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Reading Skills 1 and 2

UNDERSTANDING VOCABULARY FROM CONTEXT; PARAPHRASING A SENTENCE

Reading Skill 1: Understanding Vocabulary from Context

Vocabulary questions in the reading section test your ability to figure out the meaning of a word you don't know. Therefore, do not worry if you don't already know the word! There will be clues in the passage to help you guess its meaning. Check the other words in the sentence and also the sentences just before and after the one with the **highlighted** word.

Some words in English have several meanings. Even if you are already familiar with one meaning of the word, check the sentence carefully to see which meaning is appropriate for that passage. Pay attention to the part of speech (i.e., noun, verb, adjective, or adverb).

- The **cast** of the play was comprised of only male actors. (*cast* = noun, meaning the group of players who act in a theatrical production)
- The fisherman on the boat **cast** his nets into the water. (*cast* = verb, meaning “to throw”)

EXPRESS TIP



One type of common clue is a contrast clue, which shows the unknown word in contrast to a more familiar word. Check for words and phrases such as *unlike*, *instead of*, and *on the other hand*.

*Rats are active at night. The mongoose, on the other hand, is **diurnal**. (*diurnal* = “awake and active during the day”)*

The vocabulary questions will ask you about the word directly, and show you where to find it by highlighting it in the passage:

- The phrase **on the clock** in the passage is **closest in meaning to** ...
- The word **unseemly** in the passage could **best be replaced by** ...

The correct answer will be a synonym (or phrase) for the word (or expression) that could be used in the same place in the passage.

EXPRESS TIP



After you have selected an answer, mentally put it into the sentence, and “read” the sentence with your replacement to double-check that it makes sense.

*You must wear your uniform as long as you are **on the clock**. = “at work”*
*You must wear your uniform as long as you are **at work**. ✓*

Look at this example of a vocabulary question on a computer screen.

EXAMPLE: Understanding Vocabulary from Context Question

TOEFL Reading

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Question 1 of 10 Hide Time 00:54:00

1. The word **pseudonym** in the passage is closest in meaning to

- false name
- married name
- nickname
- middle name

Agatha Christie

1 Agatha Christie is perhaps the best-known writer of mystery and detective novels in the English language. In fact, she is the best-selling writer of books of all time. She wrote romances using the **pseudonym** Mary Westmacott, and an autobiographical account of her travels with her archaeologist husband using her married name, Agatha Christie Mallowan. However, it is her mystery and detective novels, short stories, and plays for which she is most famous.

SKILL BUILDER

Directions: Work with a partner. Read the paragraph and the questions. Discuss the clues in the paragraph that tell you the answers. Circle the contrast word in the paragraph that helps you figure out the answer to #2. Then mark the correct answers.

Agatha Christie

- 1 Agatha Christie is perhaps the best-known writer of mystery and detective novels in the English language. In fact, she is the best-selling writer of books of all time. She wrote romances using the **pseudonym** Mary Westmacott, and an autobiographical account of her travels with her archaeologist husband using her married name, Agatha Christie Mallowan. However, it is her mystery and detective novels, short stories, and plays for which she is most famous.
- 2 Agatha was painfully shy as a child. Perhaps as result of this, her mother decided that she would not receive a **formal** education, but would instead be taught at home. She taught herself to read by age five, and had lessons from part-time tutors. She was interested in the arts from a young age, first music and then story telling and writing. At age 16, she was sent to Paris to study singing and piano. However, because of her shyness, she never became a performing musician. Perhaps her shyness is partly to thank for her choice of writing as her favorite form of artistic expression as an adult.

-
1. The word **pseudonym** in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to
 - A. false name
 - B. married name
 - C. nickname
 - D. middle name
 2. The word **formal** in paragraph 2 could best be replaced by
 - A. expensive
 - B. fancy
 - C. traditional
 - D. free

EXPRESS TIP



You can also look at the word itself for clues to its meaning. Check to see if the word has any of these elements:

- word roots you recognize [*teleport*: *tele~* (far) you might recognize from *telephone*; *port~* (carry) you might recognize from *porter* or *transport*]
- prefixes that change the word's meaning, such as *re~* (again) or *un~* (not)

Skill Builder Answers

1. **Answer A is correct.** The word “pseudonym” means “false name.” The clues in the passage that tell you this are the presence of her real name (Agatha Christie) and the word “using” that comes before “the pseudonym Mary Westmacott.” Answer B is incorrect because her married name is given as Agatha Christie Mallovan. Answer C is incorrect because a nickname is a shortened form of a person’s first name. Answer D is incorrect because a middle name is the second name of three.
2. **Answer C is correct.** The word “formal” here is contrasted by the word “instead” to “taught at home” – so a “formal education” is opposite to being taught at home. Answer A is incorrect because there is no mention in the paragraph about price or cost. Answer B is incorrect because “fancy” (although it is a possible definition of the word “formal” in other contexts) is not the opposite of “taught at home.” Answer D is incorrect because there is no mention of cost or price.

