

GMAT



READING COMPREHENSION

BRANDON ROYAL

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Published by:

Maven Publishing
4520 Manilla Road, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2G 4B7
www.mavenpublishing.com

Correspondence Address in Asia:

GPO Box 440
Central, Hong Kong

ISBN 978-1-897393-96-3 eDoc

This eDoc contains Chapter 4: Reading Comprehension, as excerpted from the parent eDoc *Chili Hot GMAT: Verbal Review*.

Technical Credits:

Cover design: George Foster, Fairfield, Iowa, USA
Editing: Victory Crayne, Laguna Woods, California, USA

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CONTENTS

Topical Checklist	7
Chapter 1: The GMAT Exam	9
What's on the GMAT Exam? ♦ How is the GMAT Scored? ♦ How does the CAT Work? ♦ Exam Tactics ♦ Attitude and Mental Outlook ♦ Time frame for GMAT Study	
Chapter 2: Sentence Correction	15
<i>Overview</i>	
Official Exam Instructions for Sentence Correction ♦ Strategies and Approaches	
<i>Review of Sentence Correction</i>	
Overview ♦ The 100-Question Quiz on Grammar, Diction, and Idioms ♦ Review of Grammatical Terms ♦ Diction Review ♦ List of 200 Grammatical Idioms ♦ Style Review ♦ Answers to The 100-Question Quiz of Grammar, Diction, and Idioms	
<i>Multiple-Choice Problems</i>	
Subject-Verb Agreement ♦ Pronoun Usage ♦ Modification ♦ Parallelism ♦ Comparisons ♦ Verb Tenses ♦ Answers and Explanations	
Chapter 3: Critical Reasoning	93
<i>Overview</i>	
Official Exam Instructions for Critical Reasoning ♦ Strategies and Approaches	
<i>Review of Critical Reasoning</i>	
Defining Terms ♦ The ABCs of Argument Structure ♦ Evaluating Arguments ♦ The “Big Six” Assumption Categories	
<i>Multiple-Choice Problems</i>	
Comparison and Analogy Assumptions ♦ Cause-and-Effect Assumptions ♦ Representativeness Assumptions ♦ Implementation Assumptions ♦ Number-based Assumptions ♦ Logic-based Assumptions ♦ Bolded-Statement Problems ♦ Answers and Explanations	
Chapter 4: Reading Comprehension	151
<i>Overview</i>	
Official Exam Instructions for Reading Comprehension ♦ Strategies and Approaches	

Review of Reading Comprehension

Passage Type ♦ Passage Content ♦ Passage Structure ♦ Passage Question Types
 ♦ Common Wrong Answer Choices ♦ The Relationship Between Passage Question Types
 and Common Wrong Answer Choices

Multiple-Choice Problems

Sample Passage ♦ Social Science Passage ♦ Science Passage ♦ Answers and Explanations

Chapter 5: Analytical Writing **181**

Overview

Official Exam Instructions for the Analytical Writing Assessment ♦ Strategies and
 Approaches

Review of Analytical Writing

Frequently Asked Questions ♦ The 4-Step Approach for Writing an Argument Essay ♦ The
 4-Step Approach for Writing an Issue Essay ♦ Special Writing Techniques for Use with
 Issue Essays

Essay Topics

Two Argument Essays ♦ Four Issue Essays ♦ Outlines and Proposed Solutions

Appendix I – GMAT and MBA Website Information **217**

Registering for the GMAT Exam ♦ MBA Fairs & Forums ♦ International GMAT Test-
 Preparation Organizations ♦ National & Regional GMAT Test-Preparation Organizations
 ♦ Other GMAT & MBA Websites

Appendix II – Contact Information for the World’s Leading Business Schools **225**

U.S. Business Schools ♦ Canadian Business Schools ♦ European Business Schools
 ♦ Australian Business Schools ♦ Asia-Pacific Business Schools ♦ Latin and South American
 Business Schools ♦ South African Business Schools

On a Personal Note **231**

About the Author

TOPICAL CHECKLIST

The following checklist provides an overview of all topical areas within each chapter. Reviewers may find it useful to check boxes upon completing each topic.

VERBAL:

	<i>Problem No.</i>
Chapter 2: Sentence Correction	
<input type="checkbox"/> Subject-Verb Agreement	1–5
<input type="checkbox"/> Pronoun Usage	6–8
<input type="checkbox"/> Modification	9–11
<input type="checkbox"/> Parallelism	12–14
<input type="checkbox"/> Comparisons	15–23
<input type="checkbox"/> Verb Tenses	24–29
Chapter 3: Critical Reasoning	
<input type="checkbox"/> Comparison and Analogy Assumptions	30–32
<input type="checkbox"/> Cause-and-Effect Assumptions	33–38
<input type="checkbox"/> Representativeness Assumptions	39–43
<input type="checkbox"/> Implementation Assumptions	44–46
<input type="checkbox"/> Number-based Assumptions	47–52
<input type="checkbox"/> Logic-based Assumptions	53–58
<input type="checkbox"/> Bolded-Statement Problems	59
Chapter 4: Reading Comprehension	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sample Passage	60–64
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Science Passages	65–68
<input type="checkbox"/> Science Passages	69–72

WRITING:

Chapter 5: Analytical Writing

<input type="checkbox"/> Argument Essays	73–74
<input type="checkbox"/> Issue Essays	75–78

CHAPTER 4

READING COMPREHENSION

*I took a speed reading course and
read War and Peace in twenty
minutes. It involves Russia.*

—Woody Allen

OVERVIEW

Official Exam Instructions for Reading Comprehension

Directions

The questions in this group are based on the content of a passage. After reading the passage, choose the best answer to each question. Answer all questions following the passage on the basis of what is stated or implied in the passage.

Strategies and Approaches

1. *Read for content, noting topic, scope, and purpose.*

A GMAT test taker will encounter four Reading Comprehension passages per Verbal section and each passage will be accompanied by three or four questions each. Understanding the purpose of each passage is fundamental. As you read a passage, keep talking silently to yourself, “What’s the purpose ... where is the author going?” In other words, ask yourself, “Why did the author sit down to write the passage?”

2. *Read the first sentence first, then scroll down and read the last sentence next.*

A good tip is to read the first sentence of the passage and then read the last sentence of the passage, then start back reading at the top. Why? Because an author (of a passage) might conclude on the last line, and if you read this as soon as possible, you will know where the author is going with his or her discussion, and be better able to remember pertinent details.

3. *Read for structure, noting important guide words as well as the number of viewpoints and relationship among those viewpoints.*

Next is structure. Keep close track of transition words such as “however,” “but,” “moreover,” and “hence.” These words are important and may influence dramatically the flow of the passage. Second, think in terms of the number of paragraphs and viewpoints presented. Usually one paragraph represents one viewpoint. Frequently, Reading Comprehension passages will contain two viewpoints and it may be helpful to try and simplify everything into simple black-and-white terms. For example, take a hypothetical passage written about personality development. Ask yourself what is the relationship between, say, the three paragraphs of the passage. Perhaps the first paragraph is the introduction, the second paragraph is how sociologists view personality development, the third paragraph is how biologists view personality development... now you’ve got it!

4. *Eliminate common wrong answer choices including out of scopes, distortions, and opposites.*

There are three common wrong answer choices in Reading Comprehension. These include “out of scope,” “opposite,” and “distorted” answer choices. Note that although “irrelevant” answer choices are possible (and common wrong answer choices among critical reasoning problems), they are not common wrong answer choices in Reading Comprehension.

REVIEW OF READING COMPREHENSION

There is an obvious difference between the kind of casual reading that takes place when reading a newspaper and the kind required when one sits for a standardized exam like the GMAT. There are essentially five areas to cover when discussing strategies to tackle Reading Comprehension passages and accompanying multiple-choice questions. Mastering Reading Comprehension involves an understanding of passage type, passage content, and passage structure, as well as passage question types and common wrong answer choices.

I. Passage Type

- i) Social science
- ii) Science

II. Passage Content

- i) Topic
- ii) Scope
- iii) Purpose (equals main idea)

III. Passage Structure

- i) Transition or guide words
- ii) Number of paragraphs and their function
- iii) Number of viewpoints and their relationships

IV. Passage Question Types

- i) Overview questions
- ii) Explicit-detail questions
- iii) Inference questions
- iv) Tone questions
- v) Passage organization questions

V. Common Wrong Answer Choices

- i) Out of scope
- ii) Opposite
- iii) Distortion
- iv) Irrelevant
- v) Too General
- vi) Too Detailed

Passage Type

There are three basic types of Reading Comprehension passages—social science, science, and business/economics. Since business and economics passages read more similar to social science than science, they fit easily under the umbrella of social science. The fundamental difference between social science and science is that science passages tend to be objective and generally exist to *describe*. Social science

passages tend to be subjective and usually exist to *argue*. Social science (which deals with people, societies, and their institutions) is typically the domain of ideas, opinions, and conjecture while science (which deals with nature and the universe) is typically the domain of phenomena, theories, and details.

