

PSAT Critical Reading Practice Diagnostic Exam

Please choose the best answer from among the choices given.

1. The _____ sound of the radiator as it released steam became an increasingly annoying distraction.

- a. sibilant
- b. scintillating
- c. diverting
- d. sinuous
- e. scurrilous

2. The teacher was dismissed for the _____ act of helping his students cheat on the exam.

- a. steadfast
- b. meritorious
- c. unconscionable
- d. pristine
- e. fortuitous

3. Standing on the _____, the preacher greeted the parishioners every Sunday morning.

- a. steeple
- b. pillar
- c. parvis
- d. manifestation
- e. sensor

4. Arnie becomes so _____ when he talks about painting that it is hard not to be infected by his enthusiasm.

- a. laconic
- b. circuitous
- c. impertinent
- d. ardent
- e. recalcitrant

5. The Boston Tea Party happened because the Americans believed the British tea taxes were _____ the rights of the colonists.

- a. trespassing
- b. reviling
- c. sublimating
- d. transgressing
- e. entreating

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Questions 6-9 are based on the following passage.

In the following passage, the author gives an account of the development of the Emancipation Proclamation, Abraham Lincoln's 1863 executive order abolishing slavery in the Confederate States of America.

- (1) Almost from the beginning of his administration, Lincoln was pressured by abolitionists and radical Republicans to issue an Emancipation Proclamation. In principle, Lincoln approved, but he postponed action against slavery until he believed he had wider support from the
- (5) American public. The passage of the Second Confiscation Act by Congress on July 17, 1862, which freed the slaves of everyone in rebellion against the government, provided the desired signal. Not only had Congress relieved the Administration of considerable strain with its limited initiative on emancipation, it demonstrated an increasing public
- (10) abhorrence toward slavery. Lincoln had already drafted what he termed his "Preliminary Proclamation." He read his initial draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to Secretaries William H. Seward and Gideon Welles on July 13, 1862. For a moment, both secretaries were speechless. Quickly collecting his thoughts, Seward said something
- (15) about anarchy in the South and possible foreign intervention, but with Welles apparently too confused to respond, Lincoln let the matter drop.

- Nine days later, on July 22, Lincoln raised the issue in a regularly scheduled Cabinet meeting. The reaction was mixed. Secretary of War
- (20) Edwin M. Stanton, correctly interpreting the Proclamation as a military measure designed both to deprive the Confederacy of slave labor and bring additional men into the Union Army, advocated its immediate release. Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase was equally supportive, but Montgomery Blair, the Postmaster General, foresaw
- (25) defeat in the fall elections. Attorney General Edward Bates, a conservative, opposed civil and political equality for blacks but gave his qualified support. Fortunately, President Lincoln only wanted the advice of his Cabinet on the style of the Proclamation, not its substance. The course was set. The Cabinet meeting of September 22, 1862, resulted
- (30) in the political and literary refinement of the July draft, and on January 1, 1863, Lincoln composed the final Emancipation Proclamation. It was the crowning achievement of his administration.

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6. The passage suggests which of the following about Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation?

- a. Abolitionists did not support such an executive order.
- b. The draft proclamation was unanimously well-received by Lincoln’s cabinet.
- c. Congressional actions influenced Lincoln and encouraged him to issue it.
- d. The proclamation was not part of a military strategy.
- e. The first draft needed to be edited because Lincoln made numerous grammatical errors.

7. The description of the reaction of Secretaries Seward and Welles to Lincoln’s draft proclamation in lines 13–16 is used to illustrate

- a. Lincoln’s lack of political acumen.
- b. that Lincoln’s advisors did not anticipate his plan.
- c. the incompetence of Lincoln’s advisors.
- d. Seward and Welles’ disappointment that Lincoln did not free all slaves at that time.
- e. that most members of Lincoln’s administration were abolitionists.

8. In lines 26 and 27, *qualified* most nearly means

- a. adept.
- b. capable.
- c. certified.
- d. eligible.
- e. limited.

9. The author’s attitude to the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation is one of

- a. informed appreciation.
- b. reluctant admiration.
- c. ambiguous acceptance.
- d. conflicted disapproval.
- e. personal dislike.

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Questions 10-17 are based on the following passage.

The following passage explores the role of Chinese Americans in the nineteenth-century westward expansion of the United States, specifically their influence on the development of California.