PRACTICE

Directions: Read the passages. Then mark the correct answers to the questions.

Passage 1 (Questions 1-2)

The Four-Color Theorem

- 1 How many different colors would you have to use to color a map so that no two countries next to each other are the same color? It sounds like a simple question, and yet it wasn’t until 1976 that the answer—four—was proven, by mathematicians Kenneth Appel and Wolfgang Haken, who were working together at a university in Illinois. The theorem was additionally significant because it was the first to be proven through the use of a computer. The four-color **conjecture** was first proposed in 1852, but no definitive proof, or mathematical answer, could be demonstrated.
- 2 The theory is of more interest to mathematicians than to mapmakers, who have used colors to show significant features such as climate, population, system of government, or other such features. Furthermore, although a map is the usual example given to help people visualize the four-color theorem, it is necessary to define countries as being only one landmass. This means, for example, that in the case of the United States, one would consider only the continental United States, and not states such as Alaska and Hawaii that are not **contiguous** but are separated from the rest of the country by water.

1. The word **conjecture** in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to
 - A. proof
 - B. assumption
 - C. mathematician
 - D. program
2. The word **contiguous** in paragraph 2 could best be replaced by
 - A. large
 - B. distant
 - C. visible
 - D. neighboring

Passage 2 (Questions 3-4)

Airport Codes in the United States

- 1 In the early 1900s, the **aviation** industry adopted the system of the National Weather Service for indicating cities, using two letters. Sometimes the letters were the first two letters of the city name (such as JA for Jacksonville, Florida), and sometimes the first letter of each word of a two-word city (such as LA for Los Angeles). However, as air travel became more popular, more airports were built, some in places that didn't have a National Weather Service letter code. Therefore, the decision was made to add a third letter—in many cases, the letter X. Thus, the airport at Jacksonville became JAX and the Los Angeles airport became LAX. Other cities, such as Savannah, Georgia (SAV), and Boise, Idaho (BOI), used the first three letters of their name.
 - 2 However, special restrictions kept some letters from being used. Because radio stations east of the Mississippi River began with the letter W, and those west of the Mississippi with the letter K, it was decided not to let any airport codes **commence with** W or K, although those letters can be placed second or third. The Navy then reserved all of the N codes for the military airbases that served them. Q and Z have also been reserved for special purposes. Some cities, therefore, use internal letters, such as Newark, New Jersey (EWR), and some are even named for places that no longer exist – the New Orleans, Louisiana airport code MSY comes from the old **Moisant Stock Yards**.
-

3. The word **aviation** in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to
 - A. weather
 - B. city
 - C. airline
 - D. code
4. The phrase **commence with** in paragraph 2 could best be replaced by
 - A. begin with
 - B. contain
 - C. start to use
 - D. repeat

Reading Skill 2: Paraphrasing a Sentence

Paraphrasing means to say the same idea in another way. This type of question asks you to choose the best restatement of a **highlighted** sentence from the reading passage. The restatement has the same meaning, but it is expressed in a simpler way, and with synonyms for key words. To find the correct answer, first make sure that you understand the highlighted sentence. Then read the four restatements.

One type of restatement leaves out unimportant details. However, the main idea and important supporting information from the original sentence must be present in the restatement.

An incorrect restatement will contradict part or all of the highlighted sentence.

A question of this type will be phrased as follows:

Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 2?

Look at this example of a paraphrasing question on a computer screen.

EXAMPLE: Paraphrasing a Sentence Question

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Question 2 of 10 Hide Time 00:54:00

2. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 2?

Quinine

2 The first effective drug to fight malaria was quinine, made from the bark of the cinchona tree, a native of South America. Long used by the Quechua Indians of Peru, quinine was employed as an antimalarial from the seventeenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, at which time it was largely replaced by more effective laboratory-created drugs. Nowadays, it is possible to create quinine itself entirely in the laboratory, although it is still less expensive to extract it from its natural plant source. However, quinine is no longer seen as one of the more effective drugs for the treatment of malaria.

The Quechua Indians of Peru got jobs by selling quinine as a drug to treat malaria.

Quinine can be made in laboratory now, but it is more expensive than quinine from the cinchona tree.

Natural quinine was used to combat malaria until more effective drugs were created.

In the seventeenth century, people used quinine to fight malaria.

SKILL BUILDER

Directions: Work with a partner. Read the passage. Then, in the following exercise, match the answer choice in the left-hand column to its evaluation in the right-hand column.

