Chapter Nine
Reading Passage Mastery: Analyze the Answer Choices

Just like Sentence Completion questions, Passage-Based Reading questions have two parts: a question stem and five answer choices:

Question Stem → In lines 9-13 (“Although . . . wonderful”), the author’s tone is best described as

Answer Choices →
(A) critical
(B) hostile
(C) disappointed
(D) sardonic
(E) appreciative

You are likely wondering why we are “putting the cart before the horse” and discussing the answer choices before covering the question stem. By reviewing answer choices now, you will have more opportunities to practice selecting the right answers and eliminating the wrong ones in the problem sets in the following chapter. We can also point to answers in our explanations for those problem sets and state “This is an Extreme Answer” without explaining that concept over and over because you will know what an Extreme Answer is after reading this chapter. Finally, these strategies are universal to all types of Passage-Based Reading questions, so it is convenient to discuss them here before looking at the specific types of questions.

There are two types of answers on the SAT: right answers and wrong answers. But you already knew that, right? In this chapter, we will discuss the characteristics of right and wrong answer choices in greater detail:

1. Right Answers
2. Wrong Answers
   • Copycats
   • Opposites
   • Extremes
   • True But Wrong
   • True To A Point
   • True To You

Let’s get started!
Right Answers

There is a certain comfort in multiple choice questions, knowing that the right answer is there on the page staring up at you. In Passage-Based Reading questions, the right answer is the only answer that can be proven true.

If the question asks you to interpret a phrase or sentence from the passage, the right answer will be a paraphrase of the actual passage. Consider an example:

While the United States was fighting the War of 1812 with Britain, a series of violent incidents occurred when authorities entered Seminole territory to recapture runaway slaves, which aggravated the Seminole and increased hostility.

1. According to the passage, the “hostility” (line 5) between the United States and the Seminole was intensified by which of the following?

(A) Wrong answer
(B) Officials invading Native American territory to reclaim escaped slaves.
(C) Wrong answer
(D) Wrong answer
(E) Wrong answer

The correct answer, choice (B), is a reworded version of lines 3 and 4. Compare the wording of the passage and the correct answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words from Passage</th>
<th>Words from Correct Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>authorities</td>
<td>officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entered</td>
<td>invaded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminole</td>
<td>Native American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>territory</td>
<td>territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recapture</td>
<td>reclaim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>runaway</td>
<td>escaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slaves</td>
<td>slaves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When adjectives and verbs are used in the original passage, expect the correct answer to use synonyms for these words. Even some of the nouns may be replaced with synonyms, although you should not discount an answer for using the same nouns that were used in the passage. After all, there are only so many ways you can say *spaghetti* or *elephant* or *pants*! If a noun does not have many recognizable synonyms, the test makers will reuse the word in the answer choice. But since adjectives and verbs have many alternatives, they will likely be replaced with different words.

Confidence Quotation

“Two trucks loaded with a thousand copies of Roget’s Thesaurus collided as they left a New York publishing house last week, according to the Associated Press. Witnesses were stunned, startled, aghast, taken aback, stupefied, appalled, surprised, shocked and rattled.” - Alan Schlein
Even questions that ask you to draw conclusions about the passage will have right answer choices that prefer synonyms over the actual words from the text. It’s one way that the test makers can actually assess whether you understand the passage or are just regurgitating words you happened to read.

The right answer will also include all of the important ideas from the cited line reference, unlike some wrong answers that only provide a portion of the information. Study another example:

Mельнер attributes the decline in school enrollment to several factors. For one, families are moving out of the area to find work. For another, lackluster test results cause some existing and most new families to choose other districts.

2. According to the passage, enrollment in the school district has decreased because of families’

(A) Wrong answer
(B) Wrong answer
(C) Wrong answer
(D) Wrong answer
(E) emphasis on jobs and performance

The correct answer includes both *moving out of the area to find work* (emphasis on jobs) and *lackluster test results* (emphasis on performance). As we will discuss in the next section, wrong answers may address only one of those reasons. The right answer includes all of the important ideas.

Another characteristic of right answers is that they tend to be more general than wrong answers:

The festival allowed us to acknowledge our German heritage after hiding our ancestry the rest of the year. For one weekend, my sisters and I could feast on mettwurst and maultaschen, dance the landler, and play Topfschlagen without worrying about the anti-German sentiments permeating the country after the war. It was our most memorable weekend of 1946.

3. According to the passage, the narrator remembers the “festival” (line 1) with fondness because

(A) he learned a German dance called the landler
(B) Wrong answer
(C) Wrong answer
(D) it allowed him to celebrate his culture
(E) German sausages were prepared for the first time that year

*TIPS and TRICKS:
The correct answer incorporates all of the important ideas from the line reference.

