

Frequently Confused Words (Lesson)

Writers often confuse words that sound alike but have different meanings or words that have similar meanings. Below are some of these **frequently confused words**. You need to be able to select the appropriate word based on the context. Below is a list of frequently confused words and example sentences.

a lot: a considerable quantity or extent (noun)

allot: to assign (verb)

- I have a lot of socks.
- The teacher has allotted 20 minutes for the test.

accept: to receive (verb)

except: excluding (preposition)

- I accept your apology.
- Everyone is going to the store except me.

adapt: to change or to make suitable for a purpose (verb)

adopt: to accept with approval or to take into one's family (verb)

- The ideal candidate should be able to adapt to change quickly and easily.
- The legislature has yet to adopt the committee's recommendations.

advice: an opinion or a recommendation about what could or should be done (noun)

advise: to recommend, suggest, or counsel (verb)

- I never asked for your advice.
- His lawyer advised him not to talk.

affect: to influence (verb)

effect: a result (noun)

- The snowstorm has affected the city.
- The effect of the snowstorm is school closings.

aisle: a pathway between rows of seats (noun)

ail: to be sick (verb)

isle: an island (noun)

I'll: "I will" (contraction)

- The bride walked up the aisle with her father.
- Melissa needs to take care of her ailing father.
- We are taking a trip to the British Isles.
- I'll wash my car tomorrow.

allude: to make an indirect reference to an idea, place, person, or text (verb)

elude: to escape capture or to be incomprehensible (verb)

- Jacob hasn't even so much as alluded to liking me.
- The bank robber could elude the police for only so long before getting caught.

allusion: a reference to something (noun)

illusion: a false perception of reality (noun)

- The story has an allusion to Arachne, a character from Greek mythology.
- The illusion kept the audience entranced for hours.

aloud: with the speaking voice (adverb)

allowed: permitted (verb)

- The teacher read aloud to her students.
- The teacher allowed her students to read outside.

apart: separate one from another; in pieces or parts (adverb)

a part: one piece of a whole (noun)

- Their family was torn apart by the war.
- Henri wants to be a part of our volunteer team.

ascent: an act of rising (noun)

assent: an act of agreeing to something (noun)

- Her ascent into the mountains was tiring.
- Her assent gave us permission to close the deal.

assure: to remove doubt or anxiety (verb)

ensure: to guarantee an event or condition (verb)

insure: to protect from financial liability with insurance (verb)

- Lecrae tried to assure Thomas that he knew what he was doing.
- Thomas just wanted to ensure that their undertaking would be successful.

- Whatever happens, be sure to insure your car before you let them borrow it.

award: to bestow based on merit (verb)

reward: to give wages or recompense (verb)

- Ryan was awarded a medal for his bravery.
- Adele rewarded the puppy for his obedience.

between: in the middle of (preposition used when talking about distinct, individual items)

among: in the middle of (preposition used when talking about items that are not distinct)

- I am stuck between a rock and a hard place.
- I am among people who understand me.

breath: inhaled or exhaled air (noun)

breathe: to exhale and inhale (verb)

- The ring was so beautiful that it took my breath away.
- Ronnie was so excited to see her favorite singer that she forgot to breathe and passed out.

capital: a city serving as a seat of government (noun)

capitol: a building in which a legislative body meets (noun)

- Austin is the capital of Texas.
- The U.S. Congress meets at the Capitol.

censor: to forbid the public distribution of a piece of information (verb)

censure: to give a formal rebuke (verb)

sensor: an object that detects stimuli such as heat, light, or movement (noun)

- The university censored its campus newspaper before it was published.
- The lawyer was censured due to her improper conduct during the case.
- The sensor in my smoke detector is very sensitive.

cite: to quote (verb)

site: a position or place (noun)

sight: vision (noun)

- The essay cites several different authors.
- Meet me at the construction site.
- Please get that bug out of my sight.

coarse: rough (adjective)

course: a path (noun)

- The coarse sand hurts my feet.
- Kimi ran along the course.

conscience: the sense of moral goodness of one's conduct, intentions, or character (noun)

conscious: capable of or marked by thought, will, design, or perception (adjective)

- Rumi had a guilty conscience, so she turned herself in.
- It was a conscious decision to do the right thing.

complement: to make complete or whole (verb)

compliment: to give praise (verb)

- The lemon juice complements the flavor of the fish.
- Danielle complimented John on his courage.

counsel: to advise (verb)

council: an assembly or a group working to legislate or advise (noun)

- My lawyer counseled me to get the company to sign a contract.
- The council will meet tonight to elect officers.

discreet: judicious in one's conduct or speech (adjective)

discrete: separate or distinct (adjective)

- Try to be discreet when you slip him the note.
- Cut the brownies into nine discrete pieces.

elicit: to call forth or evoke or to deduce (verb)

illicit: morally wrong or illegal (adjective)

- Jackie is trying to elicit sympathy because she is in trouble.
- He said he was arrested for illicit activity.

eminent: of high status or prominent (adjective)

imminent: about to happen, occur, or take place (adjective)

- Whoever becomes president will hold an eminent position.
- The destruction of the building seems imminent.

farther: to greater distance or extent (adverb used to express physical distance)

further: to greater distance or extent (adverb used to express advancement to a greater degree, as in time and other concepts)

- Pamela ran farther than I did.
- I will further my education by attending college.

fewer: smaller amount (adjective used when referring to something that can be counted)

less: smaller amount or degree (adjective used when referring to something that cannot be counted)

- I have fewer apples than Daniel.
- There was less pollution last year.

here: in this place (adverb)

hear: to perceive sounds (verb)

- When will you get here?
- I hear the train coming.

incidence: rate, extent, or frequency of occurrence (noun)

incident: a definite and separate occurrence or action (noun)

- There is a high incidence of robbery in that neighborhood.
- I'd rather not talk about that incident.

its: belonging to something (adjective)

it's: "it is" or "it has" (contraction)

- Its weakness is in its legs.
- It's going to be a rainy day.

knew: past tense form of "know," which means to hold information in mind (verb)

new: appearing, thought of, or made for the first time (adjective)

- At two years old, Cathleen already knew her alphabet.
- Shondra went to the dealership to pick up her new car.

lead: a kind of metal or the graphite in pencils (noun)

led: past tense form of "lead," which means to guide (verb)

- My mechanical pencil needs more lead.
- The dog led me to the injured child.

lease: to rent for money (verb)

least: the smallest amount or degree (adjective)

- She leased the car.
- That option will cost the least amount of money.

lose: to fail to keep or maintain (verb)

loose: not tight or secure (adjective)

- Do not lose this expensive bracelet.
- This bracelet is loose on me.

passed: the past tense form of "pass," which means to undergo a test or a course of study successfully (verb)

past: having taken place in a period before the present (adjective)

- Raj barely passed his algebra class.
- Don't judge me by my past mistakes.

patience: the quality of being patient (noun)

patients: the plural form of "patient" (noun)

- Daryl is testing my patience.
- The patients had to reschedule their appointments.

poor: lacking resources (adjective)

pore: to gaze intently or to read or study attentively (verb)

- Carly has always desired to care for those who are poor.
- Roman pored over the contract trying to find a loophole.

precede: to go before or to introduce (verb)

proceed: to move forward or to continue an action or process (verb)

- His reputation preceded him.
- We must proceed with the ceremony.

principal: a head of a school or organization (noun)

principle: a basic law or truth (noun)

- The principal will make an important announcement this morning.
- A principle of healthy eating is to eat fresh and natural foods.

quiet: an absence of noise or activity (noun)

quite: to a degree or to an extent (adverb)

- I enjoyed the peace and quiet.
- The strawberries were quite delicious.

stationary: fixed or unchanging (adjective)

stationery: paper used for writing (noun)

- A stationary bike allows people to watch television while exercising.
- Cindy likes to use unique stationery for her letters.

their: belonging to them (adjective)

there: in or to that place (adverb)

they're: "they are" (contraction)

- Their house is impressive.
- I will walk there.
- They're working hard to meet this deadline.

then: after that (adverb)

than: (preposition used in comparisons)

- Andy passed the football to Edward and then ran to the end zone.
- Andy runs faster than Edward.

through: into or out of (preposition)

threw: past tense form of "throw" (verb)

- The ball went through the hoop on her first try.
- She threw the ball as hard as she could.

to: (preposition)

too: very or also (adverb)

two: 2 (noun)

- They both rushed to the door.
- Amelia was too tired.
- There are two apples left.

wear: to have something on; to damage something by using or rubbing (verb)

where: in or to what place (adverb)

ware: a manufactured article or product; goods (noun)

- The weather is wearing away at the bridge.
- Where is my favorite mug?
- The artist peddled his wares door to door.

which: (pronoun used to refer to things in nonrestrictive or nonessential clauses)

that: (pronoun used to refer to things in restrictive or essential clauses)

who: (pronoun used to refer to a person or people)

whom: (pronoun used to refer to a person or people when it functions as an object of a verb or preposition in the sentence)

- We have the meeting this Wednesday, which is my birthday.
- The television that Stacey broke will cost \$2,000 to replace.
- Tamara, who won the award last year, will be a presenter.
- With whom will you be going to the dance?

whole: total, all, or complete (adjective)

hole: an opening or a hollowed-out place (noun)

- Billy ate the whole cake.
- There is a hole in my jeans.

whose: belonging to who or which (pronoun)

who's: "who is" or "who has" (contraction)

- Whose phone is ringing?
- Who's at the door?

write: to put words on paper (verb)

rite: a ceremonial act (noun)

- I need to write an essay for my history class.
- The initiation rites are simple to perform.

your: belonging to you (adjective)

you're: "you are" (contraction)

- Your essay was entertaining to read.
- You're hilarious.

