

# Author's Purpose Practice Questions

Read the passage below and answer question 1.

## ASTHMA

About 17 million children and adults in the United States suffer from asthma, a condition that makes it hard to breathe. Today it is a problem that is treatable with modern medicine. In days gone by, there were many different superstitions about how to cure asthma. Some people thought that eating crickets with a little wine would help. Eating raw cat's meat might be the cure. Another idea was to gather some spiders' webs, roll them into a ball, and then swallow them. People also thought that if you ate a diet of only boiled carrots for two weeks, your asthma might go away. This carrot diet may actually have done some good for asthma patients, since vitamin A in carrots is good for the lungs.

**1. The main purpose of the passage is to:**

- a. Describe herbal remedies
- b. Explain some of the measures for treating asthma from long ago
- c. Define superstitions
- d. Extol the virtues of modern medicine
- e. Explain why asthma came about

Read the passage below and answer question 2.

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Black History Month is unnecessary. In a place and time in which we overwhelmingly elected an African-American president, we can and should move to a postracial approach to education. As Detroit Free Press columnist Rochelle Riley wrote in a February 1 column calling for an end to Black History Month, "I propose that, for the first time in American history, this country has reached a point where we can stop celebrating separately, stop learning separately, stop being American separately."

In addition to being unnecessary, the idea that African-American history should be focused on in a given month suggests that it belongs in that month alone. Instead it is important to incorporate African-American history into what is taught every day as American history. It needs to be recreated as part of mainstream thought and not as an optional, often irrelevant, side note. We should focus efforts on pushing schools to diversify and broaden their curricula.

There are a number of other reasons to abolish it. First of all, it has become a shallow commercial ritual that does not even succeed in its (limited and misguided) goal of focusing for one month on a sophisticated, intelligent appraisal of the contributions and experiences of African-Americans throughout history. Second, there is a paternalistic flavor to the mandated bestowing of a month

in which to study African-American history that is overcome if we instead assert the need for a comprehensive curriculum. Third, the idea of Black History Month suggests that the knowledge imparted in that month is for African-Americans only, rather than for all people.

**2. The author's primary purpose in Passage 2 is to:**

- a. Argue that Black History Month should not be so commercial
- b. Argue that Black History Month should be abolished
- c. Argue that Black History Month should be maintained
- d. Suggest that African-American history should be taught in two months rather than just one
- e. Argue that African-American history is not part of mainstream curriculum

*Read the passage below and answer question 3.*

**PARK WILDLIFE**

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks support a wide diversity of animal species, reflecting the range in elevation, climate, and habitat variety there. Over 260 native vertebrate species are in the parks; numerous additional species may be present but have not been confirmed. Of the native vertebrates, five species are extirpated (here meaning extinct), and over 150 are rare or uncommon. There have been some studies of invertebrates in the area, but there is not enough information to know how many species occur specifically in the parks. Many of the parks' caves contain invertebrates, some of which exist only in one cave and are known nowhere else in the world. Plant life in the foothills, where summers are hot and dry and winters are mild, is largely chaparral on the lower slopes, with blue oak and California buckeye in the valleys and on higher slopes. A number of animals live in this area year-round; some breed here, while others winter here. Local species include the gray fox, bobcat, striped and spotted skunks, black bear, wood rat, pocket gopher, white-footed mouse, California quail, scrub jay, lesser goldfinch, wrenit, acorn woodpecker, gopher snake, California king snake, striped racer, western whiptail lizard, and the California newt.

**3. What was the author's purpose in writing this passage?**

- a. To entertain the reader
- b. To bore the reader
- c. To persuade the reader
- d. To inform the reader
- e. To humor the reader

*Read the passage below and answer question 4.*

**CALIFORNIA GRAPES**

Grapes are one of the oldest cultivated fruits. Hieroglyphics show that Egyptians were involved in grape and wine production. Also, the early Romans were known to have developed many grape varieties.

Grapes have been grown in California for more than 200 years. The tradition of viticulture (growing grapes) began in 1769 when Spanish friars established missions throughout California. Then the boom in grapes planted for eating arose in the early 1800s. William Wolfskill, founder of California's citrus industry, planted the first table grape vineyard in 1839 near Los Angeles.

By the 1850s, the United States had officially acquired California from Mexico, and 80,000 gold prospectors had moved to the region. A few of these had the foresight to realize that there was money in grapes as well as in gold.

Today California wine, table grapes, and raisins are all important agricultural commodities, with approximately 700,000 acres planted in vineyards. About 85% of California's table grape production is in the southern San Joaquin Valley region, with the Coachella Valley region accounting for most of the remaining production.