*TIPS and TRICKS:
Right answers tend to be more general than wrong answers.
The correct answer, (D), uses the broad term *culture* to describe the German food, dance, and game that were a part of the festival. The two wrong answers use more specific language. Choice (A) is wrong because it claims the narrator learned a dance; the passage just states that he *danced* the landler, not that he *learned* it. But notice that this answer is quite specific. As is (E). The answer in (E) is wrong because the passage only says that he *ate* mettwurst, not that it was the first time they were *prepared* that year. But again, the use of *German sausages* is quite specific. Sometimes the correct answer is this particular, too, especially if the question asks about a specific event, but when in doubt, select the most general answer choice.

The right answer is the only answer that can be defended or proven in the text. While many questions ask you which answer best characterizes or most effectively supports an argument in the passage, there is only one choice that completely and correctly answers the question. As we will see, something makes the other four answer choices wrong. When you select an answer, you should be pretty confident that it is correct because you can point to a specific portion of the text that proves the answer.

Now that you know what to look for in the right answers, let’s look more closely at common wrong answers!
Wrong Answers

If only one answer can be right, then four others are wrong. The test makers carefully write these wrong answer choices, intentionally using language and ideas that trick unsuspecting test takers. Learning how these incorrect answers are crafted can help you spot them, which is why eliminating wrong answers can sometimes be easier than determining the right answer.

Copycat Answers

The most common characteristic of wrong answers is that they copy words or phrases from the passage. These are Copycat Answers. Consider an example from earlier in the chapter:

While the United States was fighting the War of 1812 with Britain, a series of violent incidents occurred when authorities entered Seminole territory to recapture runaway slaves, which aggravated the Seminole and increased hostility.

1. According to the passage, the “hostility” (line 5) between the United States and the Seminole was intensified by which of the following?

   (A) Wrong answer
   (B) Officials invading Native American territory to reclaim escaped slaves.
   (C) Wrong answer
   (D) A violent incident that aggravated the American government.
   (E) Wrong answer

We have already looked at how the right answer, choice (B), uses synonyms for words in the text. But consider the choice of words used by answer (D):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words from Wrong Answer</th>
<th>Words from Passage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>violent incident</td>
<td>violent incidents (line 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aggravated</td>
<td>aggravated (line 4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answer uses two words or phrases directly from the text! Sadly, this simple tactic will trick a lot of test takers into choosing this answer.

The reason that this answer is incorrect is because it expresses an opposite idea, which we will discuss in the next section. The Seminole were aggravated, not the American government as the answer choice states. Copycat Answers are usually combined with another answer trap from the following pages, which is why we discussed Copycats first in this section. Always be leery of answer choices that use several words or phrases from the passage.
Opposite Answers

Just as Sentence Completion questions often have a wrong answer choice that is opposite of your prephrase, so may Passage-Based Reading questions. The College Board is playing on students’ self-doubt, as many test takers will assume they misunderstood the passage and that it actually said the opposite of what they originally understood. Do not doubt your initial reading unless you reread the text and have a new understanding!

The question that we studied on the previous page is a good example of an Opposite Answer, where the statement in the answer choice had the opposite meaning as the passage. Let’s look at another from a previous passage:

The festival allowed us to acknowledge our German heritage after hiding our ancestry the rest of the year. For one weekend, my sisters and I could feast on mettwurst and maultaschen, dance the landler, and play Topfschlagen without worrying about the anti-German sentiments permeating the country after the war. It was our most memorable weekend of 1946.

3. According to the passage, the narrator remembers the “festival” (line 1) with fondness because

(A) he learned a German dance called the landler
(B) he was able to conceal his German heritage
(C) Wrong answer
(D) it allowed him to celebrate his culture
(E) German sausages were prepared for the first time that year

We have already determined that answer choice (D) is correct: he liked the festival because he was able to celebrate his German heritage. But look at choice (B). This presents an idea opposite of the correct answer: that instead of acknowledging his culture, he hid it. Notice that it also uses the phrase German heritage from lines 1-2. Sadly, some students will read this answer choice and assume they misread the passage. They select (B) without ever reading the last three answer choices.

You should note that the test makers often put the most attractive wrong answer choice above the right answer for this very reason. If they can trick you into selecting an answer before reading the correct one, then they helped colleges weed out students who are careless and inattentive to detail. Always read all five answer choices before making your selection. And steer clear of any answer choice that presents an idea directly opposite of your predicted answer.
Extreme Answers

In an SAT answer choice, every word counts, and each of those words should be read literally. Let’s analyze the meaning of the following answer choice:

(A) People in the neighborhood think that Mr. Wilson is mean.