Frequently Confused Words Practice #1

1. Which sentence uses whose or who's correctly?

- A. Potter voted for Angelica, whose speech mentioned the smaller school sports.
- B. I liked that actress whose in the action movie about the bank robbers in Rome.
- C. My sister, who's best friend plays tennis, wants to play double's tennis tomorrow.
- D. Ginny decided to ask Tony, who's math scores are high, to help her with algebra.

2. Choose the sentence that uses your or you're correctly.

- A. Please pick up your sweater before you sit down.
- B. I can't believe your coming to the concert with me!
- C. I'll take you're coat to be cleaned since I wore it last.
- D. Are you making you're famous spicy dip for the party?

3. Which word best replaces the underlined part of the sentence?

Dean said, "I wish you had told me that your not coming to my baseball game."

- A. you're
- B. make no change
- C. your'e
- D. you'r

4. What change, if any, should be made to who's in the sentence below?

Ms. Franco threatened to throw the sweater away if no one would say who's it was.

- A. whos'
- B. no change
- C. who'se
- D. whose

5. What change, if any, should be made to they're in the sentence below?

Paul and Rita looked everywhere, but they could not find they're soccer ball.

- A. there
- B. theyr'e
- C. their
- D. no change

6. Which sentence uses its or it's correctly?

- A. The hamster is out of it's cage.
- B. I think it's a great idea!
- C. Then, its ready to ride.
- D. Its almost finished drying.

7. Which word best replaces the underlined part of the sentence?

My cable company is replacing it's wires in my neighborhood.

- A. its
- B. its'
- C. make no change
- D. its's

8. Which word belongs on the blank line?

"I checked with the Lings," Lupita said, "and ____ going on vacation until the end of June."

- A. their
- B. theyr'e
- C. they're
- D. there

9. Choose the sentence that uses their, they're, or there correctly.

- A. Claudia likes how there so friendly to new kids.
- B. Drake thinks that they're presentation is next.
- C. Badi's coach wanted to practice drills there.
- D. Alicia needed to move their for the project.

10. Choose the sentence that uses its or it's correctly.

- A. Soraya shouted, "I think its starting without us, so please hurry up!"
- B. Mr. Villagomez told his class, "And now, it's time for presentations."
- C. The Hutchinson family decided to go to the mountains for it's vacation.
- D. Xander told me its hard work to make a new Web site from scratch.

11. Which sentence uses your or you're correctly?

- A. I heard that you're song in the musical is very beautiful.
- B. Regina thinks that your coming to her dinner tomorrow.
- C. Why is you're soccer bag sitting next to the front door?
- D. You should take your dog for a longer walk next time.

12. Which word belongs on the blank line?

"So while I am in Florida," Hannah said, " ____ going to be in Alabama?"

- A. your'e
 - B. you're
 - C. your
 - D. your's
-

13. What change, if any, should be made to Its in the sentence below?

Cathy told her best friend, "I love my new backpack. Its the perfect size, and because my mom made it, it's one of a kind."

- A. no change
 - B. Its's
 - C. It's
 - D. Its'
-

14. Which word best replaces the underlined part of the sentence?

The Pongs asked Nicky to watch they're two dogs, Pat and Spot.

- A. make no change
- B. there
- C. theyr'e
- D. their

Frequently Confused Words Practice #2

1. Which word best replaces the underlined part of the sentence?

Lena is the class president whose hoping to make some big changes to the school.

- A. make no change
- B. whos'
- C. who'se
- D. who's

2. Which sentence uses their, they're, or there correctly?

- A. Eric heard the Kendricks say that they're going to get another dog.
- B. The Cardinals could use some help with there pitching coaches.
- C. When did Sayid say that their meeting us for the big rivalry game?
- D. Valerie asked her parents why they had to move all the way over they're.

3. Choose the sentence that uses whose or who's correctly.

- A. Ronnie, who's dad played tennis, preferred soccer.
- B. Manny did not know whose broken bike it was.
- C. I cannot remember who's book I borrowed when.
- D. Tracy asked, "Whose going to the basketball game?"

4. Which word belongs on the blank line?

William, _____ the top high school violinist in the state, is also a very good tennis player.

- A. whose
- B. whos'
- C. who's
- D. who'se

5. What change, if any, should be made to you're in the sentence below?

"I know you want to play with you're game," Mom said, "but you should give our guests a turn."

- A. your'e
- B. yours
- C. your
- D. no change

6. Which word belongs on the blank line?

Lucy's dog liked to play, and ____ favorite thing to do was to chase a tennis ball.

- A. its's
- B. it's
- C. its
- D. its'

7. Which sentence uses capitol or capital correctly?

- A. After he went on a tour of Tennessee's capital building, James decided that he wanted to be a legislator.
- B. Once Greg got the capital he needed from investors, he was able to open his new store.
- C. Sheila always wanted to go to Washington, D.C., because it is the nation's capitol.
- D. Though sentences should start with capitol letters, poets can break the rules and use lowercase letters instead.

8. Which word belongs on the blank line?

Patil and Ilia went to the fair but did not go on any of the rides because they all looked _____ dangerous.

- A. too
- B. to
- C. two
- D. tu

9. Choose the sentence that uses complement or compliment correctly.

- A. After the last hiring phase, we finally had a full compliment of customer service reps ready to answer calls.
- B. It always seemed like Mr. Larken complemented the boys in the class for their hard work more than the girls.
- C. Jake beamed when his peers complimented him on his performance in the school talent show.
- D. The complements she received did not make Chelsea feel better about her defeat in the golf tournament.

10. Choose the sentence that uses principal or principle correctly.

- A. The principle actor in the show had to deal with gossip and rumors in the tabloids more than the other actors.
- B. Symmetry is an important principal of design because it makes things look pleasing to the eye.
- C. "My principal reason for going to law school is to make a lot of money," Chris shared with his best friend.
- D. "The principle is to blame for the low test scores," an angry parent shouted at the last school board meeting.

11. Which sentence uses affect or effect correctly?

- A. I could tell that the opera effected Lisa even though she tried to hide her tears during the mournful aria.
- B. The drought affected the price of produce because the demand stayed high while the supply dropped.
- C. Some people don't realize that their choice in clothing will effect the outcome of the interview.
- D. The amount of effort that you put into your work will have an affect on your final grade.

12. Choose the sentence in which accept or except is used correctly.

- A. "Can you except the fact that I'm a faster runner than you?" Karl asked as he taunted Juan.
 - B. Children are taught at a young age that it is not safe to except gifts from strangers.
 - C. I can't accept Sterling's apology because the prank he played on my brother was cruel and hurtful.
 - D. I liked all the movies nominated for an award this year accept the one starring Tom Cruise.
-

13. Which word belongs on the blank line?

Peterson Construction is building a new shopping center on the land _____ the old high school used to be.

- A. were
 - B. ware
 - C. wear
 - D. where
-

14. Which sentence correctly uses the word stationary or stationery for the sense of the sentence?

- A. The unemployment rate remained stationary at 4.5 percent for six months.
 - B. The old car must have broken down because it has become a stationery fixture in my neighbor's backyard.
 - C. Mrs. Jenkins handed me a colorful envelope from her personal stationary.
 - D. Riding a stationery bike is the most boring exercise because you don't get to go anywhere.
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Subject-Verb Agreement (Lesson)

Subjects and verbs must agree with one another in number. In the present tense, a singular subject takes a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb. Below is a list of common subject-verb agreement rules.

Singular verbs end in *–s* or *–es*.

Unlike nouns, the plural form of a verb is not made by adding an *–s* or *–es* to the ending. It's actually the opposite. For present-tense verbs, adding the *–s* to the end makes it singular. If the verb is plural, there is no *–s* ending used.

Singular Verbs

The **driver speeds** down the highway.

The **girl stares** at the cute guy.

Plural Verbs

The **drivers speed** down the highway.

The **girls stare** at the cute guy.

Compound subjects joined by "and" take a plural verb.

A subject that is made up of two or more nouns is a compound subject. When the parts are connected by *and*, the subject is plural, so it takes a plural verb.

Selena, Helena, and Mark ran the marathon.

The **truck and the car have** low mileage.

Subjects with singular nouns joined by *or* or *nor* take a singular verb.

Either the sour **milk or the moldy cheese causes** the fridge to stink.

Neither the black **dress nor the pink gown is** fashionable enough.

Subjects with a singular noun and a plural noun joined by *or* or *nor* take the verb that agrees with the closer noun.

Jalapeños or extra cheese makes pepperoni pizza even better.

Neither the **supervisor nor his workers want** to work overtime.

Subjects are not in modifying phrases.

