

FOR YOUR REVIEW
80 pages from the Instructor's
Edition of the just-published
College Reading Essentials.

COLLEGE READING ESSENTIALS



Includes
Chapter 2, MAIN
IDEAS—one of seven
key reading skills
taught in this book,
which is also available
in a digital version.

*See back cover
for details.*

JOHN LANGAN

2 Main Ideas

What Is the Main Idea?



“**W**hat’s the point?” You’ve probably heard these words before. It’s a question people ask when they want to know the main idea that someone is trying to express. The same question can guide you as you read. Recognizing the **main idea**, or point, is the most important key to good comprehension. Sometimes a main idea is immediately clear, as in the above cartoon. The humorous point—that the figure of death is not a desirable date—is supported by the woman’s three reasons.

To find the main idea of a reading selection, ask yourself, “What’s the point the author is trying to make?” For instance, read the paragraph on the following page, asking yourself as you do, “What is the author’s point?”

¹School bullies have been around as long as there have been schools. ²Studies reveal several reasons why some children become bullies. ³Research shows that a certain combination of size and personality may be one factor. ⁴Bigger, more aggressive children are more likely to try to dominate their smaller, quieter peers. ⁵Another factor linked to bullying is overexposure to violent TV programs. ⁶By the time the average American child is ten years old, he or she has watched thousands of acts of violence, including assault and murder. ⁷Such exposure can lead to aggression and violence. ⁸Finally, exposure to *real* violence is a factor in bullying. ⁹Studies indicate that victims of bullies often turn into bullies themselves. ¹⁰Whether abused by family members or tormented by other kids, bullies typically learn their behavior from others. ¹¹Look closely into the eyes of a bully, and you may be looking into the eyes of a former victim.

A good way to find an author's point, or main idea, is to look for a general statement. Then decide if that statement is supported by most of the other material in the paragraph. If it is, you have found the main idea.



Check Your Understanding

Following are four statements from the above passage. Pick out the one that is both a general statement *and* that is supported by the other material in the passage. Write the letter of that statement in the space provided. Then read the explanation that follows.

Four statements from the passage

- A. School bullies have been around as long as there have been schools.
- B. Studies reveal several reasons why some children become bullies.
- C. Research shows that a certain combination of size and personality may be one factor.
- D. Studies indicate that victims of bullies often turn into bullies themselves.

The general statement that expresses the main idea of the passage is _____.

Explanation

Sentence A: While this *is* a general statement, the paragraph does not go on to show how bullying has been a problem from when schools first began to the present day. Sentence A, then, is not the main idea.

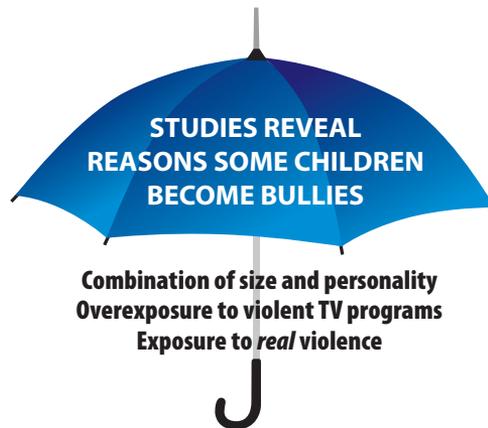
Sentence B: The phrase “several reasons” is a general one. And in fact the rest of the passage goes on to describe a series of three supporting reasons why some children become bullies. Sentence B, then, is the sentence that expresses the main idea of the passage.

Sentence C: This sentence is about only one reason. It is not general enough to include the other reasons for bullying.

Sentence D: This sentence provides detailed support for the third reason for bullying—“exposure to *real* violence.” It does not cover the other material in the paragraph.

The Main Idea as an “Umbrella” Idea

Think of the main idea as an “umbrella” idea. The main idea is the author’s general point; all the other material of the paragraph fits under it. That other material is made up of **supporting details**—specific evidence such as examples, causes, reasons, or facts. The diagram below shows the relationship.



The explanations and activities on the following pages will deepen your understanding of the main idea.

Recognizing a Main Idea

As you read through a passage, you must **think as you read**. If you merely take in words, you will come to the end of the passage without understanding much of what you have read. Reading is an active process, as opposed to watching television, which is passive. You must actively engage your mind, and, as you read, keep asking yourself, “What’s the point?” Here are three strategies that will help you find the main idea.

- 1 Look for general versus specific ideas.
- 2 Use the topic to lead you to the main idea.
- 3 Use key words to lead you to the main idea.

Each strategy is explained on the following pages.

1 Look for General versus Specific Ideas

You saw with the bullying paragraph that the main idea is a *general* idea supported by *specific* ideas. The following practices will improve your skill at separating general from specific ideas. Learning how to tell the difference between general and specific ideas will help you locate the main idea.



PRACTICE 1

Each group of words below has one general idea and three specific ideas. The general idea includes all the specific ideas. Identify each general idea with a **G** and the specific ideas with an **S**. Look first at the example.

Example

- S dogs
- S goldfish
- S hamsters
- G pets

(*Pets* is the general idea that includes three specific types of pets: dogs, goldfish, and hamsters.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. ___ home cooking
___ take-out
___ ways to eat dinner
___ frozen foods | 4. ___ traffic delay
___ head cold
___ bad coffee
___ minor problems |
| 2. ___ hot and humid
___ cold and rainy
___ cloudy with scattered showers
___ weather forecasts | 5. ___ hurry up
___ get to bed
___ commands
___ clean up this mess |
| 3. ___ deadbolt locks
___ alarm system
___ barking dog
___ kinds of security | |

**PRACTICE 2**

Write the answers to each question in the spaces provided. For each question, the answers will be specific details that illustrate the general idea.

1. Let's say you are describing a good friend. That he or she is a good friend is a general idea. List three *specific* reasons why he or she is a good friend.

2. All of us have certain valued material possessions in our lives. What are three *specific* objects that are very important to you?

3. Everyone has goals. What are three of the *specific* goals in your life?

4. Most students have had teachers whom they admire. Name one such teacher and three *specific* qualities or behaviors that made you like or respect that teacher.

Name of teacher: _____

Specific qualities or behaviors: _____

5. At one time or another, you've probably had to do a really unpleasant chore or job. Write three *specific* reasons why that chore or job was so unpleasant.

**PRACTICE 3**

In the following groups, one statement is the general point, and the other statements are specific support for the point. Identify each point with a **P** and each statement of support with an **S**.

1. ___ My family has real problems.
___ My mother has cancer.
___ My sister is pregnant.
___ I lost my job.

2. ___ Iris has a great smile.
___ Iris asks you questions about yourself.
___ Iris is a pleasure to be around.
___ Iris really listens when you talk.

3. ___ I feel short of breath.
___ I'm getting dizzy and sweating.
___ There is a pain in my chest.
___ I may be having a heart attack.

4. ___ My boss is hard to work for.
___ He lacks a sense of humor.
___ He never gives praise.
___ He times all our breaks to the second.

5. ___ We had different political beliefs.
___ The date was a nightmare.
___ We were dressed completely differently.
___ Both of us were too nervous to say much.

**PRACTICE 4**

In each of the following groups, one statement is the general point, and the other statements are specific support for the point. Identify each point with a **P** and each statement of support with an **S**.

1. ___ A. Last night we could hear and smell a large animal prowling outside our tent.
___ B. Green flies with stinging bites are in abundance around our campsite.
___ C. The time has come to find a new campsite.
___ D. This morning we discovered a nest of baby rattlesnakes nearby.
2. ___ A. Children are at risk at the school.
___ B. There are two active gangs in the school.
___ C. Knives and guns have been found in lockers.
___ D. Drug busts have been made at the school.
3. ___ A. Cats are clean and do not require much attention.
___ B. There are definite advantages to having a cat as a pet.
___ C. Cats like living indoors and are safe to have around children.
___ D. Cats are inexpensive to feed and easy to keep healthy.
4. ___ A. Communicating with family and friends using email takes very little effort or time.
___ B. Finding information is as easy as typing several key words.
___ C. Shopping can be quickly handled online with a few clicks of the mouse and the use of a credit card.
___ D. Computers make everyday matters much easier.
5. ___ A. Instead of working full-time, many of today's employees work part-time with little job security and few benefits.
___ B. Job security and our ideas about work have changed dramatically in recent years.
___ C. Unlike in years past, most people entering the work force today will change jobs several times during their careers.
___ D. Rather than work for someone else, many of today's workers hope to start their own businesses.

2 Use the Topic to Lead You to the Main Idea

You already know that to find the main idea of a selection, you look first for a general statement, which is often at the beginning of a selection. You then check to see if that statement is supported by most of the other material in the paragraph. If it is, you've found the main idea. Another approach that can help you find the main idea is to decide on the topic of a given selection.

The **topic** is the general subject of a selection. It can often be expressed in one or more words. Knowing the topic can help you find a writer's main point about that topic. Paying close attention to the topic of a selection can lead you to the main idea.

Textbook authors use the title of each chapter to state the overall topic of that chapter. They also provide many topics and subtopics in boldface headings within the chapter. For example, here is the title of a chapter in a sociology textbook:

Aggression: Hurting Others (a 38-page chapter)

And here are the subtopics:

Theories of Aggression (a 12-page section)

Influences on Aggression (a 20-page section)

Reducing Aggression (a 6-page section)

If you were studying the above chapter, you could use the topics to help find the main ideas. But there are many times when you are not given topics—with standardized reading tests, for example, or with individual paragraphs in articles or textbooks. To find the topic of a selection when the topic is not given, ask this simple question:

Who or what is the selection about?

For example, look again at the beginning of the paragraph that started this chapter:

School bullies have been around as long as there have been schools. Studies reveal several reasons why some children become bullies.

What, in a single word, is the above paragraph about? On the line below, write what you think is the topic.

Topic: _____

You probably answered that the topic is “Bullies.” As you read the paragraph again, you saw that, in fact, every sentence in it is about bullying.

The next step after finding the topic is to decide what main point the author is making about the topic. Authors often present their main idea in a single sentence. (This sentence is also known as the **main idea sentence** or the **topic sentence**.) As we have already seen, the main point that is made about bullying is that “Studies reveal several reasons why some children become bullies.”



Check Your Understanding

Let's look now at another paragraph. Read it and then see if you can answer the questions that follow.

¹Though fun to watch, chimpanzees should not be kept as pets. ²They are dangerously stronger than any NFL lineman. ³Adult chimps weigh only 100 to 160 pounds, but have been measured pulling six to nine times their own weight—*with one hand*. ⁴Thus, to match the strength of an average chimp, a human being would have to be able to register a two-handed pull of about a ton; it takes a very strong man to pull a quarter of that. ⁵Combined with this strength is the fact that a chimp is capable of losing its temper—for reasons known only to the chimp. ⁶Chimps signal their feelings with subtle cues of behavior that aren't apparent to most humans. ⁷It's quite possible for a chimp to be on the verge of violence while its owner sits unaware or even unknowingly continues to provoke it. ⁸Furthermore, it's not wise to keep a cute young chimp and release it into the wild when it becomes dangerous. ⁹Wild-raised chimps will routinely gang up on and kill those raised in captivity.

1. What is the *topic* of the paragraph? In other words, what is the paragraph about? _____

Hint: It often helps to look for (and even circle) a word or idea that is repeated in the paragraph.

2. What is the *main idea* of the paragraph? In other words, what point is the author making about the topic? (Remember that the main idea will be supported by the other material in the paragraph.)

Explanation

As the first sentence of the paragraph suggests, the topic is “chimpanzees.” Reading the paragraph, you see that, in fact, everything in it is about chimpanzees. And the main idea is clearly that “chimpanzees should not be kept as pets.” This idea is a general one that sums up what the entire paragraph is about. It is an “umbrella” statement under which all the other material in the paragraph fits. The parts of the paragraph could be shown as follows:

Topic: Chimpanzees

Main idea: Chimpanzees should not be kept as pets.

Supporting details:

1. Dangerously strong
2. Capable of losing temper
3. Liable to be attacked if released in the wild

The following practices will sharpen your sense of the difference between a topic, the point about the topic (the main idea), and supporting details.



PRACTICE 5

Below are groups of four items. In each case, one item is the topic, one is the main idea, and two are details that support and develop the main idea. Label each item with one of the following:

- T** — for the **topic** of the paragraph
- MI** — for the **main idea**
- SD** — for the **supporting details**

Note that an explanation is provided for the first group; reading it will help you do this practice.

Group 1

- _____ A. The creakings of a house settling may sound like a monster coming out of a grave.
- _____ B. Gusts of wind rattling a bedroom window can sound like invaders about to break in.
- _____ C. Nighttime noises can be frightening to children.
- _____ D. Noises at night.

Explanation

All of the statements in Group 1 are about noises at night, so item D must be the topic. Statements A and B each describe specific nighttime noises. Statement C, however, presents the general idea that nighttime noises can be frightening to children. It is the main idea about the topic “noises at night,” and statements A and B are supporting details that illustrate that main idea.

Group 2

- _____ A. People vary in the amount of daydreaming they do.
- _____ B. Around 2 to 4 percent of the population spend at least half their free time fantasizing.
- _____ C. Almost everyone daydreams about 10 percent of the time.
- _____ D. Daydreaming.

Group 3

- _____ A. Climate change.
- _____ B. Melting ice caps will raise ocean water levels and flood coastal areas.
- _____ C. A warmer atmosphere may cause droughts that will turn farmlands to deserts.
- _____ D. Climate change may cause destructive changes to life on Earth.

Group 4

- _____ A. There are ways to remain healthy in old age.
- _____ B. One way for people to remain healthy as they age is to continue to find mental challenges.
- _____ C. Sticking to a balanced, low-cholesterol diet and a reasonable exercise program helps keep people in good shape throughout their lives.
- _____ D. Health in old age.

Group 5

- _____ A. Love at first sight is a poor basis for a happy marriage, according to a study of one thousand married and divorced couples.
- _____ B. Couples who knew each other only slightly but fell instantly in love found that their feelings for each other grew weaker instead of stronger.
- _____ C. Love at first sight.
- _____ D. The couples who considered themselves happily married reported that they were not powerfully attracted to their partners when they first met, but that they gradually found each other more attractive as they grew to know and understand each other.



PRACTICE 6

Following are five paragraphs. Read each paragraph and do the following:

- 1 Ask yourself, “What seems to be the topic of the paragraph?” (It often helps to look for and even circle a word or idea that is repeated in the paragraph.)
- 2 Next, ask yourself, “What is the writer’s main point about this topic?” This will be the main idea. It is stated in one of the sentences in the paragraph.
- 3 Then test what you think is the main idea sentence by asking, “Is this statement supported by all or most of the other material in the paragraph?”

Hint: When looking for the topic, make sure you do not pick one that is either **too broad** (covering a great deal more than is in the selection) or **too narrow** (covering only part of the selection). The topic and the main idea of a selection must include everything in that selection—no more and no less.

For example, in Group 1 on page 74, the topic is “noises at night.” “Noises” would be too broad, since there are many other types of noises that are not mentioned. “The creakings of a house” would be too narrow, since this is only one type of nighttime noise mentioned.

Paragraph 1

¹Stories have the magic ability to focus our attention and maintain our interest. ²The politician or preacher who says, “That reminds me of a story . . .” has an audience’s attention immediately. ³Consider the success of television’s *60 Minutes*, the longest-running and most profitable prime-time show in the history of television. ⁴The person behind its success, producer Don Hewitt, says, “The secret of our show is so simple I can’t believe the formula hasn’t been followed by others. ⁵It’s four words that every kid knows: ‘Tell me a story.’ ⁶I look at things in screening rooms and I say, ‘That’s an interesting guy and those are some great scenes you’ve got, but what’s the story?’” ⁷Without the “story,” Hewitt knows the audience is leaving.

1. What is the *topic* of the paragraph? In other words, what (in one or more words) is the paragraph about? _____
- _____ 2. What point is the writer making about this topic? In other words, what is the *main idea* of the paragraph? In the space provided, write the number of the sentence containing the main idea. (Remember that the main idea will be supported by the other material in the paragraph.)

Paragraph 2

¹Fairy tales are often thought to be charming and lovely stories for children. ²Yet the original versions of some familiar fairy tales are shockingly violent. ³In “Cinderella,” a handsome prince searches for Cinderella by asking women to try on the glass slipper she’d worn at the royal ball. ⁴In the original version, Cinderella’s sisters cut off their own toes to make the slipper fit. ⁵In “Hansel and Gretel,” Hansel and Gretel’s parents abandon the children deep in the woods because the youngsters eat too much. ⁶After days of wandering, the hungry children are taken in by a hideous old woman. ⁷Her plan is to fatten the children up and then cook them and eat them. ⁸The children do escape, but only after Gretel has pushed the old woman into the oven, where she dies a fiery, agonizing death.

