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About PowerScore

PowerScore is one of the nation's fastest growing test preparation companies. Founded in 1997, PowerScore offers LSAT, GMAT, GRE, and SAT preparation classes in over 150 locations in the U.S. and abroad. Preparation options include Full-length courses, Weekend courses, Virtual courses, private tutoring, and admissions counseling services. For more information, please visit our website at www.powerscore.com or call us at (800) 545-1750.

For supplemental information about this book, please visit the *Reading Comprehension Bible* website at www.powerscore.com/lSATbibles.

C HAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Welcome to the *PowerScore LSAT Reading Comprehension Bible*. The purpose of this book is to provide you with a powerful and comprehensive system for attacking the Reading Comprehension section of the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). By carefully studying and correctly applying the techniques we employ, we are certain that you can increase your Reading Comprehension score.

In an effort to clearly explain the fundamental principles of the Reading Comprehension section, this book contains substantial discussions of how to deconstruct the passages as you read, how to identify and attack the questions, and how to successfully avoid the traps set by the test makers. In doing so, we recommend techniques and approaches that have been tested in our live LSAT preparation classes, through individual tutoring, and on the LSAT itself. We feel the use of real Reading Comprehension passages is essential to your success on the LSAT, and no LSAT passage in this book has been modified from its original form.

This book has been carefully designed to reinforce your understanding of the concepts behind the Reading Comprehension section. In order to effectively and efficiently apply our methods, we strongly recommend that you thoroughly read and then reread each of the discussions regarding passage elements. We also suggest that as you finish each question you look not only at the correct answer choice, but also at the incorrect answer choices. Look again at the problem and determine which elements led to the correct answer. Study the analyses and explanations provided in the book and check them against your own work. By doing so, you will greatly increase your chances of scoring high on the Reading Comprehension section.

This book also contains a variety of drills and exercises that supplement the discussion of techniques and question analysis. The drills help strengthen specific skills that are critical for LSAT excellence; for this reason they are as important as the LSAT questions. In the answer keys to these drills we will often introduce and discuss important LSAT points, so we strongly advise you to read through all of the explanations.

Beginning on page 351 there is a complete quick-reference answer key to all of the problems in this book. This reference contains chapter-by-chapter answer keys, and on page 354 you will find a unique reverse lookup feature that lists all of the passages used in this book sorted by the LSAT administration date and PrepTest number.

If you are looking to further improve your LSAT score, we also recommend that you pick up a copy of the renowned PowerScore LSAT Logical Reasoning Bible and LSAT Logic Games Bible. The Logical Reasoning Bible contains our system for attacking the Logical Reasoning section of the LSAT, and the Logic Games Bible explains our methodology for attacking the Analytical Reasoning section. Both books are available through our website at www.powerscore.com.

Because new LSATs appear every several months, and access to accurate and up-to-date information is critical, we have devoted a section of our website to *Reading Comprehension Bible* students. This free online resource area offers supplements to the book material, answers questions posed by students, and provides updates as needed. There is also an official book evaluation form that we strongly encourage you to use. The exclusive *LSAT Reading Comprehension Bible* online resource area can be accessed at:

www.powerscore.com/lSATbibles

If we can assist you in your LSAT preparation in any way, or if you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to email us at lsatbibles@powerscore.com. Additional contact information is provided at the end of this book. We look forward to hearing from you!

C HAPTER TWO: THE BASICS OF READING COMPREHENSION

The Reading Comprehension Section

The focus of this book is on the Reading Comprehension section of the LSAT, and each Reading Comprehension section contains four passage sets with a total of 26 to 28 questions. Since you have thirty-five minutes to complete the section, you have an average of approximately eight minutes and forty-five seconds to complete each passage set. Of course, the amount of time you spend on each passage set will vary with the reading difficulty of the passage(s), the difficulty of the questions, and the total number of questions per passage set. For virtually all students the time constraint is a major obstacle, and as we progress through this book we will discuss time management as well as time-saving techniques that you can employ within this section.