When the subject and the verb are separated by other words or phrases, make sure the verb agrees with the subject, not with a noun within the phrase.

The **paintings** *at the museum* **are** strange.

Your baby-blue **tuxedo** *with all the ruffles* **is** tacky.

Don't let those phrases fool you.

Phrases using *with*, *together with*, *including*, *accompanied by*, *in addition to*, or *as well* do not change whether a subject is singular or plural. If the subject is singular, the verb should be as well.

Jane, *as well as her sisters*, **enjoys** punk music.

The **cranberries**, *in addition to the broth*, **go** in the stuffing.

Nouns with a plural form but with a singular meaning take singular verbs.

Nouns such as *United States*, *civics*, *mathematics*, *measles*, and *news* take singular verbs.

Mumps **is** a contagious disease that can be avoided with vaccination.

Physics sounds like a hard subject.

Nouns such as *scissors*, *tweezers*, *trousers*, *jeans*, and *shears* take plural verbs.

These nouns may appear to have a singular meaning, but each of these things is made up of two parts.

The **shears** **are** in the barber's hand.

The **tongs** **have** barbeque sauce all over them.

Collective nouns *usually* take singular verbs.

A collective noun has a singular form even though it refers to a group of individuals or things. Examples include *army*, *audience*, *crowd*, *group*, *team*, *committee*, *class*, and *family*. These nouns take a singular verb when the group acts as one unit.

The **audience** **enjoys** the long-awaited movie.

The **crowd** **goes** wild during a double play.

The **town** **supports** Mayor Bright.

However, a plural verb is used when people or things within a group act separately.

The broken-up **band have** solo careers now.

The **family disagree** about where to go on summer vacation.

If the subject follows the verb, the subject and verb should still agree.

When the normal subject-verb order is inverted in a sentence, the verb still agrees with the subject. For example, in sentences beginning with *there* or *here*, the subject follows the verb. Since neither *there* nor *here* is ever the subject of a sentence, the verb agrees with the noun that follows the verb.

There are many **chores** to do.

Here is the **match** to your other sock.

With words that indicate portions, look to the object of the preposition.

With words that indicate portions—percent, fraction, part, majority, some, all, none, remainder, and so forth—look at the object of the preposition (the noun following the *of* phrase) to determine whether to use a singular or plural verb. If the object of the preposition is singular, use a singular verb. If the object of the preposition is plural, use a plural verb.

Half of the car was covered in mud.

One-third of the sodas were peach flavored.

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
Is	are
Was	were
Has	have

Subject-Verb Agreement (practice)

1. Choose the correct verb for the sentence below.

Kelly _____ all the secret passageways in the rambling old house.

- A. knows
 - B. walk
 - C. understand
 - D. see
-

2. Which sentence below demonstrates incorrect subject-verb agreement?

- A. Karen was the only person Dawn told about Maria's secret.
 - B. The thing that hurt the worst was the look on Maria's face when she approached Dawn and asked, "Why?"
 - C. When rumors runs wild, Dawn doesn't know who to blame, but she feels awful.
 - D. Dawn didn't want to think that Karen could betray her trust that way.
-

3. Choose the correct complete subject for the sentence below.

_____ agree that the race was as challenging as initially advertised.

- A. Neither the winner nor the loser
 - B. Neither the winner nor the losers
 - C. Neither the losers nor the winner
 - D. Neither the loser nor the winner
-

4. Choose the correct verb for the sentence below.

The doctor on staff who has performed the most surgeries _____ Dr. Watson.

- A. are
 - B. is
 - C. were
 - D. be
-

5. Which sentence below demonstrates incorrect subject-verb agreement?

- A. The Blackburn Committee decide which student is the most qualified and most deserves the Covington Scholarship.
 - B. There is also a Covington Scholarship available for graduate students as well, but the requirements are different.
 - C. The scholarship not only covers college tuition for four years, but it includes the cost of books as well.
 - D. They review each applicant based on test scores, school grades, and active participation in the community.
-

6. Which sentence below demonstrates **incorrect** subject-verb agreement?

- A. All of the noteworthy happenings takes priority in the news.
 - B. Reduced hours of sleep in turn reduce mental sharpness during the day.
 - C. Each hour of the day seems to pass faster than the next.
 - D. Of all the possible solutions, the most obvious tend to be overlooked.
-

7. Choose the correct verb for the sentence below.

Either Travis or Kevin _____ every match.

- A. lose
 - B. throw
 - C. concede
 - D. wins
-

8. Which sentence below demonstrates incorrect subject-verb agreement?

- A. Even though they are not operational, many people still flock to see the old court and hospital buildings in the Patton District.
 - B. The city's growth since 1918 is phenomenal, but the traditional architecture in the Patton District is part of the city's history.
 - C. In stark contrast, the new Fausto skyscraper located downtown looks like something from the Star Wars universe.
 - D. As a testament to their relevance today, the buildings from 1918 still stands and is considered historic landmarks.
-

9. Which sentence below demonstrates **incorrect** subject-verb agreement?

- A. Citizens, who are residents and townspeople, have the right to cast a ballot on election day.
 - B. All citizens, residents, and townspeople have a right to cast a ballot on election day.
 - C. Each citizen, resident, and townsperson have a right to cast a ballot on election day.
 - D. Citizens, including each resident and townsperson, have the right to cast a ballot on election day.
-

10. In which of the following sentences do the subject and verb agree?

- A. The paintings on display at the art museum seems priceless.
 - B. The paintings on display at the art museum is priceless.
 - C. The paintings on display at the art museum are priceless.
 - D. The paintings on display at the art museum was priceless.
-

11. Which sentence below demonstrates correct subject-verb agreement?

- A. The price and the location each depend on the availability of the tickets.
 - B. The teachers and the students both knows the educational requirements.
 - C. Cell phones and laptop computers each requires high-output batteries.
 - D. Both comes to us on a regular basis to discuss the expectations of the day.
-

12.

Among the most widely quoted authors is the American philosopher and scholar Henry David Thoreau.

What change should be made to correct the problem of subject-verb agreement?

- A. Change **is** to **are**.
 - B. No change is necessary.
 - C. Change **authors** to **author**.
 - D. Change **is** to **were**.
-

13. Choose the correct subject for the sentence below.

_____ listen to the instructions carefully.

- A. Students
 - B. My cousin
 - C. Mrs. Chambers
 - D. Sheila
-

14. Which sentence below demonstrates correct subject-verb agreement?

- A. There were once an old man who lived way up in the hills as a hermit.
 - B. There is something about the midnight sky that excites my imagination.
 - C. There are a concern because we have noticed strange happenings.
 - D. There is answers that will be given tomorrow when the time is right.
-

15. Choose the correct subject for the sentence below.

_____ are among the great American writers who influenced American culture in the nineteenth century.

- A. Twain together with Emerson and Thoreau
 - B. Twain, Emerson, and Thoreau
 - C. Twain, Emerson, or Thoreau
 - D. Twain as well as Emerson and Thoreau
-

16. Which sentence below demonstrates correct subject-verb agreement?

- A. Delores is sailing in a yacht race this weekend.
 - B. Delores be sailing in a yacht race this weekend.
 - C. Delores are sailing in a yacht race this weekend.
 - D. Delores am sailing in a yacht race this weekend.
-

17. Which sentence below demonstrates **incorrect** subject-verb agreement?

- A. Each household and resident of this great town is entitled to an informed and educated opinion.
 - B. Every planet and celestial body represents an undiscovered country yet to be explored.
 - C. Every man, woman, and child have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
 - D. Each debate and discussion between us contains too many words and not enough thought.
-

18. Choose the correct verb for the sentence below.

Each of the students _____ responsible for completing his or her homework on time and correctly.

- A. is
 - B. are
 - C. be
 - D. being
-

19. Choose the correct complete subject for the sentence below.

_____ observes silently while the doings of the night transpire below.

- A. A parliament of owls
 - B. A parliaments of owls
 - C. A parliament of owl
 - D. A parliaments of owl
-

20. Choose the correct verbs for the sentence below.

Both the Sun and the Moon _____ once thought to revolve around the Earth, which _____ considered the center of the universe.

- A. was; were
- B. are; is
- C. were; was
- D. is; are

Denotation and Connotation (LESSON)

Words express more than just their dictionary definitions. Words can trigger images or stir emotions in the reader. Authors use connotation to influence their readers and support their point of view. Certain words can express tone and contribute to style.

Words have connotative and denotative meanings.

Denotation - the literal, dictionary meaning of a word

Connotation -ns or emotional suggestions attached to a word

NOTE:

Connotations of words are created by the feelings, attitudes, and knowledge commonly shared by members of a society. It can be hard to prove the connotation of a word. Instead, it is something that the reader will learn through experience.

Look at these two words with a denotation of “costing a small amount of money.” **inexpensive - cheap**

Which word has a negative connotation? Would you want to buy a “cheap” computer? If you are proud of a jewelry purchase you made, would say it was “cheap” jewelry? Have you ever almost said the word “cheap” but quickly changed it to “inexpensive”?

Technically, “inexpensive” and “cheap” are very close in their literal meanings, but “cheap” implies that the object is lacking in quality, not just price. “Cheap” has come to have this connotation because of the way the word is used by English speakers.