Because this answer choice has no modifiers, it states that ALL people in the neighborhood think that Mr. Wilson is mean—including Mrs. Wilson, neighboring infants and children, and Mr. Wilson’s friends. Because statements like this one are so extreme, the makers of the SAT are likely to use modifiers to subdue the meaning. Consider some examples:

(B) Most people in the neighborhood think that Mr. Wilson is mean.
(C) Many people in the neighborhood think that Mr. Wilson is mean.
(D) Some people in the neighborhood think that Mr. Wilson is mean.

Each of these answer choices added an adjective modifier to people, making them easier to defend than the original answer in (A). However, choices (B) and (C) are still somewhat Extreme Answers; the qualifiers most and many include a lot of people, making these answers difficult to prove. But answer choice (D) is much more moderate. With the use of some, you only need to find two people who think Mr. Wilson is mean in order for this answer choice to be true. Sometimes the right answer will also use somewhat:

(E) The neighbor thinks that Mr. Wilson is somewhat mean.

In this answer choice, somewhat tempers the meaning of mean. Instead of proving that Mr. Wilson is always cruel, you only need to find one instance of meanness to make him somewhat mean.

Also watch for Extreme verbs. Consider the difference between these three answer choices:

(A) Henry must go to the wedding.
(B) Henry needs to go to the wedding.
(C) Henry should go to the wedding.

It is difficult to defend must go and needs to go, and it is quite unlikely that the author was that straightforward in the passage. However, should go is much easier to prove.
Passage Based Reading Mastery

For most SAT questions, avoid answers that use most, many, must, needs, or these other Extreme words:

- all, total, only, solely, exclusively, completely, entirely, thoroughly
- mainly, chiefly, primarily, largely, mostly
- invariably, certainly, absolutely, unquestionably
- always, never, not
- words that end in -est (greatest, largest, etc.)
- words that end in -less (worthless, useless, etc.)
- words that are preceded by most (most accurate, most important, etc.)
- words that are preceded by least (least significant, least truthful, etc.)

Some Extreme Words are more difficult to pinpoint. Consider these two answers:

(A) Penelope was surprised by her mother’s **vicious** reply.
(B) Penelope was surprised by her mother’s **insensitive** reply.

Which answer choice is easiest to defend? The word vicious makes answer choice (A) the least likely answer. In order for the reply to be vicious, the mother would have had to have been spiteful, cruel, and severe. But the word insensitive is much easier to defend. She simply had to say something that was mildly unkind in order to be called insensitive.

Consider the difference between these moderate and extreme word pairs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moderate Word</th>
<th>Extreme Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unfriendly</td>
<td>hostile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happy</td>
<td>elated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sad</td>
<td>despairing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excited</td>
<td>hysterical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impolite</td>
<td>barbaric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mischievous</td>
<td>sinister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opposition</td>
<td>malice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unrealistic</td>
<td>outrageous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>challenge</td>
<td>mock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foolish</td>
<td>ludicrous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anxious</td>
<td>frantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unlikely</td>
<td>impossible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criticize</td>
<td>chastise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You would be wise to avoid answers with these extreme words and others like them.
One Extreme Word that often avoids detection is *nostalgic*. The definition maintains that a person who is nostalgic desires to return to a happier time in the past. Someone who remembers his childhood is not necessarily nostalgic; he would have to express his longing for the happiness from that childhood in order to be considered nostalgic. So unless an author or narrator plans to build a time machine and return to the past, try to avoid an answer choice with the word *nostalgic* or *nostalgia* on the SAT.

Let’s look at a previous passage with a question utilizing some Extreme Answers:

Melner attributes the decline in school enrollment to several factors. For one, families are moving out of the area to find work. For another, lackluster test results cause some existing and most new families to choose other districts.

2. According to the passage, enrollment in the school district has decreased because of families’

(A) complete confidence in standardized tests
(B) Wrong answer
(C) outrage over the lack of employment
(D) Wrong answer
(E) emphasis on jobs and performance

We previously determined that the correct answer is (E). But examine choice (A). Aside from being totally inaccurate, it uses the word *complete*. This is an Extreme Word, and so the answer choice should be avoided.

Choice (C) uses the Extreme Word *outrage*. In order to prove this word is justified, the families would have had to have shown show powerful feelings of anger and resentment. The passage does not indicate they expressed these feelings, let alone even felt them. Both (A) and (C) are Extreme Answers.