Viewpoints, and the flow of ideas and viewpoints, are generally more important in social science readings than in science readings. In terms of understanding a social science passage, it is critical to understand the author's stance—"what side the author is on." A fitting analogy is to say that social science passages are "river-rafting rides" where the goal is to not fall off our raft amid the twists and turns. Science passages are "archeological digs." Once we determine where to dig, we must keep track of the small pieces—we must be able to memorize and work with details.

Passage Content

Obviously, the better we understand what we have read, the better our chance of answering questions related to the subject at hand. In breaking down passage content, we can subdivide everything into three areas, namely topic, scope, and purpose.

Topic is defined as "the broad subject matter of the passage." Scope is defined as "the specific aspect of the topic that the author is interested in." Purpose is defined as "the author's main reason for writing the passage" or "why did the author sit down to write this passage." In summary, *topic* and *scope* are "what" a passage is about while *purpose* is about "why" the passage was written.

One tip involves always performing a "topic-scope-purpose" drill (think T-S-P). That is, always ask yourself what is the topic, scope, and purpose. Let's test this.

The whale is the largest mammal in the animal kingdom. When most people think of whales, they think of sluggish, obese animals, frolicking freely in the ocean by day and eating tons of food to sustain themselves. When people think of ants, on the other hand, they tend to think of hardworking underfed creatures transporting objects twice their body size to and from hidden hideaways. However, if we analyze food consumption based on body size, we find that ants eat their full body weight everyday while a whale eats the equivalent of only one-thousandth of its body weight each day. In fact, when we compare the proportionate food consumption of all living creatures, we find that the whale is one of the most food efficient creatures on earth.

What is the topic? The answer is clearly "whales." Don't be fooled into thinking that the topic is the "animal kingdom." This would be an example of an answer that is too general. What is the scope? The answer is "food consumption of whales." What is the purpose of the passage or why did the author sit down to write this? The author's purpose is to say that whales are food efficient creatures and to thereby counter the popular misconception that they are "biological" gas guzzlers.

Passage Structure

There are essentially two distinct ways to analyze passage structure: the micro and the macro. Micro analysis involves keeping track of transitions, which signal the flow of the passage. Transition or guide words, including such words as *but* and *however*, have been called the traffic lights of language. These words serve one of four primary purposes: to show continuation, illustration, contrast, or conclusion. See exhibit 4.1.

Macro analysis involves not only noting the number of paragraphs and their function, but more importantly, the number of viewpoints and their relationship. The relationships between or among viewpoints are finite and summarized in exhibit 4.2.

EXHIBIT 4.1 GUIDE WORDS

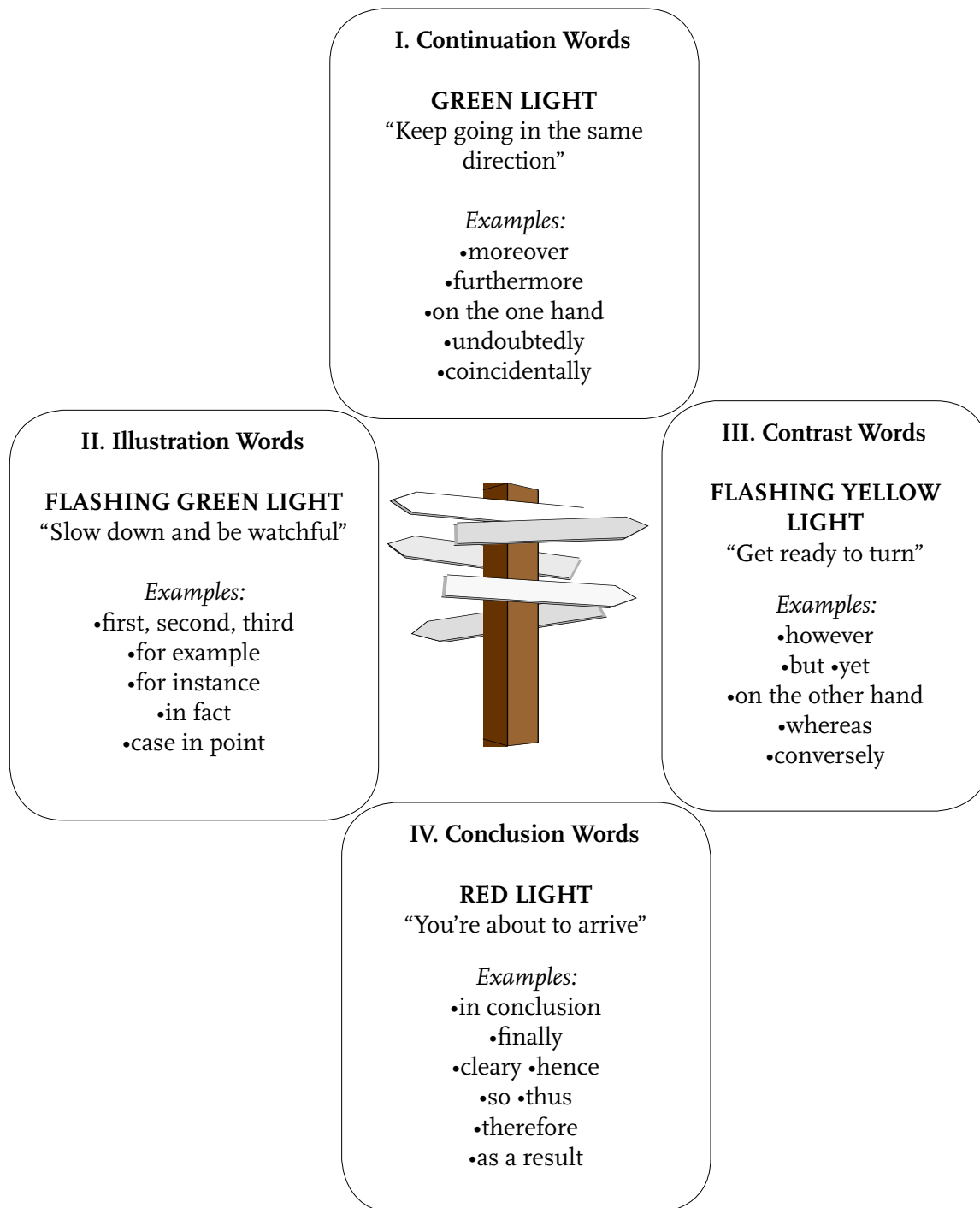
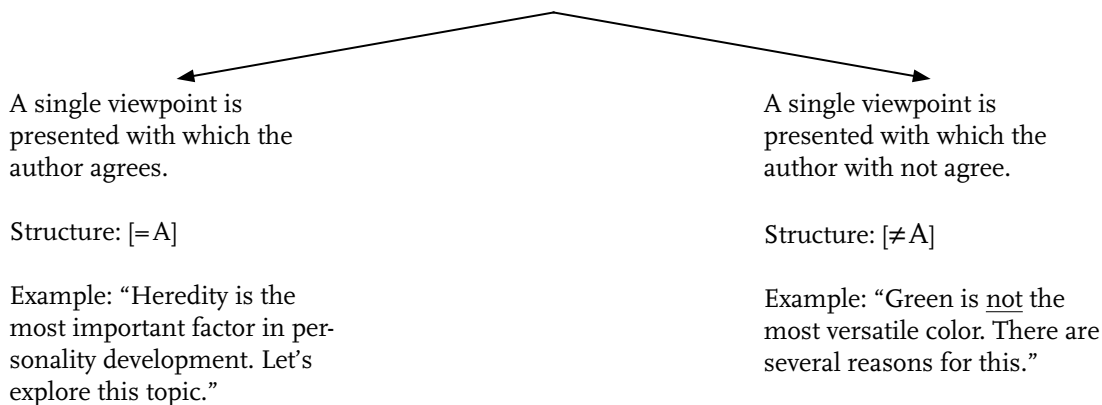
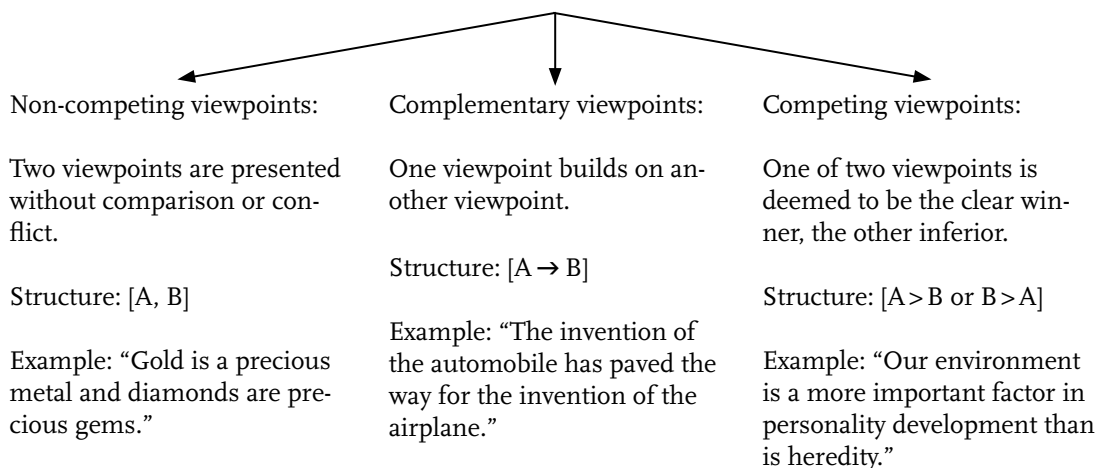