Examples:

Notice how the speakers are carefully choosing their words to convey negative or positive emotions.

Mr. Negative: My organic chemistry class was difficult.

Mr. Positive: My organic chemistry class was challenging.

Mr. Negative: I’ve learned that Karl can be very rude.

Mr. Positive: I’ve learned that Karl can be very direct.

Mr. Negative: That child is puny.

Mr. Positive: That child is little.

Mr. Negative: My father was a stingy man.

Mr. Positive: My father was a thrifty man.

Mr. Negative: My call to the company was ignored.

Mr. Positive: My call to the company was unanswered.

Denotation and Connotation (Practice)

an excerpt from World History Volume II

The growing commerce in plantation products from the Americas made a third pattern—the trade in slaves—increasingly lucrative. The grueling work under tropical or semitropical conditions and the constant expansion of plantation areas required a continual flow of fresh labor. As plantation agriculture flourished, the trade in black African slaves grew increasingly efficient. During the eighteenth century, some sixty thousand slaves annually were imported into the Western Hemisphere from Africa.

1. What does the term grueling connote about the work of slaves?

- A. The work was important and necessary.
- B. The work was finished quickly.
- C. The work was expensive to complete.
- D. The work was cruel and inhumane.

"The only recklessness the Suffragettes have ever shown has been about their own lives and not about the lives of others. It had never been, and it never will be, the policy of the women's Social and Political Union recklessly to endanger human life. We leave that to the men in warfare. . . .

There is something that Governments care far more for than human life, and that is the security of property and so it is through property that we shall strike the enemy.

—Emmeline Pankhurst
Address to Suffragettes
October 17, 1912

2. What word could replace strike to describe the action in a less forceful way?

- A. blast
- B. sway
- C. destroy
- D. annihilate

3. In the passage above, the word strike suggests what kind of action?

- A. polite
- B. aggressive
- C. soothing
- D. uncertain

4. Which of the following words meaning "to take food into the body" has the most aggressive connotation?

- A. dine
- B. consume
- C. ingest
- D. devour

5. Which of the following words meaning "lacking color" has the most positive connotation?

- A. ashen
 - B. pale
 - C. pasty
 - D. fair
-

6. Which pair of words has similar denotative meaning but different connotative meanings?

- A. poke and prod
 - B. reason and explanation
 - C. prude and conservative
 - D. tall and high
-

7. Which of the following words meaning "given to promoting one's will or authority over others" has the most positive connotation?

- A. pushy
 - B. overbearing
 - C. assertive
 - D. bossy
-

8. The words know-it-all, wise, smart, and quick-witted all have similar meanings. Which word would a writer use to express a negative opinion about a person?

- A. know-it-all
 - B. smart
 - C. wise
 - D. quick-witted
-

9. Which of these words connotes the idea of hard work?

- A. convey
 - B. carry
 - C. transport
 - D. haul
-

10. Which of the following words meaning "to give instructions to" has the most gentle connotation?

- A. dictate
- B. direct
- C. command
- D. order

Roots and Affixes (Lesson)

You may encounter unfamiliar words in your textbooks and lessons. One way to guess the meaning of an unknown word is to use affixes. Affixes are **prefixes and suffixes** that are added to a base word, sometimes called a root word. Affixes can help you analyze the meanings of words.

Prefixes

A prefix is a syllable or group of syllables added to the beginning of a word to form a new word: *appropriate – inappropriate*. A prefix usually changes the meaning of a word.

Look at the chart below to see a list of commonly used prefixes.

PREFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLE
anti-	against	antismoking (against smoking)
co-	with	co-worker (a person you work with)
counter-	opposite or offset	counterclockwise (opposite of clockwise)
de-	remove	decaffeinated (having caffeine removed)
dis-	not	dishonest (not honest)
ex-	former	ex-wife (former wife)
extra-	beyond	extracurricular (beyond the regular curriculum)
im-/in-	not or without	inactive (not active)
inter-	between	intermission (break between acts)
mid-	in the middle	midterm (test given at the middle of the semester)
multi-	many	multicultural (made of many cultures)
over-	beyond some limit	overdue (beyond the due date)
para-	beyond	paranormal (beyond normal)
poly-	many	polyglot (one who knows several languages)
post-	after	post-war (period after a war)
pre-	before	preheat (heat before)
re-	again	redo (do again)
sub-	under or below	substandard (below standard)
trans-	change or cross	transatlantic (crossing the Atlantic Ocean)
un-	not	uncooked (not cooked)

Roots and Affixes (Lesson continued)

Suffixes

A suffix is a sound, syllable, or groups of syllables attached to the end of a word to form a new word, change the meaning of a word, or indicate a grammatical function: *light – lighter – lightest – lightness*.

Look at the chart below to see a list of commonly used suffixes.

SUFFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLE
-able/-ible	capable of	fixable (capable of being fixed)
-esque	resembling or like	statuesque (like a statue)
-est	most	largest (most large)
-ful	full of	beautiful (full of beauty)
-ish	like	childish (like a child)
-less	without	fearless (without fear)
-logy	study of	geology (study of the Earth)
-ly	like or in a manner of	quickly (in a quick manner)
-ment	action or process	management (action of managing)
-oid	similar but not exactly like	humanoid (like a human)
-ous	having qualities of	joyous (having qualities of joy)
-ward	in the direction of	westward (western direction)

Roots and Affixes (Lesson continued)

When you encounter unfamiliar words while reading, you can use **word roots** to help you guess the meaning. A word root is a part of a word that carries the meaning. Several roots have Greek or Latin origins.

When decoding a new word, look at the root and think of other words you know that share the root. You can see word roots repeated in several words, as in *convert*, *revert*, *subvert*, *introvert*, and *reverse*. The root "vert" means "to turn."

Look at the chart below to see a list of some commonly used word roots. Try to think of as many words as you can that use each root.

ROOTS	MEANING	EXAMPLE
a	without or opposite	amoral (without morals) atypical (opposite of typical)
anthrop	humans or people	anthropology (study of human development) misanthrope (someone who hates other people)
auto	self	autograph (person's own signature or handwriting) autobiography (biography written by one's self)
bio	life	biology (study of life) biography (writing about someone's life)
deca	ten	decagon (shape with ten sides) decathlon (athletic contest with ten events)
graph	write	seismograph (instrument that writes lines representing movement) calligraphy (fancy form of writing)
micro	small	microscope (instrument used to see small things) microcosm (small representative system)
mort	death	mortuary (place where dead bodies are kept) immortal (never dying)
path	feeling	apathy (without feeling) sympathetic (sharing a feeling)
pseudo	false	pseudonym (false name) pseudoscience (false science)
script	writing	scripture (religious writings) postscript (writing at the end of a letter)

Roots and Affixes (Practice)

1. The neighborhood had certainly seen its better days. The windows and doors of a once vibrant commercial district were now boarded and shut. The substandard conditions of the homes were also obvious signs that neglect and disinterest had overwhelmed the community.

What does the prefix "sub-" mean as it is used in the passage?

- A. opposite
 - B. beneath
 - C. near
 - D. around
-

2.

Danielle hoped that being active and eating properly would help her counteract the heart disease that was so common in her family.

What does the prefix "counter-" mean as it is used in the sentence above?

- A. old
 - B. similar
 - C. opposite
 - D. additional
-

3. Which of the following prefixes means "one"?

- A. bi-
 - B. mono-
 - C. dis-
 - D. arch-
-

4. What is the root or base word of multilayered?

- A. multiple
 - B. layer
 - C. lay
 - D. layered
-

5.

The origins of Stonehenge are unknown to us because it was built in prehistoric times.

What is the meaning of the word prehistoric?

- A. after written history
- B. against written history
- C. before written history
- D. like written history

6. When someone is disloyal, he or she is

- A. sometimes loyal.
- B. not loyal.
- C. full of loyalty.
- D. loyal again.

7. The Latin word *moliri* means "to construct." What does the word demolish mean?

- A. to guard against assault or injury
- B. to establish or make stronger
- C. to locate or recover a lost item
- D. to tear down or break into pieces

8.

Something predestined means it is destined to happen _____ anyone is aware.

- A. while
- B. sometime
- C. before
- D. after

9. What is the meaning of the prefix "sub-" in the word submarine?

- A. through
- B. under
- C. beyond
- D. above

10. Which of the following words with the prefix "im-" means "not likely"?

- A. impersonal
- B. improbable
- C. imperceptible
- D. immortal

Synonyms and Antonyms (Lesson)

Synonyms and **antonyms** are categories of words. Recognizing the use of synonyms and antonyms can help readers learn new vocabulary.

Synonyms:

Synonyms are words with the same or similar meanings. Thesauruses are primarily used to list synonyms for words.

WORD	SYNONYMS
deceive	beguile, bluff, delude, fool, hoax, hoodwink, mislead, trick
earn	acquire, attain, gain, obtain, procure, secure
irritate	aggravate, annoy, bother, bug, irk, vex
permanent	ceaseless, endless, everlasting, perpetual, unending
stubborn	hardheaded, headstrong, immovable, obdurate, pigheaded, rigid, unbending

Textbooks can use synonyms to clarify terms or ideas discussed. You can use synonyms to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Examples:

“Delegation also gives a responsibility, or obligation, to employees to carry out assigned tasks satisfactorily and holds them accountable for the proper execution of their assigned work.”