Extreme Answers are almost always incorrect on the SAT. But notice that we’ve used the modifier *almost* in the previous sentence. That’s because there is a slight chance you may encounter an extreme passage. Perhaps you will find a passage where the author detests snakes or adamantly defends the Constitution. If you have an extreme passage, written by an author who is forceful about her beliefs, you can expect some Extreme Answers. These answer choices should be easy to defend, however. If the author states that snakes are wicked and she wishes a plague would wipe them off the face of the Earth, then answer choices with the words *sinister* and *malice* become attractive and defendable. Given the temperate nature of the SAT, though, it is unlikely you will encounter such an extreme passage. When in doubt, avoid all answer choices with extreme words.
True But Wrong Answers

True But Wrong Answers are especially tricky because they provide a true statement or conclusion based on the passage; however, they do not answer the specific question at hand. They pull a fact or inference from an earlier or later portion of text, but have little to do with the line reference in question.

Let’s consider an example from a previous passage:


“Did you hear about your brother?” my father asked, knowing full well that Mother had already told me about Peter’s promotion at the bank. “He’s really making something of himself, I tell you. I always knew that boy would go far.”

I drank from my iced tea to avoid having to answer. I had been compared to my twin for nearly twenty-five years and I was still coming up short.

“So, Robert,” he began, “when are you going to get promoted at the art gallery?” Here it was again. A comparison.

“Dad, I am a painter,” I said. “I don’t get promoted. I don’t even work for the gallery. Just being displayed there is a tremendous honor.”

“Hmph,” he grunted. He stirred his cocktail with a finger. “Honor doesn’t mean the same thing today as it did in my day then, I guess. Being recognized for saving three men on the battlefield, that was an honor.”

I could not win. I was never going to please my father because I was never going to succeed at what he considered honorable.

My father was a young child when my grandparents came to America. They were migrant workers, who only planned on staying the summer at the tomato farm, but when my Uncle Miguel contracted polio, they decided to remain through the winter—a decision that changed the course of my family’s history. My grandparents never returned to Mexico after the farmer hired them full time, and my father was raised along with the white children on the farm. He enlisted in the marines upon graduating high school with honors and was sent to Vietnam, years he rarely talks about except to define honor, courage, and fear. When he came home from the war, he went to the University of Michigan on a scholarship which led
to a job with the largest bank in the county. Within 10 years, he was vice president of the bank, and within 20, he was running it. As he liked to say, “Not bad for a poor immigrant from Mexico.”

My brother had taken a similar road. He was valedictorian of his high school class, a Gulf War veteran, and a college graduate. He was a banker at the same bank that my father had worked. And I was none of these things. I was an artist, a career that helped free me from my father and imprison me in his judgment at the same time.

2. Lines 7-8 (“I had . . . up short”) indicate that

(A) Peter is taller than Robert
(B) Robert’s father had a successful career
(C) Robert’s mother does not consider art an honorable pursuit
(D) Peter’s choices have been favored over Robert’s decisions by their father
(E) it is impossible to raise twins without showing favoritism

In the previous chapter, we determined that the correct answer for #2 is (D). But notice choice (B). This is a true statement, as indicated in lines 37-39. However, although it is true, it is wrong, as it does not answer the specific question about lines 7-8.

3. The father responds to Robert’s comments in lines 12-14 by doing which of the following?

(A) Challenging Robert’s definition of honor
(B) Asserting his power over Robert
(C) Recalling the challenges he faced growing up
(D) Agreeing that Robert’s successful endeavors are different than Peter’s accomplishments
(E) Denying one son equal treatment

The third question also has a True But Wrong Answer in (E). The entire passage indicates that Robert is not viewed as favorably as his brother by their father. However, only choice (A) correctly identifies the father’s reaction to the comments in lines 12-14. His reaction has nothing to do with the brother. As you can see, these True But Wrong answer choices are especially attractive given that they provide a true statement from the passage. But you must be certain that the answer choice you select corresponds with the line reference in the question.

True But Wrong Answers are common in Paired Passage question sets. The answer might be true about Passage 2, but the question is asking about Passage 1 or about both passages. This is why it is extremely important to answer questions about Passage 1 before reading the second passage.
True To A Point Answers

True to a Point Answers are very attractive choices because they usually start out seemingly correct. Careless test takers might not notice, though, that at some point in the answer choice they become blatantly wrong.

Sometimes these answer choices add new, irrelevant information causing them to be incorrect. For example, if the passage discusses the feeding habits of monarch butterflies, be wary of any answer choice that details the feeding habits of swallowtail butterflies. This answer will appear to be correct when explaining the feeding habits, but once it cites a different butterfly type, it is clearly incorrect. Let’s study some examples:

Unlike the Tango, a dance which can trace its roots directly back to Argentina and Uruguay, Ballroom Tango saw significant changes in both structure and technique as the dance traveled to the United States and Europe. Film star Rudolph Valentino first brought Ballroom Tango to Hollywood in the early 1920s, and the famous dance instructor Arthur Murray later helped popularize a standardized version which incorporated steps that were common to the US during that period.