EXHIBIT 4.2 PASSAGE STRUCTURE AND VIEWPOINT

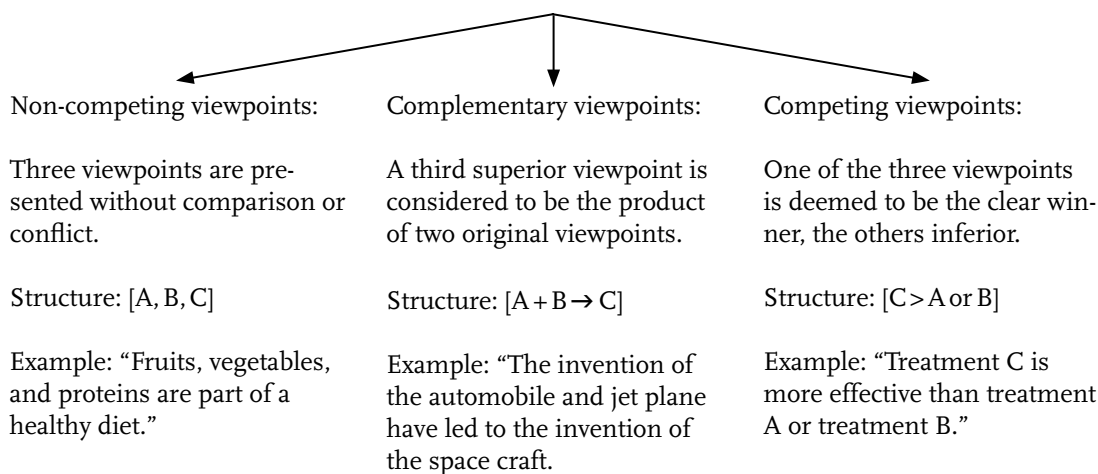
One Viewpoint



Two Viewpoints



Three Viewpoints



In terms of paragraphs and their functions, the opening paragraph is usually the introduction and each succeeding paragraph takes on a single viewpoint or concept. Passages with one or two viewpoints are most common on reading passages, although three viewpoints within a single Reading Comprehension passage is a possibility. As already noted, viewpoints are more applicable to social science passages than to science passages because social science is typically subjective and argumentative.

Passage Question Types

There are five basic kinds of Reading Comprehension questions. These include: (1) overview questions, (2) explicit-detail questions, (3) inference questions, (4) tone questions, and (5) passage organization questions. Examples of each of these question types are as follows:

Overview questions

“The primary purpose of this passage is to...” or “Which of the following is the author’s main idea?” Not surprisingly, an overview question is sometimes called a primary purpose or main idea question.

Explicit-detail questions

“According to the passage, the author states that...” An explicit-detail question is a question which has a very literal answer. It is something that the reader has read and it can be confirmed based on words actually written in the passage.

Inference questions

“It can be inferred from the passage that...” or “The author implies that...” The artistry in answering an inference question lies in drawing that magic line between what can be logically inferred based on information in a passage and what is declared outside the scope of the passage.

Tone questions

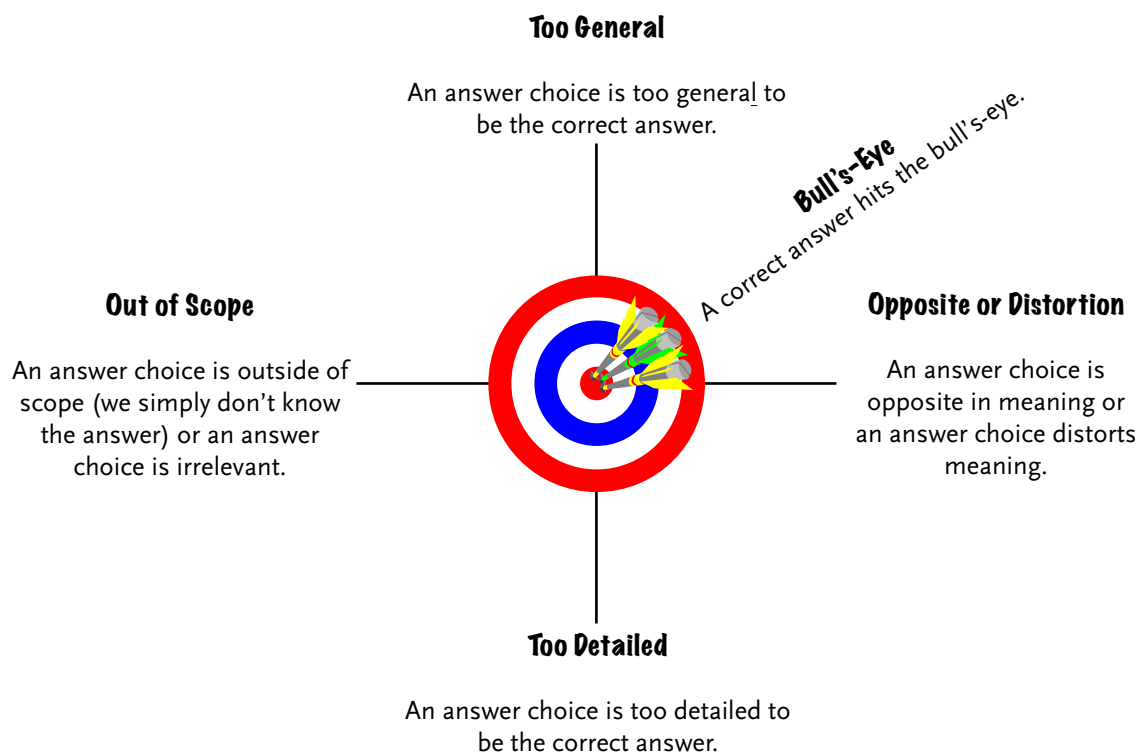
“The attitude of the author toward mystics can best be described as...” A tone question asks the reader to comment on the “temperature” of some aspect of the passage.

Passage organization questions

“Which of the following best describes the way in which this passage is organized?” A passage organization question asks about the structure of the passage or the structure of a portion of the passage.

The four-quadrant grid that follows (see exhibit 4.3) is a useful tool to ferret out common wrong answer choices on Reading Comprehension questions. The correct answer always appears in the middle where the bull’s-eye is located. The four incorrect answers will almost always appear in one of the four corners.

EXHIBIT 4.3 FOUR-CORNER QUESTION CRACKER FOR READING COMPREHENSION™



Common Wrong Answer Choices

Out of Scope: An out of scope answer choice is an answer choice that cannot be answered based on information in the passage. An out of scope statement may, in fact, be right or wrong, but it is not something that can be determined based on information supplied by the passage.

Irrelevant: An irrelevant answer choice is an answer choice that in no way touches the topic; it is completely off target. We might contrast irrelevant answer choices with out of scope answer choices in that an out of scope answer choice is related tangentially to the passage, whereas the irrelevant answer choice is not. Think of an archer with bow and arrow. Out of scope means that the archer is missing the target, but at least he or she is shooting at the right target, and in the right direction. Irrelevant means that the archer isn't even shooting at the correct target.

