

LSAT
READING
COMPREHENSION
SAMPLE QUESTIONS



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The sample questions on the following pages are typical of the Reading Comprehension questions you will find on the LSAT. Three single-passage Reading Comprehension passages are included. They are followed by two or three sample questions each. The Comparative Reading set below includes seven sample questions.

Directions:

Each set of questions in this section is based on a single passage or a pair of passages. The questions are to be answered on the basis of what is **stated** or **implied** in the passage or pair of passages. For some questions, more than one of the choices could conceivably answer the question. However, you are to choose the **best** answer; that is, choose the response that most accurately and completely answers the question.

Passage for Questions 1, 2, and 3

The painter Roy Lichtenstein helped to define pop art—the movement that incorporated commonplace objects and commercial-art techniques into paintings—by paraphrasing the style of comic books in his work. His merger of a popular genre with the forms and intentions of fine art generated a complex result: while poking fun at the pretensions of the art world, Lichtenstein’s work also managed to convey a seriousness of theme that enabled it to transcend mere parody.

That Lichtenstein’s images were fine art was at first difficult to see, because, with their word balloons and highly stylized figures, they looked like nothing more than the comic book panels from which they were copied. Standard art history holds that pop art emerged as an impersonal alternative to the histrionics of abstract expressionism, a movement in which painters conveyed their private attitudes and emotions using nonrepresentational techniques. The truth is that by the time pop art first appeared in the early 1960s, abstract expressionism had already lost much of its force. Pop art painters weren’t quarreling with the powerful early abstract expressionist work of the late 1940s but with a second generation of abstract expressionists whose work seemed airy, high-minded, and overly lyrical. Pop art paintings were full of simple black lines and large areas of primary color. Lichtenstein’s work was part of a general rebellion against the fading emotional power of abstract expressionism, rather than an aloof attempt to ignore it.

But if rebellion against previous art by means of the careful imitation of a popular genre were all that characterized Lichtenstein's work, it would possess only the reflective power that parodies have in relation to their subjects. Beneath its cartoonish methods, his work displayed an impulse toward realism, an urge to say that what was missing from contemporary painting was the depiction of contemporary life. The stilted romances and war stories portrayed in the comic books on which he based his canvases, the stylized automobiles, hot dogs, and table lamps that appeared in his pictures, were reflections of the culture Lichtenstein inhabited. But, in contrast to some pop art, Lichtenstein's work exuded not a jaded cynicism about consumer culture, but a kind of deliberate naiveté, intended as a response to the excess of sophistication he observed not only in the later abstract expressionists but in some other pop artists. With the comics—typically the domain of youth and innocence—as his reference point, a nostalgia fills his paintings that gives them, for all their surface bravado, an inner sweetness. His persistent use of comic-art conventions demonstrates a faith in reconciliation, not only between cartoons and fine art, but between parody and true feeling.

Question 1

Which one of the following best captures the author's attitude toward Lichtenstein's work?

1. enthusiasm for its more rebellious aspects
2. respect for its successful parody of youth and innocence
3. pleasure in its blatant rejection of abstract expressionism
4. admiration for its subtle critique of contemporary culture
5. appreciation for its ability to incorporate both realism and naiveté

Explanation for Question 1

This question requires the test taker to understand the author's attitude toward Lichtenstein's work.

The correct response is (E). Response (E) most accurately and completely captures the author's attitude. First, the author's appreciation for Lichtenstein's art is indicated by way of contrast with the way in which the author describes what Lichtenstein's art is not. For example, the author asserts that Lichtenstein's work "transcended mere parody," and that unlike other pop art, it did not display a "jaded cynicism." Similarly, the author holds that there is more to Lichtenstein's work than "the reflective power that parodies possess in relation to their subjects."



Moreover, the author's appreciation is reflected in several positive statements regarding Lichtenstein's work. The author's appreciation for Lichtenstein's realism is indicated by the author's statement that "Beneath its cartoonish methods, his work displayed an impulse toward realism, an urge to say that what was missing from contemporary painting was the depiction of contemporary life." That the author also appreciates Lichtenstein's naiveté is demonstrated in this sentence: "Lichtenstein's work exuded not a jaded cynicism about consumer culture, but a kind of deliberate naiveté..." This idea is further expanded in the next sentence, which says that "for all their surface bravado," Lichtenstein's paintings possess "an inner sweetness." It is important to note that these evaluations appear in the last paragraph and form part of the author's conclusion about the importance of Lichtenstein's art.

Response (A) is incorrect because, although in the last sentence of paragraph two the author notes Lichtenstein's connection to a general rebellion against abstract expressionism, the author also states quite pointedly in the first sentence of the third paragraph: "But if rebellion ... were all that characterized Lichtenstein's work, it would possess only the reflective power that parodies have..."

Response (B) is incorrect because, as noted in the first paragraph of the passage, the author believes Lichtenstein's work transcended "mere parody." Moreover, the author states in the last paragraph that comics, "typically the domain of youth and innocence," were Lichtenstein's "reference point" and filled his painting with "nostalgia" and an "inner sweetness."

Response (C) is incorrect because, as mentioned above, the author believes Lichtenstein's rebellion against abstract expressionism was not the most important aspect of his work. Indeed, if it had been, Lichtenstein's work would have been reduced to having "only the reflective power that parodies have in relation to their subjects," where here the "subject" refers to abstract expressionism.

Response (D) is incorrect because the author very clearly says that Lichtenstein embraced contemporary culture. In the last paragraph, the author writes, "But, in contrast to some pop art, Lichtenstein's work exuded not a jaded cynicism about consumer culture, but a kind of deliberate naiveté..."

Based on the number of test takers who answered this question correctly when it appeared on the LSAT, this was a middle difficulty question.

Question 2

The author most likely lists some of the themes and objects influencing and appearing in Lichtenstein's paintings (middle of the last paragraph) primarily to

1. show that the paintings depict aspects of contemporary life
2. support the claim that Lichtenstein's work was parodic in intent
3. contrast Lichtenstein's approach to art with that of abstract expressionism
4. suggest the emotions that lie at the heart of Lichtenstein's work
5. endorse Lichtenstein's attitude toward consumer culture

Explanation for Question 2

This question requires the test taker to identify from the context what the author is trying to accomplish by listing some of the themes and objects that influenced and appeared in Lichtenstein's paintings.

