



The reading test measures your ability to understand, analyze and evaluate written passages. Each of the passages and statements in the Reading test will be followed by a series of questions covering the content of the passage or statement, in which you will have to answer questions.

Author's Purpose Practice Questions

Read the passage below and answer question 1.

PARK WILDLIFE

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks support a wide diversity of animal species, reflecting the range in elevation, climate, and habitat variety there. Over 260 native vertebrate species are in the parks; numerous additional species may be present but have not been confirmed. Of the native vertebrates, five species are extirpated (here meaning extinct), and over 150 are rare or uncommon. There have been some studies of invertebrates in the area, but there is not enough information to know how many species occur specifically in the parks. Many of the parks' caves contain invertebrates, some of which exist only in one cave and are known nowhere else in the world. Plant life in the foothills, where summers are hot and dry and winters are mild, is largely chaparral on the lower slopes, with blue oak and California buckeye in the valleys and on higher slopes. A number of animals live in this area year-round; some breed here, while others winter here. Local species include the gray fox, bobcat, striped and spotted skunks, black bear, wood rat, pocket gopher, white-footed mouse, California quail, scrub jay, lesser goldfinch, wren, acorn woodpecker, gopher snake, California king snake, striped racer, western whiptail lizard, and the California newt.

1. What was the author's purpose in writing this passage?

- a. To entertain the reader
- b. To bore the reader
- c. To persuade the reader
- d. To inform the reader
- e. To humor the reader

Answers and Explanations

- 1. D:** Since the author structures the passage using main idea and detail and gives many facts, you can determine the purpose of this passage is to inform the reader, as in answer choice D. Even if you did not find this passage to be entertaining, as in answer choice A, it is unlikely that the author would take the time to write a piece with the intent to bore the readers, so B can be easily eliminated. Nor is there any attempt within the passage to make an argument for any particular position and, thus, persuade the reader of a certain viewpoint; therefore, option C also does not apply.

Read the passage below and answer question 2.

CALIFORNIA GRAPES

Grapes are one of the oldest cultivated fruits. Hieroglyphics show that Egyptians were involved in grape and wine production. Also, the early Romans were known to have developed many grape varieties.

Grapes have been grown in California for more than 200 years. The tradition of viticulture (growing grapes) began in 1769 when Spanish friars established missions throughout California. Then the boom in grapes planted for eating arose in the early 1800s. William Wolfskill, founder of California's citrus industry, planted the first table grape vineyard in 1839 near Los Angeles.

By the 1850s, the United States had officially acquired California from Mexico, and 80,000 gold prospectors had moved to the region. A few of these had the foresight to realize that there was money in grapes as well as in gold.

Today California wine, table grapes, and raisins are all important agricultural commodities, with approximately 700,000 acres planted in vineyards. About 85% of California's table grape production is in the southern San Joaquin Valley region, with the Coachella Valley region accounting for most of the remaining production.

2. The author most likely wrote this passage to:

- a. Entertain the reader
- b. Persuade the reader
- c. Humor the reader
- d. Inform the reader
- e. Sway the reader

Answers and Explanations

2. **D:** Since the author structures the passage using chronological order and gives many facts and details, you can quickly determine that the purpose of this passage is to inform the reader, as in answer choice D. Even if you did not find this passage to be entertaining, as in answer choice A, it is unlikely that the author would take the time to write a piece with the intent to bore the readers, so B can be easily eliminated. Nor is there any attempt within the passage to make an argument for any particular position and, thus, persuade the reader of a certain viewpoint; therefore, option C also does not apply.

Reading Comprehension Practice Questions

In the sixteenth century, an age of great marine and terrestrial exploration, Ferdinand Magellan led the first expedition to sail around the world. As a young Portuguese noble, he served the king of Portugal, but he became involved in the quagmire of political intrigue at court and lost the king's favor. After he was dismissed from service to the king of Portugal, he offered to serve the future Emperor Charles V of Spain.

A papal decree of 1493 had assigned all land in the New World west of 50 degrees W longitude to Spain and all the land east of that line to Portugal. Magellan offered to prove that the East Indies fell under Spanish authority. On September 20, 1519, Magellan set sail from Spain with five ships. More than a year later, one of these ships was exploring the topography of South America in search of a water route across the continent. This ship sank, but the remaining four ships searched along the southern peninsula of South America. Finally they found the passage they sought near a latitude of 50 degrees S. Magellan named this passage the Strait of All Saints, but today we know it as the Strait of Magellan.

