

ELECTRONIC SOURCES

Contemporary passages often cite electronic sources—emails, films, CD-ROMs, DVDs, and especially the Internet. Because web sites don't always publish complete information about themselves, citations will vary, but you're apt to find at least a few of the following:

- Name of web site
- Name of author and/or editor
- Title of article
- Title of online publication
- Institution/organization sponsoring site
- The date material was posted on the web/date of revisions
- Date that the author of the passage accessed the material
- URL, often printed between two carets < >

Example:

"Find the Right College for You," CollegeBoard.com, posted March, 2006;
accessed 28 March 2007, <<http://apps.collegeboard.com/search/index/jsp>>

TECHNIQUES FOR TACKLING READING PASSAGES

Passage 1

Questions 1–8

Read the following passage carefully before you answer the questions.

This passage comes from the autobiography of Edward Bok, an American journalist. In 1870, at age seven, Bok emigrated to the U.S. from Holland. He and his family settled in Brooklyn. This excerpt recounts boyhood experiences.

- The elder Bok did not find his "lines cast in pleasant places" in the United States. He found himself, professionally, unable to adjust the methods of his own land and of a lifetime to those of a new country. As a result
- Line the fortunes of the transplanted family did not flourish, and Edward soon
- (5) saw his mother physically failing under burdens to which her nature was not accustomed nor her hands trained. Then he and his brother decided to relieve their mother in the housework by rising early in the morning, building the fire, preparing breakfast, and washing the dishes before they went to school. After school they gave up their play hours, and swept and
- (10) scrubbed, and helped their mother to prepare the evening meal and wash the dishes afterward. It was a curious coincidence that it should fall upon Edward thus to get a first-hand knowledge of woman's housework which was to stand him in such practical stead in later years.

- It was not easy for the parents to see their boys thus forced to do work
- (15) which only a short while before had been done by servants. And the capstone of humiliation seemed to be when Edward and his brother, after having for several mornings found no kindling wood or coal to build a fire, decided to go out evenings with a basket and pick up what would they could find in neighboring lots, and the bits of coal spilled from the coal-bin
- (20) of the grocery store, or left on the curbs before houses where coal had been delivered. The mother remonstrated with the boys, although in her heart she knew that the necessity was upon them. But Edward had been started upon his Americanization career, and answered: "This is America, where one can do anything if it is honest. So long as we don't steal wood or coal,
- (25) why shouldn't we get it?" And, turning away, the saddened mother said nothing.

- But while doing these homely chores was very effective in relieving the untrained and tired mother, it added little to the family income. Edward looked about and decided that the time had come for him, young as he was,
- (30) to begin some sort of wage-earning. But how and where? The answer he found one afternoon when he was standing before the shop-window of a baker in the neighborhood. The owner of the bakery, who had just placed in the window a series of trays filled with buns, tarts, and pies, came outside to look at the display. He found the hungry boy wistfully regarding the
- (35) tempting-looking wares.

"Look pretty good, don't they?" asked the baker.

"They would," answered the Dutch boy with his national passion for cleanliness, "if your window were clean."

"That's so, too," mused the baker. "Perhaps you'll clean it."

- (40) "I will," was the laconic reply. And Edward Bok, there and then, got his first job. He went in, found a step-ladder, and put so much Dutch energy into the cleaning of the large shop-window that the baker immediately arranged with him to clean it every Tuesday and Friday afternoon after school. The salary was to be fifty cents per week!

1. The events described in the passage are narrated by

- (A) one of Edward's parents
- (B) Edward himself
- (C) Edward's brother
- (D) a participant in the events
- (E) an outside observer

Explanation:

Questions that ask you to identify or characterize the speaker in a passage appear regularly on the AP exam. To determine the identity of the speaker in any passage, look first for pronoun usage. A passage written in the first person—that is, using "I" or "we"—clearly indicates that the speaker is writing from his or her own point of view. (Note that the speaker may or may not be the same person as the author; authors sometimes invent speakers whose words are used in the passage.)