1. What is the *topic* of the paragraph? _____
- _____ 2. What point is the writer making about this topic? In other words, what is the *main idea* of the paragraph? In the space provided, write the number of the sentence containing the main idea.

Paragraph 3

¹Though some people still stubbornly resist the winds of change, Americans are becoming increasingly supportive of the idea of gay marriage. ²The numbers alone are astounding. ³In 1996, only 27 percent of Americans thought that gay people should be allowed to marry. ⁴Not even twenty years later, the majority of people in this country, 53 percent, feel that allowing gay people to marry is the right thing to do. ⁵Why the change? ⁶Some people say that they’re better informed than they used to be. ⁷Others just shrug and say it’s not as big a deal as it used to be. ⁸But the vast majority of people say it’s because they know and care about someone who is gay. ⁹Nearly 80 percent of Americans have a gay friend, family member, or coworker. ¹⁰“Their love is no different from mine,” said an 80-year-old woman who once opposed gay marriage. ¹¹“Their rights should be no different.” ¹²Perhaps most important, however, is the overwhelming support of young people. ¹³Three out of four people aged 18–29 are pushing for equal rights for gay people. ¹⁴These factors may have influenced the Supreme Court, in June 2015, to rule that gay couples could legally marry throughout the United States.

1. What is the *topic* of the paragraph? _____
- _____ 2. What point is the writer making about this topic? In other words, what is the *main idea* of the paragraph? In the space provided, write the number of the sentence containing the main idea.

Paragraph 4

¹On a vocabulary test, a student is asked to remember a word that means “to make something worse.” ²She is certain that she knows the word; in fact, it feels as if it’s on the tip of her tongue. ³Desperately searching her mind for the word, she is able to recall the first letter, the number of syllables, and the pattern of sounds. ⁴But the only word she can come up with is *exasperate*, which she knows means “to annoy.” ⁵After staring at the question for several minutes, she finally gives up and turns in her test. ⁶Then, as she runs to catch her bus, the word suddenly pops into her mind: *exacerbate*. ⁷This kind of tip-of-the-tongue experience demonstrates that people are often aware of what they do and do not know—an ability that can be both useful and maddening.

1. What is the *topic* of the paragraph? _____

- _____ 2. What point is the writer making about this topic? In other words, what is the *main idea* of the paragraph? In the space provided, write the number of the sentence containing the main idea.

Paragraph 5

¹You may have heard the expression “multiplying like rabbits.” ²That’s because, as the size of a rabbit population gets bigger and bigger, the number of rabbits increases even faster and faster. ³As a simple example, imagine that a rabbit can produce four babies every month. ⁴If each of those rabbits later produces four more rabbits, in two months there will be 16 rabbits. ⁵A month later there will be 64, then 256, then 1,024, then 4,096. ⁶By the end of the year, there will be 16,777,216 rabbits! ⁷This pattern, called exponential growth, occurs in many real-world situations, including population size, the spread of viruses, computer technology, and finance. ⁸For example, if your credit card charges 15% interest, an unpaid balance of \$1,000 will grow to \$1,013 at the end of the first month. ⁹If no payments are made, by the end of the year the balance will be \$1,160.75. ¹⁰And at the end of ten years, you will owe \$4,440.21—more than four times what you originally thought you had spent!

1. What is the *topic* of the paragraph? _____

- _____ 2. What point is the writer making about this topic? In other words, what is the *main idea* of the paragraph? In the space provided, write the number of the sentence containing the main idea.

3 Find and Use Key Words to Lead You to the Main Idea

Sometimes authors make it fairly easy to find their main idea. They announce it by using **key words**—verbal clues that are easy to recognize. First to note are **list words**, which tell you a list of items is to follow. For example, the main idea in the paragraph about bullies was stated like this: “Studies reveal several reasons why some children become bullies.” The expression *several reasons* helps you zero in on your target: the main idea. You realize that the paragraph is going to be about specific reasons why some children become bullies.

Here are some common word groups that often announce a main idea. Note that each of them contains a word that ends in *s*—a plural that suggests the supporting details will be a list of items.

List Words

several kinds (or ways) of
three advantages of
various reasons for

several causes of
five steps
a number of effects

some factors in
among the results
a series of

When expressions like these appear in a sentence, look carefully to see if that sentence might be the main idea. Chances are a sentence containing list words will be followed by a list of major supporting details.

Note Many other list-word expressions are possible. For example, a writer could begin a paragraph with a sentence containing “four kinds of” or “some advantages of” or “three reasons for.” So if you see a sentence with a word group like the ones above, you’ve probably found the main idea.



Check Your Understanding

Underline the list words in the following sentences.

Hint: Remember that list words usually end in *s*.

Example Certain kinds of behavior can quickly get you fired from a job.

1. American workers can be said to earn several types of income.
2. Water pollution takes two forms.
3. The purchase price of a house is only one of various costs that buyers must consider.
4. Problem solving usually involves a series of four steps.
5. The increasing flow of women into the labor force was caused by a number of economic factors.

Explanation

You should have underlined the following groups of words: *several types*, *two forms*, *various costs*, *a series of four steps*, and *a number of economic factors*. Each of these phrases tells you that a list of details will follow.

Besides list words, addition words can alert you to the main idea. **Addition words** are generally used right before a supporting detail. When you see this type of clue, you can assume that the detail it introduces fits under the umbrella of a main idea.

Here are some of the addition words that often introduce supporting details and help you discover the main idea.

Addition Words

one	to begin with	also	further
first (of all)	for one thing	in addition	furthermore
second(ly)	other	next	last (of all)
third(ly)	another	moreover	final(ly)

**Check Your Understanding**

Reread the paragraph about bullies, underlining the addition words that alert you to supporting details.

¹School bullies have been around as long as there have been schools. ²Studies reveal several reasons why some children become bullies. ³Research shows that a certain combination of size and personality may be one factor. ⁴Bigger, more aggressive children are more likely to try to dominate their smaller, quieter peers. ⁵Another factor linked to bullying is overexposure to violent TV programs. ⁶By the time the average American child is ten years old, he or she has watched thousands of acts of violence, including assault and murder. ⁷Such exposure can lead to aggression and violence. ⁸Finally, exposure to *real* violence is a factor in bullying. ⁹Studies indicate that victims of bullies often turn into bullies themselves. ¹⁰Whether abused by family members or tormented by other kids, bullies typically learn their behavior from others. ¹¹Look closely into the eyes of a bully, and you may be looking into the eyes of a former victim.

Explanation

The words that introduce each new supporting detail for the main idea are *one*, *Another*, and *Finally*. These addition words introduce each of the three reasons for bullying.

Note also that the main idea includes the list words *several reasons*, which signal that the supporting details will be a list of the reasons for bullying. In this and many paragraphs, list words and addition words often work hand in hand.

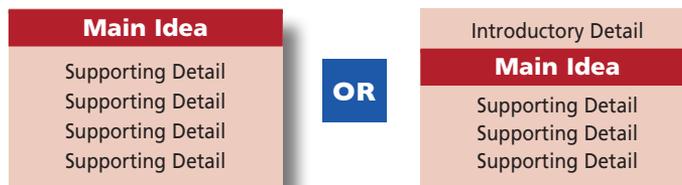
The following chapter, “Supporting Details,” includes further information about words that alert you to the main idea and the details that support it. But what you have already learned here will help you find main ideas.

Locations of the Main Idea

Now you know how to recognize a main idea by (1) distinguishing between the general and the specific, (2) identifying the topic of a passage, and (3) using key words. You are ready to find the main idea no matter where it is located in a paragraph.

A main idea may appear at any point within a paragraph. Very commonly, it shows up at the beginning, as either the first or the second sentence. However, main ideas may also appear further within a paragraph or even at the very end.

Main Idea at the Beginning



In textbooks, it is very common for the main idea to be either the first or the second sentence. See if you can underline the main idea in the paragraph on the following page.

¹Spanking is a poor way to shape a child's behavior. ²For one thing, spanking will result in feelings of anger and frustration. ³The child, then, will not learn anything positive from the punishment. ⁴In addition, spanking may actually lead to more bad behavior. ⁵Having learned that hitting is okay, the child may attack smaller children. ⁶Finally, spanking teaches children to hide certain actions from their parents. ⁷Once out of their parents' sight, however, children may feel they can get away with the bad behavior.

In this paragraph, the main idea is in the *first* sentence. All the following sentences in the paragraph provide details about the negative effects of spanking.



Check Your Understanding

Now read the following paragraph and see if you can underline its main idea:

¹Tailgating—following too closely behind another vehicle—is a common cause of accidents. ²Yet tailgating accidents could be avoided if drivers followed some clear-cut guidelines. ³Any car that is less than two seconds behind the one ahead is definitely too close. ⁴Two car lengths is a safe following distance to maintain in local driving. ⁵Two-car accidents often become chain-reaction pileups when a number of drivers are all tailgating in a line. ⁶At freeway speeds, or in snowy, icy or foggy conditions, people should increase following distance well beyond what is normally safe. ⁷Finally, drivers who are impatient or aggressive need to develop the self-control not to express those feelings through dangerous behaviors like tailgating.

Explanation

In the preceding paragraph, the main idea is stated in the *second* sentence. The first sentence introduces the topic, but it is the idea in the second sentence—tailgating can be avoided by following clear-cut guidelines—that is supported in the rest of the paragraph. So keep in mind that the first sentence may simply introduce or lead into the main idea of a paragraph. Very often, a contrast word like *yet*, *but*, or *however* signals the main idea, as in the paragraph you have just read:

Tailgating—following too closely behind another vehicle—is a common cause of accidents. Yet tailgating accidents could be avoided if drivers followed some clear-cut guidelines.

Main Idea in the Middle



The main idea at times appears in the middle of a paragraph. Here is an example of a paragraph in which the main idea is somewhere in the middle. Try to find it and underline it. Then read the explanation that follows.

¹Many of us are annoyed by telemarketers who call us day and night, trying to sell us everything from magazine subscriptions to vacation homes. ²These electronic intruders don't seem to care how much they are inconveniencing us and refuse to take "no" for an answer. ³However, nuisance callers can be stopped if we take charge of the conversation. ⁴As soon as one of them asks if we are Mr. or Ms. X, we should respond, "Yes, and are you a telephone solicitor?" ⁵This technique puts them on the defensive. ⁶We then have an opening to say that we don't accept solicitations over the phone, only through the mail. ⁷This puts a quick end to the conversation.

If you thought the third sentence states the main idea, you were correct. The two sentences before the main idea introduce the topic: the problem of annoying telemarketers. Then the writer presents the main idea, which is that we can stop telemarketers from going on by taking charge of the conversation. The rest of the paragraph develops that idea by telling us how we can take charge of the conversation.

Main Idea at the End



Sometimes all the sentences in a paragraph will lead up to the main idea, which is presented at the end. On the next page is an example of such a paragraph.

¹A study at one prison showed that owning a pet can change a hardened prison inmate into a more caring person. ²Another study discovered that senior citizens, both those living alone and those in nursing homes, became more interested in life when they were given pets to care for. ³Even emotionally disturbed children have been observed to smile and react with interest if there is a cuddly kitten or puppy to hold. ⁴Animals, then, can be a means of therapy for many kinds of individuals.

Main Idea at the Beginning and the End



At times an author may choose to state the main idea near the beginning of the paragraph and then emphasize it by restating it later in the paragraph. In such cases, the main idea is at both the beginning and the end. Such is the case in the following paragraph.

¹People react strongly to red. ²The next time you go into a bookstore, notice which books catch your eye. ³Those with red covers are likely to stand out. ⁴The color of blood, red puts us on the alert. ⁵Often it signals danger. ⁶Red traffic lights and stop signs tell us to halt. ⁷Red also flags problems. ⁸Errors commonly are marked in red. ⁹Debts place us "in the red." ¹⁰Red is the color of negative emotion. ¹¹We redden with overexertion or embarrassment. ¹²When we're angry, we "see red." ¹³But red also is associated with strong positive feelings. ¹⁴The red hearts and roses of Valentine's Day speak of romance. ¹⁵Red cheeks convey health; red lips and nails, sexuality. ¹⁶Red can even confer a competitive advantage. ¹⁷When the colors worn by Olympic athletes in sports such as boxing were analyzed, researchers found that athletes who wore red tended to outperform opponents in blue. ¹⁸Apparently, red suggests power. ¹⁹Physiologically, our eyes are more sensitive to red than to blue or green. ²⁰Asked to name any color, most adults respond, "Red." ²¹Red is the one color that humans simply cannot ignore.

**PRACTICE 7**

The main ideas of the following paragraphs appear at different locations—in the beginning, somewhere in the middle, or at the end. Identify each main idea by filling in its sentence number in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹Many people think the purpose of dictionaries is to dictate what is acceptable—to tell us which words we’re allowed to use, as well as how to spell them. ²In fact, dictionaries simply describe how language is currently being used, so that we can understand words we’re likely to read. ³Merriam-Webster’s editors, for example, spend time reading a wide variety of works, including books, magazines, newspapers, and electronic publications. ⁴They search for new words, as well as for changes in a word’s spelling, meaning, or usage. ⁵The editors then decide which entries should be added, revised, or dropped. ⁶To be included in the dictionary, words or changes must be used by many different writers and appear in many different publications. ⁷That’s why, for instance, the 17th-century word *jargogle* no longer appears in most dictionaries, while the 21st-century word *selfie* does.
- _____ 2. ¹Recently while I was sitting in a small auditorium waiting for a play to begin, I saw three audience members chatting on cell phones. ²In fact, people converse on their cell phones while they drive, shop, walk down the street, use public transportation, eat in restaurants, or go to the bathroom. ³Let’s face it: in the 21st century, cell phones are everywhere. ⁴In addition to using cell phones to talk, people use them to email, text-message, surf the Web, organize their day, take photos, listen to music, watch videos, play games, and, by means of the phone’s light, find something in the dark, such as a keyhole. ⁵According to a 2015 survey, more than 260 million Americans, including 98 percent of those aged 18 to 29, carry a cell phone. ⁶Ninety-seven percent of U.S. households have at least one cell phone; many have three or more. ⁷In the United States, cell phones now far outnumber wired phones. ⁸Americans clearly love cell phones, right? ⁹Wrong. ¹⁰A survey asked U.S. adults which invention they most hate. ¹¹The most frequent reply? ¹²The cell phone.
- _____ 3. ¹Parents have always known that singing a lullaby can help babies fall asleep. ²But music has been shown to soothe adults as well. ³In one study, for example, listening to music proved more effective than prescription drugs in lowering patients’ pre-surgical anxiety. ⁴Researchers have also found that listening to music boosts the body’s immune system and protects people from infections. ⁵Music also lowers the production of the stress hormone cortisol, which, over time, can be harmful to health. ⁶Musician Billy Joel once said, “I think music in itself is healing.” ⁷Now science has proven that music has the power to improve both mental and physical health.

- _____ 4. ¹To prevent the spread of disease, governments often use quarantines to keep ill people away from others. ²Although sometimes effective, quarantines have also been used to discriminate against people and take away their basic rights. ³For example, during a 1900 outbreak of bubonic plague, a Chinese immigrant was found dead in a San Francisco hotel. ⁴City officials used barbed wire to seal off a large section of Chinatown. ⁵Residents of Chinese origin were quarantined, while others were allowed to come and go. ⁶The decision was likely motivated by anti-immigrant feelings, because bubonic plague is spread by rats, not humans. ⁷During World War I, men with sexually transmitted diseases could not be drafted. ⁸So the U.S. military rounded up more than 30,000 women, put them in prisons, and kept them there—even after tests proved they were disease-free. ⁹More recently, during a 2014 outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, the Liberian president ordered her troops to impose a 21-day quarantine on an overcrowded slum in the capital city. ¹⁰As a result, 70,000 of Liberia’s poorest people panicked, the cost of food doubled, and clashes between residents and the military led to injuries and even death.
- _____ 5. ¹For hundreds of years, philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists have tried to understand why some people enjoy being scared while others do not. ²Recent neurological findings suggest that differences in brain chemistry help explain our varied responses to being frightened. ³When faced with a terrifying situation, the brain releases dopamine, a chemical involved in pleasure and rewards. ⁴But the amount of dopamine released varies from person to person. ⁵Therefore, people whose brains release large quantities of dopamine feel a natural high while watching a horror movie; those whose brains produce less dopamine feel only horror. ⁶Of course, to enjoy a scary situation rather than run away from it, we must first feel safe. ⁷When we enter a haunted house, for example, the spooky sounds and sights flood our brains with chemicals involved in the fight-or-flight response. ⁸For most people, the brain has time to realize that there is, in fact, no real danger. ⁹But for some people, the situation may resemble an earlier experience of real-life threat. ¹⁰In that case, lasting and terrifying memories created by those same chemicals overwhelm any possible feelings of pleasure.