- (1) While the Chinese, in particular those working as sailors, knew the west coast of North America before the Gold Rush, our story begins in 1850, as the documentation from the Gold Rush provides the starting point with which to build a more substantial narrative. Most Chinese immigrants entered California through the port of San Francisco. From San Francisco and other ports, many sought their fortunes in other parts of California. The Chinese formed part of the diverse gathering of peoples from throughout the world who contributed to the economic and population explosion that characterized the early history of the state of California. The Chinese who emigrated to the United States at this time were part of a larger exodus from southeast China searching for better economic opportunities and fleeing a situation of political corruption and decline. Most immigrants came from the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong (Canton) Province.
- (15) Chinese immigrants proved to be productive and resourceful contributors to a multitude of industries and businesses. The initial group of Chinese argonauts sought their livelihood in the gold mines, calling California *Gam Saan*, Gold Mountain. For the mining industry, they built many of the flumes and roads, allowing for easier access and processing of the minerals being extracted. Chinese immigrants faced discrimination immediately upon arrival in California. In mining, they were forced to work older claims, or to work for others. In the 1850s, the United States Constitution reserved the right of naturalization for white immigrants to this country. Thus, Chinese immigrants lived at the whim of local governments with some allowed to become naturalized citizens, but most not. Without this right, it was difficult to pursue livelihoods. For example, Chinese immigrants were unable to own land or file mining claims. Also in the 1850s, the California legislature passed a law taxing all foreign miners. Although stated in general terms, it was enforced chiefly against the Mexicans and the Chinese through 1870. This discrimination occurred in spite of the fact that the Chinese often contributed the crucial labor necessary to the mining enterprise.
- (35) Discriminatory legislation forced many Chinese out of the gold fields and into low-paying, menial, and often arduous jobs. In many cases, they took on the most dangerous and least desirable components of work available. They worked on reclaiming marshes in the Central Valley so that the land could become agriculturally productive. They built the stone bridges and fences, constructed roads, and excavated storage areas for the wine industry in Napa and Sonoma counties. The most impressive construction feat of Chinese Americans was their work on the western section of the transcontinental railroad. Chinese-American workers laid much of the tracks for the Central Pacific Railroad through the foothills and over the high Sierra Nevada, much of which involved hazardous work with explosives to tunnel through the hills. Their speed, dexterity, and outright perseverance, often in brutally cold temperatures and heavy snow through two record breaking winters, is a testimony to their outstanding achievements and contributions to opening up the West.

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10. The first paragraph (lines 1–14) of the passage serves what function in the development of the passage?

- a. provides an expert’s opinion to support the author’s thesis
- b. introduces the topic by describing general patterns
- c. compares common myths with historical facts
- d. draws a conclusion about the impact of Chinese immigration on the state of California
- e. condemns outdated concepts

11. Which of the following best describes the approach of the passage?

- a. theoretical analysis
- b. historical overview
- c. dramatic narrative
- d. personal assessment
- e. description through metaphor

12. Lines 15–20 portray Chinese immigrants as

- a. fortuitous.
- b. prideful.
- c. vigorous.
- d. effusive.
- e. revolutionary.

13. The author cites the United States Constitution (lines 23–24) in order to

- a. praise the liberties afforded by the Bill of Rights.
- b. show that the government valued the contributions of its immigrants.
- c. imply that all American citizens are equal under the law.
- d. emphasize the importance of a system of checks and balances.
- e. suggest that it did not protect Chinese immigrants from discrimination.

14. The word *enterprise* as it is used in line 33 most nearly means

- a. organization.
- b. corporation.
- c. industry.
- d. partnership.
- e. occupation.

15. According to the passage, which of the following is NOT a contribution made by Chinese immigrants?

- a. worked land so that it would yield more crops
- b. performed dangerous work with explosives
- c. built roads and bridges
- d. purchased older mining claims and mined them
- e. dug storage areas for California wine

16. In line 37 *reclaiming* most nearly means

- a. redeeming.
- b. protesting.
- c. objecting.
- d. approving.
- e. extolling.

17. The last sentence (lines 46–49) in the passage provides a. an example supporting the thesis of the passage.

- a. an example supporting the thesis of the passage.
- b. a comparison with other historical viewpoints.
- c. a theory explaining historical events.
- d. a summary of the passage.
- e. an argument refuting the position taken earlier in the passage.

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Questions 18-24 are based on the following passage.

The selection that follows is based on an excerpt from the biography of a music legend.