On average, you have 8 minutes and 45 seconds to complete each passage set.

Why Reading Comprehension?

Each section of the LSAT is designed to test abilities required in the study and/or practice of law. The Logical Reasoning sections measure your skills in argumentation and logic. The Logic Games section tests your ability to understand the interaction of different variables and the laws which govern their actions. Reading Comprehension, a section included in many standardized tests, provides a test of skills particularly important to both law students and attorneys. Law students are required to read significant portions of dense text throughout their legal studies, and lawyers must often be ready to do the same in their normal course of business; given that the misreading of a contract or legal judgment could lead to disastrous results for a lawyer's clients (not to mention the lawyer), it should not be surprising that Reading Comprehension is an integral part of the Law School Admission Test.

The Section Directions

Each Reading Comprehension section is prefaced by the following directions:

“Each set of questions in this section is based on a single passage or a pair of passages. The questions are to be answered on the basis of what is stated or implied in the passage or pair of passages. For some questions, more than one of the choices could conceivably answer the question. However, you are to choose the best answer; that is, the response that most accurately and completely answers the question, and blacken the corresponding space on your answer sheet.”

Because these directions precede every Reading Comprehension section, you should familiarize yourself with them now. Once the LSAT begins, *never* waste time reading the directions for any section.

Remember, the LSAT is used for admission to US and Canadian law schools, hence the test is geared towards those cultures.

Let us examine these directions more closely. Consider the following sentence: “The questions are to be answered on the basis of what is stated or implied in the passage or pair of passages.” Thus, the test makers indicate that you are to use the statements of the author of the passage to prove and disprove answer choices. You do not need to bring in additional information aside from the typical ideas that the average American or Canadian would be expected to believe on the basis of generally known and accepted facts. For example, you would be expected to understand the *basics* of how the weather works, or how supply and demand works, but not the specifics of either. Please note that this does not mean that the LSAT cannot set up scenarios where they discuss ideas that are extreme or outside the bounds of common knowledge, such as a passage about a difficult scientific or legal concept. The test makers can and do discuss complex or extreme ideas; in these cases, they give you context for the situation by providing additional information.

You should read all five answer choices in each question.

The other part of the directions that is interesting is the sentence that states, “For some questions, more than one of the choices could conceivably answer the question. However, you are to choose the best answer; that is, the response that most accurately and completely answers the question.” By stating up front that more than one answer choice could suffice to answer the question, the makers of the test compel you to read every single answer choice before making a selection. If you read only one or two answer choices and then decide you have the correct one, you could end up choosing an answer that has some merit but is not as good as a later answer. One of the test makers’ favorite tricks is to place a highly attractive wrong answer choice immediately before the correct answer choice in the hopes that you will pick the wrong answer choice and then move to the next question without reading any of the other answers.

The Two Passage Types

The section directions also state that “Each set of questions in this section is based on a single passage or a pair of passages.” Prior to June 2007, all LSAT Reading Comprehension sections consisted of four total passages, each accompanied by a series of five to eight questions. Each passage and its accompanying questions are known as a “passage set.”

Starting with the June 2007 LSAT, the test makers introduced a new element to the test known as a Comparative Reading passage set, wherein two passages addressing the same topic are presented, and a set of questions follows. Comparative Reading passage sets and the special considerations that follow from their unique structure will be addressed in detail in Chapter Seven.

Passage Topics

Reading Comprehension passages are drawn from a wide variety of disciplines, including science, law, and humanities. Thus, you will typically encounter four passage sets with widely varying topical matter. However, even though passage subject matter differs, most sections are constructed from the same consistent set of topics, as follows:

4 Passage Sets

- 1 Law-related passage
- 1 Science-based passage
- 1 Humanities passage featuring diversity
- 1 Random passage, often Humanities

So, even though the exact subject matter of each passage changes from test to test, the typical LSAT contains one science passage, one law passage, and one humanities passage featuring diversity. The remaining passage is usually drawn from a humanities field such as history or economics, but occasionally the passage comes from science or law.