This incarnation of Ballroom Tango was generally considered somewhat less formal and referred to as the “American Style” by the English, who wished to distinguish this informal approach from their own International Style—a technique that was taught in countries throughout Europe and had already become the de facto standard in competitions around the world.

1. The standardized version of the Ballroom Tango features which of the following?
   (A) steps that were common in American film
   (B) Answer B
   (C) conventional American movements
   (D) Answer D
   (E) Answer E

Choice (A) is appealing because it is True to a Point: *steps that were common*, the phrase in the answer choice, comes right from line 9. But then the answer makes a wrong turn with the phrase *in American film*. The passage does not mention American film in connection with the Ballroom Tango, other than the fact that a film star was responsible for bringing the dance to Hollywood. It does not state that these steps were common in movies, so choice (A) is incorrect.
Astute test takers would also avoid choice (A) because it is a Copycat Answer, using text right from the passage. Choice (C) uses synonyms to express the idea in lines 8-9, and is in fact correct.

The most tempting True to a Point Answers have a single word that sabotages the entire answer choice. Consider an example using the passage on the previous page:

2. According to the passage, the Ballroom Tango is different from the Tango because the Ballroom Tango
   (A) Answer A
   (B) was slightly altered once it became popular in America
   (C) Answer C
   (D) Answer D
   (E) underwent a transformation upon entering countries in the US and Europe

Choice (B) is incorrect because of a single word: slightly. The passage states that the Ballroom Tango saw significant changes (line 3) making slightly altered significantly incorrect. Note, too, that the answer only includes America, omitting Europe as stated in the passage (line 5). Remember, the correct answer will include all of the important ideas, as does choice (E).

Every word counts in an SAT answer choice. You must carefully read each possibility, looking for reasons that the answer choice is incorrect. Be sure to eliminate any answer that is only True to a Point, and cross the letter out in your test booklet.
True To You Answers

One of the biggest mistakes that a student can make is to bring their experience and expectations into the SAT. Your opinions are not relevant on the Reading portion of the test, and you should be careful not to let them influence your understanding of a text.

True to You Answers are designed to take advantage of your personal beliefs and prior knowledge. Let’s study an example that plays on a common opinion about slavery:

By 1750, slavery was a legal institution in all of the American colonies, the profits of which amounted to 5% of the British economy at the time of the Industrial Revolution. The Transatlantic slave trade peaked in the late 18th century, when the largest number of slaves were captured on raiding expeditions into the interior of West Africa. The slaves were shipped to the Americas in the hulls of large boats, where they experienced extremely cramped quarters, lack of ventilation, and unsanitary conditions; a large percentage of the captives died in transit.

1. The author of the passage implies that
   (A) the hazardous conditions in which the slaves were shipped resulted in a high mortality rate
   (B) Wrong answer
   (C) Wrong answer
   (D) slavery is uncivilized and immoral
   (E) Wrong answer

In the 21st century, we know that slavery is uncivilized and immoral. That is part of the reason why the Civil War was fought and why the 13th amendment to the Constitution was passed. But it is never stated or even implied in the passage, so you cannot assume that the author shares this belief. The passage itself is very matter-of-fact, presenting data and information, but not imparting the author’s opinions. Even the sentence about the death of slaves in transit is emotionless and objective. So if the author does not state his opinion, any feelings assigned to him are untrue, no matter how you feel about the subject yourself. After all, the passage could have been written in 1850 by a plantation owner in Georgia. Do not apply your personal beliefs to any SAT passage or answer choice!
The test makers might also try to trick you into applying your prior knowledge to a passage:

In late summer, black bears begin gorging on carbohydrate-rich foods in order to put on significant weight and body fat. They can gain as much as 30 pounds in a single week! Once fall arrives, the bear prepares its den, lining it with leaves and other plants to form a nest.

1. According to the passage, black bears seek “carbohydrate-rich foods” (line 2) primarily because they
   (A) Wrong answer
   (B) are preparing to hibernate
   (C) need to considerably increase their body mass
   (D) Wrong answer
   (E) Wrong answer

Unless you skipped kindergarten and most of elementary school, it’s likely that you know bears hibernate. Answer choice (B) is depending on this knowledge to seduce you into selecting it as the right answer choice. But you would be wrong.

The passage never mentions hibernation. The reason it provides for the black bears gorging on carbs is to put on significant weight and body fat. The correct answer is (C). But many, many test takers would choose (B) because they applied their prior knowledge to the passage and failed to read all five answer choices.