—*Business: A Changing World*

Antonyms:

Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings. Some thesauruses will list antonyms of words after the synonyms.

WORD	ANTONYMS
brawny	frail, skinny, slight, thin, weak
fickle	constant, faithful, reliable, stable, steady
lofty	below, beneath, humble, low, modest
obscure	apparent, clear, explicit, obvious, perceptible, understood
rash	careful, cautious, planned, thoughtful

Antonyms can help readers understand the meanings of words by showing opposites. Look for a sentence structure that shows contrast. Words like *however*, *but*, and *though* show that opposite ideas may be introduced.

Examples:

“Though cnidarians are a diverse group, all possess the same basic body structure.”

—*Biology: the Dynamics of Life*

Synonym and Antonym (Practice)

1. Which word is an antonym for prevalent?

- A. destroyed
 - B. preserved
 - C. rare
 - D. fine
-

2. "Cases of malaria constitute 25% of children's deaths in Africa."

Which word is a synonym for constitute?

- A. control
 - B. start with
 - C. make up
 - D. abandon
-

3. "It is a communicable disease caused by a parasitic protozoan, which is transferred to the human bloodstream by a mosquito."

Which of these words is a synonym of communicable?

- A. local
 - B. contagious
 - C. talkative
 - D. concrete
-

4. Which is an antonym for the word unkempt as it is used in the passage?

- A. stiff
 - B. lengthy
 - C. neat
 - D. short
-

5. Read the following sentences from the passage.

"Quit groveling, Lou! Of course I'll help you."

Which of these words is a synonym of groveling?

- A. running
 - B. begging
 - C. digging
 - D. ignoring
-

6. Which word is an antonym for hysteria in the passage above?

- A. dread
 - B. panic
 - C. calmness
 - D. excitement
-

7. What is an **antonym** for the underlined word in the following sentence?

The Sound of Music is one among many timeless screen musicals produced by 20th Century Fox.

- A. temporary
 - B. late
 - C. still
 - D. lasting
-

8. What is a **synonym** for the underlined word in the following sentence from the passage?

The movie captivates audiences even to this day with its wonderful array of songs.

- A. delights
 - B. offends
 - C. imprisons
 - D. irritates
-

9. What is an **antonym** for the underlined word in the following sentence from the passage?

The Barbary pirates soon found that the American navy was a formidable opponent.

- A. harmless
 - B. terrifying
 - C. diplomatic
 - D. prepared
-

10. What is a **synonym** for the underlined word in the following sentence from the passage?

The representatives were eager to have a leader of his caliber.

- A. quality
- B. strategy
- C. confidence
- D. wealth

Making Predictions (LESSON)

A **prediction** is a guess about what will happen in the future. You can learn to make smart guesses about what will happen next in a story. Use information that you have read and your knowledge of the real world to help you make accurate predictions.

Remember that a good prediction is what will **MOST LIKELY** happen next. It is not what you **WISH** would happen next.

To make a smart guess about what will happen next:

- Think about information that you already know from real life. Use what you know about events and actions from your own life.
- Look at the events that already happened in the passage. The next event will most likely have something to do with what already happened.
- Look at how the characters feel. People do different things when they are happy, sad, angry, or scared.
- Look for a pattern. Characters will probably do the same thing each time they are faced with the same problem or task.
- See if the characters have learned a lesson. If characters get in trouble for doing something wrong, they will probably behave better in the future.

Examples:

Harvey was running late for class again. He drummed his fingers on the steering wheel, trying to will the white SUV in front of him to go faster. Losing patience, Harvey pulled the steering wheel and gunned the engine to pass the car on the left shoulder. As he cleared the SUV, he saw what was slowing it down. The police cruiser turned on its lights as Harvey pulled back into the normal lanes of traffic.

Use your knowledge of the real world to guess what happens next in the story. What will Harvey most likely do the next time he is stuck behind a slow car? What lesson did he learn?

Nicole held her breath as the speaker opened the envelope and announced the winner of the Best Actress Award. "Cassandra Lyman."

She knew Cassie would win. Her performance was a once-in-a-lifetime masterpiece. Even though she didn't win, Nicole was happy for her friend.

What will Nicole most likely do next in the story? How would your predictions have changed if Nicole had been sad or angry about losing?

Making Predictions

Imagine your instructor hands out an essay without explaining what it is about. You don't have to wait until you are finished reading every word to know some key information about the essay. You can use the text features to make **predictions**, or guesses, about the content of the writing.

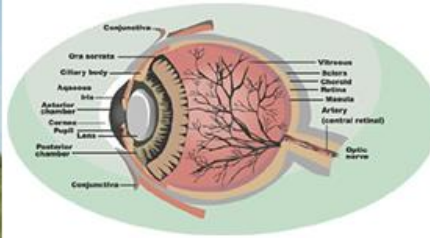
Making predictions using text features is a quick way to make judgments about a passage. You probably already use text features to make predictions. Have you ever looked at the graphics and bold text of a book, essay, or article before reading it?

Pictures

Illustrations are the most eye-catching features of a text. If you are flipping through a magazine and see an interesting picture, you are more likely to stop and read the article. Pictures can be illustrations or photographs. Photographs are usually associated with nonfiction because they show something real. Illustrations can be fiction or nonfiction. Precise and detailed illustrations are more likely to be diagrams for nonfiction articles, while more artistic drawings usually illustrate a story.

Examples:

What type of passage would most likely go with each picture?

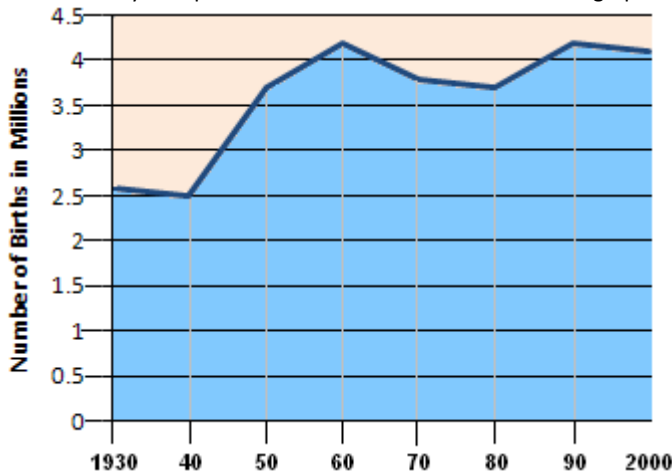


Maps, Charts, and Graphs

Maps, charts, and graphs are visual representations of information. If you find a graph or map in an article, then you will have a clue about the topic of the article. Authors will only add graphics that connect to the information in some way. For example, if you see a line graph that shows trends in birthrates, then the topic of the article must be something about birthrates.

Examples:

What type of information would you expect to find in articles that feature these graphics?



Bold Words

Boldface text stands out from the rest of the text. Titles, headings, and key words are usually in bold text in a document. You can use these features to make predictions about the content of the rest of the article. Titles and headings are the most helpful because they often show the main ideas. You use titles to make predictions about a text more often than you realize. When you scan headlines in a newspaper before deciding which article to read, you are making predictions about the articles.

Examples:

Can you tell which passage would be fiction just by looking at the titles?

Boston Plane Crash Kills 20 - **A Secret in the Desert** - **Medical Mysteries from Johns Hopkins**

Topic Sentence

The topic sentence of an article is usually the first or second sentence. It sets up the rest of the passage for the reader. This information can help you make predictions about the rest of the passage. Many people read the first sentences of newspaper articles before deciding whether or not they want to read the entire text.

Examples:

Which topic sentence shows that the rest of the article will be about politics?

"An Alaskan volcano erupted Monday night, making the fifth eruption since Sunday morning."

"The president will address the nation on Tuesday evening to discuss his latest budget proposal."

"Witnesses in the Brown-Leiman trial contradict the defendant's alibi."

Making Predictions (Practice)

1. Read this topic sentence:

A study at Queen's University in Northern Ireland demonstrated that classical music calmed dogs.

Based on this topic sentence, what can be predicted about the remaining text?

- A. It is about popular classical music in Northern Ireland.
- B. It is about what dogs in Northern Ireland like to eat.
- C. It is about a scientific study of dogs and their favorite music.
- D. It is about a scientific study on music and its effects on dogs.

2. Read this topic sentence:

Each book review should begin with a thoughtful, well-ordered overview that includes both the book's high and low points.

Based on this topic sentence, what can be predicted about the contents of the text?

- A. It is about the best way to read books.
- B. It is about how to structure one's thoughts.
- C. It is about how to write a book review.
- D. It is about the writer's favorite books.

3. Read this topic sentence:

Hollywood is banking on the fact that good things really do come in threes as it prepares to unleash an unprecedented series of blockbuster sequels on the summer box-office.

Based on this topic sentence, what can be predicted about the text?

- A. It will contain information about undeserved actor salaries and how it hurts the movie industry.
- B. It will contain information about the underappreciated directors who make movies for Hollywood.
- C. It will contain information about how independent movies are less successful than big-budget movies.
- D. It will contain information about how sequels will bring in the most money for Hollywood studios.