The correct response is (A). First, as the author notes in the same sentence, the listed themes and objects "were reflections of the culture Lichtenstein inhabited." Moreover, as the author argues in the sentence that precedes the list, Lichtenstein's work displayed "an impulse toward realism, an urge to say that what was missing from contemporary painting was the depiction of contemporary life."

Response (B) is incorrect because the author does not claim that Lichtenstein's work was parodic in intent. On the contrary, the author states in the opening paragraph that Lichtenstein's work transcended "mere parody."

Response (C) is incorrect because the author's comparison between Lichtenstein's approach to art and that of the abstract expressionists—which is located in paragraph two—concentrates on the difference between Lichtenstein's and other pop artists' use of "simple black lines and large areas of primary color" and the expressionists' "airy" and "overly lyrical" work. This comparison does not involve the list of themes and objects mentioned in question 2. The list is offered instead as part of the author's argument in paragraph three that there is more to Lichtenstein's work than its rebellion against abstract expressionism.

Response (D) is incorrect because, although the listed themes and objects "were reflections of the culture Lichtenstein inhabited," the list by itself does not suggest anything about the emotions that lie at the heart of Lichtenstein's work.

The emotions in Lichtenstein’s work were revealed in Lichtenstein’s treatment of those themes and objects, which “exuded not a jaded cynicism about consumer culture, but a kind of deliberate naiveté ...” The author goes on to assert that it is Lichtenstein’s use of conventions of comic art that gives his art its “inner sweetness” and demonstrates his faith in the possibility of reconciliation between “parody and true feeling.”

Response (E) is incorrect because the list of themes and objects does not in itself explain Lichtenstein’s attitude toward consumer culture. Instead, it is how he dealt with these objects and themes that show, according to the author, that Lichtenstein did not exude the “jaded cynicism” of other pop artists.

Based on the number of test takers who answered this question correctly when it appeared on the LSAT, this was an easy question.

Question 3

The primary purpose of the passage is most likely to

1. express curiosity about an artist’s work
2. clarify the motivation behind an artist’s work
3. contrast two opposing theories about an artist’s work
4. describe the evolution of an artist’s work
5. refute a previous overestimation of an artist’s work

Explanation for Question 3

This question requires the test taker to look at the passage as a whole and determine the author’s primary purpose in writing it.

Response (B) is the correct response because it most accurately and completely reflects the purpose of the passage as a whole. In the first two paragraphs of the passage, the author uses phrases that are suggestive of Lichtenstein’s motivations, such as “poking fun at the pretensions of the art world,” and “rebel[ling] against the fading emotional power of abstract expressionism.” Then, in the third paragraph, the author makes clear that Lichtenstein also had a more serious aim that transcended these two—namely, that of depicting contemporary life with a “kind of deliberate naiveté.” As the author puts it in the final sentence, Lichtenstein’s paintings demonstrated his “faith in reconciliation ... between parody and true feeling.”



Response (A) is incorrect because the passage does not simply express curiosity about Lichtenstein's work. Instead, the passage advances a thesis about the importance of Lichtenstein's work as art.

Response (C) is incorrect because nowhere in the passage are two opposing theories discussed.

Response (D) is incorrect because the passage does not cover the evolution of Lichtenstein's work. The author makes no mention of when any of the particular paintings were created in the course of Lichtenstein's career, but instead treats the work as a unified whole.

Response (E) is incorrect because a previous overestimation of Lichtenstein's work is neither mentioned nor alluded to. If the passage had an aim of this kind, it would seem to be the reverse, as the author clearly thinks that Lichtenstein's work is valuable and has perhaps been underestimated by those who see pop art as primarily parodic in intent.

Based on the number of test takers who answered this question correctly when it appeared on the LSAT, this was an easy question.

Passage for Questions 4 and 5

The following passage was written in the late 1980s.

The struggle to obtain legal recognition of aboriginal rights is a difficult one, and even if a right is written into the law there is no guarantee that the future will not bring changes to the law that undermines the right. For this reason, the federal government of Canada in 1982 extended constitutional protection to those aboriginal rights already recognized under the law. This protection was extended to the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples, the three groups generally thought to comprise the aboriginal population in Canada. But this decision has placed on provincial courts the enormous burden of interpreting and translating the necessarily general constitutional language into specific rulings. The result has been inconsistent recognition and establishment of aboriginal rights, despite the continued efforts of aboriginal peoples to raise issues concerning their rights.



Aboriginal rights in Canada are defined by the constitution as aboriginal peoples' rights to ownership of land and its resources, the inherent right of aboriginal societies to self-government, and the right to legal recognition of indigenous customs. But difficulties arise in applying these broadly conceived rights. For example, while it might appear straightforward to affirm legal recognition of indigenous customs, the exact legal meaning of "indigenous" is extremely difficult to interpret. The intent of the constitutional protection is to recognize only long-standing traditional customs, not those of recent origin; provincial courts therefore require aboriginal peoples to provide legal documentation that any customs they seek to protect were practiced sufficiently long ago—a criterion defined in practice to mean prior to the establishment of British sovereignty over the specific territory. However, this requirement makes it difficult for aboriginal societies, which often relied on oral tradition rather than written records, to support their claims.

Furthermore, even if aboriginal peoples are successful in convincing the courts that specific rights should be recognized, it is frequently difficult to determine exactly what these rights amount to. Consider aboriginal land claims. Even when aboriginal ownership of specific lands is fully established, there remains the problem of interpreting the meaning of that "ownership." In a 1984 case in Ontario, an aboriginal group claimed that its property rights should be interpreted as full ownership in the contemporary sense of private property, which allows for the sale of the land or its resources. But the provincial court instead ruled that the law had previously recognized only the aboriginal right to use the land and therefore granted property rights so minimal as to allow only the bare survival of the community. Here, the provincial court's ruling was excessively conservative in its assessment of the current law. Regrettably, it appears that this group will not be successful unless it is able to move its case from the provincial courts into the Supreme Court of Canada, which will be, one hopes, more insistent upon a satisfactory application of the constitutional reforms.