Opposite: An opposite answer choice is an answer choice which is opposite in meaning to a statement or viewpoint expressed or implied by the passage. One common way answer choices are used to reverse meaning is through the inclusion or omission of prefixes such as “in,” “un,” and “dis,” or the inclusion or omission of negative words such as “no” or “not.” Thus “unfortunately” becomes “fortunately,” “advantageous” becomes “disadvantageous,” and “not applicable” becomes “applicable.”

Distortion: A distorted answer choice is an answer choice that distorts the meaning of something stated or implied by the passage. Saying, for example, that something is “good” is not the same as saying that something is “best.” Distortions are typically signaled by the

use of extreme wording or by the use of categorical words such as “any,” “all,” “always,” “cannot,” “never,” “only,” and “solely.”

Too General: This answer choice is relevant only to the overview question type. Examples: A discussion of “South American trade imbalances in the 1950s” is not the same thing as a discussion of “modern global economic practices.” The latter is obviously broader in scope: “global” is broader than “South American”; “modern” is broader than “the 1950s”; “economics” encompasses more than just “trade imbalances.”

Too Detailed: This answer choice is also relevant only to overview-type questions. Example: A discussion of “the propagation of the Venus Fly Trap” is a much more specific topic than is “plant reproductive systems.” The correct answer to an overview-type question is, relative to the topic, neither overly general nor overly detailed.

Let’s gain further insight into how test makers may create incorrect answer choices with respect to Reading Comprehension (as well as Critical Reasoning) questions. Take the following easy-to-understand statement:

Original: “Success is a strange phenomenon. You can achieve it through hard work, skill, or luck, or some combination of the three.”

Here are several concocted statements derived from the original statement which showcase incorrect answer choices.

Out of scope: “The *most* important ingredient in success is hard work.”

(Comment: No, we don’t know whether hard work is the most important element in achieving success.)

“Hard work is a *more* important element in success than is skill.”

(Comment: Unwarranted comparison—we don’t know which element, in relative terms, is more important than the other.)

Irrelevant: “People who achieve success through hard work, skill, or luck sometimes find that their lives are meaningless.”

(Comment: We are only concerned with how to achieve success, not what might happen beyond that juncture.)

Opposite: “People who are either hardworking, skillful, or lucky are *not* likely to achieve success.”

(Comment: The word “not” reverses the meaning of the original statement.)

Distortion: “*Only* through hard work can one achieve success.”

(Comment: No, we can also achieve success by being skillful or lucky. The word “only” creates a distortion.)

“A person who is hardworking does not run *any* risk of failure.”

(Comment: The word “any” distorts the meaning of the original statement. How likely is the possibility of engaging in any human endeavor and having no chance of failure. Another way to view this statement is out of scope because the original statement makes no mention of the word “failure.”)

“A person who is hardworking, skillful, or lucky can achieve *greatness*.”

(Comment: The word “greatness” has an elevated meaning as compared with “success.” Another way to view this statement is that it is out of scope because the original statement does not make mention of what it takes to achieve greatness.)

The Relationship Between Question Types and Common Wrong Answer Choices

How might the different Reading Comprehension question types be tackled based on an understanding of the common wrong answer choices?

(1) Overview questions

There are at least four ways to avoid wrong answer choices when tackling overview questions.

- i) Consider eliminating any answer choice which does not contain the words of the topic. Note that this advice works well for Q60, page 163.
- ii) Avoid any *overly detailed* answer choice which may be a factually correct statement, but which is too detailed to be the correct answer choice to an overview question.
- iii) Avoid any *overly general* answer choice that is too broad to represent the topic at hand.
- iii) Use a verb scan, when possible. That is, look at the verb which begins each answer choice and eliminate those verbs which do not fit. Five common verbs found in Reading Comprehension passages include *describe*, *discuss*, *explain*, *argue*, and *criticize*. “Argue” is found frequently in social science passages; “describe” is found frequently in science passages. “Discuss” and “explain” are found in both social science and science passages. “Criticize” is usually not correct in an overview question involving a science passage because the author is typically out to describe something without being opinionated or judgmental.

(2) Explicit-detail questions and (3) Inference questions

On both explicit-detail questions and inference questions, common wrong answer choices include *opposites* and *out of scopes*.

Inference questions are especially vulnerable to wrong answer choices that are beyond the scope of the passage. In the context of a standardized test question, the test taker must be careful not to assume too much. Standardized test questions are notorious for narrowing the scope of what we can infer based on what we read. Contrast this with everyday life in which we generally use a loose framework and assume a lot.

(4) Tone questions

Tone is attitude and there are basically three “temperatures” for tone questions—positive, negative, or neutral. One trick is to avoid answer choices which contain “verbally confused word pairs.” For example, the word pairs “supercilious disdain” or “self-mingled pity” are not terribly clear. Test makers like to include these types of answer choices believing that test takers will be attracted to confusing, complex sounding wrong answer choices.

(5) Passage organization questions

Two classic structures arise in Reading Comprehension passages. The first relates to social science passages, where a common structure is “A > B.” Given that the hallmark of social science passages is their provocative, subjective, and often argumentative nature, such passages often contain competing viewpoints, where one view is favored over another. The other classic structure relates to science passages, which are often structured in the form of “A, B.” An important distinction with regard to the latter is that the two events are simply being described in detail, but not contrasted. Because science passages exist classically to describe (not to criticize), the author is unlikely to show favoritism to one side.

Regardless of the structure of the passage, a reader should always be careful to distinguish between the author’s view and that of the information and evidence in the passage itself. For instance, the author may present information that clearly favors one side of an issue, especially if there is more support for that side or the stance is compelling. However, he or she may not necessarily endorse that viewpoint. Remember that “what the passage says” and “what the author thinks” may not always be one in the same. For example, an author of a passage may present evidence as to why the scientific community, in general, is sceptical about a belief in psychics, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that the author is skeptical about a belief in psychics.

Important note: Two caveats that must be noted when using the *Four-Corner Question Cracker for Reading Comprehension*[™]. The first is that it can only be used on three of the five question types, namely *overview* questions, *explicit-detail* questions, and *inference* questions. That said, this is hardly problematic because these three question types are by far the most common question types found in Reading Comprehension. In fact, they may even be referred to as the “big 3” question types for Reading Comprehension. Second, the vertical grid of the four-corner question cracker, which highlights too general answer choices and too detailed answer choices, can only be used when tackling overview questions. That is, the vertical grid cannot be used on explicit-detail or inference questions. In short, wrong answer choices on explicit-detail and inference questions are strictly referred to as being out of scope, opposite in meaning, or distorted in meaning.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE PROBLEMS

Sample Passage

The first passage below and the accompanying questions are presented to highlight analytical techniques for use in answering Reading Comprehension questions. Passage 1 exceeds 450 words in length and contains five questions. Reading Comprehension passages on the GMAT are usually not longer than 450 words in length and contain no more than four questions. Passages 2 and 3, on the other hand, typify the style, content, and length of difficult passages. Read each passage and answer the questions that follow.

Passage 1 (477 words)

1 For more than forty years, a controlling insight in my educational philosophy has
 been the recognition that no one has ever been—no one can ever be—educated in
 school or college. That would be the case if our schools and colleges were at their
 very best, which they certainly are not, and even if the students were among the
 5 best and the brightest, as well as conscientious in the application of their powers.
 The reason is simply that youth itself—immaturity—is an insuperable obstacle
 to becoming educated. Schooling is for the young. Education comes later, usually
 much later. The very best thing for our schools to do is to prepare the young for
 continued learning in later life by giving them the skills of learning and the love
 10 of it.

To speak of an educated young person or of a wise young person, rich in the
 understanding of basic ideas and issues, is as much a contradiction in terms as
 to speak of a round square. The young can be prepared for education in the years
 to come, but only mature men and women can become educated, beginning the
 15 process in their forties and fifties and reaching some modicum of genuine insight,
 sound judgment and practical wisdom after they have turned sixty.

Those who take this prescription seriously would, of course, be better off if
 their schooling had given them the intellectual discipline and skill they need to
 carry it out, and if it also had introduced them to the world of learning with some
 20 appreciation of its basic ideas and issues. But even the individual who is fortunate
 enough to leave school or college with a mind so disciplined, and with an abiding
 love of learning, would still have a long road to travel before he or she became
 an educated person. If our schools and colleges were doing their part and adults
 were doing theirs, all would be well. However, our schools and colleges are not
 25 doing their part because they are trying to do everything else. And adults are not
 doing their part because most are under the illusion that they had completed their
 education when they finished their schooling.