Remember, if the author does not state or imply an idea, it simply is not true.
Analyzing the Answer Choices Problem Set

In the following exercise, reread the passages from the previous chapter. For each question, select the correct answer choice and, if possible, label the wrong answer choices as Copycats, Opposites, Extremes, True But Wrong, True to a Point, True to You, or a combination of answer types. The first one has been done for you. Answers begin on page 246.

The following passages discuss the commemoration of Christopher Columbus’ arrival in North America. Passage 1 is from a 2002 article written by a Native American activist; Passage 2 is from a 2011 blog by a political commentator.

Passage 1

In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue, resulting in the annihilation of my people. Upon his “discovery,” there were more than 10 million Native Americans populating the continent, but by 1900, that number had diminished to 230,000. Such atrocities might be somewhat less offensive or at least mitigated if he had only inadvertently spread European germs that wiped out so many tribes, but Columbus was a murderous tyrant. He kidnapped and enslaved hundreds of natives, allowed his crew to abuse men, women, and children, and mortally wounded those slaves who could not produce gold and riches fit for Spain. Eventually, his arrival in North America led to further genocide, when the government cleared our lands for the white man’s pursuit of manifest destiny. It is deplorable that the American dream of homestead ownership is founded on the slaughter of Native Americans and the larceny of their land.

What makes Columbus’ savage crimes more unsettling is the honor that is still being bestowed upon him some 500 years later. Christopher Columbus is a national hero; he is exalted in elementary school text books, glorified in the names of our cities and capitals, and commemorated every year on the second Monday in October. In this era of political correctness, it is baffling how the United States government can continue to ignore the cries of my people who demand the forsaking of Columbus Day in favor of Indigenous Peoples’ Day. Can you imagine the repercussions if national holidays were issued for other brutal leaders, such as Adolf Hitler or Nathan Bedford Forrest? Fortunately, these tyrants will never be celebrated because the United States recognizes their atrocities and assisted or at least apologized to their victims. In the meantime, though, hundreds of thousands of Native Americans are ignored, insulted, and expected to “just get over it.”

I suppose we shouldn’t expect much from our government. To make changes to school textbooks and national holidays demands accepting responsibility and making reparations, two acts that threaten the culture, economy, and status quo of the nation. Plus, the ashes of nineteenth century manifest destiny still smolder, as most Americans believe that their leaders have a right to invade and take any land as long as the goal is the common good of the American people and the betterment of the natives of the that land. Never mind what the culture of those natives dictates; Americans, after all, know best. While it may be pointless to expect change, Native Americans will undoubtedly hold on to hope that one day our leaders will recognize the heinousness that our ancestors endured, and take the necessary steps to reduce a historical figure from national hero to national villain.

Passage 2

Columbus Day is in danger of extinction. In several cities in California, it has been replaced by Indigenous Peoples’ Day. Parades in honor of the explorer have not occurred in Columbus, Ohio since the 1990s. And South Dakota has renamed the holiday “Native American Day.” Even where the holiday is preserved, many people lack enthusiasm for the celebration in fear of offending descendents of native peoples.

All Americans need to reclaim this national holiday. Honoring the incredible achievement of Columbus is not the same as reveling in the hardship and sorrow of native peoples. In addition, historians have exaggerated the facts surrounding Columbus’ discovery while de-emphasizing the barbarism and poverty into which he stumbled in North America. Columbus was at times brutal and did take hostages to Spain, but in his journal, Columbus reported cannibalism, warfare, and slavery among the natives, and upon his second journey, he learned that the crew members he left behind were slaughtered by local inhabitants. Enslavement, brutality, and conquest were not exclusive to Europeans—these atrocities were rampant all over the world—but the remarkable discovery of two continents was something only Columbus accomplished.

It’s also worth noting that Columbus made his quest not for riches or fame but to honor his adopted country and spread its religion. His intentions were pure. Some would argue that he and his men engaged in warfare with some of the natives that they encountered, but this happened rarely and only because it was a “kill or be killed” situation. The victims were so deficient in iron
that they did not have the strength to effectively fight the Europeans. Columbus described most of the people he encountered as “gentle” and “free from wickedness,” and his design for them included conversion to Christianity, development of a written language, and freedom from poverty. These goals were ultimately realized, but historians are hesitant to place value on the results. They would rather look at the negative impact of Columbus discovering America than the positive impact of Native Americans discovering Europe.

Columbus’s discovery was the first great chapter in our nation’s history. His accomplishment was a catalyst for excellence; enlightenment, democracy, reason, and individualism are just a few of the core values that are a direct result of the voyage of the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria. We are not only entitled, but patriotically obligated, to honor the great explorer.