Question 4

Which one of the following most accurately states the main point of the passage?

1. The overly conservative rulings of Canada's provincial courts have been a barrier to constitutional reforms intended to protect aboriginal rights.
2. The overwhelming burden placed on provincial courts of interpreting constitutional language in Canada has halted efforts by aboriginal peoples to gain full ownership of land.
3. Constitutional language aimed at protecting aboriginal rights in Canada has so far left the protection of these rights uncertain due to the difficult task of interpreting this language.
4. Constitutional reforms meant to protect aboriginal rights in Canada have in fact been used by some provincial courts to limit these rights.
5. Efforts by aboriginal rights advocates to uphold constitutional reforms in Canada may be more successful if heard by the Supreme Court rather than by the provincial courts.

Explanation for Question 4

This question requires the examinee to identify the main point of the passage. For an answer choice to be the main point of the passage, it must do more than simply express a claim with which the author would agree. The correct answer choice is the one that most accurately expresses the point of the passage as a whole.

The correct answer choice is (C). The passage discusses the Canadian federal government's 1982 decision to extend constitutional protection to aboriginal rights. In the first paragraph the author claims that this decision has "placed on provincial courts the enormous burden of interpreting and translating the necessarily general constitutional language into specific rulings." The rest of the passage details the difficulties that have been encountered as provincial courts have attempted to carry out this task. The second paragraph is concerned mainly with the difficulties involved in interpreting the legal meaning of "indigenous," especially as it relates to the recognition of indigenous customs. The third paragraph focuses primarily on an example of the difficulties encountered in an attempt to interpret the meaning of "ownership." Answer choice (C) best captures the main point of the passage as a whole.



It is clear that the author thinks the protection of aboriginal rights is uncertain, and it is clear that the author feels this is due to the difficulties involved in interpreting the general language of the constitutional reforms.

Answer choice (A) is incorrect. Near the end of the last paragraph, the passage does mention one provincial court ruling that the author feels is “excessively conservative.” However, the author clearly intends this to merely be one example of a problem caused by the difficult task of interpreting the constitutional language, rather than the main point of the passage. Moreover, even the “excessively conservative” decision described in the last paragraph has not been a barrier to constitutional reform. The constitution was already reformed in 1982 to extend protection to aboriginal rights. The difficulties detailed in the passage have arisen in legal efforts to apply the 1982 constitutional changes.

Answer choice (B) is incorrect. While this answer choice does identify the crucial issue involving the “overwhelming burden placed on provincial courts of interpreting constitutional language,” it is incorrect inasmuch as it focuses only on “efforts by aboriginal peoples to gain full ownership of land.” It’s clear that the author thinks land ownership is only one of the important issues concerning aboriginal rights. In the second paragraph, the author also discusses the right of self-government and the right to legal recognition of indigenous customs. Moreover, while the passage indicates that the “excessively conservative” decision described in the last paragraph has been a setback to one aboriginal group’s efforts to gain full ownership of its land, it does not say that such efforts have been “halted” by the decision. In fact, the author suggests that the group in question may seek to pursue its efforts further before the Supreme Court of Canada (last sentence of the passage).

Answer choice (D) is incorrect. The author points to one example of a provincial court ruling that, in the author’s opinion, seems to limit aboriginal rights rather than protect them. However, it is incorrect to regard this as the main point of the passage. The author’s point throughout the passage as a whole concerns the difficulty of interpreting the general constitutional language aimed at protecting aboriginal rights, not simply that some courts have limited these rights.

Answer choice (E) is incorrect.

The author does introduce the possibility that the Supreme Court of Canada may be better able to uphold constitutional reforms. The author even expresses hope that this is so. But it is inaccurate to regard this hope as the main point of the passage, because the Supreme Court is mentioned only in connection with one specific court case. It is not central to the author's discussion.

Based on the number of test takers who answered this question correctly when it appeared on the LSAT, this was an easy question.

Question 5

The passage provides evidence to suggest that the author would be most likely to assent to which one of the following proposals?

1. Aboriginal peoples in Canada should not be answerable to the federal laws of Canada.
2. Oral tradition should sometimes be considered legal documentation of certain indigenous customs.
3. Aboriginal communities should be granted full protection of all of their customs.
4. Provincial courts should be given no authority to decide cases involving questions of aboriginal rights.
5. The language of the Canadian constitution should more carefully delineate the instances to which reforms apply.

Explanation for Question 5

This question requires the examinee to use evidence from the passage to infer what the author would be most likely to believe. The question is not simply to identify something that the author states explicitly. Rather, the test taker must identify what can reasonably be inferred from what the author says.

The correct answer choice is (B). In the second paragraph the author discusses the aboriginal right to the legal recognition of indigenous customs. It is clear from the tenor of the discussion in the passage that the author believes that this right should be protected, but the author notes that there have been difficulties in securing this protection.



According to the author, provincial courts have required legal documentation as evidence that a custom is long-standing. As the author points out at the end of the second paragraph, however, this requirement is difficult to meet for aboriginal societies, “which often relied on oral tradition rather than written records.” Given that the author believes that aboriginal customs should receive legal recognition, and given that the author regards the requirement of written documentation as an impediment to such recognition in many cases, it can be inferred that the author would be likely to assent to the statement that oral tradition should sometimes be considered legal documentation for certain indigenous customs.

Answer choice (A) is incorrect. While the author clearly feels that aboriginal rights should be protected, that is a far cry from thinking that aboriginal peoples should not be answerable to federal laws. More importantly, the author’s argument in favor of the legal recognition of aboriginal rights, and also the presumption that problems should be resolved in the Canadian courts, suggest that the author probably believes that aboriginal peoples should be answerable to Canadian laws.