Only the person who realizes that mature life is the time to get the education
 that no young person can ever acquire is at last on the high road to learning. The
 30 road is steep and rocky, but it is the high road, open to anyone who has skill in
 learning and the ultimate goal of all learning in view—understanding the nature of
 things and man’s place in the total scheme. An educated person is one who through
 the travail of his own life has assimilated the ideas that make him representative of
 his culture, that make him a bearer of its traditions and enable him to contribute
 35 to its improvement.

The above passage was written by Mortimer J. Adler, author and former chairman of the board of directors of Encyclopedia Britannica and co-founder of The Center for the Study of The Great Ideas.

Q60. (1)

The author's primary purpose in writing this passage is to

- A) Highlight major tenets in educational philosophy in the last 40 years.
- B) Raise public awareness for the need of teachers with training in the liberal arts.
- C) Contrast the words schooling and education.
- D) Suggest that youth stands in the way of one becoming educated.
- E) Cite the importance of reading with active discussion.

Q61. (2)

According to the passage, the best thing that our schools can do is to

- A) Improve academic instruction at the grass roots level.
- B) Advocate using the word "education" in place of the word "schooling" to better convey to adults the goal of teaching.
- C) Convey to students that only through high scholastic achievement can one become truly educated.
- D) Implement closely the opinions of adults who have already been through the educational process.
- E) Help students acquire the skills for learning.

Q62. (2)

It can be inferred from the passage that the educated person must

- A) Possess more maturity than passion.
- B) Not be less than 40 years of age.
- C) Be at least a university graduate.
- D) Have read classic works of literature.
- E) Have traveled widely in order to understand his or her own culture.

Q63. (🇵🇪)

Which of the following pairs of words most closely describe the author's attitude toward adults as mentioned in the passage?

- A) Uninformed participants
- B) Unfortunate victims
- C) Conscientious citizens
- D) Invaluable partners
- E) Disdainful culprits

Q64. (🇵🇪)

How is the previous passage organized?

- A) An objective analysis is put forth supported by factual examples.
- B) A single idea is presented with which the author does not agree.
- C) A thesis is presented and support given for it.
- D) Two ideas are contrasted and a conciliatory viewpoint emerges.
- E) A popular viewpoint is criticized from a number of perspectives.

Social Science Passage

Passage 2 (450 words)

1 How does ritual affect relationships between groups and entities external to them?
 According to traditional cultural anthropology, aggregates of individuals who
 regard their collective well-being as dependent upon a common body of ritual
 performances use such rituals to give their members confidence, to dispel their
 5 anxieties, and to discipline their social organization. Conventional theories hold
 that rituals come into play when people feel they are unable to control events and
 processes in their environment that are of crucial importance to them. However,
 recent studies of the Tsembaga, a society of nomadic agriculturalists in New
 Guinea, suggest that rituals do more than just give symbolic expression to the
 10 relationships between a cultural group and components of its environments; they
 influence those relationships in measurable ways.

Perhaps the most significant finding of the studies was that, among the
 Tsembaga, ritual operates as a regulating mechanism in a system of a set of
 interlocking systems that include such variables as the area of available land,
 15 necessary length of fallow periods, size of the human and pig populations,
 nutritional requirements of pigs and people, energy expended in various activities,
 and frequency of misfortune. In one sense, the Tsembaga constitute an ecological
 population in an ecosystem that also includes the other living organisms and
 nonliving substances found within the Tsembaga territory. By collating measurable
 20 data (such as average monthly rainfall, average garden yield, energy expenditure
 per cultivated acre, and nutritive values of common foods) with the collective
 decision to celebrate certain rituals, anthropologists have been able to show how
 Tsembaga rituals allocate energy and important materials. Studies have described
 how Tsembaga rituals regulate those relationships among people, their pigs, and
 25 their gardens that are critical to survival; control meat consumption; conserve
 marsupial fauna; redistribute land among territorial groups; and limit the
 frequency of warfare. These studies have important methodological and theoretical
 implications, for they enable cultural anthropologists to see that rituals can in fact
 produce measurable results in an external world.

30 By focusing on Tsembaga rituals as part of the interaction within an ecosystem,
 newer quantitative studies permit anthropologists to analyze how ritual operates
 as a mechanism regulating survival. In the language of sociology, regulation is
 a “latent function” of Tsembaga ritual, since the Tsembaga themselves see their
 rituals as pertaining less to their material relations with the ecosystem than to
 35 their spiritual relations with their ancestors. In the past, cultural anthropologists
 might have centered on the Tsembaga’s own interpretations of their rituals
 in order to elucidate those rituals; but since tools now exist for examining the
 adaptive aspects of rituals, these anthropologists are in a far better position to
 appreciate fully the ecological sophistication of rituals, both among the Tsembaga
 40 and in other societies.

Q65. ()

The primary purpose of the passage is to

- A) Propose that the complex functions of ritual have been best analyzed when anthropologists and ecologists have collaborated in order to study human populations as measurable units.
- B) Criticize anthropologists' use of an ecological approach that ignores the symbolic, psychological, and socially cohesive effects of ritual.
- C) Evaluate theories of culture that view ritual as an expression of a society's understanding of its relationship to its environment.
- D) Point out the ecological sophistication of Tsembaga ritual and suggest the value of quantitative methods in assessing this sophistication.
- E) Argue that the studies showing that the effects of Tsembaga ritual on the environment can be measured prove that the effects of ritual on other environments can also be measured.

Q66. ()

On the basis of the information in the passage, one might expect to find all of the following in the recent anthropological studies of the Tsembaga except

- A) An examination of the caloric and nutritive value of the Tsembaga diet.
- B) A study of the relationship between the number of Tsembaga rituals and the number of pigs owned by the Tsembaga.
- C) An analysis of the influence of Tsembaga forms of worship on the traditions of neighboring populations.
- D) A catalog of the ways in which Tsembaga rituals influence planting and harvest cycles.
- E) A matrix summarizing the seasonality of Tsembaga rituals and the type and function of weapons made.

Q67. ()

Which of the following best expresses the author’s view of ritual?

- A) Rituals symbolize the relationships between cultural groups and their environments.
- B) As a cultural phenomenon, ritual is multifaceted and performs diverse functions.
- C) Rituals imbue the events of the material world with spiritual significance.
- D) A society’s view of its rituals yields the most useful information concerning the rituals’ functions.
- E) The spiritual significance of ritual is deemed greater than the material benefits of ritual.

Q68. ()

The author of the passage uses the term “latent function” (third paragraph) in order to suggest that

- A) The ability of ritual to regulate the environment is more a matter of study for sociologists than for anthropologists.
- B) Sociological terms describe ritual as precisely as anthropological terms.
- C) Anthropologists and sociologists should work together to understand the symbolic or psychological importance of rituals.
- D) Anthropologists are more interested in the regulatory function of rituals of the Tsembaga than they are the psychological function of rituals.
- E) The Tsembaga are primarily interested in the spiritual values that are embodied in their rituals.

Science Passage

Passage 3 (315 words)

1 Supernovas are among the most energetic events in the universe and result in the complete disruption of stars at the end of their lives. Originally, the distinction between Type I and Type II supernovas was based solely on the presence or absence of hydrogen atoms (hydrogen lines). Supernovas without hydrogen lines were
5 called Type I, while those with hydrogen lines were Type II. Subsequent analysis of many of these events revealed that this empirical classification schema instead reflected two different mechanisms for the supernova explosion.

Type I supernovas happen in binary stars—two stars that orbit closely each other—when one of the two binary stars is a small, dense, white dwarf star. If the
10 companion star ranges too close to the white dwarf that it is orbiting, the white dwarf’s gravitational pull will draw matter from the other star. When the white dwarf acquires enough matter to become at least 1.4 times as big as the Sun, it collapses and explodes in a supernova.

Type II supernovas occur when a star, much more massive than the Sun,
15 ends its life. When such a star begins burning out, the core of the star quickly collapses releasing amazing energy in the form of neutrinos, a kind of particle smaller than even an atom. Electromagnetic radiation—energy that is electric and magnetic—causes the star to explode in a supernova. Whereas Type I supernovas typically destroy their parent stars, Type II explosions usually leave behind the
20 stellar core.

The classification schema regarding the mechanism for supernova explosions helps to more succinctly answer the question: Is the Sun in danger of becoming a supernova? Neither does our Sun have a companion star orbiting it nor does our Sun have the mass necessary to become a supernova. Furthermore, it will be
25 another billion years until the Sun runs out of fuel and swells into a red giant star before going into a white dwarf form.

Q69. ()

How is this passage organized?