Note on the Central Point

Just as a paragraph may have a main idea, a longer selection may have a **central point**, also known as a **central idea** or **thesis**. The longer selection might be an essay, an article, or a section of a textbook chapter. You can find a central point in the same way that you find a main idea—by identifying the topic (which is often suggested by the title of the selection) and then looking at the supporting material.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 8, Test 1

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹There are several different parenting styles. ²One is the authoritarian style. ³Authoritarian parents give orders and punish their children if those orders are not quickly obeyed. ⁴There is also the authoritative style. ⁵Authoritative parents make it clear they are in charge, but they are open to seeing their children's point of view. ⁶The next style is that of permissive parents, who avoid ever saying "no" and give the children a good deal of power. ⁷Fourth is the uninvolved parenting style. ⁸An uninvolved parent does not ask much of children, and does not give much attention either. ⁹Most child-rearing experts feel that children's needs are best met by authoritative parents.
- _____ 2. ¹We often think that we keep "sharing" the same cold with our friends or loved ones. ²But the truth is that it's very unlikely that you would catch the same cold twice. ³There are hundreds of different kinds of cold viruses floating around. ⁴When you catch a cold, your body builds up immunity to the specific virus that gave you the cold. ⁵If that virus tries to infect you again, your immune system usually will protect you from it. ⁶However, that immunity may not protect you from catching a cold from a different cold virus.
- _____ 3. ¹Walking regularly burns calories, and this can help maintain a healthy weight. ²It also improves muscle tone in the legs, the abdomen, and (if you pump your arms as you walk) the arms. ³It helps the heart by improving blood circulation and lowering blood pressure. ⁴In addition, walking releases hormones in your body that can reduce pain and brighten your mood. ⁵Furthermore, when you walk places, you are more likely to interact with other people than you are when you drive a car. ⁶Walking can be a good way to get to know your neighbors better. ⁷In short, walking offers a number of physical, mental, and social benefits.

(Continues on next page)

- _____ 4. ¹The cars we drive are generally comfortable, convenient, and dependable. ²However, the first automobiles were quite unlike what we are used to today. ³For one thing, the wheels—and many other parts of the car—were made of wood. ⁴The combination of the hard seats, the wooden wheels, and the rutted dirt roads made a Sunday drive a bone-crunching experience. ⁵In addition, many early cars were made without doors or roofs, so drivers and their passengers were exposed to dust, mud, and rain. ⁶Motorists had to wear goggles to protect their eyes because there were no windshields. ⁷There were no gas stations, so gasoline was purchased in containers at a general store. ⁸To start the car, drivers had to turn the engine by hand using a metal crank and be careful not to break a thumb in the process. ⁹Once the car was started, it was not very dependable and frequently broke down. ¹⁰And it was not unusual to get at least one or two flat tires during a half-day trip.
- _____ 5. ¹Most people feel anxious when they have to make a speech or take a test, but the feeling is not long-lasting and does not interfere with their lives in general. ²A phobia, on the other hand, is a continuing, extreme fear of something that is not likely to be harmful. ³For example, some people have a phobia about elevators. ⁴They worry that if they enter an elevator, the cable will break and they will fall hundreds of feet to their death. ⁵While such an accident can happen, it is extremely rare. ⁶Agoraphobia is the fear of open spaces. ⁷People with this phobia may be afraid to use public transportation or to be in a crowd. ⁸For some people, this phobia is so strong that they cannot even leave home. ⁹These and other phobias can usually be overcome, often fairly quickly, with the right direction and treatment.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 8, Test 2

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹According to memory experts, there are ways you can improve your chances of remembering the names of people you meet. ²First, when you are introduced to someone, repeat the name with your greeting: "Nice to meet you, Susan." ³If the name is a difficult one, ask for the spelling, and visualize the letters mentally. ⁴If you realize you have forgotten the name a few seconds after the introduction, be honest. ⁵Say something like, "I'm sorry, I missed your name." ⁶Then take a good look at the person and concentrate on matching the face with the name. ⁷If possible, make associations between a person's name and looks. ⁸For example, if you meet a man named Baker, you might picture him wearing a baker's hat. ⁹It is also important to use the person's name as you converse, keeping your mental images in mind. ¹⁰Repeating the name silently to yourself can be helpful too. ¹¹Last of all, when your conversation ends, repeat the person's name as you say goodbye.
- _____ 2. ¹It is estimated that between 20 and 50 percent of American adults have a tattoo. ²But choosing whether or not to get a tattoo is a decision that should be made carefully. ³For one thing, being tattooed can be physically painful. ⁴It can also be expensive. ⁵A small, simple tattoo may cost only \$100 or less, but a large, complex one can cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars. ⁶In some cases, the healing time can be several weeks. ⁷Occasionally, people have allergic reactions to the dye. ⁸Also, if the equipment the artist uses has not been properly sterilized, getting a tattoo can lead to an infection. ⁹Finally, a tattoo is relatively permanent. ¹⁰About 14 percent of those who get a tattoo later regret it. ¹¹A tattoo can be removed with laser treatments, but the process is expensive, painful, and time-consuming.
- _____ 3. ¹There are many kinds of kisses. ²There is the kiss of peace, the kiss of death, the ceremonial kiss on the hand, the air kiss, the peck on the cheek, the romantic kiss. ³No one knows exactly why humans kiss, but there are a few theories. ⁴Some scientists believe it is a learned behavior that can be traced back to "kiss feeding." ⁵In some cultures, a mother will feed her baby by chewing up food and then passing it directly from her mouth into the baby's mouth. ⁶There are, however, cultures that practice kiss feeding but not social or romantic kissing. ⁷Another theory is based on the idea that many living

(Continues on next page)

creatures “kiss” in some way. ⁸Bonobo apes frequently kiss one another, and dogs and cats lick and nuzzle one another. ⁹Rather than kissing, as we think of it, these creatures may be grooming, smelling, or communicating with one another. ¹⁰In any case, the behavior suggests that the animals are discovering if they can trust one another and are bonding in some way. ¹¹The same might be said for human kissing.

_____ 4. ¹“Falling stars” or “shooting stars” aren’t really stars at all. ²The streaks of light we sometimes see in the nighttime sky are caused by tiny bits of dust and rock (called meteoroids) falling into the earth’s atmosphere and burning up. ³The trail of light produced by the burning meteoroid is called a meteor. ⁴These tiny bits of dust and rock enter the earth’s atmosphere at speeds of 45,000 miles per hour or more. ⁵Passing through the atmosphere at such speeds causes them to heat up and glow and begin to fall apart. ⁶The particles that fly off leave a glowing trail behind the bit of dust or rock. ⁷Most meteoroids have completely fallen apart before they get within thirty miles of the surface of the earth.

_____ 5. ¹It is no secret that you can lose weight through diet and exercise. ²But there are also other less obvious ways to remove a few pounds. ³One way is to eat more slowly. ⁴It takes your brain about twenty minutes to get the message from your stomach that it is full. ⁵By slowing down your food intake, your brain may tell you that you have had enough before you finish the entire plate of French fries. ⁶To eat more slowly, try sipping water frequently and interspersing your eating with conversation with your dinner partner. ⁷Often people eat out of boredom, nervousness, or frustration, so by finding ways other than eating to control these feelings, you will cut down on the number of calories you take in each day. ⁸A third way to lose weight is to get enough sleep. ⁹When you are overtired, you don’t have the mental clarity to make good decisions. ¹⁰As a result, you are less likely to refuse that second helping of ice cream. ¹¹In addition, when you are sleep-deprived, your body makes more of the hormone that signals your brain it is time to eat and less of the hormone that tells your brain that you have had enough food.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 8, Test 3

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹According to researchers, chimpanzees make and use surprisingly sophisticated tools. ²For example, chimps insert stiff blades of grass into termite hills to draw out the insects, which they then eat from this “spoon.” ³Sometimes, a chimp will shape the grass for a better fit. ⁴These forest creatures use sticks to break open beehives for the honey, to dig grubs out of logs, and even to create spears for killing small animals. ⁵Chimpanzees use rocks as hammers and anvils to break open nuts. ⁶And they crumple leaves together to use as sponges to get drinking water out of hard-to-reach places. ⁷Some have collections of different tools to use when getting food from a particular source.
- _____ 2. ¹We are taught that lying is wrong, so why do people do it all the time? ²There are many reasons people lie. ³One of the most common reasons is that a quick lie is often the easiest and fastest way to get on with life. ⁴If someone asks “How are you?” we usually say something like “Fine, thanks,” even if we have a terrible cold and feel lousy. ⁵Both the question and the answer are just the polite give and take of social interaction. ⁶Another reason for lying is to protect the feelings of others. ⁷If a friend has a new haircut that she thinks looks great, most of us would not tell her it looks awful even if we thought so. ⁸Sometimes we lie to protect ourselves. ⁹If the instructor asks why we were late for class, we will probably get more sympathy if we say that the bus broke down than if we admit that we simply overslept.
- _____ 3. ¹Although eating garlic may give you bad breath, it has many health benefits. ²Garlic has very few calories, but it is highly nutritious. ³For example, it is rich in Vitamins C and B6 and contains other important vitamins and minerals as well. ⁴Garlic also strengthens the immune system. ⁵One study has shown that garlic supplements can reduce the number of colds you get. ⁶Other studies indicate that garlic can significantly reduce the length and severity of your cold or flu symptoms when you do get sick. ⁷In addition, large quantities of garlic can reduce high blood pressure. ⁸High blood pressure can be dangerous because it can lead to heart attacks and strokes. ⁹Garlic can also

(Continues on next page)

lower the level of “bad” cholesterol in your blood. ¹⁰This could lower your risk of heart disease. ¹¹Some research suggests that garlic may also help reduce the risk of common brain diseases that come with aging, such as Alzheimer’s and dementia.

- _____ 4. ¹Sometimes heart attacks are sudden and intense—the “movie heart attack,” in which the victim gasps for breath, clutches his chest, and collapses. ²More often, however, a heart attack starts slowly and triggers various warning signs. ³One sign is discomfort in the center of the chest. ⁴The feeling may continue for more than a few minutes, or it may go away and come back; and it may feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain. ⁵There may also be discomfort or pain in other parts of the body, such as the arms, the back, the neck, the jaw, or the stomach. ⁶Frequently the victim experiences shortness of breath. ⁷Someone having a heart attack also might feel lightheaded or nauseated or break into a cold sweat.
- _____ 5. ¹It seems as if it should be easy to figure out the length of a wall, but estimates of the Great Wall of China range from 5,500 miles to 13,170 miles, depending on which archeologist you ask. ²There are several reasons it is difficult to pinpoint the exact length of the Great Wall. ³One is that it was constructed over a long period of time. ⁴The earliest sections were built more than 2,500 years ago. ⁵These sections were later joined together and reinforced. ⁶The most recent sections were constructed between 1474 and 1644. ⁷There is not a single, continuous record of its construction. ⁸A second reason it is hard to determine the exact length is that portions of the wall have disappeared. ⁹Some have been worn away by sandstorms, while others have been vandalized and the materials used to build other structures. ¹⁰And parts have disappeared because they have been knocked down to make way for other structures. ¹¹A third reason researchers have trouble measuring the wall is that some sections of it are in mountainous areas that are extremely difficult to reach. ¹²As a result, nobody can really be sure how long the world’s longest manmade structure actually is.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 8, Test 4

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹Uncorrected vision problems make it difficult for a young student to read or to see what is going on in the classroom. ²Ear infections, if not treated, can result in hearing loss, which also makes it harder for a child to succeed in school. ³Lack of proper dental care can result in toothaches. ⁴A child with a toothache is likely to have difficulty concentrating in school. ⁵In short, a lack of appropriate basic healthcare can interfere with a child's performance in school.
- _____ 2. ¹The hedgehog, a spiny animal that lives in much of Europe and Africa, is a very effective snake-killer. ²First, the hedgehog sneaks up on the snake and bites its tail firmly. ³The hedgehog immediately curls up into a tight ball, still holding the snake's tail in its mouth. ⁴The snake then strikes the hedgehog again and again, but all it does is injure itself against the hedgehog's pointed spines. ⁵As the snake strikes, the hedgehog continues chewing until the snake is dead. ⁶Finally, the hedgehog uncurls and enjoys its meal.
- _____ 3. ¹Almost every week, you're likely to see a TV commercial or an ad for a new health product. ²It might promise better sleep, more energy, clearer skin, firmer muscles, lower weight, brighter moods, longer life—or all of these combined. ³The product is often endorsed by ordinary-looking people who have been carefully rehearsed. ⁴However, if a health product sounds too good to be true, it probably is. ⁵If, for example, a magic pill really could trim off excess pounds or remove wrinkles, the world would be filled with thin people with unlined skin. ⁶Look around, and you'll realize that's not the case.

(Continues on next page)

- _____ 4. ¹Carnivorous plants are plants that trap and digest small animals, especially insects. ²These plants grow in areas where the soil does not offer much food value and, as a result, get most of their nutrition by eating insects. ³Different types of carnivorous plants use different methods for trapping their meals. ⁴Pitcher plants use what are called pitfall traps. ⁵The leaves form a funnel or pitcher, and the lip of the pitcher puts out nectar that attracts the insect. ⁶A loose coating of waxy flakes on the plant's leaves cause the insect to fall down the slippery leaf into the bottom of the funnel, where it is digested. ⁷The largest pitcher plants use this method to catch small frogs and mammals. ⁸Some plants, such as Australian rainbow plants and sundews, use the flypaper method for trapping insects. ⁹These plants have a glue-like material on their leaves or at the ends of their tentacles. ¹⁰Insects become stuck in the glue and are then digested by the plant. ¹¹A third method, used by the Venus flytrap, is the snap trap. ¹²The color and odor of the plant's leaves attract insects. ¹³An insect landing on the leaf stimulates special sensory hairs that signal the two sides of the leaf to rapidly snap shut, trapping and sealing the insect inside, where it is digested and absorbed by the plant.
- _____ 5. ¹Early on the morning of April 18, 1906, a major earthquake struck the city of San Francisco, California. ²The earthquake caused huge fires to break out. ³About 80 percent of the city was destroyed. ⁴One of the people who played an important role in helping the city recover and rebuild was a man named Amedeo Giannini. ⁵Giannini was the son of an Italian immigrant who, in 1904, had established the Bank of Italy. ⁶This was a bank designed to serve immigrants to San Francisco at a time when most banks would offer services only to the wealthy. ⁷The morning the earthquake struck, Giannini walked seventeen miles from his home outside San Francisco to his bank. ⁸The building had only minor damage but was threatened by rapidly approaching fire. ⁹He and two assistants loaded the bank's money and records into two wagons and hauled it all to Giannini's house. ¹⁰Because of the earthquake and fires, almost none of the other banks in the city were able to access their funds. ¹¹Giannini set up a desk made of planks laid across two barrels and reopened his bank. ¹²From there he made loans on a handshake to people who needed money to rebuild.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 8, Test 5

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹Many people love bike riding. ²Biking, however, can be a dangerous activity. ³One danger is “getting doored”—having a car driver open his or her door directly into the path of an oncoming bike. ⁴Equally dangerous is the driver who pulls out of a parking space without signaling or noticing a biker is passing by. ⁵Another risk is aggressive drivers who feel they have more right to the roads than bikers do. ⁶Such drivers will scream, honk, or gesture wildly. ⁷They may intentionally block off bikers without a signal or a look, giving the biker no time to avoid running off the road or into the car. ⁸An added source of danger for bikers is poor road design, which in many cases allows just enough room for a car on either side of the road, but no extra room for a biker to be on the same road. ⁹Recently, the U.S. Department of Transportation noted that bicycling is now more dangerous than flying in planes or riding in buses, boats, or trains.
- _____ 2. ¹While the female black widow spider is venomous, her bite is very rarely fatal to a human being. ²The bite can be life-threatening to an infant or to someone whose immune system is already weakened. ³However, in most people, it produces only muscle aches, nausea, and difficulty breathing. ⁴In addition, the black widow does not go looking for humans to attack. ⁵In fact, she is very shy and will bite humans only when she feels cornered. ⁶Also, the idea that the black widow always kills the male after mating is untrue. ⁷The male is often spared—if he remembers to tap out a special signal as he ventures onto his mate’s web. ⁸The vibrations on the web let her know he is one of her own kind, not an insect to be rushed at and killed. ⁹So, in spite of all the bad publicity, it seems that the female black widow spider is not as terrible a killer as is generally believed.