1. Both authors would most likely agree that

(A) Columbus’ voyage was sanctioned by the king and queen of Spain
(B) Columbus Day should be abandoned in favor of Indigenous Peoples’ Day
(C) Columbus exhibited ruthlessness in the Americas
(D) celebrating Columbus Day is an entitlement for Americans
(E) Columbus is viewed as a villain by most Native Americans

(A) True to You?
(B) True But Wrong (P1)/Copycat (Line 28)
(C) Correct (Lines 8-12 and 67-68)
(D) True But Wrong (Passage 2)
(E) Extreme

2. In response to the claim made in lines 21-24 (“Columbus . . . October), the author of Passage 2 would most likely assert that

(A) Columbus Day honors a murderous tyrant
(B) Columbus had the purest of intentions for Native Americans
(C) Columbus Day celebrations should be continued in elementary schools
(D) the repercussions from Columbus Day celebrations are financially draining
(E) brutality was universal and should not detract from Columbus’ accomplishment

(A)
(B)
(C)
(D)
(E)
3. The author of Passage 1 mentions Adolf Hitler and Nathan Bedford Forest (lines 30-31) primarily to suggest that
   
   (A) savageness was not exclusive to the New World
   (B) national holidays honoring other villains would cause an uproar by Europeans
   (C) Columbus is the only person responsible for decimating a population of people
   (D) Columbus' wrongdoings were as terrible as the crimes of two other historical figures
   (E) the government is not likely to abolish Columbus Day

4. According to the author of Passage 2, there is a lack of "enthusiasm" (line 59) for Columbus Day because
   
   (A) many Americans worry that the celebration is an affront to Native Americans
   (B) most people view Columbus as a savage tyrant
   (C) few private businesses close for the national holiday
   (D) Columbus' voyage is considered a Spanish accomplishment rather than an American one
   (E) an overwhelming majority of Native Americans would prefer to celebrate Indigenous People's Day

5. The author of Passage 1 does not "expect much" (line 37) because
   
   (A) most people do not believe that the United States has a right to invade foreign lands
   (B) the government fears the cultural and financial consequences of change
   (C) Americans choose to celebrate Columbus' quest to free natives from poverty and illiteracy
   (D) home ownership has replaced freedom as the American dream
   (E) history has proven that the American government ignores Native Americans' requests
6. Line 47 ("Americans . . . best") suggests that Americans

(A) support the government in conducting foreign invasions
(B) celebrate Columbus Day because it benefits the common good
(C) acknowledge that their country is the most powerful in the Western hemisphere
(D) refuse to make changes to their national holidays
(E) believe that their judgment concerning appropriate behavior is better than that of Native Americans

7. In lines 64-67 ("In addition . . . America"), the passage implies that

(A) Columbus mistakenly believed that he had landed in the Spice Islands
(B) Columbus was not as barbaric as other European explorers
(C) Native Americans threatened to kill Columbus and his men
(D) historians are partly responsible for Columbus’ villainous reputation
(E) all European explorers reported that the natives in the new world engaged in cannibalism and warfare

8. The author of Passage 1 and the “historians” (line 90) in Passage 2 would most likely agree that the voyage of Christopher Columbus

(A) resulted from Spain’s devotion to spreading Christianity
(B) led to the development of a written language for Native Americans
(C) had detrimental consequences for Native Americans
(D) was the first great accomplishment in our nation’s history
(E) should be commemorated with pride by all Americans
Chapter Summary

There are two types of answers on the SAT: right answers and wrong answers.

Right Answers

- Use synonyms.
- Include all of the important ideas from the line reference or passage.
- Tend to use more general language or ideas.
- Can be proven by the text.
- Are provided below the question. You simply have to locate them.

Wrong Answers

- Cannot be proven by the referenced portion of the text.
- Tend to use more specific language but often fail to include all important ideas from the line reference or passage.
- Are often easier to determine than the right answer.
- Are often placed above the correct answer when they are especially attractive to fool you into selecting the wrong answer without reading all five answer choices.
- Come in several styles that are designed to trap you:
  - **Copycat Answers**
    - Use words and phrases directly from the text.
  - **Opposite Answers**
    - Present an idea that is opposite of the right answer and your prephrase.
  - **Extreme Answers**
    - Use words that are difficult to defend. The words may be qualifiers, like *most* and *always*, or adjectives and verbs, like *malicious* and *mock*.
  - **True But Wrong Answers**
    - Make true statements about a portion of the passage that is not the subject of the question.
  - **True To A Point Answers**
    - Provide an answer that is “half-right.”
    - Often introduce new information not discussed in the passage.
    - May have a single word the makes the answer choice wrong.
  - **True to You Answers**
    - Present common beliefs that were not provided in the passage.
    - Use facts that are likely a part of your prior knowledge but were not provided in the passage.