For a typical example, consider the topics from the December 2007 LSAT:

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Subject Matter</u>
Humanities/Diversity	Asian-American Poetry of Wing Tek Lum
Law	British Common Law
Humanities	University Research Commercialization
Science	Natural Predation and Cyclamen Mites

Please note that the topic of the passage is not necessarily indicative of the level of difficulty. That is, some Science passages are easy, some are difficult. The same goes for Law passages, Humanities passages, etc. In the next chapter we will discuss how to attack any type of passage, and we will discuss how the underlying structure of passages can be analyzed regardless of the passage topic. Topic is examined here so that you understand the nature of what you will be reading. In some cases, knowing the topic can help you make informed decisions about the viewpoints that will be presented therein, and in many cases, students perform better on passages that contain a subject matter that is familiar to them. And, although our primary analysis will focus on viewpoints and structure, later in this chapter we will examine passages from the most commonly occurring topics as a way to calibrate your test radar to the types of mechanisms and viewpoints put forth by the makers of the test.

To locate passages written in the desired style, test makers draw from various sources, which they adapt for use in the Reading Comprehension section. Academic, scientific, and scholarly journals tend to be written in a fairly sophisticated manner, and thus routinely provide materials for the LSAT; recent passage sources have included The University of California, Scientific American Library, and Johns Hopkins University. Articles are also drawn from publications devoted to the arts, including recent offerings from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and Poetry in Review Foundation. While the passages are drawn from a wide variety of sources, including newspapers, magazines, books, and journals, they tend to be written in a recognizable, academic style that generally evades simple analysis.

Understand the Type of Difficulty in the Reading Comprehension Section

There is a widespread misconception among test takers that because one's reading level is difficult to improve (having been developed over many years), one's performance on the Reading Comprehension section is also unlikely to change. This belief reflects a common misunderstanding about the specific type of difficulty associated with reading LSAT passages. Keeping in mind that the test makers only have about half of a page to get their points across, LSAT authors are limited as to the degree of depth that can be reached. This is not to say that these passages are simple, but that the challenge often comes from sources other than conceptual difficulty.

The LSAT is designed not only as a test of conceptual abilities—it is also a test of intimidation. So, how do the test makers ensure that the passages are challenging? Often by choosing subjects that seem daunting; many passages are based on esoteric topics, filled with sophisticated-sounding scientific or technical terms. It is vital that you avoid intimidation as a response to words or phrases which you have never seen. Since the makers of the LSAT do not expect or require outside knowledge with regard to Reading Comprehension passage topics, unfamiliar terms or phrases will almost always be surrounded by context clues. These issues will be covered further in our discussion of reading and notating strategy; for now it is important to understand that unfamiliar words or phrases do not necessarily make a passage any more conceptually difficult, as long as you do not react with discomfort at the prospect of seeing novel terms or phrases.

In seeking to increase reading speed, some students ask us about speed reading courses. In our extensive experience, speed reading techniques do not work on LSAT passages because of the way they are written and constructed. LSAT passages are written in a detailed style filled with built-in traps and formations, and speed reading techniques are not designed to detect these elements.

Reading Speed and Returning to the Passage

Given that you have an average of 8 minutes and 45 seconds to read each passage and complete the questions, the amount of time that you spend reading the passage has a direct effect on your ability to comfortably complete all of the questions. At the same time, the makers of the LSAT have extraordinarily high expectations about the level of knowledge you should retain when you read a passage. Many questions will test your knowledge of small, seemingly nitpicky variations in phrasing, and reading carelessly is LSAT suicide. Thus, every test taker is placed at the nexus of two competing elements: the need for speed (caused by the timed element) and the need for patience (caused by the detailed reading requirement). How well you manage these two elements strongly determines how well you perform.