(Continues on next page)

- _____ 3. ¹“Fatso!” ²“Goof-off!” ³“Loser!” ⁴Most people realize that such name-calling shows disrespect. ⁵But verbal disrespect also comes in less obvious forms. ⁶One such form is criticism that reduces a person to some undesirable behavior: “All you ever do is sit around”; “You’ve always been a lousy cook.” ⁷Repeatedly interrupting someone also shows disrespect. ⁸Such interruptions often indicate that what the person is about to say is unimportant to you. ⁹Using someone’s remark as a way of changing the subject to yourself also is disrespectful. ¹⁰For instance, if someone says, “I can’t find my car keys” and your only response is, “I’ve been looking all day for my phone,” you are suggesting that your concerns matter, but theirs do not.
- _____ 4. ¹It is well known that trees provide shade, beauty, and wind protection. ²However, there are also many other benefits of trees. ³First, trees act like filters. ⁴They absorb odors and polluting gases, and they release oxygen back into the atmosphere. ⁵A single sugar maple can absorb the amount of carbon dioxide released from cars burning a thousand gallons of gasoline. ⁶Trees can also reduce electrical use. ⁷Three shade trees around a single-family house can reduce air-conditioning needs by up to 50 percent. ⁸In addition, trees can reduce heat in cities by shading heat-absorbing streets and by releasing water vapor into the air through their leaves. ⁹Furthermore, there is evidence that trees can lower people’s levels of stress. ¹⁰Finally, hospital patients who have views of trees out their windows heal more quickly and require smaller quantities of painkillers.
- _____ 5. ¹Shakespeare wrote that “all the world’s a stage.” ²He meant that everyone has at least one part, or role, to play in life. ³In fact, every role we play has an “onstage” and a “backstage” area; in the first area, we’re on our best behavior, but in the second area, we can “let our hair down.” ⁴For example, in the dining room, the wait staff is “onstage.” ⁵No matter how rushed they are, or how annoyed they feel, servers are expected to be polite and helpful at all times. ⁶Once they return to the kitchen, however, it’s another matter. ⁷They are now “backstage” and can let their true feelings show. ⁸In the kitchen, a server can make sarcastic remarks about the customers or even joke about serving a plate of food that’s been dropped.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 9, Test 1

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹There are several reasons we wrap the gifts we give to others. ²One obvious reason is to conceal the item being given. ³Another reason is that wrapping helps personalize the gift. ⁴An attractively wrapped present suggests that the person giving it has taken the time and effort to present the gift in a pleasing way. ⁵This can be especially important when the item itself is not a very personal one, such as a gift card. ⁶A third reason is to build anticipation in the person receiving the gift and, in this way, increase the recipient's pleasure. ⁷Fourth, colorful paper and ribbon add to the festive atmosphere of the occasion on which the gift is given, whether it is for a holiday, a birthday, a wedding, or some other special event. ⁸And finally, we wrap presents because it is traditional. ⁹The earliest record of paper being used to wrap gifts dates back more than 2,200 years to China, when paper was first invented. ¹⁰In 19th-century England, wallpaper, often decorated with ribbons and lace, was used to conceal gifts. ¹¹Gift wrap as we know it today came into existence in the early 20th century.
- _____ 2. ¹Many people think that bats are dangerous and frightening creatures. ²They spread disease. ³They drink human blood. ⁴They get tangled up in people's hair. ⁵They are flying rats. ⁶In fact, rather than being a threat, bats are actually beneficial to humans. ⁷The majority of the forty types of bats in North America eat insects in huge quantities. ⁸The brown bat can eat as many as one thousand mosquitoes and crop-destroying pests in an hour, which helps reduce the need for pesticides. ⁹In addition, several types of bats help pollinate plants, especially plants that bloom at night. ¹⁰Even the bodily waste of bats, called guano, is helpful to humans. ¹¹Guano is rich in nitrogen, which makes it a powerful and environmentally friendly fertilizer. ¹²Furthermore, scientists can extract enzymes from guano that are used to produce detergents and antibiotic drugs. ¹³And as for getting tangled up in people's hair, bats generally prefer to avoid people as much as possible.
- _____ 3. ¹Some people, when they eat or drink something cold, get "brain freeze" or "ice cream headache." ²The stabbing headache usually lasts less than a minute, but it can be extremely painful. ³People who study these cold stimulus headaches do not know for certain why they occur, but researchers

(Continues on next page)

have two theories. ⁴One theory is that when something extremely cold touches the roof of the mouth, it sends a sudden dramatic increase of blood to an artery in the front of the brain. ⁵The expansion of this artery causes the pain. ⁶Once the artery contracts, the pain goes away. ⁷The other theory is that the cold food or drink causes tiny blood vessels in the sinuses to shrink and then expand as they warm up again. ⁸Pain receptors near these vessels send pain signals to the brain, and the brain interprets these pain signals to be coming from the forehead. ⁹Once the signals stop being sent to the brain, the sensation of pain goes away.

- _____ 4. ¹Pet owners like to assume that a cat's purr is an expression of pleasure, but this assumption is only partly true. ²Frankly, it is not known exactly why cats purr, but there are a number of possible reasons. ³Originally the purr probably evolved as a homing device. ⁴Because newly born kittens cannot see, hear, or smell, they need some signal to help them feed. ⁵Since they can feel the vibratory movement, they can locate the mother through her purring. ⁶Cats may also use the purr as self-comfort. ⁷Felines that are anxious, injured, or ill often issue the same low, continuous, rattling hum. ⁸Like submissive posturing among dogs, purring may be a signal of appeasement to other cats or to people. ⁹In this case, it communicates that the purring cat is not a threat. ¹⁰Recently, scientists have discovered that cats may purr to help themselves get better when they're injured. ¹¹In this theory, purring is actually a low-energy mechanism that stimulates muscle and bones. ¹²The healing power of their purring may even explain their "nine lives."
- _____ 5. ¹There are several ways that owners of fast-food restaurants can cheat employees out of their fair wages. ²Sometimes, if there is a lull in business, the workers will be told to clock out and wait in the break room until they are needed again. ³The workers are not permitted to leave, but they are not paid for their time. ⁴On other occasions, the manager may tell a worker to clock out before his or her shift is over, but then insist that the worker finish certain tasks (without pay) before leaving. ⁵Finally, employees who are paid for an eight-hour shift are sometimes asked to work thirty or even sixty minutes beyond the shift without any extra pay. ⁶One reported that in a recent two-week pay period, she was paid for eleven hours less than she actually worked.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 9, Test 2

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹According to a medical journal, there are some important guidelines for having your ears or other body parts pierced. ²First, let a professional who uses sterile instruments perform the task. ³Second, do not pierce your ears if you have a serious medical condition, such as heart disease, diabetes, or a blood disorder. ⁴Also, for six weeks, do not wear rings that contain nickel or gold or that are gold-plated. ⁵Next, avoid the risk of infection by washing the pierced area twice a day with cotton dipped in rubbing alcohol. ⁶Finally, if the area becomes red, swollen, or sore, see a doctor immediately.
- _____ 2. ¹Half of all the plant and animal species in the world live in rain forests. ²And many of the medicinal drugs used in the United States contain ingredients that originate in rain forests. ³For instance, 73 percent of the 3,000 plants identified as having cancer-fighting properties come from the world's rain forests. ⁴Rain forests also help control the flow of water on Earth. ⁵Like enormous sponges, they soak up the water from heavy tropical rains. ⁶They then release the water slowly, providing a supply for people living hundreds and even thousands of miles away. ⁷For all these reasons, it is essential that nations around the world work together to protect the rain forests.
- _____ 3. ¹Speaking before a group is more frightening to many people than almost anything else. ²But there are ways to overcome the fear of speaking and become an effective speaker. ³The first step to take is to think positively. ⁴Replace thoughts of failure with statements such as, "I am interested in my topic, and I will make my listeners interested, too." ⁵It also helps to plan a speech with only two or three major points and to develop each of those points with examples. ⁶Moreover, visualize yourself standing in front of your audience, feeling comfortable and relaxed. ⁷Finally, rehearse your speech a number of times, speaking naturally, almost the way you would in everyday conversation, rather than speaking in a formal way.

(Continues on next page)

- _____ 4. ¹Pets can be good for people’s physical and mental health. ²First of all, owning a pet tends to lower the owner’s blood pressure, as well as cholesterol and triglyceride levels—thus reducing the risk of heart attack. ³And pet owners who do have heart attacks are more likely to survive and recover from them. ⁴Caring for a pet can also increase physical activity, which is another way to improve one’s health. ⁵For example, walking a dog and playing with a cat are great ways to get regular exercise. ⁶Pets also help reduce stress. ⁷Moreover, because pets are loving and loyal companions, their owners tend to feel less depressed and more satisfied with their lives.
- _____ 5. ¹Many parents believe that middle schools and high schools should require students to wear uniforms. ²These people feel there are several good reasons for requiring uniforms. ³One reason is that uniforms save money for parents and children. ⁴Families can simply buy two or three inexpensive uniforms instead of constantly putting out money for designer jeans, fancy sneakers, and other high-priced clothing. ⁵A second advantage of uniforms is that students do not have to spend time worrying about clothes. ⁶They can get up every day knowing what they are wearing to school. ⁷Their attention, then, can be focused on schoolwork and learning and not on making a fashion statement. ⁸Furthermore, uniforms can help reduce social and economic barriers between students. ⁹Well-off students are not able to act superior by wearing expensive clothes, and students from modest backgrounds do not have to feel inferior because of lower-cost wardrobes. ¹⁰There is also some evidence that uniforms can reduce bullying and gang violence in schools.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 9, Test 3

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹Every year, about 35,000 Americans commit suicide. ²However, research shows that the rate of suicide could be much lower. ³In order to prevent this needless loss of life, people must learn to recognize the warning signs of a potential suicide. ⁴Such signs include, first of all, severe depression and withdrawal, often combined with the inability to sleep or eat. ⁵Extreme mood swings, from joy to deep depression, are also danger signs. ⁶In addition, suicidal people may begin giving away valued belongings. ⁷Last, any life crisis, such as the death of a loved one or the loss of a job, may make a potentially suicidal person feel that he or she can't go on.
- _____ 2. ¹The ancient Egyptians developed an elaborate mummification process for preparing a body for burial. ²First, priests washed the body with water from the Nile River. ³Next, they removed all the organs except the heart, dried the organs, and placed them in special jars. ⁴Because the heart was thought to house the person's spirit, it was left in the body. ⁵After the organs were removed, the body was placed under a mound of salty powder called natron for a period of thirty-five to forty days or more. ⁶The salt absorbed all the moisture from the body, the flesh sank, and the skin darkened. ⁷At the end of the drying period, the natron was washed off, the body was stuffed with linen and other materials to fill out sunken areas, and false eyes were inserted. ⁸After the priests stuffed the body, they closed the incision and began the process of wrapping. ⁹They wrapped the body in a layer of linen, coated the form with warm resin, and then repeated the process, adding another layer of linen, another coat of resin, and so on. ¹⁰Finally, priests placed the mummy inside a coffin and sealed the coffin inside a tomb, along with food and other items they believed the dead person would need or desire in the afterlife.
- _____ 3. ¹We knock before entering our boss's office, but we walk into the office work area without hesitating. ²In many schools, teachers have their own offices, dining rooms, and even restrooms, but students do not have such special places. ³In the world of show business, stars receive their own dressing rooms or private trailers. ⁴Among the military, generous living space and privacy usually come with rank: privates sleep forty to a barrack, sergeants have

(Continues on next page)

their own rooms, and generals have government-provided houses. ⁵These examples illustrate the well-known fact that people with higher status are generally given more space and privacy.

- _____ 4. ¹Dale Carnegie, author of the book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, suggested various ways to make people feel important and so win their friendship. ²According to Carnegie, one way to make people feel important is to remember their names. ³Greeting people by name makes them feel liked and valued. ⁴So does greeting them warmly and enthusiastically. ⁵Therefore, Carnegie advises that you convey delight when you see or hear from someone you know. ⁶In conversations, allow people to talk about themselves: their experiences, their views, their goals, their work, their hobbies, their relationships. ⁷Encourage them to talk by listening attentively, asking questions, and otherwise showing interest. ⁸Also, be generous with your praise. ⁹Compliment people—not falsely, but in genuine appreciation of their accomplishments and merits.
- _____ 5. ¹Have you ever thought about what life on earth would be like without our moon? ²Of course, there would be no lunar or solar eclipses. ³And we'd miss the "man in the moon." ⁴There would be no inspiration for writing love songs about the moon, or scary stories about werewolves and vampires that come out when the moon is full. ⁵But the moon also affects our world in ways that are essential to our existence. ⁶For example, the moon's gravitational force tugging at the earth's surface produces tides. ⁷Long before there were surfers or, for that matter, any living beings on earth, these tides helped create an environment in which life could evolve. ⁸In addition, the moon helps keep the earth rotating at the same angle relative to the sun. ⁹Without the moon, the earth would wobble wildly on its axis, swinging dangerously close to or far away from the sun. ¹⁰Such instability would lead to extremes in climate that would threaten our survival. ¹¹The moon's gravity also slows the earth's rotation. ¹²Without the moon, our winds would be much stronger and our days much shorter—perhaps as short as eight hours. ¹³With less time for the sun to heat the earth, the temperature would drop significantly, affecting many plants we rely on for food.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 9, Test 4

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹Some people persist in believing that they can drink and be alert drivers. ²Yet alcohol is estimated to be a factor in at least half of all fatal highway accidents. ³Another poor attitude about driving is the refusal to wear seat belts. ⁴Statistics show that the chances of being seriously hurt or dying in a car accident are greater when a seat belt is not worn. ⁵Also potentially deadly is the view that the best driving is fast driving. ⁶Again, statistics contradict this attitude—fast driving is more likely to be deadly driving. ⁷A final mistaken attitude is that speaking on a cellphone will not detract a driver’s attention from the road. ⁸Studies have proven otherwise, with the result that many have called for a ban on using cellphones while driving. ⁹There is simply no question that poor attitudes about driving contribute to the high rate of traffic accidents and their brutal effects.
- _____ 2. ¹Chemotherapy, which targets rapidly growing cells, can have both positive and negative effects. ²Chemo is often an effective treatment for cancer because it kills cancer cells, which typically divide faster than normal cells. ³However, chemo can also affect healthy tissues that produce rapidly dividing cells our body needs. ⁴For example, because hair follicles are constantly replacing old cells, chemo sometimes leads to hair loss. ⁵By attacking fast-growing cells in the lining of the stomach, chemo can result in nausea or loss of appetite. ⁶Chemo can cause additional side effects by interfering with bone marrow’s production of new blood cells. ⁷Fewer white blood cells can affect the body’s ability to fight infection. ⁸Fewer red blood cells can cause fatigue. ⁹And fewer platelets can keep blood from clotting normally.
- _____ 3. ¹Because Venus and Earth are similar in size, density, and location (second and third planets from the sun), they have been called “the twin planets.” ²In reality, the two planets differ significantly. ³Earth has climates ranging from subfreezing to tropical. ⁴Venus, however, has only one surface temperature (864°F), which is hot enough to melt lead. ⁵Nearly three-fourths of the Earth’s surface is water. ⁶In contrast, Venus has no surface water. ⁷Unlike Earth, Venus has no magnetic field. ⁸Earth’s clouds are composed of water droplets and ice

(Continues on next page)

crystals, but Venus's clouds consist mainly of sulfuric acid. ⁹Although Earth's atmosphere is primarily nitrogen (77%) and oxygen (21%), is overwhelmingly carbon dioxide (96%), with relatively small amounts of nitrogen (3.5%) and oxygen (less than 0.5%). ¹⁰Perhaps the most important difference between the two planets is this: Venus is devoid of life.