One ship deserted while in this passage and returned to Spain, so fewer sailors were privileged to gaze at that first panorama of the Pacific Ocean. Those who remained crossed the meridian we now call the International Date Line in the early spring of 1521 after ninety-eight days on the Pacific Ocean. During those long days at sea, many of Magellan's men died of starvation and disease.

Later Magellan became involved in an insular conflict in the Philippines and was killed in a tribal battle. Only one ship and seventeen sailors under the command of the Basque navigator Elcano survived to complete the westward journey to Spain and thus prove once and for all that the world is round, with no precipice at the edge.

1. The sixteenth century was an age of great ___ exploration.

- A. cosmic
- B. land
- C. mental
- D. common man
- E. none of the above

2. Magellan lost the favor of the king of Portugal when he became involved in a political ___.

- A. entanglement
- B. discussion
- C. negotiation
- D. problems
- E. none of the above

3. The Pope divided New World lands between Spain and Portugal according to their location on one side or the other of an imaginary geographical line 50 degrees west of Greenwich that extends in a ___ direction.

- A. north and south
- B. crosswise
- C. easterly
- D. south east
- E. north and west

4. One of Magellan's ships explored the ___ of South America for a passage across the continent.

- A. coastline
- B. mountain range
- C. physical features
- D. islands
- E. none of the above

5. Four of the ships sought a passage along a southern ___.

- A. coast
- B. inland
- C. body of land with water on three sides
- D. border
- E. answer not available

6. The passage was found near 50 degrees S of ___.

- A. Greenwich
- B. The equator
- C. Spain
- D. Portugal
- E. Madrid

7. In the spring of 1521, the ships crossed the ___ now called the International Date Line.

- A. imaginary circle passing through the poles
- B. Imaginary line parallel to the equator
- C. area
- D. land mass
- E. answer not found in article

Answer Key

- 1. B
- 2. A
- 3. A
- 4. C
- 5. C
- 6. B
- 7. A

Reading Main Idea Practice Questions

Americans have always been interested in their Presidents' wives. Many First Ladies have been remembered because of the ways they have influenced their husbands. Other First Ladies have made the history books on their own.

At least two First Ladies, Bess Truman and Lady Bird Johnson, made it their business to send signals during their husbands' speeches. When Lady Bird Johnson thought her husband was talking too long, she wrote a note and sent it up to the platform. It read, "It's time to stop!" And he did. Once Bess Truman didn't like what her husband was saying on television, so she phoned him and said, "If you can't talk more politely than that in public, you come right home."

Abigail Fillmore and Eliza Johnson actually taught their husbands, Millard Fillmore and Andrew Johnson, the thirteenth and seventeenth Presidents. A schoolteacher, Abigail eventually married her pupil, Millard. When Eliza Johnson married Andrew, he could not read or write, so she taught him herself.

It was First Lady Helen Taft's idea to plant the famous cherry trees in Washington, D. C. Each spring these blossoming trees attract thousands of visitors to the nation's capital. Mrs. Taft also influenced the male members of her family and the White House staff in a strange way: she convinced them to shave off their beards!

Shortly after President Wilson suffered a stroke, Edith Wilson unofficially took over most of the duties of the Presidency until the end of her husband's term. Earlier, during World War I, Mrs. Wilson had had sheep brought onto the White House lawn to eat the grass. The sheep not only kept the lawn mowed but provided wool for an auction sponsored by the First Lady. Almost \$100,000 was raised for the Red Cross.

Dolly Madison saw to it that a magnificent painting of George Washington was not destroyed during the War of 1812. As the British marched toward Washington, D. C., she remained behind to rescue the painting, even after the guards had left. The painting is the only object from the original White House that was not burned.

One of the most famous First Ladies was Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. She was active in political and social causes throughout her husband's tenure in office. After his death, she became famous for her humanitarian work in the United Nations. She made life better for thousands of needy people around the world.

1. What is the main idea of this passage?

- A. The Humanitarian work of the First Ladies is critical in American government.
- B. Dolly Madison was the most influential president's wife.
- C. Eleanor Roosevelt transformed the First Lady image.
- D. The First Ladies are important in American culture.
- E. The First Ladies are key supporters of the Presidents.

Answer Key

1. D