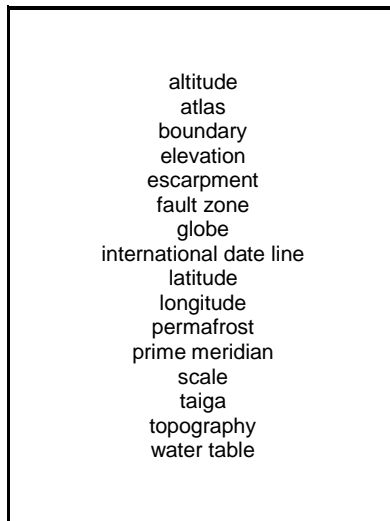
4. Read this topic sentence:

A trial for two former executives of Mason's sales department begins Monday.

Based on this topic sentence, what can be predicted about the contents of the text?

- A. It will be about an upcoming court case.
- B. It will be about two executives' ideas for improving sales.
- C. It will be about back-to-school sales at Mason's.
- D. It will be about the infrastructure of Mason's sales department.

5.



A magazine article has the keywords above highlighted and defined at the bottom of the page. Based on these keywords, what can be predicted about the contents of the article?

- A. It will be about photographic techniques.
- B. It will be about medical advances.
- C. It will be about the scientific method.
- D. It will be about geographic studies.

Media reports exaggerate cell phone cancer risk

Newspapers internationally reported that cellular telephone use increases the risk of brain tumors, citing the opinion of Vini Khurana, an Australian neurosurgeon. According to the Mobile Operators Association, Dr. Khurana's conclusion "does not present a balanced analysis" and "reaches opposite conclusions to the World Health Organization and more than 30 other independent expert scientific reviews."

More than 100 news sources ran the story about Dr. Khurana although his findings are under peer review and not yet published in any scientific journal. Some reports and headlines called cell phone use more hazardous than smoking, claiming that "New research has revealed that mobile phones are more injurious to people's health than smoking."

Even if Dr. Khurana is correct about the increase in brain tumor rates, these claims overstate the danger. Primary brain tumors are a rare condition that account for 1.4 percent of all cancers and 2.4 percent of cancer deaths. The death rate from brain tumors is approximately 13,000 persons per year in the United States. Tobacco causes an estimated 438,000 deaths per year in the United States. So if cell phone use actually doubled the brain tumor casualty rate, a United States resident would still be 20 times more likely to die from tobacco than from a primary brain tumor.

6. Based on this passage, what will be the public's reaction to Dr. Khurana's research?

- A. Scientists will stop research to identify a link between cell phones and brain tumors.
- B. Consumers will lobby cell phone carriers for cheaper rates and cell phones.
- C. Most consumers will continue using their cell phones as usual.
- D. People everywhere will panic and cancel their cell phone contracts immediately.

Asheville, North Carolina, is the largest city in Western North Carolina (WNC) where it continues to grow and prosper. The Asheville Metropolitan area estimates just over 400,000 people live within a four-county area near the city of Asheville. Locals practice a comfortable, laid-back approach to life that involves many festivals and outdoor activities throughout the year. The city presents a calm, gentle quality. Life passes slowly in Asheville, where people spend time visiting in the local establishments or shopping in farmers' markets. The architecture reflects the city's rich history and culture, nestled in the foothills and forests of Appalachia. At night, restaurants and venues come alive with bluegrass and folk music performances. While most areas of the South have suffered in the economic problems of this last decade, Asheville continues to grow. American industries have moved industrial work overseas. Prosperous towns and cities operate commercial economies instead of relying heavily on industrial economies as they had in the past. Asheville is in the process of transitioning away from blue-collar trades into more white-collar, commercial businesses. The city teems with entrepreneurship. Streets are lined with local shops and eateries. Many corporations have recently relocated offices to downtown Asheville. If this trend continues, then the city will continue to grow in the years to come.

7. What will **most likely** happen if Asheville fails to make a successful transition to a commercial economy?

- A. Workers will go on strike, and riots will erupt in the streets.
- B. The city will have to transition back to blue-collar trades.
- C. North Carolina will be forced to secede from the Union.
- D. The economy will stagnate, and the city's growth will slow.

It is probable that the greatest disquietude which a child ever experienced was Pandora's vexation at not being able to discover the secret of the mysterious box. This was at first only the faint shadow of trouble, but every day it grew more and more substantial.

"Where can the box have come from?" Pandora continually kept saying to herself and to Epimetheus. "And what in the world can be inside of it?"

"Always talking about this box!" said Epimetheus, for he had grown extremely tired of the subject. "I wish, dear Pandora, you would try to talk of something else. Come, let us go and gather some ripe figs and eat them under the trees for our supper. And I know a vine that has the sweetest and juiciest grapes you ever tasted."

"Always talking about grapes and figs!" cried Pandora, pettishly.

"Well then," said Epimetheus, who was a very good-tempered child, "let us run out and have a merry time with our playmates."

"I am tired of merry times and don't care if I never have any more!" answered our pettish little Pandora. "And besides, I never do have any. This ugly box! I am so taken up with thinking about it all the time. I insist upon your telling me what is inside of it."

"As I have already said, fifty times over, I do not know!" replied Epimetheus, getting a little vexed. "How, then, can I tell you what is inside?"

"You might open it," said Pandora, looking sideways at Epimetheus, "and then we could see for ourselves."

"Pandora, what are you thinking of?" exclaimed Epimetheus.

And his face expressed so much horror at the idea of looking into a box which had been given to him on the condition of his never opening it, that Pandora thought it best not to suggest it any more.

adapted from "The Paradise of Children" by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

8. What will **most likely** happen next?

- A. Pandora will apologize to Epimetheus and forget about the box.
- B. Epimetheus will give in and allow Pandora to open the box.
- C. Epimetheus will hide the box to keep it away from Pandora.
- D. Pandora will sneak around and look in Epimetheus' box.

An Internet forum, run by the non-profit Epilepsy Foundation, was attacked by a group of hackers last week. The attack exploited a function of the forums to post JavaScript code. The code submitted by the hackers flashed two images repeatedly and tried to lead users off to external Web sites showing flashing lights and shapes intended to trigger epileptic fits.

In a press release, the Foundation stated that several users of the forum, sufferers of epilepsy, experienced harsh migraines and seizures as a result of the attack. One woman, RyAnne Fultz, was paralyzed by the flashing images in what she calls her worst attack in over a year, until her 11-year old son managed to get her to stop looking at the screen and close the flashing images.

Between three and five percent of all epilepsy sufferers are vulnerable to seizures triggered by flashing lights, shapes or colors, like ones used in the attack. Photosensitive epilepsy has been in the news increasingly over the last few years as various media have triggered seizures in people.

Recently a logo animation for the 2012 London Olympics caused thousands of people to experience seizures. In another incident, the episode "Denno Senshi Porygon" of the animated TV series *Pokémon* caused thousands of children to experience seizures in Japan. In March, MTV refused to air a new video by Gnarl Barkley out of fear it would trigger seizures.

9. What will the Epilepsy Foundation **most likely** do next?

- A. The Foundation will investigate who caused the attack and seize their computer equipment.
- B. The Foundation will propose legislation to outlaw the use of JavaScript code in online public forums.
- C. The Foundation will suggest epilepsy patients avoid television and computers to reduce chances of a seizure.
- D. The Foundation will shut down the forum and take measures to prevent future attacks.

10. Seated at the head table in Chef Jancsi's, food critic Mike McKenzie passed the menu to the waiter and took a sip of the hot tea that was set before him. *Mmm*, he thought. *If the food is as good as this tea, I'm in for a treat.*

A short moment later, a bowl of goulash was brought out to him. Anxious to get started, Mike picked up the soup spoon and took a bite. *The veal is tender and the potatoes compliment the dish just right. This is exquisite!* Mike mused. He jotted down some notes in the spiral notepad he had brought, blotted his mouth with the napkin, and swept the spoon through the bowl preparing for another bite. *What's this?* he thought as he spied the pink, thin object that dangled from his spoon. It was long and flexible. His eyes bulged as he dropped the spoon in disgust. He did not expect to find such vermin in a fine restaurant.

How will the public **most likely** respond as a result of the food critique Mike McKenzie writes for the restaurant?

- A. They will ask Mike to reconsider his critique.
- B. They will recommend Chef Jancsi's to friends.
- C. They will order anything but goulash from the menu.
- D. They will avoid eating at Chef Jancsi's restaurant.

Main Idea and Supporting Details (LESSON)

The **main idea** of a passage is the idea that most of the passage covers. It is the basic point that the author wants to convey to the reader. In simpler terms, the main idea is the idea that the passage is mostly about. The sentences that explain, describe, or support the main idea are called **supporting details**.

The **main idea** can range from an idea that the author wants the reader to agree with in a newspaper article to a main event that takes place in a story. Each passage you read, whether it is 5 sentences or 500 pages, has a main idea. When you are looking for the main idea, ask yourself:

- Why did the author write this passage?
- What is the point he/she is trying to make?
- What is the passage mostly about?
- What idea is conveyed in the passage?

