on, if it does not reverse, the first part, where a romantic reading receives more confirmation. Seeing the two parts as a whole is encouraged by the novel’s sophisticated structure, revealed in its complex use of narrators and time shifts. Granted that the presence of these elements need not argue for an authorial awareness of novelistic construction comparable to that of Henry James, their presence does encourage attempts to unify the novel’s heterogeneous parts. *Line* 5 However, any interpretation that seeks to unify all of the novel’s diverse elements is bound to be somewhat unconvincing. This is not because such an interpretation necessarily stiffens into a thesis (although rigidity in any interpretation of this or of any novel is always a danger), but because Wuthering Heights has recalcitrant *10* elements of undeniable power that, ultimately, resist inclusion in an all-encompassing interpretation. In this respect, Wuthering Heights shares a feature of Hamlet. *15*

### **Description**

The passage discusses a critical view concerning the unity of structure of Wuthering Heights, then, following the use of “However,” expresses a reservation about that view.

5. According to the passage, which of the following is a true statement about the first and second parts of Wuthering Heights?
- (A) The second part has received more attention from critics.
  - (B) The second part has little relation to the first part.
  - (C) The second part annuls the force of the first part.
  - (D) The second part provides less substantiation for a romantic reading.
  - (E) The second part is better because it is more realistic.

### **Explanation**

This question requires the reader to identify which of the given relationships between the novel's first and second parts is one that is described in the passage. According to the first sentence, the first part of the novel tends to confirm the "romantic" reading more strongly than the second. Therefore, choice D is correct. Nothing in the passage suggests that critics have paid more attention to the second part, that the two parts have little relation, or that the second part is better. Therefore, choices A, B, and E are incorrect. Choice C is a more extreme statement than any found in the passage, and therefore it is incorrect.

6. Which of the following inferences about Henry James's awareness of novelistic construction is best supported by the passage?
- (A) James, more than any other novelist, was aware of the difficulties of novelistic construction.
  - (B) James was very aware of the details of novelistic construction.
  - (C) James's awareness of novelistic construction derived from his reading of Brontë.
  - (D) James's awareness of novelistic construction has led most commentators to see unity in his individual novels.
  - (E) James's awareness of novelistic construction precluded him from violating the unity of his novels.

### **Explanation**

This question focuses on the passage's mention of Henry James and asks what can be inferred from it. The third sentence implies that James represents a very high degree of authorial awareness of novelistic construction and that no such claim is necessarily being made for Brontë. Thus, choice B is the correct answer. Choice A is incorrect, since the passage does not imply that there are particular difficulties that James understood uniquely among novelists. Choice C is incorrect because the passage does not state or imply that James read Brontë. The passage also does not say anything about commentators' opinions of the unity of James's works; therefore choice D is incorrect. Choice E is incorrect because the passage itself offers no information about the unity of James's novels.



7. The author of the passage would be most likely to agree that an interpretation of a novel should
- (A) not try to unite heterogeneous elements in the novel
  - (B) not be inflexible in its treatment of the elements in the novel
  - (C) not argue that the complex use of narrators or of time shifts indicates a sophisticated structure
  - (D) concentrate on those recalcitrant elements of the novel that are outside the novel's main structure
  - (E) primarily consider those elements of novelistic construction of which the author of the novel was aware

### **Explanation**

This question requires the reader to determine what can be inferred from the passage about its author's view of the interpretation of novels. Choice A may seem attractive because in the passage the author says that Wuthering Heights has heterogeneous elements that resist inclusion in a unifying interpretive scheme. Choice A is incorrect, however, because the author does not indicate that the unification of different elements is to be avoided in interpretation generally. By contrast, the author's parenthetical statement about rigidity does present a general warning against inflexibility of interpretation, and it is this that supports choice B as the correct answer. Choice C is incorrect, as the author actually suggests the contrary of this view in the second sentence of the passage. Although the author mentions recalcitrant elements of Wuthering Heights, there is no suggestion by the author that such elements deserve a special focus in interpretation. Therefore choice D is incorrect. The author of the passage does not indicate which elements, if any, of novelistic construction are most worthy of consideration. Therefore choice E is incorrect.

**For the following question, consider each of the choices separately and select all that apply.**

8. The author of the passage suggests which of the following about Hamlet?

- A Hamlet has usually attracted critical interpretations that tend to stiffen into theses.
- B Hamlet has elements that are not amenable to an all-encompassing critical interpretation.
- C Hamlet is less open to an all-encompassing critical interpretation than is Wuthering Heights.

### **Explanation**

This question asks the reader which of the three statements about Hamlet listed in the answer choices are suggested by the author of the passage.

Choice A is incorrect: the passage does not provide information about the characteristics of the usual critical interpretations of Hamlet.

Choice B is correct: Hamlet is mentioned only in the final sentence of the passage, which refers to “this respect” in which Hamlet and Wuthering Heights are similar. The previous sentence reveals the point of similarity referred to: Wuthering Heights has elements that resist inclusion in an all-encompassing interpretive framework.

Choice C is incorrect: the passage mentions only a feature shared between Hamlet and Wuthering Heights. It does not suggest anything about a difference in their openness to a particular critical interpretation.