

READING COMPREHENSION (Sample Items)

Select the best answer. Only one is correct.

TEXT 1

True democracy means direct rule by the people. A good example can be found in a modern town meeting in many small New England towns. All citizens aged 21 or over may vote. They not only vote for officials, but they also get together to vote on local laws (or ordinances). The small size of the town and the limited number of voters makes this possible.

In the cities, voters cast ballots for officials who get together to make the laws. Because the voters do not make the laws directly, this system is called indirect democracy or representative government. There is no problem of distance to travel, but it is difficult to run a meeting with hundreds of thousands of citizens.

Representation of voters and a direct vote in making laws are more of a problem in state or national governments. The numbers of citizens and the distances to travel make representative government the most practical way to make laws.

The main theme of this passage is that

- (a) the United States is not democratic
- (b) citizens cannot vote for lawmakers
- (c) representative government does not make laws
- (d) every citizen makes laws directly
- (e) increasing populations lead to less direct democracy

Answer: (e)

TEXT 2

Skye, just off the northwest coast of Scotland, is the largest and most famous of the Hebrides. Yet fame has neither marred its natural beauty nor brought affectation to its inhabitants. The scene and the people are almost as they were generations ago.

The first sight that impresses the visitor to Skye is its stark beauty. This is not beauty of the usual sort, for the island is not a lush green "paradise." It is, on the other hand, almost devoid of shrubbery. Mountains, moorlands, sky, and sea combine to create an overpowering landscape. Endless stretches of rocky hills dominate the horizon. Miles of treeless plains meet the eye. Yet this scene has a beauty all its own.

And then cutting into the stark landscape are the fantastic airborne peaks of the Cuillins, rising into the clear skies above. The Cuillins are the most beloved mountains in Scotland and are frequently climbed. Their rugged, naked grandeur, frost-sculptured ridges and acute peaks even attracted Sir Edmund Hillary.

The main idea of this passage is:

- (a) the sky over Skye
- (b) the lack of trees on Skye
- (c) the natural beauty of Skye
- (d) the lack of affectation on Skye
- (e) the Cuillins in the skies of Skye

Answer: (c)

TEXT 3

The candidate who wants to be elected pays close attention to statements and actions that will make the voters see him favorably. In ancient Rome candidates wore pure white togas (the Latin word *candidatus* means “clothed in white”) to indicate that they were pure, clean, and above any “dirty work.” However, it is interesting to note that such a toga was not worn after election.

In modern history, candidates have allied themselves with political parties. Once a voter knows and favors the views of a certain political party, he may vote for anyone with that party’s label. Nevertheless, divisions of opinion develop, so that today there is a wide range of candidate view in any major party.

The best conclusion to be drawn from the first paragraph is that after an election:

- (a) all candidates are dishonest
- (b) candidates are less concerned with symbols of integrity
- (c) candidates do not change their ideas
- (d) officials are always honest
- (e) policies always change

Answer: (b)

A fair statement is that most candidates from the same political party today are likely to

- (a) have the same views
- (b) be different in every view
- (c) agree on almost all points
- (d) agree on only some points
- (e) agree only by accident

Answer: (c)

TEXT 4

Slowly but surely the great passenger trains of the United States have been fading from the rails. Short-run commuter trains still rattle in and out of the cities. Between major cities you can still find a train, but the schedules are becoming less frequent. The Twentieth Century Limited, The Broadway Limited, and other luxury trains that sang along the rails at 60 to 80 miles an hour are no longer running. Passengers on other long runs complain of poor service, old equipment, and costs in time and money. The long-distance traveler today accepts the noise of jets, the congestion at airports, and the traffic between airport and city. A more elegant and graceful way is becoming only a memory.

With respect to the reduction of long-run passenger trains, this writer expresses

- (a) regret
- (b) pleasure
- (c) grief
- (d) elation
- (e) anger

Answer: (a)

The author seems to feel that air travel is

- (a) costly
- (b) slow
- (c) streamlined
- (d) elegant
- (e) uncomfortable

Answer: (e)