Quinine

- 1 Malaria is a disease caused by parasites and spread by mosquitoes. The existence of different strains of the disease means that it must be combated by different drugs and treatments. In addition, strains of malaria become resistant to some drugs over time, necessitating the development of new treatments.
- 2 The first effective drug to fight malaria was quinine, made from the bark of the cinchona tree, a native of South America. Long used by the Quechua Indians of Peru, quinine was employed as an antimalarial from the seventeenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, at which time it was largely replaced by more effective laboratory-created drugs. Nowadays, it is possible to create quinine itself entirely in the laboratory, although it is still less expensive to extract it from its natural plant source. However, quinine is no longer seen as one of the more effective drugs for the treatment of malaria.

Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 2?

- ___ 1. The Quechua Indians of Peru got jobs by selling quinine as a drug to treat malaria.
- ___ 2. Quinine can be made in a laboratory now, but it is more expensive than quinine from the cinchona tree.
- ___ 3. Natural quinine was used to combat malaria until more effective drugs were created.
- ___ 4. In the seventeenth century, people used quinine to fight malaria.
- A The information is accurate, but it does not include the most important ideas.
- B This is the best restatement of the highlighted sentence.
- C The information isn't an accurate restatement.
- D The information is accurate, but is from a different sentence.

The highlighted sentence from the passage is long, and almost always is made up of several clauses and phrases. To understand its meaning, follow these steps:

- Examine one part of the sentence at a time.
- Make a mental note of what each part means.
- Eliminate words or phrases that don't communicate important information.

In the Skill Builder text about quinine, look at how this sentence can be divided:

Nowadays, it is possible to create quinine itself entirely in the laboratory, although it is still less expensive to extract it from its natural plant source.

Nowadays	(not very important)
it is possible to create quinine entirely in the laboratory	you can make quinine in a lab
although it is still less expensive to extract it from its natural plant source	but it's cheaper from plants

EXPRESS TIP



To logically divide a sentence into smaller pieces:

- check before and after commas
- consider prepositional phrases (*of the more effective drugs; for the treatment of malaria*)

Skill Builder Answers: 1. C; 2. D; 3. B; 4. A

PRACTICE

Directions: Read the passages. Then mark the correct answers to the questions.

Passage 1 (Questions 1-2)

Tulip Mania

- 1 Tulips, a member of the Liliaceae family, are a simple-looking plant: growing from a **bulb**, they normally have one brightly colored flower whose shape resembles a cup, atop a long stem, and a few straight green leaves that grow nearly vertically. **A simple plant, perhaps, but one with a history as colorful as its blooms.**
- 2 Even today, tulips are associated with Holland, a region in the Netherlands, although they were first cultivated by the Ottoman Empire (today's Turkey and, at its height, several neighboring countries). The exact date of the introduction of the tulip to northwestern Europe isn't known, although we do know it occurred around the latter half of the sixteenth century. 1594 is commonly accepted as the year when tulips first bloomed in Holland, however, and they caught on quickly. Gardeners became obsessed with cultivating new colors and patterns, especially stripes. The trend spread to the middle and upper classes. **Prices for tulips soared, reaching thousands and even tens of thousands of dollars for a single bulb of the more desired varieties.** People bought and sold items using tulip bulbs as a form of currency, and tulips were listed on the **Amsterdam** stock exchange. Some people sold their homes in order to have sufficient amounts of money available to invest in tulip trading.
- 3 By 1636, though, prices began to fall. Now people couldn't sell their tulips for the amounts of money they had anticipated. Not only individuals but the economy of Holland suffered and did not recover for several years.

Glossary

bulb: a short, thick, underground stem of some plants

Amsterdam: Capital city of the Netherlands

1. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 1?
 - A. The history of tulips is simple.
 - B. Tulips have an interesting history.
 - C. The more colorful a flower is, the more interesting its history is.
 - D. Tulips are not as simple as they first appear.
2. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 2?
 - A. People preferred to buy the more expensive types of tulips.
 - B. Striped tulips cost more than any other variety.
 - C. The cost of some tulip bulbs became surprisingly expensive.
 - D. Having many different kinds of tulip bulbs became increasingly important.

Passage 2 (Questions 3-4)

Day Traders

- 1 Day traders are individuals who buy and sell a variety of financial instruments such as stocks, **futures**, and currencies. Their transactions begin and end during a single business day. Depending on the personality of the trader and the types of trades made, day traders may make only a few trades per day or several hundred.
- 2 Originally, most day traders worked for companies such as banks, which had access to market data and sophisticated equipment; such a trader is called an institutional trader. **However, the decrease in price and the increase in speed and power of personal computers have made this type of work more available to more people, leading to a boom in the number of independent day traders, or retail traders.** A retail trader generally uses his or her own capital, although some also manage money for other people. Some countries limit the amount of others' money that a retail trader can handle and how they may advertise.
- 3 **A subgroup of traders are the auto-traders, so called because they engage in automated trading through the use of sophisticated computer software.** This type of trading is also known as high-frequency trading (because of the speed at which transactions occur) or **algorithmic** trading (because of its use of computer algorithms).