- _____ 4. ¹Lean against a tree almost anywhere, and the first creature that crawls on you will probably be an ant. ²Stroll down a suburban sidewalk—or anywhere else—with your eyes fixed on the ground, counting the different kinds of animals you see. ³The ants will win hands down. ⁴The British entomologist C.B. Williams once calculated that the number of insects alive on Earth at a given moment is one million trillion. ⁵If, to take a conservative figure, 1 percent of those insects are ants, their total population is ten thousand trillion. ⁶Individual worker ants weigh on average between one and five milligrams, according to the species. ⁷When combined, all ants in the world taken together weigh about as much as all human beings. ⁸Although ant population is not something we often consider, the number of ants on Earth is mind-boggling.
- _____ 5. ¹When we think of modern warfare, musical instruments might be the last thing we think of. ²However, three musical instruments played an important role in eighteenth-century warfare. ³One of the most important was the snare drum. ⁴Often played by boys between 12 and 16 years old, snare drums were used to set the marching rhythm for soldiers. ⁵With a skilled drummer playing 96 beats per minute, a commander could march his troops three miles in fifty minutes, allowing ten minutes each hour for a breather and a drink. ⁶Another important instrument was a small flute called a fife. ⁷The fife's role in an army was to entertain soldiers and communicate orders. ⁸For example, the song "Pioneer's March" was the signal for road-clearing crews to get started ahead of the infantry. ⁹Fifes were also used to give orders to soldiers during battle since they could be heard above the roar of firearms. ¹⁰A third instrument used in warfare was the bugle. ¹¹Requiring just one hand to play, it was used by soldiers on horseback to send messages to soldiers in battle and on the march.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 9, Test 5

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

_____ 1. ¹If you are like 70 million Americans, you don't get enough sleep. ²Lack of sleep affects people in a number of harmful ways. ³For one thing, too little sleep affects our concentration and judgment. ⁴Impaired concentration and judgment can lead to mistakes when taking a test or driving a car. ⁵The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that fatigue is a cause in 100,000 auto crashes and 1,550 crash-related deaths a year. ⁶Lack of sleep can also lead to accidents at work. ⁷Some of these work-related accidents can be devastating, such as the massive Exxon Valdez oil spill off the coast of Alaska in 1989. ⁸In addition, too little sleep can, over time, lead to health problems such as increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and diabetes. ⁹Lack of sleep may also increase the likelihood of obesity. ¹⁰Not only does sleep loss appear to stimulate appetite, but it also stimulates cravings for high-fat, high-carbohydrate foods.

_____ 2. ¹The word *plagiarism* comes from a Latin word that means "kidnapper." ²To plagiarize means to use another person's words or ideas as if they were one's own original creations. ³Quite simply, it is theft. ⁴Common thieves steal material goods that legally belong to others and then use this property as if it were rightfully theirs. ⁵Plagiarists do the same with words and ideas. ⁶Plagiarism can occur in three forms: global, patchwork, and incremental. ⁷Global plagiarism is stealing all the words and ideas from another source and passing them off as one's own. ⁸This is the most blatant kind of plagiarism and is considered to be grossly unethical. ⁹Patchwork plagiarism occurs when words and ideas are pilfered from several sources and then patched together. ¹⁰In other words, instead of copying everything from one single source, the thief copies word for word from several sources. ¹¹A third kind of plagiarism, incremental plagiarism, occurs when small portions (choice words or phrases) are borrowed from different parts of one source without proper credit being given.

_____ 3. ¹Sometimes it's hard to remember that cats and dogs are descended from wild animals. ²Even though these house pets have been tame for many centuries, they still have some leftover wild qualities. ³If you watch cats

(Continues on next page)

when they drink water, you'll notice that their ears are turned around to listen for any sounds behind them. ⁴This instinctive behavior evolved to help protect wild cats (lions, tigers, leopards) from being attacked while they drank at water holes. ⁵Or perhaps you've seen a dog turn around and around before settling down for a nap. ⁶Wild dogs (wolves, coyotes, foxes) are often observed trotting around in circles in order to flatten out resting spots in tall grasses and scratchy weeds. ⁷Although Rover may actually be preparing to stretch out on the sofa, this old instinct still remains.

_____ 4. ¹In January of 1954, Ernest and Mary Hemingway left Nairobi on a vacation trip during which they flew over grazing elephants, hippos bathing in the lakes, and huge flocks of feeding flamingos. ²As they were circling a spectacular waterfall, a flock of ibises flew in front of the plane. ³When the pilot dived to avoid the birds, he struck an abandoned telegraph wire that crossed the gorge. ⁴In the crash that followed, Ernest sprained his shoulder, and Mary was only slightly injured. ⁵Luckily, a boat came down the river the next morning, and its crew rescued them. ⁶By that evening, they were on board a small plane bound for Entebbe. ⁷The plane lifted from the plowed field that served as a runway, then crashed and burst into flames. ⁸Ernest escaped by breaking through a window with his head and injured shoulder, and Mary got out through another window. ⁹As unbelievable as it seems, in two days Ernest and Mary Hemingway survived two plane crashes.

_____ 5. ¹Do you sometimes feel cold, or hot, while others around you seem comfortable? ²Don't worry—you are not alone. ³A number of biological factors—characteristics that vary from person to person—can affect how warm or how cold an individual feels. ⁴Weight is one characteristic that can influence your response to temperature: the more body fat you have, the greater the amount of insulation, so you tend not to be as cold. ⁵Muscle mass is another biological factor affecting your body temperature. ⁶The more muscular you are, the better your body will be at regulating temperature. ⁷Moreover, diet affects one's perception of temperature. ⁸People with a poor diet who don't get enough essential nutrients may find themselves feeling cold and tired because their body is not getting the "fuel" it needs to work efficiently. ⁹In addition, age is a biological factor to consider. ¹⁰As people age, their declining hormonal systems don't produce as many hormones as when they were younger. ¹¹As a result, the elderly often feel colder. ¹²Finally, stress is a factor affecting people's body temperature: tenseness could reduce your circulation, making you feel colder.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 10, Test 1

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

_____ 1. ¹In 1853, Charles Loring Brace came up with an idea that was the beginning of the concept of foster care for children in the United States. ²At that time, there were an estimated 30,000 abandoned, abused, or orphaned children on the streets of New York City. ³Brace believed there was a way to give these children a chance to escape their poverty and suffering. ⁴His plan was to send the children by train to live with “good” families on farms out west. ⁵To put his plan into practice, he and a group of social reformers founded the Children’s Aid Society. ⁶The concept was ambitious and, to those who favored putting the children into institutions, controversial. ⁷Nevertheless, the Orphan Train Movement lasted from 1853 until 1929 and removed more than 150,000 homeless children from the streets of New York, placing them with farm families across the country.

_____ 2. ¹Some people will drink heavily even though they know they’re eroding their liver, or they’ll eat all the wrong foods even though they know they’re increasing their risk for a heart attack. ²There are several reasons people engage in self-destructive habits. ³One explanation is that these behaviors creep up on people slowly. ⁴Drug use may grow imperceptibly over years, or exercise habits may decline ever so gradually. ⁵Another reason for health-impairing habits is that they are quite pleasant at the time. ⁶Actions such as eating favorite foods, smoking cigarettes, and drinking too much are potent reinforcing events. ⁷Also, the risks associated with most self-destructive habits are chronic diseases such as cancer that usually take 10, 20, or 30 years to develop. ⁸It is easy to ignore risks that lie in the distant future. ⁹Finally, it appears that people have a tendency to underestimate the risks associated with their own bad health habits. ¹⁰They know about the dangers associated with certain habits but often engage in denial when it is time to apply this information to themselves.

_____ 3. ¹Researcher Edward Hall has identified four zones of personal spatial territory; and, according to Hall, we allow only certain people to enter or events to occur within each zone. ²Intimate distance includes the space ranging from contact with one’s body up to one foot away. ³This zone is shared only with loved ones—parent and child, lovers, close friends. ⁴If

(Continues on next page)

forced to share this space with strangers (in a crowded elevator, for instance), we feel uncomfortable. ⁵Hall labels a distance of one to four feet as personal distance. ⁶Activities such as eating in a restaurant with two or three other people or sitting in small groups at a party occur within this zone. ⁷Social distance is between four feet and twelve feet—the distance typical in a classroom or a formal meeting. ⁸Events such as addressing a crowd, watching a sports event, or sitting in a large lecture occur in the zone that Hall calls public distance—the area beyond twelve feet.

- _____ 4. ¹One problem with the emphasis on giving grades in school is that this practice encourages students to see grades as determining how worthwhile they are as human beings. ²One survey showed that 80 percent of college students based their sense of self-worth on their academic grades. ³Another problem with grades is that they can make students fearful. ⁴Although fear may be useful to motivate people in some situations, it does not work well in education. ⁵Studies have repeatedly shown that fear of getting bad grades can interfere with the ability to learn. ⁶A third argument against grades is they can reduce students' willingness to challenge themselves or to take risks. ⁷A number of studies show that students' willingness to take on challenging tasks diminishes when grades are involved, but without grades, students left on their own tend to seek out more challenging problems. ⁸In short, grades are a distraction from the learning process and, sometimes, even a deterrent to that process.
- _____ 5. ¹Flextime, or flexible working hours, has become popular in recent years. ²The most obvious advantage is less absenteeism. ³When employees can choose working hours that meet their needs, they are less likely to take time off. ⁴Another advantage of flextime is more efficient use of the physical plant. ⁵The additional hours that a company is "open for business" could mean higher productivity and greater profits. ⁶Finally, giving employees a choice of working hours permits them more control over their work environment, leading to increased job satisfaction and less turnover. ⁷While flextime has many advantages, it can have a negative impact on workers if the employer is making all the decisions about when the employee works. ⁸For low-wage workers in particular, flexibility often means the employee has no control whatsoever over when he or she works. ⁹If business is slow, workers can be sent home (without pay, of course) on a moment's notice. ¹⁰If business picks up, employees may be told to cancel whatever they were doing on their personal time and show up for work. ¹¹And they can be told to work last-minute overtime or be fired—even if they need to get home to take care of family responsibilities.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 10, Test 2

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in New York City. ²The owners, assuming that their employees would try to steal from them, had locked many of the exits. ³Unable to escape, 146 workers died—most of them young Jewish and Italian immigrant women. ⁴The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, while tragic, ultimately led to many important labor reforms. ⁵First of all, the fire raised public awareness of the plight of poor workers, who were forced to labor in filthy and dangerous conditions for long hours and little pay. ⁶Under public pressure, New York State legislators then passed more than 30 new laws that regulated wages, working hours, workplace conditions, and child labor—including many measures we now take for granted, such as sprinkler systems and regular safety checks. ⁷The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire also increased public and political support for the right of workers to form unions, giving them the power to stand up to their employers and demand other much-needed reforms.
- _____ 2. ¹Queen Isabella of Spain, who died in 1504, boasted that she'd had only two baths in her life—one at birth and the other before her marriage. ²In colonial America, leaders frowned on bathing because it involved nudity, which they feared could lead to loose morals. ³Indeed, laws in Virginia and Pennsylvania either limited or banned bathing outright—and for a time in Philadelphia, anyone who bathed more than once a month faced jail. ⁴Furthermore, some of the early Christian churches discouraged sudsing up because of its association with the immorality common in the Roman baths. ⁵Clearly, the notion that cleanliness is next to godliness has not always been a popular one.
- _____ 3. ¹Criticism is a valuable means of helping ourselves and others achieve personal growth. ²However, because it is often done carelessly or cruelly, criticism has a bad reputation. ³Here are some guidelines for offering criticism constructively. ⁴First, wait until the person asks for feedback on his or her performance or actions. ⁵Unasked-for criticism is not usually valuable. ⁶Second, describe the person's behavior as specifically as possible before you criticize it. ⁷Instead of just saying, "You were awful," tell the person exactly what you observed. ⁸And finally, try to balance your criticism with positive statements. ⁹Look for significant points in the other person's performance that you can honestly praise.

(Continues on next page)

- _____ 4. ¹In both Canada and the United States, many people arrested for a crime never receive appropriate punishment. ²Prosecutors often drop charges because of mistakes made in the arrest procedure—officers didn't follow the rules with sufficient care or file their paperwork properly. ³In many other cases, the charges are dismissed at preliminary hearings because of problems with evidence, such as key witnesses failing to appear. ⁴Of cases surviving these barriers, many are resolved by a plea bargain. ⁵That is, the charges are reduced in exchange for a plea of guilty. ⁶Such arrangements spare the government the expense of a trial, but they also make the punishment less severe. ⁷And even for those who do go to prison, very few will serve their full sentence. ⁸Time off for good behavior often equals 25 percent of one's sentence, so most will be out on parole well before their time is up.
- _____ 5. ¹To erase or not to erase? ²That is the question in many students' minds after they've penciled in one of those small circles in multiple-choice tests. ³Folk wisdom has long held that when answering questions on such tests—or on any test—you should trust your first instincts. ⁴However, a research instructor has found that students who change answers they're unsure of usually improve their scores. ⁵The instructor spent three years compiling and analyzing college students' tests, watching for telltale erasure marks, which would indicate that the student had, indeed, revised his or her answer. ⁶What the instructor found was that revised answers were two and a half times as likely to go from wrong to right as vice versa. ⁷This statistic held up even across such variables as sex, age, and race; the subject matter of the tests studied also proved not to be a factor.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 10, Test 3

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹Do you know who sent that email link or attachment, and does it sound like something the person would send? ²If not, before you open it, call or send the person a separate email, because one click could unleash a virus or allow someone to hack your email account. ³Choose passwords that are easy for you to remember but hard for others to figure out. ⁴In addition, keep your passwords in a safe place, and never save them on your computer. ⁵To prevent identity theft, do not reveal personal identifying information, such as your Social Security, credit card, or bank account numbers. ⁶Also, never respond to emails asking for personal identifying information; legitimate sites will not contact you this way. ⁷Finally, remember that information posted online is permanent, and it can be seen by anyone—including school authorities and potential employers. ⁸Fortunately, if you use common sense, follow a few simple rules, and remain vigilant, your online experience will be enjoyable as well as safe.
- _____ 2. ¹Fire extended humans' geographical boundaries by allowing them to travel into regions that were previously too cold to explore. ²It also kept predators away, allowing early humans to sleep securely. ³Fire, in fact, has been a significant factor in human development and progress in many ways. ⁴Among the obvious benefits of fire are its uses in cooking and in hunting. ⁵Probably even more important, however, is that learning to control fire allowed people to change the very rhythm of their lives. ⁶Before fire, the human daily cycle coincided with the rising and setting of the sun. ⁷With fire, though, humans gained time to think and talk about the day's events and to prepare strategies for coping with the following day.
- _____ 3. ¹The three types of human memory allow a person to remove or retain information, as needed. ²Everything that we notice—see, smell, hear, touch, or taste—forms a brief mental impression called a sensory memory. ³Information is stored in this sensory memory for only a few tenths of a second before it disappears forever. ⁴Information that is retained slightly longer enters what is called short-term memory. ⁵This form of memory can store about seven items for about thirty seconds—about enough information to dial a telephone number once you know its area code. ⁶In

(Continues on next page)

order to be remembered for a long period, information must pass into long-term memory. ⁷No one knows just how much information can be stored in a person's long-term memory, but the capacity seems enormous.

- _____ 4. ¹A hurricane is a relatively flat system of winds rotating around a center where the atmospheric pressure is abnormally low. ²This system can be hundreds of miles across and usually brings heavy rains along with its powerfully strong winds. ³As with a hurricane, air pressure at the center of a tornado is very low. ⁴Unlike a hurricane, however, a tornado is a violently rotating column or "funnel" of air, usually reaching down from a thundercloud, and is typically only a few hundred yards across. ⁵Wind speeds in a hurricane are about 75 to 150 miles per hour, but the wind speed in a tornado might be 300 miles per hour. ⁶A hurricane may last for one or more days; a tornado lasts only a few minutes. ⁷Locally, tornadoes are even more destructive than hurricanes. ⁸Although hurricanes and tornadoes have some similarities, they are quite different storm systems.
- _____ 5. ¹If you have trouble getting a good night's sleep, there are several things you can do about it. ²For one thing, don't have an alcoholic drink before bedtime. ³While alcohol can certainly knock you out, it also damages the quality of sleep you'll get because it chemically interferes with dreaming, an important part of restful sleep. ⁴Also, avoid beverages and foods that contain caffeine—such as coffee, most teas, colas, and chocolate—because caffeine can stimulate you, making sleep difficult or impossible. ⁵A better before-bed choice is milk, which contains a mild, sleep-inducing type of protein. ⁶Another piece of good advice is to exercise during the day; this can leave you tuckered out enough at night to fall promptly and soundly asleep. ⁷But do avoid exercise right before bedtime, as its immediate effects are more stimulating than relaxing. ⁸Last, try to get up at about the same time every day; this practice will help your body establish a solid sleep and wake cycle. ⁹Varying your hours too much can confuse your body's "inner clock."