Answer choice (C) is incorrect. The main point of the passage as a whole is that there are difficulties involved in interpreting the language of the constitutional protection of aboriginal rights. Importantly, the author clearly agrees with the intentions of the constitutional protection. In discussing the legal recognition of aboriginal customs in the second paragraph, the author claims that the “intent of the constitutional protection is to recognize only long-standing traditional customs, not those of recent origin.” Since the author never questions this intent, there is no reason to think that the author would agree that aboriginal peoples should be granted full protection of all of their customs.

Answer choice (D) is incorrect. The author asserts that provincial courts have been placed in the difficult position of interpreting general constitutional language. This assertion takes it for granted that the provincial courts are the correct venue for the interpretation and application of the constitutional reforms. (If the author believed otherwise, it would be incumbent on him or her to say as much, rather than simply observing that the provincial courts are in a difficult position.) Furthermore, the passage does not provide any other evidence that the author thinks that provincial courts should be eliminated from the process, or be stripped of their authority concerning issues of aboriginal rights.



Answer choice (E) is incorrect. The author’s main point is that there are difficulties inherent in interpreting the language involved in the constitutional protection of aboriginal rights in Canada. Tellingly, however, the author describes the relevant constitutional language as “necessarily general” (first paragraph), and there is no evidence to suggest that the author believes that the language of the Canadian constitution should be revised or rewritten.

Based on the number of test takers who answered this question correctly when it appeared on the LSAT, this was a difficult question.

Passage for Questions 6 and 7

In economics, the term “speculative bubble” refers to a large upward move in an asset’s price driven not by the asset’s fundamentals—that is, by the earnings derivable from the asset—but rather by mere speculation that someone else will be willing to pay a higher price for it. The price increase is then followed by a dramatic decline in price, due to a loss in confidence that the price will continue to rise, and the “bubble” is said to have burst. According to Charles Mackay’s classic nineteenth-century account, the seventeenth-century Dutch tulip market provides an example of a speculative bubble. But the economist Peter Garber challenges Mackay’s view, arguing that there is no evidence that the Dutch tulip market really involved a speculative bubble.

By the seventeenth century, the Netherlands had become a center of cultivation and development of new tulip varieties, and a market had developed in which rare varieties of bulbs sold at high prices. For example, a Semper Augustus bulb sold in 1625 for an amount of gold worth about U.S. \$11,000 in 1999. Common bulb varieties, on the other hand, sold for very low prices. According to Mackay, by 1636 rapid price rises attracted speculators, and prices of many varieties surged upward from November 1636 through January 1637. Mackay further states that in February 1637 prices suddenly collapsed; bulbs could not be sold at 10 percent of their peak values. By 1739, the prices of all the most prized kinds of bulbs had fallen to no more than one two-hundredth of 1 percent of Semper Augustus’s peak price.



Garber acknowledges that bulb prices increased dramatically from 1636 to 1637 and eventually reached very low levels. But he argues that this episode should not be described as a speculative bubble, for the increase and eventual decline in bulb prices can be explained in terms of the fundamentals. Garber argues that a standard pricing pattern occurs for new varieties of flowers. When a particularly prized variety is developed, its original bulb sells for a high price. Thus, the dramatic rise in the price of some original tulip bulbs could have resulted as tulips in general, and certain varieties in particular, became fashionable. However, as the prized bulbs become more readily available through reproduction from the original bulb, their price falls rapidly; after less than 30 years, bulbs sell at reproduction cost. But this does not mean that the high prices of original bulbs are irrational, for earnings derivable from the millions of bulbs descendent from the original bulbs can be very high, even if each individual descendent bulb commands a very low price. Given that an original bulb can generate a reasonable return on investment even if the price of descendent bulbs decreases dramatically, a rapid rise and eventual fall of tulip bulb prices need not indicate a speculative bubble.

Question 6

The phrase “standard pricing pattern” as used in the middle of the last paragraph most nearly means a pricing pattern

1. against which other pricing patterns are to be measured
2. that conforms to a commonly agreed-upon criterion
3. that is merely acceptable
4. that regularly recurs in certain types of cases
5. that serves as an exemplar

Explanation for Question 6

This question requires the test taker to understand from context the meaning of the phrase “standard pricing pattern,” which is used by the author in a particular way.

The correct answer choice is (D). The phrase occurs in the last paragraph of the passage. The purpose of this paragraph is to detail Garber’s reasons for thinking that, contrary to Mackay’s view, the seventeenth-century Dutch tulip market did not involve a speculative bubble. It is in this context that the author uses the phrase in question.



The complete sentence reads, “Garber argues that a standard pricing pattern occurs for new varieties of flowers.” The author then explains this standard pricing pattern: original bulbs for prized new varieties initially command a high price, but descendants produced from the original bulbs cost dramatically less over time. It is clear that the author takes Garber to be describing a regularly recurring pattern about the pricing of new varieties of flowers, and then asserting that the particular details about the pricing of tulip bulbs in the seventeenth century fit this recurring pattern. Thus, answer choice (D) is correct, since it paraphrases the use of the term “standard pricing pattern” as a pricing pattern “that regularly recurs in certain types of cases.”

Answer choice (A) is incorrect. Nowhere does the author suggest that pricing patterns can or should be “measured” against one another, much less against a pricing pattern that is for some reason taken to be the benchmark.

Answer choice (B) is incorrect. The passage as a whole does concern the interpretation of the pricing of tulip bulbs in the seventeenth century, and it might be said that the debate between Mackay and Garber concerns whether this case fits commonly agreed-upon criteria regarding speculative bubbles.

However, in the middle of the last paragraph Garber’s point is simply about prices fitting a pattern observed in a number of other cases. In this way, it is a point about conformance to a historical pattern, not to agreed-upon standards.

Answer choice (C) is incorrect. There is no reason to think that the author views pricing patterns as “acceptable” or unacceptable, or that the author believes there is a standard for acceptability.

Answer choice (E) is incorrect. An “exemplar” would be a particular case that serves as some kind of model or ideal. No particular case is being offered up as a model in the third paragraph. Instead the “standard pricing pattern” is only described generally, not by reference to some paradigm example of the pattern Garber has in mind.