Although it may sound rather ordinary, the best approach is to read each passage at the high end of your normal reading speed. If possible, you should try to step it up a notch or two, but reading too quickly will cause you to miss much of the detailed information presented in the passage and will force you to reread most of the passage. On the other hand, reading too slowly will prevent you from having adequate time to answer all of the questions.

One thing to be aware of as you read is that you do not need to remember every single detail of the passage. Instead, you simply need to remember the basic structure of the passage so you will know where to return when answering the questions. We will discuss this in more detail when we discuss passage structure.

Everyone's reading speed is different, but the fastest readers tend to complete each passage in somewhere around two to two and a half minutes. Readers moving at a more deliberate pace should finish the passage in around three to three and a half minutes. Once your reading time per passage exceeds the three and a half minute mark, the likelihood of being able to complete all of the questions drops considerably. At the end of this book we will discuss section management and how to handle situations where time is running out, and over the next several chapters we will focus on improving your LSAT reading ability. Improving your reading ability will, in part, consist of teaching you what to look for when reading the passages. Once your ability improves, you will be able to move through the passages and questions more quickly.

Please note that the primary aim of this book is not to just make you a *faster* reader (your natural reading speed has been developed over many years and is hard to increase by itself in a short period of time). Instead, as you become more adept with effective approaches to the passages, you will likely be able to attack the passage sets far more proficiently. The goal here is to make you a *better* reader with a greater knowledge of what to look for, and this will result in your becoming a faster reader.

Active Reading and Anticipation

The best readers read actively. That is, they engage the material and consider the implications of each statement as they read. They also use their involvement in the material to constantly anticipate what will occur next in the passage. This type of reading takes focus and a positive attitude, as discussed earlier, but it also takes practice.

The first part of this book is devoted to examining the theory of approaching the passages and questions, whereas the second part of the book is focused on applying those ideas and discussing passage elements.

Let us take a moment to examine several short sections of text, and use those sections to highlight the idea of how active reading leads to anticipating what comes next:

Governmental reforms, loosening of regulations, and the opening of markets each played a role in fueling China's economic growth over the last quarter-century.

After reading this section, one could deduce that there are a number of directions this passage could go. For example, a detailed analysis of each of the three listed factors in the economic growth could be presented, or further implications of the growth could be discussed. Let's add the next two sentences—which complete this paragraph—and see where the author goes:

Governmental reforms, loosening of regulations, and the opening of markets each played a role in fueling China's economic growth over the last quarter-century.

- (5) Within the economy, the two most important segments are industry and agriculture. However, industry has grown at a significantly faster pace than agriculture.

If you were reading this passage, when you reached this juncture, you should have a fairly good idea of the possible directions the author can take with the *next* paragraph. Consider for a moment the information that has been presented thus far:

- Three factors were named as playing a role in China's economic growth over the last quarter-century.
- The economy is stated to have two key segments.
- One of those two segments is said to have grown at a much faster rate than the other segment.

Clearly, the logical direction to take at this point would be to either explain why industry has grown at a faster rate or why agriculture has grown at a slower rate, or both. There does seem to be a slightly higher likelihood that the author will focus on industry because the exact phrase used was, "industry has

grown at a significantly faster pace than agriculture,” and this phrasing puts the emphasis on “industry.”

Let’s see which direction the author chose:

- Governmental reforms, loosening of regulations, and the opening of markets each played a role in fueling China’s economic growth over the last quarter-century. Within the economy, the two most important segments are industry and agriculture. However, industry has grown at a significantly faster pace than agriculture.
- (5) The growth in industry has occurred largely in the urban areas of China, and has been primarily spurred by a focus on technology and heavy manufacturing. This emphasis, however, has not come without costs.
- (10)

Not surprisingly, the author chose to address the industrial side of the economic growth, in this case by focusing on the segments within industry that have been the most important. Of course, as you continue to read, being correct in your anticipation should not cause you to stop reading actively. As the passage moves forward you should continue to “look ahead” mentally. For example, the last sentence in the text above suggests that the next topic of discussion will be the costs associated with the industrial economic growth.