- A) A single phenomenon is introduced and two overlapping classification schemas are contrasted.
- B) An original theory is mentioned before being overturned as a result of new findings.
- C) Two complementary mechanisms for describing a single phenomenon are discussed and a conclusion is offered.
- D) A new classification schema is described and an example of how it works is provided.
- E) Two different classification systems are outlined and a question posed to help reconcile both.

Q70. ()

Which of the following best summarizes the author's answer to the question: Is the Sun in danger of becoming a supernova?

- A) The Sun is too large to have a white dwarf as a partner and lacks the physical size required to become a red giant.
- B) Even if the Sun were paired with a white dwarf, the Sun does not have the mass necessary to create sufficient electromagnetic radiation.
- C) The Sun is not a white dwarf with a companion star orbiting it, nor does it have the size to qualify as a Type II supernova.
- D) Without a white dwarf orbiting the Sun, the Sun has no obvious way to increase its size to become a Type II supernova.
- E) The Sun will inevitably become a supernova once it passes from a red giant to white dwarf but not for at least a billion years.

Q71. ()

It can be inferred from the passage that

- A) Classifying a Type I or Type II event based on the presence or absence of hydrogen is not necessarily incompatible with a classification schema based on the mechanism by which these two events explode.
- B) A dense white dwarf's gravitational pull on its companion star causes the companion star to collapse and explode as a supernova.
- C) Before a star such as the Sun can become a red giant, it must first become a white dwarf.
- D) In a Type II supernova, energy and electromagnetic radiation causes a star to collapse and explode.
- E) Supernovas are rare events in our universe.

Q72. (🌶️🌶️)

According to the passage, which statement or statements below are true?

- I. The energy created from a Type II explosion is greater than the energy created by a Type I explosion.
 - II. The sun is not a binary star.
 - III. Both Type I and Type II supernovas result in the complete destruction of the exploding star.
- A) I only
 - B) II only
 - C) I and III only
 - D) II and III only
 - E) I, II, and III

Answers and Explanations

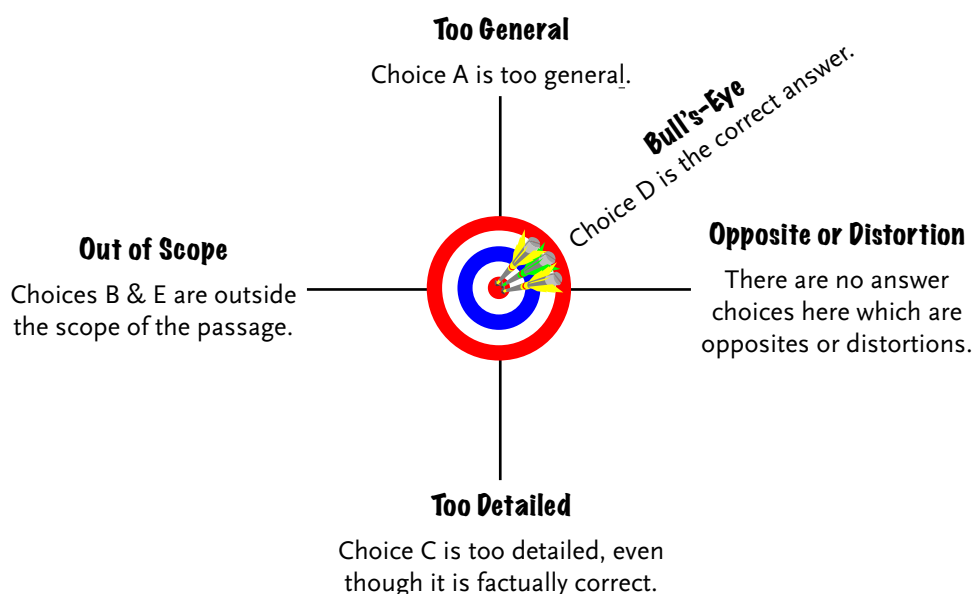
Q60. (A)

Choice D

Classification: Overview question

Snapshot: When attacking an overview question, look for the words of the topic and avoid overly detailed or overly general answer choices.

Here’s how the answers choices for Q60 are mapped using the *Four-Corner Question Cracker for Reading Comprehension*™.



Choice A is too general because a discussion of educational philosophy in the last forty years would likely incorporate the viewpoints of many individuals, not just the author’s viewpoint. Choice B is outside the passage’s scope. We do not necessarily know whether or not teachers should receive more liberal arts training. Choice C is a correct statement within the passage’s context. However, it is too detailed to satisfy the primary purpose as demanded by this overview question.

For an overview question, there are effectively five reasons why wrong answers could be wrong. An answer choice will either be outside a passage’s scope, opposite in meaning, distorted in meaning, too general, or too detailed. Whereas choice C was too detailed, choice A is an overly general answer choice. It is very useful to be on the lookout for “out of the scope”-type answers. This was the fate of answer choices B and E. Note that opposites or distortions are not common wrong answer choices with regard to overview questions.

A time-honored tip for answering overview questions involves performing a “topic-scope-purpose” drill. That is, we seek to identify the passage’s topic, scope, and purpose. Topic is defined as the passage’s broad subject matter. It’s an “article on education.” The topic is therefore “education.” Scope is defined as the specific aspect of the topic that the author is interested in. The scope here is “schooling versus education.” Last, purpose is defined as the reason the author sat down to write the article. His purpose

is to say: “Colleges or universities can’t educate; they exist to prepare students for later learning because youth itself makes real education impossible.”

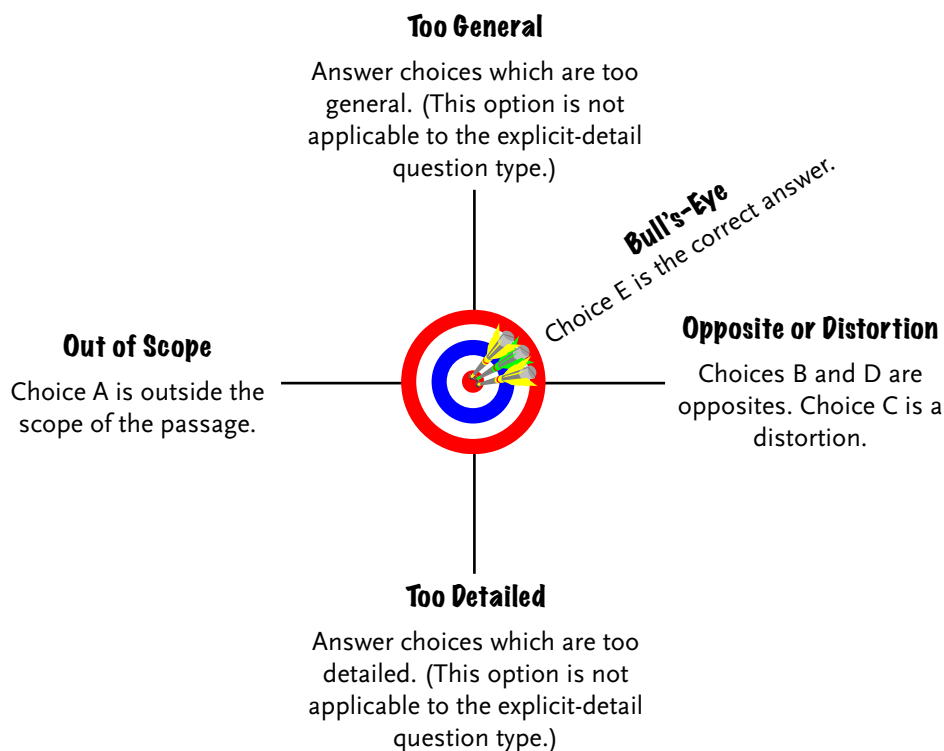
Knowing the topic, scope, and purpose is enough to answer directly the question at hand. And knowing the author’s purpose will likely set us up for another right answer on at least one of the remaining questions. Identifying the topic alone can help get us halfway to a right answer because the correct answer to an overview question almost always contains the words of the topic. In this case, the word “education” (or its derivative “educated”) does not appear in answer choices B or E. We can feel fairly confident eliminating both of these choices.

Q61. ()

Choice E

Classification: Explicit-detail question

Snapshot: An explicit-detail question enables the reader to go back into the passage and “underline” the correct answer. Look for a literal answer.



Where is the correct answer to be found? Consider the words “prepare the young for continued learning in later life by giving them the skills of learning,” (lines 8–9) and “better off if their schooling had given them the intellectual discipline and skill” (lines 17–18). The word “skill” surfaces both times that the author talks about what schools should be doing.

Choice A is outside the passage’s scope. The passage does not talk about improving academic instruction or have anything to do with grass roots education levels. Nor does the passage talk about adults’ opinions.