Based on the number of test takers who answered this question correctly when it appeared on the LSAT, this was a difficult question.

Question 7

Given Garber's account of the seventeenth-century Dutch tulip market, which one of the following is most analogous to someone who bought a tulip bulb of a certain variety in that market at a very high price, only to sell a bulb of that variety at a much lower price?

1. someone who, after learning that many others had withdrawn their applications for a particular job, applied for the job in the belief that there would be less competition for it
2. an art dealer who, after paying a very high price for a new painting, sells it at a very low price because it is now considered to be an inferior work
3. someone who, after buying a box of rare motorcycle parts at a very high price, is forced to sell them at a much lower price because of the sudden availability of cheap substitute parts
4. a publisher who pays an extremely high price for a new novel only to sell copies at a price affordable to nearly everyone
5. an airline that, after selling most of the tickets for seats on a plane at a very high price, must sell the remaining tickets at a very low price.

Explanation for Question 7

This question requires the test taker to identify the scenario that is most analogous to the way in which Garber would view the purchase of a tulip bulb at a very high price, and the later sale of tulip bulbs of that same variety at a much lower price. Before looking at the answer choices, it is worth getting clear on the specifics of Garber's account. In Garber's view, the value of the original bulb reflects the earnings that can be made from the descendant bulbs. Since an original bulb will produce multiple descendants, the value of the original will be much greater than the value of any individual descendant. The value of the original reflects the cumulative value of the descendants. Thus, someone could buy an original bulb at a very high price and still turn a profit by selling descendant bulbs at a much lower price.

The correct answer choice is (D). The relation between the manuscript of a new novel and the copies that can be made of that novel is analogous to the relation between an original bulb and its descendants.



From the original novel, the publisher can produce many copies. The copies can then be sold for a much lower price than the original. The value of the new novel reflects the cumulative value of the sales of the copies.

Answer choice (A) is incorrect. The scenario described does not include anything akin to the relationship between an original bulb and later descendants. Instead, it presents an example of someone who applies for a job based on a perception about the degree of competition for that job.

Answer choice (B) is incorrect. In this scenario, the value of the painting has dropped due to critical or public opinion. This represents a case in which the art dealer has taken a loss, not one where the art dealer recoups the original value of the painting through an accumulation of smaller sales.

Answer choice (C) is incorrect. On the surface, the drop in price of the motorcycle parts due to a flooded market of replacement parts seems similar to the drop in price of the bulbs of a variety of flowers. However, the situation is disanalogous in crucial respects. The cheap substitute parts cannot be described as anything like “descendants” of the original rare parts, and the owner of the box of rare parts does not get the value back through the cumulative sales of the cheap replacements. Indeed, the owner of the box of rare motorcycle parts was simply forced to sell the parts at a loss.

Answer choice (E) is incorrect. The airline had a certain number of seats for which they could sell tickets. The drop in price over time is not a product of increased availability, as in the case of the flower bulbs. In this case, the number of available seats has actually decreased. While it is surely rational for the airline to reduce the price of the seats, the situation is not analogous to the drop in price of descendant flower bulbs.

Based on the number of test takers who answered this question correctly when it appeared on the LSAT, this was a difficult question.

Passage Pair for Questions 8 Through 14

For the following comparative reading set, information about the difficulty of the questions is not available.

The following passages were adapted from articles published in the mid-1990s.

Passage A

In January 1995 a vast section of ice broke off the Larsen ice shelf in Antarctica. While this occurrence, the direct result of a regional warming trend that began in the 1940s, may be the most spectacular manifestation yet of serious climate changes occurring on the planet as a consequence of atmospheric heating, other symptoms—more intense storms, prolonged droughts, extended heat waves, and record flooding—have been emerging around the world for several years.

According to scientific estimates, furthermore, sea-level rise resulting from global warming will reach 3 feet (1 meter) within the next century. Such a rise could submerge vast coastal areas, with potentially irreversible consequences.

Late in 1995 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that it had detected the “fingerprint” of human activity as a contributor to the warming of the earth’s atmosphere. Furthermore, panel scientists attributed such warming directly to the increasing quantities of carbon dioxide released by our burning of fossil fuels. The IPCC report thus clearly identifies a pattern of climatic response to human activities in the climatological record, thereby establishing without doubt that global warming can no longer be attributed solely to natural climate variability.

Passage B

Over the past two decades, an extreme view of global warming has developed. While it contains some facts, this view also contains exaggerations and misstatements, and has sometimes resulted in unreasonable environmental policies.

According to this view, global warming will cause the polar ice to melt, raising global sea levels, flooding entire regions, destroying crops, and displacing millions of people. However, there is still a great deal of uncertainty regarding a potential rise in sea levels. Certainly, if the earth warms, sea levels will rise as the water heats up and expands. If the polar ice caps melt, more water will be added to the oceans, raising sea levels even further.



There is some evidence that melting has occurred; however, there is also evidence that the Antarctic ice sheets are growing. In fact, it is possible that a warmer sea surface temperature will cause more water to evaporate, and when wind carries the moisture-laden air over the land, it will precipitate out as snow, causing the ice sheets to grow. Certainly, we need to have better knowledge about the hydrological cycle before predicting dire consequences as a result of recent increases in global temperatures.

This view also exaggerates the impact that human activity has on the planet. While human activity may be a factor in global warming, natural events appear to be far more important. The 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines, for example, caused a decrease in the average global temperature, while El Niño, a periodic perturbation in the ocean's temperature and circulation, causes extreme global climatic events, including droughts and major flooding. Of even greater importance to the earth's climate are variations in the sun's radiation and in the earth's orbit. Climate variability has always existed and will continue to do so, regardless of human intervention.

Question 8

Which one of the following questions is central to both passages?

1. How has an increase in the burning of fossil fuels raised the earth's temperature?
2. To what extent can global warming be attributed to human activity?
3. What steps should be taken to reduce the rate of global warming?
4. What kinds of human activities increase the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere?
5. To what extent is global warming caused by variations in the sun's radiation and the earth's orbit?