MAIN IDEAS: Level 10, Test 4

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

_____ 1. ¹A social dilemma is a situation in which the most rewarding short-term choice for one individual will ultimately lead to negative outcomes for all concerned. ²For example, as you hike along a beautiful mountain trail, you stop for a snack. ³You are tempted to throw away your empty water containers and granola bar wrappers, knowing that your backpack will be lighter if you don't have to carry your trash to the top of the mountain and back. ⁴But you hesitate, knowing that if all hikers litter the trail, it will soon be unpleasant for everyone who uses it. ⁵Or consider the situation of many communities in the Southwest, where water conservation has become essential after years of severe drought. ⁶Individuals living in such drought-stricken areas face personal decisions. ⁷For instance, should I forgo the pleasure of a long shower today so that there will be more water for all in the future?

_____ 2. ¹A study of firstborn children reveals that they tend to be super-achievers who strive very hard to make their families proud. ²Of the country's first twenty-three astronauts, twenty-one were the oldest children in their families. ³Also, about half of our presidents were firstborn children. ⁴One possible explanation is that firstborns must learn to be independent, since they are the only children until younger siblings are born. ⁵On the other hand, having enjoyed doing things on their own, firstborns sometimes have trouble with personal relationships. ⁶And because parents tend to pin their hopes and dreams on their first child, firstborns often feel a lot of pressure to succeed. ⁷According to this study, being a firstborn child is a mixed blessing, with both positive and negative aspects.

_____ 3. ¹More than one anthropologist has taken the time to explore old cemeteries in New England and look at the gravestones there. ²The anthropologists discovered that during three different time periods, there were three different types of images carved on the gravestones. ³The first, which appears on the oldest stones (from the 1600s into the mid-1700s), is the death's head—a grinning skull. ⁴The death's head corresponds to the pessimistic view of life and death held by the Puritans, who populated New England at that time. ⁵But as more liberal thought took hold in New England in the mid-1700s,

(Continues on next page)

another image began to be seen on headstones. ⁶This was a cherub—a smiling, baby-faced angel. ⁷The cherub seemed to represent a more hopeful view of death and a happy afterlife in heaven. ⁸Then in the late 1700s, there was a preference for the classic-looking urn and willow. ⁹This image indicates a turn to a more intellectual and less emotional attitude toward death.

- _____ 4. ¹When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans on August 29, 2005, hundreds of thousands of residents were forced to leave their homes. ²Many lower-income families spent months—even years—moving from place to place, looking for housing and employment. ³Children who were evacuated had to change schools frequently. ⁴Some missed school regularly; others were unable to enroll in school. ⁵Furthermore, because of the trauma they had experienced, many of these children had higher than expected levels of anxiety and concentration difficulties. ⁶As a result, four years after the hurricane, more than one-third of those children were behind in their learning by a year or more. ⁷Ten years after the storm, those children—now adults—continued to have difficulty in finishing their educations and in finding jobs. ⁸The trauma of leaving their homes during Hurricane Katrina, as well as the impact on their schooling, has had long-term effects on children, especially those from lower-income families.
- _____ 5. ¹Paper recycling has become a major success story in reducing waste and preserving our environment. ²Currently, more than twice as much paper is being recycled than sent to landfills—saving 3.3 cubic yards of space for every ton of paper recycled. ³In fact, more than two-thirds of the paper produced in the U.S. is recovered every year, and that rate continues to grow. ⁴Instead of cutting down trees to make wood pulp, most paper mills now use recovered fiber to make a variety of products, including office paper, tissues, newspapers, and packaging. ⁵As a result, paper recycling helps preserve our forests and reduce harmful greenhouse emissions. ⁶Another way paper recycling helps limit our carbon footprint is by reducing the amount of energy required to manufacture paper products. ⁷Of course, the best way to protect the environment is to reuse paper rather than recycle it. ⁸But it is much better to recycle those old magazines or cereal boxes than send them to landfills along with your household garbage.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 10, Test 5

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹In the 1930s, a husband and wife research team raised a young chimpanzee along with their human baby, treating the two youngsters exactly alike. ²The chimp didn't learn any language at all. ³In the 1950s, another team of married researchers gave a young chimp extensive language lessons. ⁴She finally learned to make sounds resembling "papa," "mama," and "cup," but nothing more, and it was not clear whether or not she made actual associations with these words. ⁵More recently, several chimps and gorillas have been taught to use some American Sign Language. ⁶But they use sign language only to request food or social rewards, not to communicate complex ideas or feelings. ⁷Research has shown that animals, even highly intelligent ones, do not have the same capacity for language as human beings.
- _____ 2. ¹Caffeine is a natural ingredient in coffee, tea, colas, cocoa, and chocolate, and is added to some prescription and non-prescription drugs. ²Despite being "natural," caffeine is also a powerful drug that greatly affects the body. ³In healthy, rested people, a dose of 100 milligrams (about one cup of coffee) increases alertness, banishes drowsiness, and quickens reaction time. ⁴Drinking one to two cups of coffee an hour before exercise can also result in greater endurance. ⁵In addition, caffeine masks fatigue. ⁶But in doses above 300 milligrams, caffeine can produce sleeplessness, irritability, headaches, and muscle twitches. ⁷Caffeine is also habit-forming, and those who try to stop suddenly after heavy use may experience such withdrawal symptoms as headaches and difficulty in concentrating.
- _____ 3. ¹The work homemakers do is essential to the economy. ²The estimated value of the cleaning, cooking, nursing, shopping, child care, home maintenance, money management, errands, entertaining, and other services homemakers perform has been estimated at equal to roughly one-fourth of the gross national product. ³In fact, the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis has proposed a revision of the gross national product that would take into account the value of the homemaker's services. ⁴Currently, however, homemakers are given neither money nor prestige, even though homemaking is essential to the economy. ⁵Since homemaking is not considered formal

(Continues on next page)

employment, no financial compensation is associated with this position.⁶And the Dictionary of Occupational Titles places mothering and homemaking skills in the lowest category of skills, lower than the occupation of “dog trainer.”

- _____ 4. ¹When people are under physical or emotional stress, the brain sends signals that cause the release of various hormones that prepare the body for an emergency situation. ²This is known as the “fight-or-flight response.” ³But these hormones also severely depress the immune system, and this can put a person at greater risk of illness and disease. ⁴Some researchers suggest that stress may be responsible for many illnesses and diseases—including cancer and heart disease. ⁵Under stress, the body becomes flooded with the hormone cortisol. ⁶In the short run, cortisol can be helpful in decreasing inflammation. ⁷But over time, cortisol is harmful because it also decreases white blood cells—the cells that that protect the body against infectious diseases. ⁸As a result, constant stress makes us more susceptible to illness and disease.
- _____ 5. ¹In 2015, researchers asked American adults to describe their cellphone use. ²According to the survey, 8 out of 10 people said that phones interfered with their face-to-face conversations. ³And yet 9 out of 10 also said they regularly use their phones in social situations. ⁴More than 70 percent thought it was acceptable to use a phone while walking down the street or waiting in line. ⁵However, only 38 percent thought it appropriate to use a phone at a restaurant. ⁶Even fewer (12 percent) would use a phone at a family dinner, and only 4 percent at a movie theater. ⁷Although many people feel that cellphones interfere with face-to-face communication, they continue using them in social situations. ⁸Typically, however, they use phones to be more, rather than less, social. ⁹For example, 45 percent of those surveyed used phones to post pictures of a gathering they were attending. ¹⁰And 38 percent researched information on their phones in order to share it with others attending an event with them.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 11, Test 1

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹Of the many problems American pioneer women faced, perhaps the most unusual was insects. ²One of the most terrifying assaults of nature involved grasshoppers. ³Swarms would appear suddenly, in huge clouds, and devour everything in sight. ⁴If a housewife tried covering her garden with gunnysacks, the bugs simply went under them or ate their way through them. ⁵After the grasshoppers ate the crops, they moved into the pioneers' barns and houses. ⁶There they ate all the food and devoured clothing, curtains, furniture, fences, and cabin sidings. ⁷In the summer, flies and gnats swarmed over everything. ⁸In a desperate attempt to drive away mosquitoes, women of the American Plains burned dried buffalo dung, which produced a smell the pests could not stand. ⁹In the Southwest, women were instructed to place beds at least two feet away from the walls, lest they wake up covered with scorpions. ¹⁰Fleas were also a terrible problem, and some settlers burned down their houses when the fleas became too overwhelming. ¹¹Unfortunately, while trying to create permanent homes for themselves, these settlers also ended up creating permanent homes for destructive pests.
- _____ 2. ¹An old saying has it that "Many hands make light the work." ²Thus we might expect that three individuals can pull three times as much as one person and that eight can pull eight times as much. ³Research reveals that, on average, an individual can pull 130 pounds of pressure when tugging on a rope. ⁴However, groups of three people average 351 pounds (only 2.5 times the solo rate); and groups of eight, only 546 pounds (less than 4 times the solo rate). ⁵One explanation is that faulty coordination produces group inefficiency. ⁶However, when subjects are blindfolded and believe they are pulling with others, they also slacken their effort. ⁷Apparently, when we work in groups, we cut down on our efforts, a process termed social loafing.
- _____ 3. ¹There have always been homeless people in the United States. ²But people who are homeless today are more visible to the general public because they are much more likely to sleep on the streets or in other public places. ³Today's homelessness has arisen from at least three social forces. ⁴One is the growing shortage of inexpensive housing for the poor because of

(Continues on next page)

diminishing government subsidy of such housing. ⁵Another social force is the decreasing demand for unskilled labor. ⁶This decrease, which has occurred since the 1980s, has resulted in extremely high unemployment among young men in general and African Americans in particular. ⁷A third social force is the decrease in public welfare benefits that has taken place over the last few decades. ⁸These three social forces have enlarged the ranks of the extremely poor, thereby increasing the chances that these people will become homeless.

- _____ 4. ¹Nowadays Americans worry more about being murdered by others than about killing themselves, even though more Americans—twice as many, in fact—commit suicide every year than are murdered. ²We worry about being struck by lightning, although 10 times more of us die from falling out of bed. ³We are more afraid of dying in an airplane accident than on the highway. ⁴Yet more than 500 times as many people die in car wrecks as in plane crashes. ⁵We wring our hands over getting bird flu and mad cow disease, which have not killed a single person in the United States. ⁶But not only do we worry too much about unlikely events; we also worry too little about problems we might prevent. ⁷For example, many Americans don't bother getting flu shots, even though the common flu contributes to 36,000 deaths every year. ⁸And, judging by the quantity of high-cholesterol, high-calorie foods that we eat, we're not worried enough about developing heart disease, which annually kills 700,000 Americans.
- _____ 5. ¹Just as there are rules of the road for drivers of cars, trucks, and buses, there are "rules of the sidewalk" for pedestrians. ²For example, pedestrians on a sidewalk keep to their right, relative to an imaginary dividing line in the middle of the sidewalk. ³Thus people sort themselves into lanes going in opposite directions, as on a vehicular roadway. ⁴People who are walking slowly tend to stay closer to the buildings, while to their left, in a "passing lane," are the people who are moving more quickly. ⁵Also, like drivers, walkers scan the route ahead so they can swerve around obstacles, such as a puddle or a hole in the walkway, and so they don't collide with anyone else. ⁶If a head-on collision seems possible, pedestrians will make eye contact and maneuver to keep out of each other's way. ⁷There is one obvious difference, though: rules of the road are codified in laws and regulations, whereas rules of the sidewalk are informal social customs.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 11, Test 2

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹Slashing their swords wildly, swordfish swim through schools of fish, trying to slice as many as possible; then they feast. ²When hooked by fishermen, swordfish have been known to fight nonstop for three or four hours. ³They have pulled some fishermen to their deaths, and if they are not clubbed senseless when captured, swordfish will slash fishermen on deck. ⁴Swordfish have even been known to attack boats—and sometimes sink them—by driving their swords right through the hull. ⁵The sword, which is a bony extension of the upper jaw, is deadly sharp on the sides and can grow to a length of four or five feet. ⁶And it is a weapon thrust by five hundred pounds of sleek, muscular fish. ⁷Furthermore, a puncture wound made by a swordfish bill will cause an immediate and severe infection. ⁸Whether innately violent or simply acting in self-defense, an aggressive swordfish can be dangerous both to marine life and to human beings.
- _____ 2. ¹Cosmetic surgery is often presented as easy and painless—not like surgery at all, but more like dyeing hair or putting on nail polish. ²This idea is reflected in casual, lighthearted terms like “tummy tuck.” ³However, cosmetic surgery is riskier than it’s often portrayed to be. ⁴These risks include an adverse reaction to the anesthesia used, excessive bleeding, and postoperative infection. ⁵Also, muscles and nerves can be damaged during the surgery, and the patient may be paralyzed or, in rare instances, die. ⁶Even if the patient recovers well, there is also the risk of an unacceptable result: that is, the patient may look worse, instead of better. ⁷In that case, further surgery may be needed, perhaps several times. ⁸Finally, even a reasonably successful outcome may be disappointing because it does not miraculously change the patient’s whole life. ⁹A prettier nose, for example, will not ensure fame, fortune, or romance.
- _____ 3. ¹Criminal and civil cases, the two types of court cases, differ in significant ways. ²Criminal cases involve the enforcement of criminal laws: laws against acts intended to harm others, such as murder and robbery. ³A criminal case is brought by a government—a state or the federal government—against someone who is charged with committing a crime. ⁴The government, then, is the prosecutor, and the accused is the defendant. ⁵The defendant will be found “guilty” or “not guilty,” usually by a jury. ⁶And the punishment

(Continues on next page)

is typically imprisonment, community service, or a fine. ⁷In contrast, a civil case involves a legal dispute between individuals and organizations, such as businesses. ⁸One party to the case, the plaintiff, files a complaint against the other party, the defendant. ⁹Civil lawsuits arise, for example, over personal injuries (as in automobile accidents), disagreements about contracts, and—more and more often these days—medical malpractice. ¹⁰There is no verdict of “guilty” or “not guilty” in a civil case; instead, a jury, a judge, or a panel of judges will decide in favor of the plaintiff or the defendant. ¹¹In a civil case, the punishment is typically financial compensation for damage or injury.

- _____ 4. ¹A biological virus can attach itself to a human host cell and take charge, using the cell’s functions to make substances needed to form new virus particles, which then leave that cell, spread, and repeat the process in other cells. ²Biological viruses cause many diseases—some minor, like the common cold, but some life-threatening, like polio or AIDS. ³Biological viruses may kill the host cell, or the virus may set off a dangerously violent response in the immune system. ⁴Biological viruses reproduce in various ways, and they may be very hard to treat because they can take forms that the immune system cannot detect. ⁵A computer virus, as the name implies, is very much like a biological virus. ⁶A computer virus is a program designed to attach itself to ordinary software, take it over, and then reproduce itself and spread. ⁷It attacks either the startup program or the operating system—eventually distorting or destroying computer memory. ⁸And like biological viruses, computer viruses often do their damage before they can be detected by antivirus protective software.
- _____ 5. ¹As children develop socially, emotionally, and cognitively, they go through several stages of play. ²Initially, babies and toddlers engage in solitary play. ³They may prefer being near other children and show some interest in what others are doing; however, they play alone, absorbed entirely in their individual activity. ⁴Solitary play is eventually replaced by parallel play, in which children use similar materials (such as a pail and toy shovel) and engage in similar activities (such as digging sand). ⁵But even though the children may be playing side by side, they interact very little, if at all. ⁶By the age of 3 or 4, most children have developed enough communication skills to engage in some form of cooperative play, which involves direct child-to-child interaction. ⁷At this stage, children demonstrate cooperative role taking in “pretend” games like “Mommy and Daddy” and “teacher and student.”