Choice B is essentially opposite in meaning. To be correct, the answer choice should read, “redefine ‘education’ as ‘schooling’ so to better convey to parents the goals of teaching.” The author feels that adults have missed the point in thinking that finishing school is the same as finishing one’s education; in fact, schools exist to school, and education comes later. Choice D may be also classified as opposite in meaning, if we stick to the general spirit of the passage. The author believes that adults are very much uninformed and have missed the major point of education (lines 25–27); therefore closely implementing their opinions is essentially opposite to the author’s intended meaning.

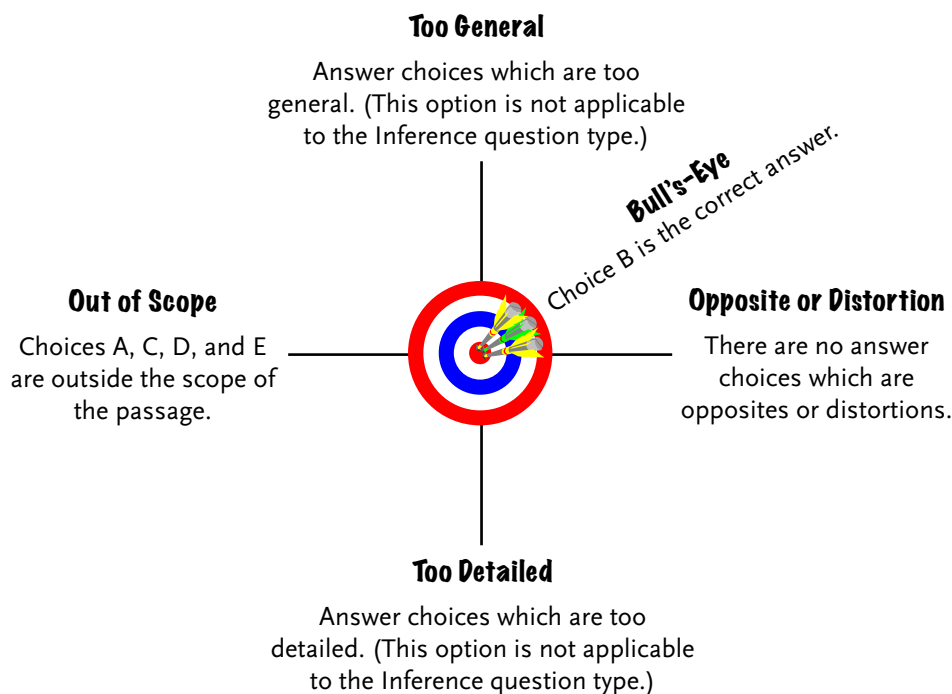
Choice C is a distorted meaning. Distortions are most often created by the use of extreme or categorical or absolute-type wordings. Here the word “only” signals a potential distortion. The author would likely agree that high scholastic achievement is a possible requirement for becoming educated, but not a sufficient condition in and of itself. In fact, the author really doesn’t mention scholastic achievement, so we might classify it as being out of scope if we did not happen to focus initially on the absolute-type wording.

Q62. ()

Choice B

Classification: Inference question

Snapshot: The challenge with inference questions is to find an answer that isn’t explicitly mentioned in the passage, but one which can be logically inferred.



Although the author does not give an exact “education” formula, he effectively says that a number of factors are necessary to travel the high road to becoming educated. These include: passion, a knack for learning, discipline, and maturity. In terms of maturity, he clearly states, “The young can be prepared for education in the years to come, but only mature men and women can become educated, beginning the process in their forties and fifties and reaching some modicum of genuine insight, sound judgment and practical wisdom after they have turned sixty.” Obviously, according to the author, if maturity

begins in a person's forties and takes another ten to twenty years, then an individual cannot be less than forty years of age and still be considered educated.

Wrong answer choices in inference-type questions often fall outside the passage's scope. Choice A is outside the passage's scope and is specifically referred to as an unwarranted comparison. The author does not say whether he believes becoming educated takes more passion than maturity or more maturity than passion.

Choice C is perhaps the trickiest wrong answer choice. The author doesn't imply that one has to be a university graduate. In fact, he mentions "school and/or college" (lines 3, 21, 23, and 24), which suggests that he may well lump high school in with college and/or university. A high school graduate might have enough schooling to get onto the road of education. Moreover, the author doesn't claim one must be a four-year college or university graduate or even whether one has to attend college or university.

There is no mention of classic works of literature, so choice D is outside the passage's scope; we cannot answer this question based on information presented in the passage. Choice E is wrong because the author never mentions "travel." Don't mistake the word "travail" (meaning "struggle"; line 33) for "travel." Moreover, it is possible, without evidence to the contrary, that a person could never have left his or her own country and still understand those ideas that make him or her representative of his or her particular culture.

Q63. ()

Choice A

Classification: Tone question

Snapshot: Tone questions ask about the author's feeling or attitude toward someone or something in the passage. Basically, the author will be either positive, negative, or neutral. In most cases, especially with respect to Social Sciences passages (versus Science passages), the fact that the author would sit down to write something hints that he or she has some opinion about the topic at hand. Therefore, the neutral answer choice is not usually correct, even if available. For this question, we have, on the positive and supportive side, the word pairs: "invaluable partners," "conscientious citizens," or "unfortunate victims." On the negative side, we have "uninformed participants" or "disdainful culprits."

The author's attitude toward adults is somewhat negative but not excessively so. The feeling is more like frustration. The author believes that adults are not grasping the distinction between schooling and education (lines 25–27). Therefore, positive sounding choices C and D are out. Choice B, "unfortunate victims," is sympathetic but the author thinks that adults are not victims, just misfocused. Choice E, "disdainful culprits," is too negative.

Q64. (1)

Choice C

Classification: Passage organization question type.

Snapshot: Think in terms of the number of viewpoints and the relationship of these viewpoints.

The author introduces his thesis or summary in the very first sentence, "... a controlling insight in my educational philosophy ...," then he goes on to support it with his personal observations, experiences, and opinions. Thus, choice A is not correct. No objective analysis is put forth; if there were, we would expect to see some surveys, statistics, or alternative viewpoints introduced. Choice B is wrong because there is a single idea presented but the author agrees with it because it is his own idea. Choice D is incorrect as there are not two viewpoints presented, just one. Choice E suggests a popular viewpoint but it is highly unlikely that many people have adopted this viewpoint because, according to the author, adults (and, by extension, laypersons) haven't really caught on. Last, a number of perspectives are not drawn upon. The author chooses to spend the entire article developing his single viewpoint "no one has ever been—no one could ever be—educated in school or college."

Q65. (3)

Choice D

Classification: Overview question

Snapshot: Make sure to read "the first sentence of the passage first then the last sentence of the passage next." Sometimes the author concludes at the bottom of the passage.

The major theme in this passage is that rituals are not only used by the Tsembaga society in a symbolic sense (that is, religiously, psychologically, or socially) but also in a practical or material way. Furthermore, these impacts or influences can be measured. Measurement is a key theme. Case in point: "they influence those relationships in measurable ways" (1st paragraph); "they enable cultural anthropologists to see that rituals can in fact produce measurable results in the external world" (2nd paragraph); and "newer quantitative studies permit anthropologists to analyze how ritual operates" (3rd paragraph). Choice D is a succinct rendition.

The passage does not suggest that anthropologists and ecologists collaborate for best results (choice A), even though the passage does suggest that anthropologists analyze ecological factors. Choice B is incorrect because the author does not criticize the symbolic role of rituals; he or she instead extends the discussion of rituals to include regulatory functions or mechanisms. The last sentence of the first paragraph makes this point: "However, recent studies of the Tsembaga, a society of nomadic agriculturalists in New Guinea, suggest that rituals do more than give symbolic expression to the relationships between a cultural group and components of its environment..."

The author does not evaluate theories of culture as indicated by choice C. His or her sole example is limited to the Tsembaga people. The author therefore does not prove that these studies show the measurable effects of rituals on other environments (per choice E).

Author's note: The T-S-P drill for this passage? The topic of this passage is "rituals of the Tsembaga people." The scope is the "symbolic and material aspects of rituals for the Tsembaga people." The

purpose is “to show that the benefits of rituals for the Tsembaga people are not only symbolic (spiritual) but also material (practical), and that these benefits can be measured.”

Q66. ()

Choice C

Classification: Inference question

Snapshot: This inference question serves to introduce the “all of the following except” phraseology in Reading Comprehension.