Confidence Quotation

“Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”
- Thomas Edison, American inventor
Notes:
Analyze the Answer Choices Answer Key

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2. (E) Medium Prephrase: Everyone was brutal, including the natives. But he is the only one to sail to the Americas so he should still be celebrated.

(A) Opposite Answer and Copycat Answer. This is the opinion of the author of Passage 1 and the opposite opinion of the author of Passage 2. It uses text from lines 8-9 to try to trick you.

(B) Extreme and True But Wrong. The word purest makes it extreme. The author of Passage 2 does cite Columbus’ pure intentions, though, but this is not the argument he would use to refute the claim in lines 21-24.

(C) True to a Point. The author of Passage 2 does believe Columbus Day celebrations should continue, but nowhere in the passage does it say anything about elementary school.

(D) Slight Copycat Answer. The idea of this answer is off-base and not mentioned in either passage, but it uses the word repercussions, as does the passage in line 29.

3. (D) Medium Prephrase: Two other tyrants are considered terrible so national holidays in their honor do not exist.

(A) True But Wrong, Opposite, and Copycat. The author of Passage 1 makes this point in lines 72-73, but he makes it about exclusivity to Europeans.

(B) True to a Point. This answer is correct until you get to the word Europeans. According to lines 28-30, it would cause serious repercussions in America (and likely all over the world).

(C) Extreme and Opposite. The author implies that Hitler and Forrest have shown similar brutality, so the idea in the passage is opposite the idea in the answer choice. The extreme word only should cause you to avoid it, too.

(E) True But Wrong. The author of Passage 1 makes this point in lines 37-41, but it is not related to the line reference.

4. (A) Medium Prephrase: Many people fear offending descendents of native peoples (lines 59-60).

(B) Extreme. The word most makes this answer extreme. Even the author of Passage 1 does not go so far as to say this.

(C) True to You. This is not discussed in either passage but may be true given your own experiences.

(D) This answer does not fit any of the Wrong Answer categories, but is wrong nonetheless. This idea is not discussed in the passage.

(E) Extreme. This idea is again more suitable for the author of Passage 1, but even then, the phrase overwhelming majority makes it extreme.

5. (B) Medium Prephrase: Government does not want to admit responsibility nor change the status quo.

(A) Opposite. According to lines 42-45, most Americans believe the opposite of this statement.

(C) True to a Point. Columbus did look to free natives from poverty and illiteracy, but this is not the full reason he is celebrated or why the author does not expect much.

(D) Copycat. Other than using words from Passage 1, this answer has no relation to the passage.

(E) This answer does not fit any of the Wrong Answer categories, but is wrong nonetheless. This idea is not discussed in the passage.
6. (E) Hard Prephrase: Think they know what is best for Native Americans.

(A) True But Wrong. The author states this in lines 42-45, but it is not suggested in line 47.

(B) Copycat. The phrase common good might trick you into selecting this answer that is never stated or implied in the passage.

(C) This answer does not fit any of the Wrong Answer categories, but is wrong nonetheless. This idea is not discussed in the passage and presents new information (Western hemisphere).

(D) Extreme. The verb refuse is extreme, as it applies to all Americans. The answer also uses national holidays, rather than just Columbus Day, and nothing is noted about other national holidays in the passage.

7. (D) Medium Prephrase: This answer is difficult to prephrase.

(A) True to You. It’s likely that you know this fact from your history classes, but it is not stated or implied in the passage.

(B) True to a Point. The author is making the point that the New World was no stranger to brutality, where the natives had even resorted to cannibalism. But the use of other explorers makes it untrue.

(C) This answer does not fit any of the Wrong Answer categories, but is wrong nonetheless. This idea is not discussed in the passage. Columbus claims that the natives practiced cannibalism, warfare, and slavery among themselves, never indicating that he himself was in danger.

(E) Extreme and Copycat. The modifier all should be immediately suspect, and again, this answer involves other explorers, who were not mentioned in the passage.

8. (C) Medium Prephrase: Columbus engaged in warfare and brutal behavior

(A) True to You and True to a Point. This is not discussed in the passage, but may be something you remember from history class. The passage does state that Columbus made the voyage to spread religion, but not that this was Spain’s reason for the funding the voyage.

(B) Opposite. The author of Passage 2 would make this point, not the author of Passage 1 or the historians.

(D) Opposite. The author of Passage 2 would make this point, not the author of Passage 1 or the historians.

(E) Opposite. The author of Passage 2 would make this point, not the author of Passage 1 or the historians.