Explanation for Question 8

Most single-passage reading comprehension sets include a question that asks about the passage's main point or central topic, or the author's main purpose in writing. The same is true of most comparative reading sets, but in comparative reading sets the questions may ask about the main point, primary purpose, or central issue of both passages, as is the case here.



The correct response is (B), “To what extent can global warming be attributed to human activity?” Both passages are concerned with the current warming trend in the earth’s climate, which is generally referred to as “global warming.” Both passages agree that the earth’s climate is indeed getting warmer, but it is clear that the two authors differ in their views on the issue. In the third paragraph of each passage, the author raises the question of the causes of global warming. The third paragraph of passage A cites a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that attributes warming “directly to the increasing quantities of carbon dioxide released by our burning of fossil fuels.” The author concludes, “The IPCC report thus clearly identifies a pattern of climatic response to human activities in the climatological record, thereby establishing without doubt that global warming can no longer be attributed solely to natural climate variability.” In contrast, in the third paragraph of passage B, the author argues, “While human activity may be a factor in global warming, natural events appear to be far more important.” In other words, a central concern in each passage is the cause of global warming, and more specifically, the extent to which the phenomenon can be attributed to human activity or to natural climate variability. Thus, response (B) expresses a question that is central to both passages.

Response (A) is incorrect because passage B does not address the issue of fossil fuels. While passage A states that the IPCC scientists attributed global warming “directly to the increasing quantities of carbon dioxide released by our burning of fossil fuels” (third paragraph), passage B makes no mention of fossil fuels or carbon dioxide.

Response (C) is incorrect because neither passage discusses steps that should be taken to reduce global warming. The author of passage A believes that global warming is a serious problem for which human activity bears significant responsibility, so he or she presumably believes that some steps should indeed be taken. But he or she does not actually discuss any such steps. Meanwhile, the author of passage B is not even convinced that human activity bears much responsibility for global warming; accordingly, passage B is not concerned at all with the question of what steps should be taken to address the problem.

Response (D) is incorrect because, as mentioned in the explanation of response (A) above, passage B makes no mention of carbon dioxide or of any kinds of human activities that increase carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Response (E) is incorrect because passage A does not mention variations in the sun's radiation and the earth's orbit as possible causes of global warming. The author of passage B mentions variations in the sun's radiation and the earth's orbit as natural contributors to climate variation, but does so in order to illustrate a more general point, namely, that natural climate variability may very well explain global warming. The sun's radiation and the earth's orbit are not the central concern of passage B.

Question 9

Which one of the following is mentioned in passage B but not in passage A as a possible consequence of global warming?

1. an increase in the size of the Antarctic ice sheet
2. a decrease in the amount of snowfall
3. a falling of ocean sea levels
4. an increase in the severity of heat waves
5. an increase in the frequency of major flooding

Explanation for Question 9

This question is designed to test the ability to recognize a significant difference in the content of the two passages.

The correct response is (A), "an increase in the size of the Antarctic ice sheet." In the second paragraph of passage B, the author explicitly cites the possibility that the Antarctic ice sheet will grow as a result of warmer sea temperatures brought about by global warming. On the other hand, passage A does not mention any possibility that the Antarctic ice sheet might grow. In fact, on the topic of the Antarctic ice sheet, passage A alludes only to the breaking off of part of the Larsen ice shelf (first sentence of the passage), which suggests that, if anything, the author of passage A believes that the Antarctic ice sheet is shrinking because of global warming. Thus response (A) describes something that is mentioned in passage B, but not passage A, as a possible consequence of global warming. Response (B) is incorrect because passage B mentions only increased snowfall as a possible consequence of global warming. The correct response must be something mentioned in passage B but not in passage A.

Response (C) is incorrect because passage B mentions only rising sea levels as a possible consequence of global warming. The author’s reference to the possibility that the Antarctic ice sheet might grow suggests that, in the author’s eyes, the rise in sea level might be slowed. But nowhere does the author say that sea levels might drop as a consequence of global warming.

Response (D) is incorrect because, while passage A mentions extended heat waves as a consequence of global warming, passage B does not mention heat waves in any connection.

Response (E) is incorrect because passage A discusses major flooding as a consequence of global warming in the first two paragraphs.

Question 10

The authors of the two passages would be most likely to disagree over

1. whether or not any melting of the polar ice caps has occurred
2. whether natural events can cause changes in global climate conditions
3. whether warmer air temperatures will be likely to raise oceanic water temperatures
4. the extent to which natural climate variability is responsible for global warming
5. the extent to which global temperatures have risen in recent decades

Explanation for Question 10

A significant number of questions for Comparative Reading passages require an ability to infer what the authors’ views are and how they compare. Some questions ask about points of agreement between the authors. Others, such as this one, ask about points on which the authors disagree.

As you read the response choices for a question of this sort, it is a good idea to recall what you may have already concluded about points of agreement and disagreement between the authors. For example, it was noted above that the authors of these two passages disagree on at least one key issue (see the explanation of question 8)—the causes of global warming. The correct response to this question is related to this point of contention: the correct response is (D), “the extent to which natural climate variability is responsible for global warming.”



In the last paragraph of passage A, the author states, “The IPCC report thus clearly identifies a pattern of climatic response to human activities in the climatological record, thereby establishing without doubt that global warming can no longer be attributed solely to natural climate variability.” In contrast, in the last paragraph of passage B, the author states, “While human activity may be a factor in global warming, natural events appear to be far more important.” In short, while the author of passage A holds that human activity is substantially responsible for global warming, the author of passage B holds that natural events may exert far more influence on the earth’s climate.

Response (A) is incorrect because it is not clear that the authors would disagree over this issue. In the first paragraph of passage A, the author describes the breaking off of part of the Larsen ice shelf in Antarctica as “the direct result of a regional warming trend that began in the 1940s.” The author does not use the precise words the “melting of the polar ice caps,” but the implication of what the author does say is that such melting is obviously taking place. On the other hand, it is not clear that the author of passage B would disagree with this claim, since the author concedes that there is evidence supporting the position: “There is some evidence that melting has occurred ...” (second paragraph).