Glossary

futures: Contracts traded on an exchange in which someone agrees to buy or sell a quantity of a bulk commodity (such as corn) in the future at an agreed-upon date and price.

algorithmic: Following a complex set of rules to calculate a function.

3. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 2?
 - A. Cheaper and faster computers increased the number of retail traders.
 - B. These days, people can choose whether to be independent traders or retail traders.
 - C. Computers are less expensive and more efficient than they used to be.
 - D. Independent day traders have learned to carry out the work on their own, without depending on computers.

4. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 3?
- A. Most day traders have become overly dependent on automated means of trading.
 - B. Day trading in the automotive industry is almost entirely done by computer.
 - C. Most traders who are working today are auto-traders.
 - D. Some day traders carry out all of their transactions automatically by computer.

SKILLS REVIEW

Reading Skills 1 and 2: Understanding Vocabulary from Context and Paraphrasing a Sentence

Directions: Read the passage. Then mark the correct answers to the questions.

Frescoes

- 1 Fresco, from the Italian word *affresco*, meaning “fresh,” refers to painting techniques used on plaster. Popular during the Renaissance period (around C.E. 1300–1600), especially in Italy, frescos were used to decorate walls and ceilings of churches, public buildings, and private homes with **expansive** murals.
 - 2 The purest type of fresco painting, also known as *buon fresco*, or “true fresco,” involves mixing pigments directly with wet plaster. The color is thus actually part of the material, rather than a coating on top of it, as is the case with *fresco a secco* (“dry fresco”) or with regular painting. Famous examples of true fresco include the Bull-Leaping Fresco in the Great Palace in Knossos, Crete (created by an anonymous artist), and Michelangelo’s frescoes on the ceiling and back wall of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City.
 - 3 The colors of a true fresco are especially **vibrant** and long lasting; the Bull-Leaping Fresco was created sometime during the seventeenth to fifteenth century B.C.E., but the colors are still clear today. However, this technique is not without its unique disadvantages. For one thing, colors look different when they are wet than when they are dry. **Artists of the time typically mixed their own plaster and color mixtures, and made up one batch at a time, working quickly to finish a section of a mural before the plaster dried.** The mixture they created the next time might be a slightly different shade. If you look carefully at the frescoes on the Sistine Chapel, you can see which sections must have been completed in a single session by the faint differences in colors.
 - 4 *Fresco a secco* requires something to be added to the paint to make it stick to the dry plaster; common binders include egg, oil, or glue. This technique is sometimes used to repair a *buon fresco* that has been damaged, although the colors are generally not as bright. However, some colors actually worked better with the dry fresco. During the Renaissance period, the available pigments for creating blue did not mix well with wet plaster; for this reason, skies, water, and blue clothing sometimes were painted as *secco* frescoes after the *buon fresco* had dried.
 - 5 Given that with a fresco, the painting and the wall are now the same thing, naturally any damage to a wall will damage or destroy the fresco as well. Perhaps the most **notable** modern example of this was the destruction of the frescos by Giotto in the **basilica** of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy, in an earthquake in 1997. Chunks of plaster fell from the ceilings and walls, and many people judged the damage to the frescoes irreparable. **However, a team of 150 restorers, many of whom were volunteers, spent five years gathering the pieces that they could find and assembling them much like a giant jigsaw puzzle.** The restoration, completed in 2002, featured 60,000 pieces of plaster set back into place, much like a mosaic. About 35 percent of the fresco remains incomplete.
-

Glossary

basilica: A shape of building, often used as a church, with a rounded central area at one or both ends and a long middle section.

1. The word **expansive** in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to
 - A. ancient
 - B. large
 - C. public
 - D. costly
2. The word **vibrant** in paragraph 3 could best be replaced by
 - A. bright
 - B. moving
 - C. watery
 - D. rare
3. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 3?
 - A. Fresco mixtures dried quickly, so they were made in small amounts.
 - B. Painters took a long time creating their unique colors.
 - C. *Buon fresco* is more difficult for the artist than *secco fresco*.
 - D. After a mixture of fresco dried, it couldn't be used.
4. The word **notable** in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to
 - A. fighting
 - B. misunderstood
 - C. satisfying
 - D. significant
5. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 5?
 - A. Five years after the earthquake, the fresco looked like new.
 - B. Most of the people who worked on the project were not paid.
 - C. A group of people were eventually able to repair most of the damage.
 - D. The repair process was too confusing to be successful.