**4. The author most likely wrote this passage to:**

- a. Entertain the reader
- b. Persuade the reader
- c. Humor the reader
- d. Inform the reader
- e. Sway the reader

*Read the passage below and answer question 5.*

**VISUAL PERCEPTION**

It is tempting to think that your eyes are simply mirrors that reflect whatever is in front of them. Researchers, however, have shown that your brain is constantly working to create the impression of a continuous, uninterrupted world.

For instance, in the last 10 minutes, you have blinked your eyes around 200 times. You have probably not been aware of any of these interruptions in your visual world. Something you probably have not seen in a long time without the aid of a mirror is your nose. It is always right there, down in the bottom corner of your vision, but your brain filters it out so that you are not aware of your nose unless you purposefully look at it.

Nor are you aware of the artery that runs right down the middle of your retina. It creates a large blind spot in your visual field, but you never notice the hole it leaves. To see this blind spot, try the following: Cover your left eye with your hand. With your right eye, look at the O on the left. As you move your head closer to the O, the X will disappear as it enters the blind spot caused by your optical nerve.

O

X

Your brain works hard to make the world look continuous!

**5. What is the main purpose of this passage?**

- a. To persuade the reader to pay close attention to blind spots
- b. To explain the way visual perception works
- c. To persuade the reader to consult an optometrist if the O and X disappear
- d. To prove that vision is a passive process

*Read the passage below and answer question 6.*

**OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER**

On a bad day, have you ever been irritable? Have you ever used a harsh tone or even been verbally disrespectful to your parents or teachers? Everyone has a short temper from time to time, but current statistics indicate that between 16% and 20% of a school's population suffer from a psychological condition known as oppositional defiant disorder, or ODD.

ODD symptoms include difficulty complying with adult requests, excessive arguments with adults, temper tantrums, difficulty accepting responsibility for actions, low frustration tolerance, and behaviors intended to annoy or upset adults. Parents of children with ODD often feel as though their whole relationship is based on conflict after conflict.

Unfortunately, ODD can be caused by a number of factors. Some students affected by ODD suffer abuse, neglect, and severe or unpredictable discipline at home. Others have parents with mood disorders or have experienced family violence. Various types of therapy are helpful in treating ODD, and some drugs can treat particular symptoms. However, no single cure exists.

The best advice from professionals is directed toward parents. Therapists encourage parents to avoid situations that usually end in power struggles, to try not to feed into oppositional behavior by reacting emotionally, to praise positive behaviors, and to discourage negative behaviors with timeouts instead of harsh discipline

**6. The author's purpose in writing this passage is to:**

- a. Express frustration about ODD
- b. Prove that parents are the cause of ODD
- c. Inform the reader about this complex condition
- d. Persuade the reader to keep students with ODD out of public school

*Read the passage below and answer question 7.*

**EARLY POLITICAL PARTIES**

The United States has always been a pluralistic society, meaning it has embraced many points of view and many groups with different identities from its beginning. That is not to say that these groups have always seen eye to eye. The first political parties developed in the United States as a result of conflicting visions of the American identity. Many politicians believed that wealthy merchants and lawyers represented the country's true identity, but

many others saw it in the farmers and workers who formed the country's economic base.

The event that brought this disagreement to the surface was the creation of the Bank of the United States in 1791. The bank set out to rid the country of the debts it had accumulated during the American Revolution. Until then, each state was responsible for its own debts. The Bank of the United States, however, wanted to assume these debts and pay them off itself. While many people considered this offer to be a good financial deal for the states, many states were uncomfortable with the arrangement because they saw it as a power play by the federal government. If a central bank had control over the finances of individual states, the people who owned the bank would profit from the states in the future. This concern was the basis of the disagreement: Who should have more power: the individual states or the central government?

The Democratic-Republican Party developed to protest the bank, but it came to represent a vision of America with power spread among states. The Federalist Party was established in defense of the bank, but its ultimate vision was of a strong central government that could help steer the United States toward a more competitive position in the world economy. These different points of view—central government versus separate states—would not be resolved easily. These same disagreements fueled the tension that erupted into the Civil War over half a century later.

**7. What is the author's purpose in writing this passage?**

- a. To persuade the reader to accept the Federalist Party's point of view
- b. To explain the disagreements between early American political parties
- c. To explain the importance of a strong central government
- d. To criticize the founders of the Bank of the United States

*Read the passage below and answer question 8.*

**PERIMENOPAUSE**

For most women, the onset of menopause, the period of life when they no longer experience menstrual periods, is gradual. Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause, an interval when menopause-related changes begin to be noticed. This is the lengthy period during which the ovaries progressively reduce production of the hormones estrogen and progesterone, and a woman's ability to become pregnant is lost. Perimenopause is a normal event in the process of aging, and indicates that the reproductive years are coming to an end.