Response (B) is incorrect because both authors would agree that natural events can cause changes in global climate conditions. Since the author of passage B argues that natural events appear to be a more important factor in global warming than human activity, he or she must agree that natural events can affect global climate. And indeed, in the last paragraph the author cites the eruption of Mount Pinatubo, El Niño, and variations in the sun’s radiation and the earth’s orbit as examples of natural events that are known to have done so. On the other hand, the concluding sentence of passage A—which ends with the claim that the IPCC report has established “that global warming can no longer be attributed solely to natural climate variability” (emphasis added)—indirectly acknowledges that natural events do play a role in changes in the earth’s climate. Thus the authors would agree with respect to response (B).

Response (C) is incorrect because the passages provide no evidence for concluding that the authors would disagree over the effect of warmer air temperatures on oceanic water temperatures. The author of passage B holds that warmer air temperatures would heat up the oceans. The author states in the second paragraph, “Certainly, if the earth warms, sea levels will rise as the water heats up and expands.”



However, the author of passage A says nothing at all about a causal relationship between air temperature and oceanic water temperatures, and this lack of evidence does not allow us to conclude that the author would disagree with the view expressed by the author of passage B.

Response (E) is incorrect because the passages do not provide any specific indications regarding either author's views on the extent to which global temperatures have risen in recent decades. Both authors presume that global temperatures have risen, but they say nothing that would allow us to draw any clear inferences regarding their views on how much.

Question 11

Which one of the phenomena cited in passage A is an instance of the kind of “evidence” referred to in the middle of the second paragraph of passage B?

1. the breaking off of part of the Larsen ice shelf in 1995
2. higher regional temperatures since the 1940s
3. increases in storm intensities over the past several years
4. the increased duration of droughts in recent years
5. the increased duration of heat waves over the past decade

Explanation for Question 11

This question concerns the use of the word “evidence” in the second paragraph of passage B. The author acknowledges that there is “some evidence” that melting of the polar ice caps has occurred. This question asks the examinee to identify which of the phenomena cited in passage A could be seen as an example of that kind of evidence.

The correct response is (A), “the breaking off of part of the Larsen ice shelf in 1995.” The author of passage A cites this event in the first sentence, and it is evidence of melting of the polar ice caps.

Response (B) is incorrect because, while the higher temperatures in the Antarctic region since the 1940s might well be the cause of any melting of the polar ice that has taken place, it cannot be used as evidence of that melting.

Responses (C), (D), and (E) are incorrect because the phenomena they refer to—increased storm intensities, longer droughts, and longer heat waves—are all different possible consequences of global warming, like the melting of the polar ice caps. None of these phenomena can be taken as evidence of the melting of the polar ice caps.

Question 12

The author of passage B would be most likely to make which one of the following criticisms about the predictions cited in passage A concerning a rise in sea level?

1. These predictions incorrectly posit a causal relationship between the warming of the earth and rising sea levels.
2. These predictions are supported only by inconclusive evidence that some melting of the polar ice caps has occurred.
3. These predictions exaggerate the degree to which global temperatures have increased in recent decades.
4. These predictions rely on an inadequate understanding of the hydrological cycle.
5. These predictions assume a continuing increase in global temperatures that may not occur.

Explanation for Question 12

This question requires the examinee to infer what the opinion of one of the authors would be regarding a view expressed in the other passage. Specifically, the question asks which criticism the author of passage B would be most likely to offer in response to the predictions made in passage A concerning rising sea levels. The predictions in question are found in the second paragraph of passage A. There the author cites scientific estimates that global warming will result in a sea-level rise of 3 feet (1 meter) within the next century. At the end of the paragraph, the author adds, “Such a rise could submerge vast coastal areas, with potentially irreversible consequences.”

The correct response is (D). The author of passage B addresses the effects of global warming on sea levels in the second paragraph. In the third sentence of that paragraph, the author concedes that warming water would expand, causing sea levels to rise, and that the problem would be compounded if the polar ice caps melt. But the author of passage B goes on to argue two sentences later that warmer water temperatures might also result in more evaporation, which in turn could produce more snowfall on the polar ice caps, causing the ice caps to grow. The author concludes the discussion of sea levels by stating, “Certainly, we need to have better knowledge about the hydrological cycle before predicting dire consequences as a result of recent increases in global temperatures.” Since the author of passage A does in fact cite predictions of dire consequences, which are evidently made without taking into account the possible mitigating factors discussed in passage B, the author of passage B would be likely to regard those predictions as relying on an inadequate understanding of the hydrological cycle.



Response (A) is incorrect because the author of passage B agrees that there is a causal relationship between the warming of the earth and rising sea levels (third sentence of the second paragraph). The author of passage B holds, however, that the relationship between global temperatures and sea levels is more complex than acknowledged by those who make dire predictions. But the author does not object to merely positing that there is such a causal relationship.

Response (B) is incorrect because the author of passage B is aware that at least one factor other than the melting of the ice caps—namely the expansion of water as it warms—can cause sea levels to rise (third sentence of the second paragraph). There is no indication that the author of passage B believes that those who make the predictions cited in passage A are unaware of this additional factor, or that the melting of the polar ice caps is the only causal mechanism they rely on in making their predictions.

Response (C) is incorrect. The author of passage B does dispute the conclusions drawn by some people, such as the author of passage A, regarding the causes and consequences of the warming trend. But, as noted in the explanation for question 10, there is no evidence that the author of passage B disputes any claims made about the extent of the warming that has taken place so far.

Response (E) is incorrect because the author of passage B says nothing about any assumptions concerning future temperature increases underlying the dire predictions cited in passage A. There is therefore no evidence that the author of passage B is likely to view such assumptions as grounds for criticism.

Question 13

The relationship between passage A and passage B is most analogous to the relationship between the documents described in which one of the following?