Once you have found the main idea, check it against the passage. The sentences in the passage should support, describe, or explain this idea. These sentences are **supporting details**. They are used to make the author's main idea stronger. If the sentences do not support what you think is the main idea, then you likely need to analyze the text further. Look over the sentences again and see what point or idea they are trying to explain.

Note: Main idea and topic are not the same thing. A topic is a general category, like the paparazzi or global warming. A main idea is a specific idea about that topic, like "The paparazzi should not be allowed to follow celebrities in their cars," or "Global warming is already impacting the North and South Poles."

Example:

"Most businesspeople engaged in international trade underestimate the importance of social and cultural differences, but these differences can derail an important transaction. For example, when Big Boy opened a restaurant in Bangkok, it quickly became popular with European and American tourists, but the local Thais refused to eat there. Instead, they placed gifts of rice and incense at the feet of the Big Boy statue (a chubby boy holding a hamburger) because it reminded them of Buddha. In Japan, customers were forced to tiptoe around a logo painted on the floor at the entrance to an Athlete's Foot store because in Japan, it is considered taboo to step on a crest. And in Russia, consumers found the American-style energetic happiness of McDonald's employees insincere and offensive when the company opened its first stores there."

—*Business: A Changing World*

What is the **main idea** of this passage?

Unanticipated cultural differences can affect a company's business in other countries.

This passage informs the reader that cultural differences can hurt an American business that tries to operate in another country. Much of the passage gives examples of businesses that have lost profits due to mistakes in understanding the local culture.

Main Idea Practice

- (1) The imagination is the workshop where people create. The impulse or desire to create something is given shape, form, and action through the imaginative faculty of the mind.
- (2) It is said that we can create anything we imagine. Accomplishments start with an idea, a spark of imagination. What the mind can conceive and believe it can achieve.
- (3) Through the aid of imagination, humanity has discovered and harnessed more of nature's forces during the past 100 years than during the entire history of the human race. We have conquered space; birds cannot match our flying, although they inspired human flight. We have analyzed and weighed the sun at a distance of millions of miles, and have determined, through the aid of imagination, the elements of which the sun consists. We can travel faster than sound. Robots transmit clear photographs from Mars.
- (4) Humankind's only limitation, within reason, lies in the development and use of imagination. We have not yet reached the pinnacle of development in the use of our imaginative faculty. We have merely discovered that we have an imagination, and have just begun to use it in a rudimentary way.

adapted from Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill

1. This passage is mainly about

- A. the unlimited possibilities of imagination.
- B. creativity workshops for using imagination.
- C. robots that can take photographs of Mars.
- D. traveling faster than the speed of sound.

2. The main idea of paragraph 4 is that

- A. imagination should always be used to defeat nature.
- B. further study of the mind and imagination is needed.
- C. human beings are able to fly better than birds.
- D. imagination comes from a desire to conquer space.

Chess is a game of strategy and tactics. A game involves a match between two opponents who combat one another in a contest of judgment and perception. Players must skillfully control their army as they attempt to capture their adversary's king, a game-winning position known as checkmate. Unlike many other games, chance is not a factor in determining the victor. Rather, the outcome depends solely on the decisions made by each player. The complexity of the game lies in these decisions, for they have far-reaching consequences as the game slowly progresses.

The history of chess reaches back at least 1,400 years sometime before 600 A.D. Since then, the game has undergone many changes. Evidence suggests that the game originated in India as a tool for teaching military strategy to royalty. From here, the game spread to Persia (modern day Iran) and then throughout the Muslim world. By 1000 A.D., it had moved into the main commercial centers of Italy and Spain. The game became well established throughout Europe in the second half of the fifteenth century. The historical evolution of the game has resulted in the modern form we know today.

3. What is the main idea of the passage?

- A. Modern chess differs from the original game.
- B. Chess is a game of skill and not chance.
- C. Traditional chess dates back thousands of years.
- D. Chess is an intellectual game with a long history.

4. Which statement **best** expresses the main idea of paragraph 2?

- A. "The historical evolution of the game has resulted in the modern form we know today."
- B. "The game became well established throughout Europe in the second half of the fifteenth century."
- C. "Evidence suggests that the game originated in India as a tool for teaching military strategy to royalty."
- D. "The history of chess reaches back at least 1,400 years sometime before 600 A.D."

The history of the space race between the Soviets and the U.S. is just as storied as the Cold War between both nations. Americans knew that the Soviets were constructing something similar to the U.S. space shuttle. This was made more real by the discovery of Soviet test models recovered from the ocean.

When the Soviets announced the launch of their first shuttle, Buran, the U.S. wasn't surprised. What did surprise them was how closely the pictures of Buran mirrored their own shuttle design.

Despite this, there were stark differences. The Buran orbiter did not have large engines of its own. It was instead strapped to a powerful booster called the Energia. The Energia is the most powerful booster rocket on the planet.

In addition, the Buran was able to be run without any crew aboard. Its first flight in 1988 was without a crew. It safely orbited the Earth twice before returning. All of this without one human on board.

5. What is the main idea of the passage?

- A. The Soviet Union launched a shuttle, Buran, which was similar to the U.S. shuttle.
- B. The American space shuttle is never launched into orbit without a human crew.
- C. The Soviet Union's space program was superior to the United States' space program.
- D. The United States was unaware of the Soviet Union's interest in exploring space.

Galactic Suite, the first hotel planned in space, expects to open for business in 2012. It would allow guests to travel around the world in 80 minutes.

Its Barcelona-based architects say the space hotel will be the most expensive in the galaxy, costing \$4 million for a three-day stay.

During that time, guests would see the sun rise 15 times a day. They would use Velcro suits to crawl around their pod rooms by sticking themselves to the walls like Spiderman.

Company director Xavier Claramunt says the three-bedroom boutique hotel's joined up pod structure, which makes it look like a model of molecules, was dictated by the fact that each pod room had to fit inside a rocket to be taken into space.

"It's the bathrooms in zero gravity that are the biggest challenge," says Claramunt.

However, they may have solved the issue of how to take a shower in weightlessness. The guests will enter a spa room in which bubbles of water will float around.

When guests are not admiring the view from their portholes, they will take part in scientific experiments on space travel.

Galactic Suite began as a hobby for former aerospace engineer Claramunt, until a space enthusiast decided to make the science-fiction fantasy a reality by fronting most of the \$3 billion needed to build the hotel.

6. Based on the main idea, which would be the best title for the passage above?

- A. Space Hotel to Open in 2012
- B. Hotel Uses Bubbles in Showers
- C. Hotel Guests Watch Sun Rise
- D. Space Hotel Costs \$3 Billion

In 1925, four friends gathered to discuss their common goal to create a professional organization to encourage and honor women who were involved in geographic exploration and research. As a result of their meeting, Marguerite Harrison, Blair Niles, Gertrude Shelby, and Gertrude Emerson Sen began the Society for Woman Geographers (SWG). The SWG was created at a time when membership in most professional organizations was denied to women. Its focus is on providing a forum for women to share their research, meet other professionals, and advance their careers. Some famous members of the Society of Woman Geographers include pilot Amelia Earhart, former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and anthropologist Margaret Mead.

7. What is the main idea of this selection?

- A. The Society of Woman Geographers was created by friends with a common goal.
- B. The Society of Woman Geographers is a professional organization for women.
- C. Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt were among the Society's famous members.
- D. Women were not always allowed to participate in professional organizations.

The Treaty of Waitangi was signed in New Zealand on February 6, 1840. The purpose of the treaty was to facilitate peaceful relations between white British settlers and the native Māori people of New Zealand. Due to many differences between the English and Māori translations of the treaty, there was confusion as to the exact details of the treaty. Māori tribal leaders believed that they would regain land that had been lost to the settlers and be treated as equal citizens of their homeland. The British view held that the treaty guaranteed England's sovereignty over New Zealand, established a British governor in the country, and gave British citizenship to the Māori people. The Treaty of Waitangi was not ratified by the New Zealand Parliament and has limited influence on the country's laws today.

Despite the debate over the Treaty of Waitangi, a public holiday was created in 1960 to celebrate its signing. Waitangi Day, which is celebrated each year on February 6th, is a national holiday in New Zealand. It is also celebrated among the large Māori population in England and in Māori communities around the world. Although Waitangi Day events are sometimes met with protests by Māori activists, the day is most often marked by a celebration of Māori culture. This holiday often involves public concerts, festivals, cultural demonstrations, and educational events for children. For many, Waitangi Day is a time to put aside controversy and celebrate the founding of New Zealand.

8. The first paragraph is mainly about

- A. Waitangi Day celebrations.
- B. the Treaty of Waitangi.
- C. white British settlers.
- D. the native Māori people.

9. What is the main idea of paragraph 2?

- A. There are many Māori people living in England today.
- B. Waitangi Day is always celebrated with public concerts.
- C. There was some confusion about the Treaty of Waitangi.
- D. Waitangi Day is still celebrated in spite of controversy.

Supporting Details (Practice)

When Les Paul died in the summer of 2009 at age 93, rock musicians all over the world mourned. The rock music we know today would not be possible without him: He invented the solid-body electric guitar.

Before his invention, all guitars were called "acoustic." The only sound they made came from the sound box of the guitar, or the part with a hole in it. The acoustic guitar is at least 500 years old.