As a reader, anticipating what will come next in the passage is a habit you should seek to cultivate. By constantly thinking about the possible directions the author can take, you will gain a richer perspective on the story being told by the author. Of course, at times, you might be incorrect in your prediction of what will come next. This is not a problem—you will still be able to absorb what is presented and there is no associated time loss. Simply put, there are tremendous benefits gained from actively reading.

C HAPTER THREE: PASSAGE ELEMENTS AND FORMATIONS

Chapter Preview

This chapter will cover sources of passage difficulty and examine the elements and formations that appear in passages which tend to generate questions. That is, we will look at why passages are hard and what passage elements the test makers tend to ask about. In this sense, this chapter continues the discussion begun in Chapter Two. Chapter Two introduced the “big picture” elements that you must always track, whereas this chapter will discuss the more detailed elements that you should note. In the following two chapters we will then talk about how to physically notate these elements and then examine individual question types.

Sources of Difficulty: The Test Makers’ Arsenal

There are several general ways the makers of the test can increase the level of difficulty of any given passage. Before examining the specific elements that the test makers like to test, reviewing the general methods that can be used to increase difficulty is helpful.

The following five methods are the primary ways used by the test makers to alter the perception of difficulty that students have about individual passages:

Challenging Topic or Terminology

In some passages, the choice of topic makes the passage seem more difficult to some students. For example, many students fear the appearance of a science-related passage on the LSAT. As we will discuss later, you should not be afraid or unduly worried by science passages (or any passage, for that matter). That said, an unfamiliar or complex topic can make a passage harder, but only incrementally so because the test makers are forced to explain the main concepts of the passage, regardless of the topic. Thus, there may be a few moments of anxiety while you are forced to adjust to an unknown topic, but the test makers will always give you the information needed to answer the questions. As outlined below, other methods are far more effective at making a passage difficult.

The use of complicated terminology usually concerns students as well. Reading a passage that contains words or ideas that you do not recognize is intimidating and usually confusing. As mentioned in Chapter Two, you should not be intimidated by unknown concepts, mainly because the test makers must *always* define any term or concept not in common public usage.

When you encounter unknown words, they will fall into one of two categories: new terms related to the concept under discussion or unknown vocabulary words. In the case of terms related to the concept under discussion (such as *Scar Art* or *LHB*), the test makers will define the term or concept for you in the text, sometimes briefly using synonyms, sometimes in greater detail. Unknown vocabulary words can be more challenging, but you can use context clues from the surrounding text to help determine the meaning of words you do not recognize. We will briefly discuss this point again later in this chapter.

Challenging Writing Style

The test makers carefully choose whether a passage will have a clear, easy-to-read writing style or a dense, convoluted writing style. Obviously, writing style has a tremendous effect on passage difficulty because even the easiest of concepts can become difficult to understand if the writing style is intentionally complex.

In the first few lines of a passage, it is difficult to tell whether the writing style will be challenging. If you do encounter a passage that has a very difficult-to-read style, use some of the tips in the next section to focus on the elements most likely to be tested.

There is no easy way to combat a passage written in an intentionally convoluted style other than carefully reading and clearly marking the passage.

Multiple Viewpoints

In Chapter Two we discussed the importance of tracking viewpoints while reading. We will discuss this again in a few pages, but be aware that one easy way for the test makers to increase difficulty is to add more viewpoints. Tracking viewpoints in a passage with only two viewpoints is easy; tracking viewpoints in a passage with six viewpoints is considerably more challenging. The more viewpoints present, the easier it is to confuse them, or forget who said what. This is especially true because when more viewpoints are present, the test makers typically insert extensive compare-and-contrast sections, which makes separating and mastering each view more difficult.

Later in this section we will address “compare and contrast” sections, and in Chapter Four we will discuss methods for tracking viewpoints in a concrete and easy-to-identify fashion.