1. a research report that raises estimates of damage done by above-ground nuclear testing; an article that describes practical applications for nuclear power in the energy production and medical fields
2. an article arguing that corporate patronage biases scientific studies about the impact of pollution on the ozone layer; a study suggesting that aerosols in the atmosphere may counteract damaging effects of atmospheric carbon dioxide on the ozone layer
3. an article citing evidence that the spread of human development into pristine natural areas is causing catastrophic increases in species extinction; an article arguing that naturally occurring cycles of extinction are the most important factor in species loss
4. an article describing the effect of prolonged drought on crop production in the developing world; an article detailing the impact of innovative irrigation techniques in water-scarce agricultural areas
5. a research report on crime and the decline of various neighborhoods from 1960 to 1985; an article describing psychological research on the most important predictors of criminal behavior

Explanation for Question 13

The response choices in this question describe pairs of hypothetical documents. Based on the descriptions of those documents, you are asked to identify the pair of documents that stand in a relationship to each other that is most analogous to the relationship between passage A and passage B. In order to answer this question, you need to determine, at least in a general way, what the relationship between passage A and passage B is.

As already discussed, the authors of passage A and passage B agree that global warming is occurring, but they disagree as to its cause. Passage A holds that human activity is substantially responsible, and in the last paragraph the author quotes the IPCC claim that warming is due “directly to the increasing quantities of carbon dioxide released by our burning of fossil fuels.” The last paragraph of passage B, on the other hand, states, “While human activity may be a factor in global warming, natural events appear to be far more important.”



The closest analogy to this relationship is found in response (C): an article citing evidence that the spread of human development into pristine natural areas is causing catastrophic increases in species extinction; an article arguing that naturally occurring cycles of extinction are the most important factor in species loss.

Like passage A and passage B, these two documents both agree that a trend—loss of species—is occurring. And also like passage A and passage B, these two documents differ in their assignment of responsibility for the trend. The first document identifies human activity as the salient cause, while the second document identifies natural cycles as the salient cause. Most importantly, both articles discuss the same phenomenon, and they propose conflicting explanations of the phenomenon, as is the case with passages A and B.

Response (A) is incorrect because the two documents discuss related topics—damage done by above-ground nuclear testing and practical applications of nuclear power—rather than the same topic, as in passage A and passage B. They are not attempting to explain the same phenomenon.

Response (B) is incorrect because while, at a general level, both documents engage the same topic—the effect of pollution on the ozone layer—they do not appear to agree that there is a phenomenon that needs to be explained, much less offer competing or conflicting explanations. The first document argues that at least some studies of the problem are beset with bias, without apparently making any claims about how pollution affects the ozone layer. Meanwhile, the second document seems to argue that the effects of different types of pollution may cancel each other out.

Response (D) is incorrect because the second document describes what appears to be a potential way to address the problem identified in the first document. Neither passage A nor passage B discusses a method for addressing the problem of global warming.

Response (E) is incorrect because the two documents discuss related problems, rather than the same problem. The first document discusses the relationship between crime and the decline of various neighborhoods over 25 years, while the second document addresses a different question: factors that might predict criminal behavior in individuals.

Question 14

Which one of the following most accurately describes the relationship between the argument made in passage A and the argument made in passage B?

1. Passage A draws conclusions that are not based on hard evidence, while passage B confines itself to proven fact.
2. Passage A relies on evidence that dates back to the 1940s, while passage B relies on much more recent evidence.
3. Passage A warns about the effects of certain recent phenomena, while passage B argues that some inferences based on those phenomena are unfounded.
4. Passage A makes a number of assertions that passage B demonstrates to be false.
5. Passage A and passage B use the same evidence to draw diametrically opposed conclusions.

Explanation for Question 14

This question tests for the ability to understand how the arguments in the two passages unfold and how they are related.

The correct response is (C). The author of passage A begins by describing some of the recent phenomena attributed to atmospheric heating. Some of the author's particular choices of words—such as “the most spectacular manifestation yet” (second sentence of the passage, italics added) and “have been emerging around the world for several years” (end of the first paragraph)—clearly imply that such “spectacular” phenomena are likely to continue to emerge in the coming years. And in the second paragraph, the author describes the effects of a predicted sea-level rise due to global warming as “potentially irreversible.” In contrast, the author of passage B argues that an “extreme view” of global warming has developed, containing “exaggerations and misstatements” (first paragraph of the passage). For example, at the end of the second paragraph the author argues, “Certainly, we need to have better knowledge about the hydrological cycle before predicting dire consequences as a result of recent increases in global temperatures.” Thus, unlike the author of passage A, the author of passage B argues that some of the conclusions based on the phenomena surrounding global warming lack foundation.



Response (A) is incorrect because the author of passage A does in fact rely on hard evidence in drawing his or her conclusions. Though the author of passage B obviously questions inferences like those drawn in passage A, the evidence used in passage A (the breaking off of the Larsen ice shelf, more intense storms, etc.) is not in dispute. Nor does the argument in passage B confine itself exclusively to proven fact: in the second to last sentence of the second paragraph, the author speculates about possible implications of the “hydrological cycle” for the Antarctic ice sheet.

Response (B) is incorrect because both passages rely on recent evidence—for example, see the beginning and end of the first paragraph of passage A and the reference to Mount Pinatubo in the last paragraph of passage B.

Response (D) is incorrect because passage B does not demonstrate that any of the assertions made in passage A are false. For example, the author of passage B concludes the discussion of sea level in the second paragraph by stating, “Certainly, we need to have better knowledge about the hydrological cycle before predicting dire consequences as a result of recent increases in global temperatures.” This does not amount to a demonstration of the falsity of the predictions.

Response (E) is incorrect because, while both passages refer to some of the same phenomena—such as melting of polar ice—each also cites evidence that the other passage does not mention. In reaching its conclusion, passage A cites intense storms and extended heat waves in the first paragraph, and the release of carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels in the third paragraph; passage B mentions none of these things. In reaching its quite different conclusion, passage B cites the eruption of Mount Pinatubo, El Niño, and variations in the sun’s radiation and in the earth’s orbit, as well as evidence that the Antarctic ice sheets might be growing. None of this evidence is mentioned in passage A.