In this case, the author has chosen a narrator who speaks with the voice of someone who knows all the details but plays no part in the events—in other words, an omniscient observer. When you consider that the passage is autobiographical, Bok has made an unusual choice: By using the third person (“*he*”) he writes as though Edward were someone other than himself.

Choice (E) is the best answer.

2. Which of the following phrases does the author use to illustrate that the elder Bok failed to find his “lines cast in pleasant places” (line 1)?
 - (A) “professionally, unable to adjust” (line 2)
 - (B) “transplanted family” (line 4)
 - (C) “physically failing” (line 5)
 - (D) “her nature was not accustomed” (lines 5–6)
 - (E) “capstone of humiliation” (lines 15–16)

Explanation:

Because the phrase “lines cast in pleasant places” is a quotation, it is safe to assume that it refers to something that was said or something that occurred earlier in the story. It might have been used, for example, when the family arrived in America and Mr. Bok optimistically began searching for a job. Regardless of its precise context, the opening sentence of the passage implies that Mr. Bok experienced some sort of disappointment. Two reasons are given to explain the cause: 1) the family’s fortunes “did not flourish,” and 2) Mr. Bok’s old-world professional methods were incompatible with his new environment.

- (A) therefore, is the best answer.
- (B) is not related to Mr. Bok’s discontent.
- (C) and (D) refer only to Mrs. Bok.
- (E) relates to both of Edward’s parents, not only to Mr. Bok.

3. Which of the following best describes the rhetorical function of the last sentence of the first paragraph (lines 11–13)?
 - (A) It changes the tone of the passage from serious to lighthearted.
 - (B) It contrasts the personalities of Edward and his brother.
 - (C) It explains the general significance of the details contained in the paragraph.
 - (D) It describes the state of the family’s poverty.
 - (E) It hints at a dilemma that will become important later in the story.

Explanation:

To answer a question about the *rhetorical function* of a sentence, you must try to define what that sentence contributes to the passage. Also ask what it adds to the meaning of the passage and whether it affects the author’s tone. Does it help to develop the purpose of the passage, or does the sentence help the author achieve a particular effect? In short, you must analyze the role that the sentence plays in the passage.

Much of the first paragraph details the chores performed by Edward and his brother. The last sentence draws a conclusion about the boys' efforts, saying, in effect, that Edward's work was preparing him for the future.

- (A) is incorrect because the tone of the passage remains consistent.
- (B) doesn't apply because we don't learn much about the brother except that he worked alongside Edward.
- (D) should be rejected because the sentence has no relevance to the poverty of the family.
- (E) may be a tempting answer because of the phrase "later years," but the sentence contains no hint of a dilemma.
- (C) is the best answer.

4. In line 14, "work" refers to which of the following?

- I. fixing breakfast before school (line 8)
- II. washing the dinner dishes (lines 10–11)
- III. picking up bits of spilled coal (lines 18–20)

- (A) I only
- (B) III only
- (C) I and III only
- (D) I and II only
- (E) I, II, and III

Explanation:

Before answering this question you should read the entire sentence in which the word "work" appears. Note that the work in question had once been done by servants—presumably the servants who worked for the family back in Holland. Nothing in the passage, however, suggests that the servants went out looking for coal. Note also that the sentence contains the phrase "thus forced," indicating that *work* refers to something stated earlier in the passage. Because the boys' decision to go out looking for pieces of coal comes later (lines 18–20), the *work* alluded to does not include item III.

5. In context, the expression "necessity was upon them" (line 22) is best interpreted as having which of the following meanings?

- (A) It didn't matter
- (B) Things would never be the same
- (C) The time had come to meet the challenge
- (D) It was all in a day's work
- (E) It could not be helped

Explanation:

Mrs. Bok found it difficult to permit her sons to scour the neighborhood for scraps of wood and coal, but circumstances prevented her from doing anything about it.

Only (E) expresses the idea that she had no choice but to accept the boys' decision.

6. Edward can best be described as a person who
- (A) is determined to go into business for himself
 - (B) has made up his mind not to follow in his father's footsteps
 - (C) believes that honesty is the best policy
 - (D) is quick to seize opportunities that come his way
 - (E) can be counted on to keep his word

Explanation:

Much of the passage is devoted to a description of Edward's energy and initiative. Whether he is out scrounging for bits of coal and wood or talking his way into a part-time job as a window washer, he uses his quick mind to get ahead.