- (1) Although Dick Dale is best known for his contributions to surf music, and has been called “King of the Surf Guitar,” he has also been referred to as the “Father of Heavy Metal.” While this title is more often associated with Ozzy Osbourne or Tony Iossa, Dale earned it from *Guitar*
- (5) *Player Magazine* for his unique playing style and pioneering use of Fender guitars and amplifiers.

- In the mid-1950s, Dale was playing guitar at a club in California, where his one-of-a-kind music turned it from a jazz club into a rock nightspot. After a 1956 concert there, guitar and amplifier maker Leo Fender
- (10) approached the guitarist and gave him the first Fender Stratocaster to try before the guitar was mass marketed. Fender thought that Dale’s way of playing, a virtual assault on the instrument, would be a good test of its durability. However, the guitar was right-handed and Dale played left-handed. Unfazed, Dale held and played it upside down and backwards (a
- (15) feat that later strongly influenced Jimi Hendrix).

- The test proved too much for Fender’s equipment. Dale loved the guitar, but blew out the amplifier that came with it. It had worked well for most other musicians, who at that time were playing country and blues. Rock didn’t exist, and no one played the guitar as fiercely as Dale. Fender
- (20) improved the amplifier, and Dale blew it out again. Before Fender came up with a winner, legend has it that Dale blew up between 40 and 60 amplifiers. Finally, Fender created a special amp just for Dale, known as the “Showman.” It had more than 100 watts of power. The two men then made an agreement that Dale would “road test” prototypes of Fender’s
- (25) new amplification equipment before they would be manufactured for the general public. But they still had problems with the speakers—every speaker Dale used it with blew up (some even caught fire) because of the intense power of his volume coupled with a staccato playing style.

- Fender and Dale approached the James B. Lansing speaker company, asking for a fifteen-inch speaker built to their specifications. The company
- (30) responded with the fifteen-inch JBL-D130F speaker, and it worked. Dale was able to play through the Showman Amp with the volume turned all the way up. With the help of Leo Fender and the designers at Lansing, Dick Dale was able to break through the limits of existing electronics and play the music his way—loud.
- (35)

- But it wasn’t enough. As Dale’s popularity increased, his shows got larger. He wanted even more sound to fill the larger halls he now played in. Fender had the Triad Company craft an amp tube that peaked at 180 watts, creating another new amplifier for Dale. Dale
- (40) designed a cabinet to house it along with two Lansing speakers. He called it the Dick Dale Transformer, and it was a scream machine. Dick Dale made music history by playing a new kind of music, and helping to invent the means by which that music could be played. Not only was this the start of the electric movement, but it may also be considered
- (45) the dawning of heavy metal.

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18. In line 25, the word *prototype* most nearly means

- a. an original model.
- b. a Fender guitar.
- c. an amplifier-speaker combination.
- d. a computerized amplifier.
- e. top of the line equipment.

19. Lines 16–20 indicate that

- a. country and blues guitarists didn't need amplifiers.
- b. most musicians played louder than Dick Dale.
- c. a new kind of music was being created.
- d. Dick Dale needed a new guitar.
- e. the Stratocaster didn't work for Dick Dale.

20. In line 28, the word *staccato* most nearly means

- a. smooth and connected.
- b. loud.
- c. gently picking the guitar strings.
- d. abrupt and disconnected.
- e. peaceful.

21. The title that best suits this passage is

- a. Dick Dale and the History of the Amplifier.
- b. The King of Heavy Metal.
- c. The Invention of the Stratocaster.
- d. Lansing and Fender: Making Music History.
- e. How Surf Music Got its Start.

22. In line 14, *unfazed* most nearly means

- a. not moving forward.
- b. not in sequence.
- c. not bothered by.
- d. not ready for.
- e. not happy about.

23. In line 41, *scream machine* indicates that

- a. the new transformer could handle very loud music.
- b. fans screamed when they heard Dale play.
- c. Dale's guitar sounded like it was screaming.
- d. neighbors of the club screamed because the music was too loud.
- e. you couldn't hear individual notes being played.

24. All of the following can explicitly be answered on the basis of the passage EXCEPT

- a. Who invented the Stratocaster?
- b. Where did Dick Dale meet Leo Fender?
- c. What company made speakers for Dick Dale?
- d. Where did Ozzy Osbourne get his start as a musician?
- e. What do Dick Dale, Ozzy Osbourne, and Tony Iossa have in common?

END