MAIN IDEAS: Level 11, Test 3

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹In everyday advertising, one observes many obvious attempts to package and sell products and ideas—everything from toothpaste to presidential candidates. ²But most consumers claim they are not influenced by such blatant marketing tactics. ³Nevertheless, during a four-year period of aggressive advertising, the sales of one cigarette brand increased sevenfold. ⁴Another company sold twenty-four times as many toys once it began to advertise extensively on television. ⁵Furthermore, a rather bland cereal experienced a sudden 30 percent increase in sales when a well-known natural-foods enthusiast began plugging the product. ⁶There are many other advertising success stories as well. ⁷Despite their claims to the contrary, many consumers seem to be persuaded by unobtrusive and transparent advertising methods.
- _____ 2. ¹Many people think of hippos as harmless, playful animals. ²But the hippopotamus—with its massive size, fast speed, and fierce response to perceived threats—can sometimes be dangerous or even deadly. ³For example, hippos have been known to overturn boats; then, using their strong jaws and sharp teeth, they attack and rip apart any passengers who are trying to swim to safety. ⁴In one case, a hippo capsized a canoe carrying a safari hunter, and then ripped off the man’s head and shoulders. ⁵Hippos also pose a considerable threat on land, where they feel particularly vulnerable. ⁶If you get between a hippo and its favorite river, then watch out! ⁷A hippo can weigh over five thousand pounds and can run as fast as eighteen miles per hour, making it difficult for humans to get away. ⁸Although people can usually avoid danger by keeping their distance from these creatures, marauding hordes of rogue hippos have occasionally threatened fishermen, destroyed rice fields, and attacked cattle.
- _____ 3. ¹In one study, two out of three Americans experience “digital eyestrain” caused by staring at their phones. ²To avoid dry, itchy eyes, smartphone users should remember to blink frequently—at least once every few seconds. ³Also, because most of us bend our necks while texting, we are at risk for developing “text neck.” ⁴Therefore, it is important to sit or stand upright and hold the phones at eye level. ⁵Another concern is that constantly bending the thumb can lead to tendinitis, arthritis, or “trigger finger.” ⁶So it’s a good

(Continues on next page)

idea to take frequent breaks to rest hands and gently stretch the thumbs and fingers. ⁷Even better, use voice-to-text messages whenever possible or send emails from a computer. ⁸While smartphones do much to improve our lives, we need to take precautions to keep them from ruining our bodies.

- _____ 4. ¹Pedal error occurs when the driver of an automobile mistakenly presses down on the accelerator instead of the brake pedal. ²This leads to unintended acceleration, which, in turn, can frequently result in an accident. ³It seems as though stepping on the wrong pedal would be an unlikely occurrence. ⁴However, an analysis of pedal error shows that this mistake is easier to make than you might think. ⁵A driver sometimes turns his upper body a little to the left at the same moment that he moves his right foot toward the brake pedal. ⁶The driver might turn his upper body to the left to look in the left side mirror or to reach for his seatbelt. ⁷Or, if he is in reverse, he might look over his right shoulder to make sure that it is safe to back up. ⁸This turning of the upper body could cause his right foot to move slightly to the right. ⁹As he unconsciously moves his foot to the right, he may end up hitting the accelerator, rather than the brake. ¹⁰Consequently, instead of stopping and remaining stationary, the car begins to accelerate. ¹¹But believing that his foot is on the brake, the driver presses his foot down harder in an effort to stop the car. ¹²Obviously, this action only makes the problem worse.
- _____ 5. ¹Not unlike consuming drugs or alcohol, watching television allows the participant to blot out the real world and enter into a pleasurable and passive mental state. ²The worries and anxieties of reality are as effectively put off by becoming absorbed in watching a television program as by going on a “trip” caused by drugs or alcohol. ³And just as alcoholics are only imperfectly aware of their addiction, believing they consciously control their drinking more than they really do (“I can cut it out any time I want—I just like to have three or four drinks before dinner”), people similarly overestimate their control over television watching. ⁴Even as they put off other activities to spend hour after hour watching television, these TV “addicts” feel they could easily return to a different, less passive lifestyle by simply “making up their mind” to do so. ⁵But once we are absorbed in gazing at a glowing screen, other pastimes seem less attractive and more difficult somehow. ⁶As one heavy viewer observed, “I find television almost irresistible. ⁷When the set is on, I cannot ignore it. ⁸I can’t turn it off. ⁹I feel sapped, will-less, weakened. ¹⁰As I reach out to turn off the set, the strength goes out of my arms. ¹¹So I sit there, immobile, for hours and hours.”

MAIN IDEAS: Level 11, Test 4

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹When meeting someone for the first time, we often have to make quick decisions based on little background information. ²Research suggests that we tend to base these snap judgments on such characteristics as age, race, appearance, and ethnicity. ³Known as “implicit biases” because they are activated without our awareness, these attitudes toward others develop as a result of our personal experiences, family and social environment, cultural traditions, and media exposure. ⁴While implicit biases can lead to harmful decisions and stigmatizing behaviors, there are ways to counter their effects. ⁵The first step is to become aware of our own implicit biases. ⁶Then we can acknowledge rather than ignore individual and group differences. ⁷We can also seek opportunities to interact positively with the types of people who trigger these negative feelings.
- _____ 2. ¹With so many young, single people having babies, the question arises as to how happy they are being parents. ²A national survey of young single mothers and fathers reveals that most were happier before they became parents. ³Of the 9,000 new parents who responded to the survey, 67 percent said that having a baby presented more problems than they had envisioned. ⁴Moreover, 56 percent of the respondents said they had to drop out of school, despite their hopes that they could manage schoolwork plus caring for a baby. ⁵A majority (73 percent) said they were forced to seek financial help from family, friends, and/or government agencies. ⁶In addition, 37 percent said they accepted low-paying, unsatisfying jobs out of necessity. ⁷Finally, 70 percent said they missed the “good times” they had enjoyed with friends before their babies were born.
- _____ 3. ¹Irony, which generally involves a contrast between expectation and reality, occurs in several different forms. ²Verbal irony, which is often tongue-in-cheek, involves a discrepancy between the words that are spoken and what is actually meant. ³For example, “I just heard you got the highest grade on the final exam. ⁴I guess that news ruined your day.” ⁵If, however, the ironic comment is designed to be hurting or insulting, it qualifies as sarcasm. ⁶An illustration is the comment, “Congratulations! ⁷You failed the final exam.” ⁸In dramatic irony, the discrepancy is between what the speaker says and what the audience or reader knows. ⁹For instance, in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, the

(Continues on next page)

old king gives all his wealth to the two cold-blooded daughters who flatter and manipulate him with false words; he then entrusts himself to their care. ¹⁰But he banishes a third daughter—one who so truly loves him that she will tell him nothing but the truth. ¹¹The audience watches Lear make this catastrophic misjudgment and waits for tragedy to unfold.

- _____ 4. ¹Each year, as days grow shorter and nights grow colder, animals take action to survive the winter. ²While many animals fly, swim, or walk hundreds or thousands of miles to the south in search of a warm winter home, earthworms travel too slowly to make a long journey to warmer regions. ³And yet, like other organisms, if they get trapped in the frozen ground, they will die. ⁴To survive a brutal winter, earthworms practice what is known as vertical migration. ⁵That is, instead of moving southward, they move downward—from dirt that is close to the surface to dirt that is deeper down. ⁶Each fall, the same instinct that sends geese flying south causes earthworms to start moving downward until they reach a point below any soil that will freeze during the winter. ⁷Using little barbs that stick out of their bodies to poke into the dirt, the earthworms contract their muscles, propelling themselves ever deeper into the earth. ⁸Only after winter passes and the soil overhead warms up to at least 36 degrees do the earthworms reverse the process and tunnel back to the surface.
- _____ 5. ¹When the Constitution was adopted in 1787, every state was permitted to write its own voting laws. ²As a result, many states were able to limit voting rights to landowners—at a time when, generally, the only people allowed to own property were white males. ³Since these early days of our nation, there have been many efforts both to expand the right to vote, as well as to restrict it. ⁴In 1848, at a conference in Seneca Falls, New York, advocates for women’s rights and those trying to abolish slavery joined forces to push for universal voting rights. ⁵Finally, in 1870, the 15th Amendment guaranteed that no “person”—that is, no man—could be prevented from voting because of his race. ⁶Not until 50 years later was the 19th Amendment passed, which gave women the right to vote. ⁷At the same time, many states tried to prevent poor, or poorly educated, people from voting by imposing poll taxes (charging a fee to vote), requiring that voters pass literacy tests, or simply threatening to use violence against certain groups of voters. ⁸Finally, the 24th Amendment, passed in 1964, prohibited poll taxes. ⁹And yet, even today, some people try to restrict voting by intimidating voters, as well as by creating obstacles to voter registration and enacting discriminatory voter ID laws.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 11, Test 5

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹The ability to empathize seems to exist in a rudimentary form in even the youngest of children. ²Research sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health revealed what many parents know from experience: Virtually from birth, infants become visibly upset when they hear another baby crying, and children who are a few months old cry when they observe another child in tears. ³Young children have trouble distinguishing others' distress from their own. ⁴If, for example, one baby notices that another has hurt his finger, the unhurt child might put her own finger into her mouth as if she, too, were feeling pain. ⁵Researchers also report cases in which young children seem to share their parents' feelings of sadness. ⁶In these situations, babies who see their parents crying may wipe their own eyes, even though they have no tears in them.
- _____ 2. ¹Some people may wonder why several states in India, which has the largest number of cattle in the world, forbid the slaughter of cows despite widespread hunger and malnutrition among the poor. ²Some social scientists have pointed out that the sacred cows serve several important, practical functions. ³First, they produce oxen, which Indian farmers desperately need to plow their fields and pull their carts. ⁴In addition, when cows die naturally, the poor lower castes eat the meat, and non-Hindu Indians use the hides to manufacture leather goods. ⁵Third, the cows produce an enormous amount of manure, which is used as fertilizer and cooking fuel. ⁶Finally, it costs nothing to raise the cows. ⁷Tireless scavengers, the cows feed on garbage, stalks that remain after fields have been harvested, and grass that grows between railroad tracks, in ditches, and beside roads.
- _____ 3. ¹While jurors often find eyewitness accounts compelling, research has shown that these reports may be less reliable than one might expect. ²For example, in one experiment, participants were shown a film of two cars crashing into each other. ³Some people were then asked the question, "About how fast were the cars going when they smashed into each other?" ⁴On average, these people estimated the speed to be 41 miles per hour. ⁵Another group was asked, "About how fast were the cars going when they bumped into each other?" ⁶This group estimated the speed at about 37 miles per hour. ⁷For a third group, the word *contacted* was used. ⁸The average estimated

(Continues on next page)

speed for this group was only 32 miles per hour. ⁹This study suggests that, by carefully selecting words used in their questions, attorneys can change the information people recall about events they've witnessed.

- _____ 4. ¹Many people have experienced the "jitters" after drinking one cup of coffee too many. ²Those shaking hands and sleepless nights have convinced some people that coffee is as unhealthy as alcohol or cigarettes. ³However, when consumed in moderate amounts, the health benefits of coffee often outweigh its negative effects. ⁴In addition to reducing the risk of diseases like diabetes and cirrhosis of the liver, those morning cups of java have been shown to ward off two of America's most common killers: heart disease and cancer. ⁵Coffee not only flushes the bloodstream of excess fat that clogs arteries, but it also supplies a large dose of antioxidants, which help prevent the formation of tumors. ⁶Psychologically, the stimulant effects of a daily cup have proven to reduce suicide rates. ⁷And as for the fear of a troublesome addiction to caffeine, that risk is often overstated. ⁸Unlike other addictive substances, such as alcohol or certain drugs, the physical symptoms of caffeine withdrawal are mild and generally occur only when people drink significantly more than the two or three cups consumed by most American coffee drinkers.
- _____ 5. ¹In 2013, 14.1% of Americans (or approximately 1 in 7) were age 65 or older. ²The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services predicts that, by 2040, the percentage of older Americans will rise by 50%; by the year 2060, it will double. ³There are two principal reasons for this rapid aging of our society. ⁴The first is the aging of the baby boom generation—people who were born following World War II. ⁵Between 1946 and 1964, as servicemen returned from the battlefield and as women left their jobs to return to family life, approximately 75 million babies were born in the U.S. ⁶The first of these "baby boomers" turned 65 in 2011. ⁷As baby boomers continue to age, they will create an "elder boom," which is expected to peak around 2025. ⁸The second explanation for the aging of our society is that, due to improvements in nutrition and medicine, life expectancy has increased significantly. ⁹Newborns today can expect to live thirty years longer than those born in 1900. ¹⁰The sharp and recent rise in the number of elderly people—here and around the world—supports the surprising fact that more than half of all the elderly people who have ever lived are alive today.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 12, Test 1

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹In some ways, dark chocolate can be considered a health food. ²Rich in iron, magnesium, and fiber, dark chocolate is also loaded with flavonoids, compounds known to reduce cell damage. ³Medical journals report that regularly eating a moderate amount of dark chocolate (about 1.5 ounces a day) reduces blood pressure both in healthy people and in patients with high blood pressure. ⁴Lower blood pressure means less risk of irregular heartbeat, heart attack, and heart failure. ⁵Moderate consumption of dark chocolate also lowers bad cholesterol (the type that clogs arteries) and raises good cholesterol (the type that counters clogging). ⁶In addition, dark chocolate helps prevent blood clots and arterial plaque and so protects against stroke. ⁷Dark chocolate even boosts the body's ability to metabolize sugar, thereby reducing the risk of diabetes.
- _____ 2. ¹In recent years, political campaigns in the United States have become a multi-billion-dollar industry. ²Although money does not guarantee victory, potential candidates cannot become successful candidates without substantial finances to pay expensive consultants to give their campaigns appeal. ³These professionals include media experts, pollsters, direct mailing specialists, voice coaches, statisticians, speechwriters, and makeup artists. ⁴In many cases, paid professionals have taken over the role of planning and promoting a campaign, replacing political organizations whose teams of local volunteers are no longer the only means of connecting with voters. ⁵And unlike political parties, consultants encourage candidates to de-emphasize issues and instead concentrate on image. ⁶While in the past, candidates could win with party support, grassroots efforts, and strong positions on key issues, today's campaigns must rely on the "three p's"—polling, packaging, and promotion.
- _____ 3. ¹Since the Spanish conquistadors arrived in Central America approximately 500 years ago, the indigenous peoples, including the Maya, have continuously faced adversity. ²One of the worst periods of violence and oppression against the Maya was the recent Guatemalan Civil War. ³Hundreds of thousands of people were forced to relocate, losing their communities as well as their cultural traditions. ⁴For example, many indigenous peoples stopped speaking their native languages, and instead used Spanish as a common

(Continues on next page)

language. ⁵They also lost access to their traditional calendar, textiles, religious practices, festivals, foods, and many other things that made up their culture. ⁶The younger generation, who were raised as refugees, never learned the language and cultural traditions of the Maya. ⁷Indeed, the destruction of basic components of Mayan culture was so profound that the war was effectively a cultural genocide.