The effects of rituals on neighboring populations is not described in the second paragraph so choice C would be the most unlikely candidate for inclusion in an anthropological study in support of the author’s thesis. The influence of rituals on “the Tsembaga diet” (choice A), “the number of pigs owned” (choice B), “planting and harvest cycles” (choice D), or “type and function of weapons made” (choice E), all would be likely candidates for inclusion in such a report.

Q67. ()

Choice B

Classification: Inference question

Snapshot: This question is similar to an overview question but one which focuses on a specific subtopic within the passage.

The first sentence of the second paragraph lists many ways that rituals act as regulating mechanisms. It is obvious therefore that “ritual is multifaceted and performs diverse functions.” Choice A is not incorrect per se, but rather it is incomplete. The author’s view that ritual does more than symbolize relationships appears in the last sentence of the first paragraph: “However, recent studies of the Tsembaga, a society of nomadic agriculturalists in New Guinea, suggest that rituals do more than give symbolic expression to the relationships between a cultural group and components of its environment; they influence those relationships in measurable ways.” Choice C is essentially opposite the author’s view. The choice would have been better had it read: “Rituals imbue the events of the spiritual (symbolic) world with material significance.” Choice D is also opposite in meaning. According to the last sentence of the passage (it’s a long one), the author implies that anthropologists are in a better position to understand a society’s culture than is the society itself. In choice E, we cannot confirm or negate this answer choice based on information presented in the passage. It is not clear whether the spiritual significance of ritual is deemed greater than the material benefits of ritual or whether the material benefits of ritual are deemed greater than the spiritual benefits of ritual.

Q68. ()

Choice E

Classification: Explicit-detail/Inference question

Snapshot: This is essentially a “vocabulary” question and one which requires some verbal interpretation.

The terms “latent function” and “hidden function” are worthy substitutes. Although the author states that “the Tsembaga themselves see their rituals as pertaining less to their material relations with the ecosystem than to their spiritual relations with their ancestors,” this does not mean that such rituals

do not for them perform other essential roles. The author brings up “latent function” to suggest there is “hidden benefit” in the use of ritual for the Tsembaga; these additional benefits are practical, not symbolic.

In choices A and B, the author is not pitting anthropologists and sociologists against one another, or for that matter, the study of anthropology and sociology. Nor is the author suggesting that the two sides work together as suggested by choice C. The author is also not concluding that anthropologists are more interested in the regulatory function of rituals than the psychological or symbolic importance of rituals (choice D), even though the former—regulatory functions of ritual—is the focus of this passage. Note that the use of the comparative word “more” (choices A and D) often creates *out of scope* answer choices.

Q69. ()

Choice D

Classification: Passage Organization question

Snapshot: Science passages typically exist to *describe* (as opposed to Social Science passages which typically exist to *argue*) and such passages frequently incorporate two theories, hypotheses, or explanations.

The new schema is based on the distinction between Type I and Type II supernovas; the original schema is one based on the absence of hydrogen (Type I) or the presence of hydrogen (Type II). The example of the Sun is provided as support for how the classification system works. Choice D best summarizes this structure.

In choice A, the schemas do not necessarily overlap. An event classified as a Type I supernova under one schema might not be classified as a Type I supernova under the other schema (and vice versa). Also, the two schemas are described but not contrasted with each other. In choice B, it is inaccurate to describe the original theory as being overturned. The new theory is very much an “extension” of the old theory rather than a “replacement.” In choice C, no conclusion is offered. For example, the author does not state that Type I is “better or worse” than Type II, or that Type I is easier to use in describing or explaining the occurrence of supernovas than Type II. No reconciliation between the two different classification systems is provided per choice E. The two different systems are very much distinct and do not lend themselves to reconciliation.

Q70. ()

Choice C

Classification: Explicit-Detail/Inference question

Snapshot: This question links two parts of the passage, namely the last paragraph with paragraphs two and three.

Answer choice C describes accurately and completely the author’s view in the final paragraph. The Sun is not a binary star because it doesn’t have companion star orbiting it, so it can’t qualify as a Type I supernova. Nor does the Sun have the size necessary to become a Type II supernova (it would have to be at least 1.4 times its own size).

In choice A, there is no relationship suggested between the size of the Sun and its ability to have a white dwarf partner (per Type I). Choices B and D create unwarranted linkages between Type I and Type II supernovas. It is the white dwarf, not the Sun, which would undergo collapse and explosion as a supernova. In choice E, even if the Sun does become a red giant before becoming a white dwarf, it does not mean that it will become a supernova. It would still need another star (i.e., binary star) which it could absorb en route to becoming a Type I supernova.

Q71. ()

Choice A

Classification: Inference question

Snapshot: This question highlights the need to avoid choosing “reversed cause-and-effect relationships” and “fabricated cause-and-effect relationships” which are the hallmarks of certain incorrect inference answer choices that appear difficult Reading Comprehension passages.

Choices B, C, and D represent examples of such reversed cause-and-effect relationships. In choice B, it is the dense white dwarf that explodes as a supernova, not the companion star! Choice C suggests that a star such as the Sun must first become a white dwarf before becoming a red giant. This stands in opposition to what is suggested in the last line of the passage: that a star such as the Sun “swells into a red giant star before going into white dwarf form.” Choice D is more subtle. We know that Type II supernovas release energy from neutrinos and electromagnetic radiation. However the cause-and-effect relationship is reversed. It is the collapsing of the star that *causes* the release of energy as neutrinos and electromagnetic radiation, subsequent to the exploding of the star as a supernova. Choice D suggests that the energy and electromagnetic radiation is what *causes* the star to collapse and explode.

Choice A is readily inferable from the second and third sentences of the opening paragraph. Classifying Type 1 and Type 2 events based on the presence or absence of hydrogen or based on the different explosion mechanisms are not necessarily incompatible with one another. In other words, an event might be classified as a Type I supernova because it doesn’t have hydrogen lines *or* because it explodes as a result of being a white dwarf that acquires matter from its orbiting binary star. An event might be classified as a Type II supernova because it does have hydrogen lines *or* because it explodes as a result of being a massive collapsing star.

There is no indication from the information given in the passage that supernovas are rare events in the universe at large (choice E). For all we know, they are common in some galaxies and rare in others. It is important not to draw upon outside knowledge when answering Reading Comprehension questions.

Author’s note: Per choice D, a simple example might serve to better clarify the nature of the potential overlap. Schema 1: Say, for example, we classify a good day versus a bad day by the absence or presence of rain. A good day will have the absence of rain while a bad day will have the presence of rain. Schema 2: We might also classify a good day versus a bad day based on the number of hours of sunshine received. A good day will have a substantial number of hours of sunshine while a bad day will have a minimum number of hours of sunshine. In short, between schemas 1 and 2, a good day might have the absence of rain and a substantial number of hours of sunshine. A bad day might have the presence of rain and a minimal number of hours of sunshine. As we can quickly see, a good day might be classified as a “good day” under either schema.

On the contrary, a day might have a little rain and also a substantial number of hours of sunshine. In this case, it is considered a bad day under schema 1 but a good day under schema 2. Likewise, a day might have no rain and a minimal number of hours of sunshine. In this case, it is considered a good day under schema 1 but a bad day under schema 2. Here, there is no overlap between the two schemas.

Q72. ()

Choice B

Classification: Inference/Explicit-detail question

Snapshot: This question introduces the Roman numeral question-type in Reading Comprehension.

The statement represented by statement I cannot be proved or disproved from information gleaned from the passage. Although Type II stars appear bigger than Type I (“much more massive than the Sun” versus “at least 1.4 times as big as the Sun”), it is not certain which Type releases the greatest amount of overall energy.

Statement II is true. To be a binary star, the Sun must have an orbiting partner. Because the Sun does not, it does not qualify as a binary star (see first sentence of second paragraph as well as the last paragraph).

Statement III is false. The last line of the third paragraph clearly states: “Whereas Type I supernovas typically destroy their parent stars, Type II explosions usually leave behind the stellar core.” Type II supernovas, therefore, do not result in “complete destruction of the exploding star.”

Author’s note: This passage did not contain an *overview* question. Nonetheless, it is always recommended to do a T-S-P drill, asking what is the topic, scope, and purpose of the passage. The topic is “supernovas.” The scope is “Type I and Type II supernovas.” The purpose is “to describe a new schema for classifying Type I and Type II supernovas.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A graduate of the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business and certified public accountant, Brandon developed an expertise in GMAT test-taking and MBA admissions strategies while first working overseas for the world's largest test-preparation organization. This book represents his distilled experience gained from classroom teaching on two continents and individual tutor sessions that have helped hundreds of applicants beat the GMAT and achieve acceptance at the world's leading business schools.

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