Most women experience the first signs of perimenopause around the age of forty. The first signs likely to be noticed are menopause-related symptoms, such as changes in periods. Menopause itself is said to occur on the day a period has not been experienced for 12 months in a row. Although it is sometimes referred to as "premenopause," perimenopause is also often considered to include the year after menopause occurs.

During the onset of menopause, the body's output of several key hormones fluctuates and begins to shut down. Because hormones influence a wide spectrum of body functions, women may experience a variety of symptoms during this process. The symptoms of perimenopause are both physical and emotional and often begin years before a woman's period actually ceases. The

cessation of ovulation known as menopause isn't a process that happens overnight; over a protracted period of several years, a woman's body undergoes a progression of changes.

### **Symptoms**

Many of the symptoms a woman may experience during menopause itself have their onset during the time of perimenopause. Most symptoms can be managed through a combination of diet and exercise. Most women are not immediately aware of the changes their bodies are going through as a result of these hormonal fluctuations and will become aware of changes in the schedule of their periods as the first indication that menopause is at hand. Symptoms experienced during perimenopause include headaches, depression and anxiety, hot flashes and night sweats, insomnia and fatigue, urinary problems and vaginal dryness, weight gain, heart palpitations, and loss of bone mass. Women who have experienced excessive premenstrual syndrome (PMS) symptoms in the past are also likely to experience severe symptoms during perimenopause.

### **Onset and Duration**

Perimenopause usually takes place between the ages of 45 and 55. In some women, the onset may occur much earlier. The duration of the change is quite variable from woman to woman and may last for as long as fifteen years, although ten years is typical. The timing and progression of the changes varies between individuals, depending on a number of factors including genetics and family history. A woman whose mother or grandmother experienced perimenopause early is likely to do so as well. There is also evidence linking an early onset of perimenopause to factors such as smoking, early childhood cancer, hysterectomy, and women who have not borne children.

### **Treatment**

The symptoms of perimenopause are a normal manifestation of the aging process and do not ordinarily require treatment. Some physicians may choose to monitor the levels of certain hormones-particularly thyroid function-if the symptoms are severe. Under normal circumstances, this is unnecessary. However, if bleeding is extremely heavy, lasts longer than a week, or occurs between periods, a medical professional should be consulted. Symptoms such as these may indicate a more serious underlying gynecological problem.

### **8. The purpose of this article is to:**

- a. Describe the treatment of perimenopause
- b. Enumerate the symptoms that women may experience when going through perimenopause
- c. Give an overall description of perimenopause
- d. Compare perimenopause to menopause itself

*Read the passage below and answer questions 9-10.*

### **DISCUSSION OF NATIVE SPEAKER, BY CHANG-RAE LEE**

Chang-Rae Lee's award-winning debut novel *Native Speaker* is about Henry Park, a Korean-American individual who struggles to find his place as an immigrant in a suburb of New York City. This novel addresses the notion that as the individuals who know us best, our family, peers, and lovers are the

individuals who direct our lives and end up defining us. Henry Park is confronted with this reality in the very beginning of the novel, which opens:

*The day my wife left she gave me a list of who I was.*

Upon separating from his wife, Park struggles with racial and ethnic identity issues due to his loneliness. Through Parks' work as an undercover operative for a private intelligence agency, the author presents the theme of espionage as metaphor for the internal divide that Park experiences as an immigrant. This dual reality creates two worlds for Park and increases his sense of uncertainty with regard to his place in society. While he constantly feels like an outsider looking in, he also feels like he belongs to neither world.

Chang-Rae Lee is also a first-generation Korean American immigrant. He immigrated to America at the early age of three. Themes of identity, race, and cultural alienation pervade his works. His interests in these themes no doubt stem from his firsthand experience as a kid growing up in a Korean household while going to an American school. Lee is also author of *A Gesture Life* and *Aloft*. The protagonists are similar in that they deal with labels placed on them based on race, color, and language. Consequently, all of these characters struggle to belong in America.

Lee's novels address differences within a nation's mix of race, religion, and history, and the necessity of assimilation between cultures. In his works and through his characters, Lee shows us both the difficulties and the subtleties of the immigrant experience in America. He urges us to consider the role of borders, as well as why the idea of opening up one's borders is so frightening. In an ever-changing world in which cultures are becoming increasingly intermingled, the meaning of identity must be constantly redefined, especially when the security of belonging to a place is becoming more elusive. As our world grows smaller with increasing technological advances, these themes in Lee's novels become even more pertinent.

**9. Which of the following best describes the purpose of this passage?**

- a. To criticize
- b. To analyze
- c. To entertain
- d. To inform

**10. Why does the author of the passage quote the first line of the novel *Native Speaker*?**

- a. To illustrate one of the themes in the novel
- b. To show how the book is semi-autobiographical
- c. It is the main idea of the novel.
- d. To create interest in the novel