- _____ 4. ¹When American athletes first started playing football toward the end of the nineteenth century, any tactic seemed justified in pursuit of the players' ultimate goal, supreme victory. ²For example, coaches used "mass plays," which directed the maximum amount of force against a single isolated player. ³In the most notorious of these plays, the flying wedge, players grouped themselves into a V formation and started running before the ball was put into play. ⁴At the last moment, after the ball had been passed to a player within the wall of the wedge, the densely packed runners crashed into their stationary opponent as one massive force. ⁵However, protective equipment was crude at the time: players often played without helmets, and helmets did not have facemasks. ⁶As a result, this use of massed brute force injured hundreds of players a year. ⁷As if such plays were not treacherous enough, referees back then rarely enforced rules against slugging, kicking, and piling on. ⁸In fact, during just one season in 1909, such allowances resulted in 30 deaths and 216 serious injuries. ⁹Indeed, as practiced in the late 1800s and early 1900s, football was an exceedingly violent, brutal, and often deadly sport.
- _____ 5. ¹If the entire history of life on the planet were compressed into a single year, the first modern human would not appear until December 31 at about 11:53 p.m., and the first civilizations would emerge only about a minute before the end of the year. ²Yet humanity's achievements in its brief history on Earth have been remarkable. ³Some 15,000 years ago, our ancestors practiced religious rituals and painted superb pictures on the walls of their caves. ⁴Around 11,000 years ago, humans began domesticating animals and plants. ⁵About 6,000 years ago, people began to live in cities, specialize in different forms of labor, divide into social classes, and create political and economic institutions. ⁶A few thousand years later, empires linked isolated groups and brought millions of people under centralized rule. ⁷Advanced agricultural practices allowed populations to grow. ⁸A mere 250 years ago, the Industrial Revolution marked the beginning of our modern world of factories and computers, jets and nuclear reactors, instantaneous global communications, and terrifying military technologies.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 12, Test 2

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹Scientists once believed that large meat-eating dinosaurs lived and hunted alone. ²However, recent discoveries of the buried remains of a dozen large carnivores in a single riverbed in western Canada suggest that dinosaurs may have instead lived and hunted in packs. ³Scientists also used to think that dinosaurs were slow-moving, cold-blooded reptiles. ⁴But then, in 2000, CT scans of a dinosaur's petrified heart showed it was remarkably similar to that of warm-blooded mammals. ⁵Similarly, although scientists once assumed that all dinosaurs, like modern-day lizards and snakes, had scaly skin, recent discoveries of feathery-looking fossils indicate that dinosaurs actually looked like giant birds. ⁶As each new piece of evidence is uncovered and analyzed, modern-day scientists must continually revise their thinking about how dinosaurs looked and how they lived.
- _____ 2. ¹Most young girls are more likely to see their fathers than their mothers reading magazines and watching TV programs about sports. ²And while many parents encourage their daughters to participate in sports, they generally regard boys as better athletes and feel that sports are more critical for boys' development. ³These cultural expectations, attitudes, and gender stereotypes, which children absorb from an early age, have long-lasting effects on girls' beliefs about and participation in athletics. ⁴For example, a study of over 800 elementary school pupils found that kindergartners through third-graders of both sexes viewed sports as much more important for boys than for girls. ⁵Their parents also held much higher expectations for their sons' athletic performance. ⁶As a result, girls saw themselves as being less talented at sports. ⁷And by the time they were in sixth grade, the girls devoted far less time to athletics than did their male classmates.
- _____ 3. ¹Because people learn by watching and imitating others, television has a significant impact on children's socialization. ²The question is: What social skills are TV programs teaching? ³The good news from research is that prosocial (positive and helpful) models can have prosocial effects. ⁴Children who view prosocial television programs exhibit greater levels of helping behaviors, cooperation, sharing, and self-control than children who view neutral or violent shows. ⁵The bad news from television research is that there is a link between the mayhem and violence in children's programs and aggressive behavior in children. ⁶Although televised violence does not harm every child

(Continues on next page)

who watches it, many children imitate the violent attitudes and behaviors they see.⁷Primetime programs depict about five violent acts per hour, and Saturday morning cartoons average twenty to twenty-five violent acts per hour.⁸By the time most young people leave high school, they will have witnessed 13,000 TV murders; as a result, they may view the real world as a dangerous place.⁹And because television violence increases tolerance for aggression—what is known as a “psychic numbing” effect—it weakens children’s inhibitions against responding to perceived danger in aggressive ways.

- _____ 4. ¹Primary relationships—with our relatives, friends, or neighbors—are very precious to us. ²As research has shown, they are particularly helpful when we are going through stressful life events. ³They help ease recovery from heart attacks, prevent childbirth complications, make child rearing easier, lighten the burden of household finances, and cushion the impact of job loss by providing financial assistance and employment information. ⁴However, secondary relationships—with people we know less well—have their own special benefits. ⁵For example, our close friends may not be able to help us get as good a job as our acquaintances can. ⁶While our friends move in the same social circle as we do, our acquaintances move in different circles. ⁷As a result, we may already be aware of the job openings known to our friends, but we may not know of the many other job opportunities our acquaintances can tell us about. ⁸While primary and secondary relationships differ from each other, both make valuable contributions to our health and well-being.
- _____ 5. ¹In most jurisdictions, more people are arrested and prosecuted than there are attorneys available to help prepare their defense. ²The limited number of judges, crowded court calendars, and frequent courtroom delays create a backlog of criminal cases. ³All those professionals associated with criminal courts—prosecutors, public and private defenders, and judges—must then deal with the demands of overwhelmingly large caseloads. ⁴As a result, the criminal court system itself soon becomes bogged down by the number of cases awaiting trial. ⁵Because of these heavy caseloads and clogged courts, most cases are now settled through a faster and less costly process known as plea bargaining or plea negotiation. ⁶Rather than being tried in a courtroom, these cases are “settled” through guilty pleas—pleas negotiated jointly by the prosecutor, the defense attorney, the accused, and the judge. ⁷In general, the defendant pleads guilty to reduced charges in exchange for a lighter sentence than the judge would normally give after conviction at trial. ⁸While some people question the justice of such settlements, plea bargains have the practical advantage of being far less expensive and time-consuming than lengthy criminal trials.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 12, Test 3

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the four paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹Coca-Cola was invented in 1886 by an Atlanta pharmacist named John Pemberton, who mixed it in a copper pot and sold it as a headache remedy. ²A few years later, in 1899, a couple of businessmen bought the rights to bottle and sell the beverage. ³Coke grew steadily in popularity, and soon became the world's best-selling soft drink. ⁴But on its way to becoming the most recognized brand name in the world, Coca-Cola has gone through several changes—some more successful than others. ⁵In 1982, the company introduced Diet Coke, which quickly became the world's most popular diet soda. ⁶However, this success was followed by Coca-Cola's decision in 1985 to change the original Coke formula. ⁷Although taste tests indicated that people preferred the flavor of "new" Coke, real-world consumers were furious when the company stopped producing their favorite soft drink, "classic" Coke. ⁸In less than three months, the embarrassed Coca-Cola Company returned to its original formula. ⁹More recently, the company has introduced a variety of flavors—some available only in special vending machines—including cherry, vanilla, cherry vanilla, raspberry, orange, lemon, and lime. ¹⁰Not surprisingly, some of these have proven more popular than others.
- _____ 2. ¹What do you think of as "cute"? ²Kittens? ³Paintings of children with big sad eyes? ⁴Little dolls? ⁵Golden retriever puppies? ⁶If none of these examples triggers a fond "awwwwww" response in you, you are truly a rare individual. ⁷Scientists who study human behavior say that we are hardwired not only to identify certain characteristics as "cute," but also to respond to them with affection and protectiveness. ⁸Simply put, *cute* (as opposed to *beautiful*) means "baby-like, vulnerable, young, helpless." ⁹Furthermore, what we identify as "cute" are characteristics borrowed from our own human babies, such as big round faces, forward-facing eyes set low on the face, awkward floppy arms and legs, and a clumsy, side-to-side walk. ¹⁰Because human babies are so helpless for so long, it is essential for our species' survival that adults respond strongly to such "cute" signals. ¹¹Indeed, nature has been so successful in this regard that we also respond to cuteness in nonhuman species, such as pandas, penguins, and puppies. ¹²It's no mystery, therefore, why manufacturers of cars like the VW Beetle and the MINI Cooper design them to look like round-headed, smiling babies. ¹³As absurd as it may seem, people will instinctively want to take home and care for these appealingly "cute" little vehicles.

(Continues on next page)

- _____ 3. ¹Research has shown that, for some people, drinking in moderation may provide certain benefits. ²However, excessive use of alcohol is consistently associated with poor health and social outcomes, including criminal behavior, illness and injury, and sometimes even death. ³Despite public awareness of the dangers of drunk driving, over half of each year's automobile deaths and injuries can be traced to excessive drinking. ⁴In addition, too much alcohol consumption typically leads to other social problems, such as public drunkenness, disorderly conduct, and vagrancy. ⁵The majority (over 90 percent) of the crimes committed by students on college campuses are also alcohol-related. ⁶The perpetrators usually commit multiple crimes, including vandalism, fighting, theft, and alcohol violations. ⁷Heavy drinking also plays a significant part, albeit sometimes indirectly, in the commission of more serious violent crimes, such as homicide, aggravated assault, and rape. ⁸In fact, alcohol is implicated in 42 percent of all violent crimes in the United States. ⁹Under the influence of alcohol, people who are already angry or aggressive are more likely to act on those feelings, posing a significant danger to themselves as well as to others.
- _____ 4. ¹During the economic crisis of 2008, known as the Great Recession, the popular press placed most of the blame on greedy bankers, Wall Street investors, and shortsighted government regulators. ²All these culprits certainly deserve an enormous amount of blame. ³But ordinary Americans must also accept responsibility for contributing to the crisis. ⁴We took out huge mortgages to buy houses we could not really afford. ⁵We maxed out our credit cards on luxury goods, and we reduced our savings to historically low levels. ⁶In his book *The Culture of Excess*, J.R. Slosar argues that we live in a world that nurtures a sense of entitlement to material goods, emphasizes immediate gratification, and fails to instill self-discipline. ⁷He attributes the Great Recession to a cultural climate that encourages self-indulgence and overconsumption. ⁸In a similar vein, Peter Whybrow asserts that "the debt-fueled consumptive frenzy that has gripped the American psyche . . . was a nightmare in the making—a seductive, twisted, and commercially conjured version of the American dream that now threatens our environmental, individual, and civic health." ⁹In pursuit of that impossible dream, Whybrow adds, "Shopping became the national pastime, and at all levels of society we hungered for more—more money, more power, more food, more stuff."

MAIN IDEAS: Level 12, Test 4

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the four paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹“A penny saved is a penny earned,” the old saying goes. ²But there are now good reasons for our government to phase the penny out of the economy, allowing the nickel to stand as the lowest-valued coin. ³For one thing, pennies take up more space than they are worth. ⁴Most of us can recall a time when we needed a nickel, dime, or quarter to buy a vending machine snack or pay a parking meter, but all we could come up with was a fistful of useless pennies. ⁵Pennies are also a nuisance to the business community. ⁶According to the National Association of Convenience Stores, 5.5 million hours and 22 million dollars are wasted by businesses on the extra time and effort it takes to handle pennies. ⁷Finally, keeping pennies in circulation costs the nation as a whole. ⁸The manufacturing, storage, and handling expenses involved in a penny’s production and distribution add up to considerably more than the one cent it is worth.
- _____ 2. ¹Humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers believed that people are basically good and that they are endowed with tendencies for fulfilling their potential. ²Each of us is like an acorn, primed for growth and fulfillment, unless we are thwarted by an environment that inhibits growth. ³Rogers theorized that a growth-promoting climate for people requires three conditions. ⁴The first of these conditions is genuineness. ⁵According to Rogers, growth is nurtured when others act in a genuine way—by dropping false faces and acknowledging their feelings. ⁶The second condition, said Rogers, is being able to experience “unconditional positive regard”—an attitude of total acceptance by another person. ⁷We sometimes enjoy this gratifying experience in a good marriage or an intimate friendship in which we no longer feel a need to explain ourselves, and in which we are free to be spontaneous without fear of losing the other person’s esteem. ⁸Finally, Rogers said that people nurture our growth by being empathic—by reflecting our feelings and meanings in a nonjudgmental way. ⁹“Rarely do we listen with real understanding, true empathy,” he said. ¹⁰“Yet listening, of this very special kind, is one of the most potent forces for change that I know.”

(Continues on next page)

- _____ 3. ¹Although hunger is clearly a motive that is tied to biological needs, psychological factors are also involved in the regulation of food intake. ²Learning plays a powerful role in determining what we eat, when we eat (we are often ready to eat at our customary times for eating, even if we have just had a snack), and how much we eat (many families encourage and model overeating). ³Studies of nonhuman animals show that even rats and chimpanzees learn what to eat by watching older animals. ⁴Emotions also play a role in eating. ⁵People who are anxious tend to eat more than usual, and people who are depressed may lose their appetites. ⁶For people who are trying to control their weight, incentives—external cues that encourage us to eat—can motivate behavior in troublesome ways. ⁷The smell of baked bread makes people feel hungry; passing a fast-food restaurant creates a craving for French fries. ⁸Laboratory research with animals has shown that incentives can be powerful enough to push weight above the natural set point. ⁹Like humans, rats will overeat to the point of obesity if they have easy access to large quantities of tasty, high-quality food.
- _____ 4. ¹Is it really possible to convince people that they are guilty of a crime they did not commit? ²To search for an answer, a researcher directed pairs of college students to work on a fast- or slow-paced computer task. ³At one point, the computer crashed, and the researcher accused the students of having caused the damage by pressing a key that he had specifically instructed them to avoid. ⁴Since none of the students had actually touched the key, at first they all denied the charge. ⁵However, in half of the pairs, one of the participants (who was actually an actor, posing as a participant) claimed she had, in fact, observed the other student hit the forbidden key. ⁶Confronted by this false witness and encouraged by the person in charge of the experiment, many students agreed to sign a confession in spite of their initial claim that they were innocent. ⁷In other words, the desire to comply with the person in authority caused these students to doubt what they had actually witnessed. ⁸Some of these students later “admitted” privately to a stranger (also an actor) that they had caused the computer to crash—an indication that they had internalized this false sense of guilt. ⁹In short, innocent people who are vulnerable to suggestion can be induced to confess to and feel guilty about a “crime” they never committed.

MAIN IDEAS: Level 12, Test 5

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the four paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

- _____ 1. ¹In the early 1900s, before the widespread use of cars, most Americans were limited in where they could live by their need to find transportation to work and to essential services. ²Because jobs, commercial enterprises, and cultural activities were concentrated in cities, people needed to live within walking distance or public transportation to these urban centers. ³Then, in the mid-1900s, a complex set of factors—technology, economics, social norms, and government policy—led to the growth of suburbs. ⁴Increasing prosperity, as well as the affordability and availability of the automobile, made it possible for middle-class Americans to live farther from work. ⁵In addition, government policy contributed to suburbanization by subsidizing the cost of constructing the interstate highway system. ⁶With access to both cars and high-speed highways, people could live even farther from where they worked and shopped. ⁷In fact, in sprawling cities such as Los Angeles, it is common for people to live fifty or more miles from their place of employment.
- _____ 2. ¹Researchers studying conflict resolution have identified several different commonly used communication styles. ²More aggressive and assertive approaches, for example, use direct confrontation. ³In contrast, indirect communication presents criticism in a roundabout manner that allows the recipient to save face. ⁴Although indirect communication lacks the clarity of other forms of communication and risks being misunderstood, it is often the most effective way to convey a message without hurting the person being confronted. ⁵Because indirect communication involves initiating discussion rather than ignoring or avoiding the problem, it aims to get what you want without arousing the hostility of the other person. ⁶Consider the case of a neighbor’s barking dog. ⁷One indirect approach would be to strike up a friendly conversation with the owners, perhaps the day after the dog has been barking half the night. ⁸At some point, you could raise their awareness by asking if something you are doing is making too much noise. ⁹Because it saves face for the other party, indirect communication is often kinder than blunt honesty. ¹⁰Or if your guests are staying too long, it’s probably kinder to yawn and hint about your big day tomorrow than to brusquely ask them to leave. ¹¹Likewise, if you’re not interested in going out with someone, it is more compassionate to claim you’re too busy rather than announce, “To be perfectly frank, I have no interest in going out with you.”

(Continues on next page)

- _____ 3. ¹Fair or not, American culture has historically viewed men and women as being different, both in temperament and in terms of which roles are best suited for them. ²However, studies done in the 1930s in New Guinea by the social scientist Margaret Mead show that not all cultures share our views about gender differences. ³The mountain people called the Arapesh, for example, expect both genders to be equally gentle, cooperative, and responsive to others. ⁴In their culture, both men and women place the needs of younger and weaker people before their own. ⁵The neighboring Mundugumor people, on the other hand, are as fierce as the Arapesh are gentle. ⁶Men and women are viewed as having similar temperaments—that is, as being equally violent, aggressive, and competitive. ⁷The Mundugumor children are left to fend for themselves, while the adults vie for power and seek revenge against those who get in their way. ⁸A third tribe, the Tchambuli, view male and female temperaments as fundamentally different. ⁹In this culture, women assume the dominant role: they manage practical matters, provide for their families, wield economic power, and hold authority over others. ¹⁰In contrast, the men have few responsibilities, are preoccupied with their appearance, and remain submissive to and emotionally dependent upon the Tchambuli women.
- _____ 4. ¹Unlike today, most Americans used to feel a commitment to join together as a nation to overcome adversity and pursue common goals. ²From the end of World War II through the late 1970s, the economy doubled in size—as did almost everyone’s income. ³Opportunities for upward mobility were available at every level; even those in the bottom fifth of the income ladder saw their earnings more than double. ⁴As a result, most Americans felt part of a growing economy, and therefore optimistic about working together toward progress and prosperity for all. ⁵Since then, however, the middle class has been shrinking and may now be in danger of disappearing altogether. ⁶The median wage of male workers, adjusted for inflation, is lower than it was in 1980. ⁷And wages continue to drop; four years into what wealthier Americans call economic “recovery,” median earnings were actually 4 percent lower than in 2008. ⁸Meanwhile, income, wealth, and power have become more concentrated at the top than they’ve been in ninety years. ⁹One explanation for the anger, distrust, and resentment that currently divide our country is America’s growing economic inequality—the widening gap between rich and poor. ¹⁰In fact, the last time Americans felt so angry was during the 1920s, another time when income, wealth, and power were concentrated in the hands of a small upper class perceived as greedy and uncaring.