- (A) cannot be the correct answer. Even though Edward seems to be very ambitious, the passage does not contain enough information to support it.
- (B) is not mentioned in the passage.
- (C) is probably true, but Edward's honesty is not emphasized in the passage.
- (D) accurately describes one of Edward's most important traits.
- (E) may also be valid, but Edward's integrity is not discussed.

7. Which of the following themes best serves to unify the passage?
- (A) the rundown neighborhood in which the Boks lived
 - (B) a passion for cleanliness
 - (C) a closely-knit family
 - (D) the difficulty of assimilating into American life
 - (E) the generation gap between the Bok parents and children

Explanation:

- (A) is not a valid choice because the passage does not describe the neighborhood.
- (C) is implied, but is not significant enough to contribute to the unity of the passage.
- (D) and (E) are not discussed in the passage.
- (B) is the best choice. Edward's "passion for cleanliness" is suggested by his after-school sweeping and scrubbing of the house (lines 9–10), by the fact that his knowledge of housework will "stand him in such practical stead in later years" (line 13), and by his acquisition of a job as the bakery's window cleaner.

8. The style of the passage as a whole can best be characterized as
- (A) descriptive and informal
 - (B) abstract and profound
 - (C) plain and analytical
 - (D) subtle and inspirational
 - (E) symbolic and sentimental

Explanation:

Each choice consists of two adjectives. For a choice to be correct, both adjectives must accurately describe the style of the passage.

(B) is an unlikely choice because the passage is full of concrete detail. Nor does it contain profound thoughts and ideas.

(C), (D), and (E) all contain adjectives that characterize the passage: plain, inspirational, and sentimental. But the other adjective in each pair does not apply.

(A) is the best choice, for the author takes pains to describe the plight of the Bok family and what Edward and his brother do to help. The last section of the passage describes what Edward does and says while looking for a job. The story is told in a friendly, casual manner. Note, for example, that several sentences start with “But” and “And”—just one characteristic of informal, conversational prose.

Passage 2

Questions 9–17

Read the following passage carefully before you answer the questions.

This passage, written in the 1960s, is from an anthology on the history of violence in America.

Unquestionably the longest and most remorseless war in American history was the one between whites and Indians that began in Tidewater, Virginia, in 1607 and continued with only temporary truces for nearly 300 years down to the final massacre at Wounded Knee, South Dakota in 1890.

(5) The implacable hostility that came to rule white-Indian relations was by no means inevitable. The small Indian population that existed in the continental United States allowed plenty of room for expansion of white settlement. The economic resources of the white settlers were such that the Indians could have been easily and fairly reimbursed for the land needed for (10) occupation by the whites. In fact, a model of peaceful white-Indian relations was developed in 17th-century New England by John Eliot, Roger Williams, and other Puritan statesmen. The same was true in 18th-century Pennsylvania, where William Penn’s humane and equitable policy toward the Indians brought that colony decades of white-Indian amity.¹ Racial (15) prejudice and greed in the mass of New England whites finally reaped the whirlwind in King Phillip’s War of 1675–76, which shattered the peaceful New England model.² Much later the same sort of thing happened in Pennsylvania in 1763 when Pontiac’s Rebellion (preceded by increasing tensions) ended the era of amicable white-Indian relations in the Keystone (20) colony.

Other Indian wars proliferated during the 17th and 18th centuries, nor did the pace of the conflict slacken in the 19th century. It is possible that no other factor has exercised a more brutalizing influence on the American character than the Indian wars. The struggles with the Indians have some- (25) times been represented as being “just” wars in the interest of promoting superior Western civilization at the expense of the crude stone-age culture of the Indians. The recent ethnohistorical approach to the interpretation of white-Indian relations has given us a more balanced understanding of the relative merits of white and Indian civilizations. The norms of Indian (30) warfare were, however, at a more barbaric level than those of Western Europe. Among the Indians of Eastern America torture was an accepted