A solid-body electric guitar doesn't have a hole in the middle because it does not have a hollow sound box. Instead, electrical devices called pickups take in the vibration of the strings and amplify them through speakers. These amplified sounds are really the basis for the rock music we know today. Classical music does not rely on electric guitars. Solid-body electric guitars come in many different colors.

At the request of the Gibson Guitar Co., a well known maker of acoustic guitars, Les Paul produced his Les Paul signature model electric guitar. The Les Paul model is still considered by many musicians to be the best electric guitar. Many of the most famous rock musicians visited Les Paul at his home, and sometimes he joined them onstage at rock concerts. A 2005 album made with many of his admirers, including Sting, won him two Grammy awards. Not bad for a man who was 90 years old at the time.

1. Which of these sentences **least** supports the main idea of this passage?

- A. "The Les Paul model is still considered by many musicians to be the best electric guitar."
- B. "The only sound they made came from the sound box of the guitar, or the part with a hole in it."
- C. "At the request of the Gibson Guitar Co., a well known maker of acoustic guitars, Les Paul produced his Les Paul signature model electric guitar."
- D. "Instead, electrical devices called pickups take in the vibration of the strings and amplify them through speakers."

2. Which of these sentences **most strongly** supports the main idea of this passage?

- A. "Classical music does not rely on electric guitars."
- B. "The rock music we know today would not be possible without him: He invented the solid-body electric guitar."
- C. "The acoustic guitar is at least 500 years old."
- D. "Solid-body electric guitars come in many different colors."

In life, Leona Helmsley was known as the "Queen of Mean" for the way she treated employees in her luxury hotels. She once said, "Only the little people pay taxes." In death, it is her generosity that is making headlines. A billionaire, Helmsley famously did not like her fellow human beings, but she did like dogs. She loved Trouble, her Maltese, so much that she left him a \$12 million trust fund. A Maltese dog is a small breed known for its loyalty. Trouble's \$12 million was just the beginning, however. Helmsley also created a charitable trust now worth an estimated \$5 billion. Helmsley's husband had died many years before her. According to the terms of the will, this money should be distributed to good causes, showing special preference for the care of dogs. Unfortunately, both these gifts have been struck down in court. New York courts, as with most courts, prefer people to dogs. Trouble's award has been reduced to just \$2 million. How will he get by since his security detail alone costs \$100,000 a year? That's a lot of dog biscuits! A judge ruled that the managers of the \$5-billion charitable trust are free to give the money to whichever good causes they see fit. The Humane Society and other animal charities are appealing this ruling because of the first \$136 million given away, only \$1 million was dog-related. They say the charitable trust is ignoring Helmsley's will.

3. Which of these sentences **best** supports the main idea of this passage?

- A. "In life, Leona Helmsley was known as the "Queen of Mean" for the way she treated employees in her luxury hotels."
- B. "According to the terms of the will, this money should be distributed to good causes, showing special preference for the care of dogs."
- C. "She once said, 'Only the little people pay taxes.' "
- D. "Helmsley's husband had died many years before her."

4. Which of these sentences **least** supports the main idea of this passage?

- A. "A Maltese dog is a small breed known for its loyalty."
 - B. "She loved Trouble, her Maltese, so much that she left him a \$12 million trust fund."
 - C. "Trouble's award has been reduced to just \$2 million."
 - D. "Helmsley's will also created a charitable trust now worth an estimated \$5 billion."
-

In the summer of 2009, a harsh drought hit central and southern Texas. Texas is the second biggest state with a 1,200-mile border with Mexico. Farmers along the southern border watched their crops wither and die. Only a few hundred miles away, the northeast quarter of the state was getting plenty of rainfall. Swimmers in South Texas, however, were being turned away from local lakes and neighborhood pools. They were being told that the dwindling water supply was for drinking, not for playing in. Floating on inner tubes down Texas rivers used to be a favorite summer pastime. Renting inner-tubes was once a strong summer business. Most rivers hardly had enough flow to keep a person afloat in 2009. In San Antonio, strict water usage rules were put into effect, and citizens were encouraged to call the police if they saw neighbors watering their lawns. One town held a prayer service, and their prayers were answered with 0.03 inches of rain. In June and July that year, Austin hit 100 degrees for 39 days. Inside the state capital in Austin, air conditioning kept things cool. Of Texas' 254 counties, 77 of them were said to be in "exceptional" drought conditions, the worst category on the drought scale. The part of the state with the worst drought was bigger than Massachusetts, New Jersey and Connecticut combined. The cattle business was especially hard hit with losses of more than \$4 billion. Many rural Texans eat a lot of beef. One conservationist pointed to a silver lining that resulted from all the water restrictions and conservation measures: it made Texans pay more attention to how they use water. Many people changed their habits, and using less water became a way of life for many people in south-central Texas.

5. Which of these sentences **least** supports the main idea of this passage?

- A. "Inside the state capital in Austin, air conditioning kept things cool."
 - B. "Most rivers hardly had enough flow to keep a person afloat in 2009."
 - C. "One town held a prayer service, and their prayers were answered with 0.03 inches of rain."
 - D. "The cattle business was especially hard hit with losses of more than \$4 billion."
-

6. Which of these sentences **most strongly** supports the main idea of this passage?

- A. "Texas is the second biggest state with a 1,200-mile border with Mexico."
 - B. "Many rural Texans eat a lot of beef."
 - C. "Swimmers in South Texas, however, were being turned away from local lakes and neighborhood pools."
 - D. "Only a few hundred miles away, the northeast quarter of the state was getting plenty of rainfall."
-

Emperor Penguins

Of all the varieties of penguins on our planet, Emperor penguins are the largest in size. They can weigh up to 90 pounds and grow to be almost four feet tall. The head, chin, throat, and back of an Emperor penguin is black, which makes it look like it is wearing a black dinner jacket! One way to know if a penguin is an Emperor is by the orange area on each side of its head.

These amazing penguins can hold their breath for up to 22 minutes to stay under water longer. When temperatures get more frigid, Emperor penguins cluster closely together in a massive group. The most desired place for the penguins to be is in the center since it is warmer in the middle of their circle. Emperor penguins take turns going to the center of the group.

7. Which sentence should be deleted from the essay because it is irrelevant?

- A. "These amazing penguins can hold their breath for up to 22 minutes to stay under water longer."
- B. "Of all the varieties of penguins on our planet, Emperor penguins are the largest in size."
- C. "One way to know if a penguin is an Emperor is by the orange area on each side of its head."
- D. "When temperatures get more frigid, Emperor penguins cluster closely together in a massive group."

The rate of heat loss is critical to a planet's tectonic activity (the forces that produce movement of the planet's crust). Size is one determining factor of heat loss because larger bodies lose heat more slowly and, therefore, remain active longer. Another factor is composition, what the planet is made of, which influences the ability of a body to convect or transfer heat. For example, a liquid interior, such as the Earth's, is more likely to convect and drive plate tectonics than the "stony" interiors of Mercury and Mars. Apparently, the interiors of these celestial bodies have lost too much of their internal heat to convect and drive plate tectonics. Eventually the Earth will lose so much heat that its interior will stop convecting, which will be the end of all tectonic activity. Earthquake and volcanic activity will then stop, ending mountain formation along with the geologic cycle of erosion and soil formation. Nobody knows exactly how a cooled-down Earth will change surface conditions, but it's possible that Earth will no longer be able to support life. Fortunately, these changes will not happen for many billions of years!

adapted from [This Dynamic Earth: the Story of Plate Tectonics](#) by Jacquelyne Kious and Robert I. Tilling

8. Which of the following sentences from the passage is a **major** detail that supports the main idea?

- A. "For example, a liquid interior, such as the Earth's, is more likely to convect and drive plate tectonics than the 'stony' interiors of Mercury and Mars."
- B. "Nobody knows exactly how a cooled-down Earth will change surface conditions, but it's possible that Earth will no longer be able to support life."
- C. "Apparently, the interiors of these celestial bodies have lost too much of their internal heat to convect and drive plate tectonics."
- D. "Another factor is composition, what the planet is made of, which influences the ability of a body to convect or transfer heat."

Topic Identification (LESSON)

The **topic** of a passage is the subject that the passage is about. The topic is different from the main idea or thesis because it does not express an opinion or stance. Readers need to determine the topic of a passage, while writers need to learn to narrow down a topic to a workable size.

Determine the topic

To find the topic of a book, essay, or paragraph, ask yourself, “What is the subject of the passage?” Remember that the topic is the general subject, so it should just be a word or a short phrase. It will not reveal the specific arguments or statements made about the topic. Titles and headings will often show the topic of a passage.

Example:

Between 1933 and 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt started a series of programs called the New Deal, which helped the United States combat the devastating effects of the Great Depression. The Public Works Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps created jobs for unemployed Americans. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the Security and Exchange Commission protected the money that Americans put in banks and other investments.

Topic: The New Deal

Main idea: The New Deal helped the U.S. recover from the Great Depression.

Supporting Details: Public Works Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Security and Exchange Commission

Narrow down the topic

Instructors often give students a topic to write about and a maximum page length for the essay. The student has to choose a topic that can be discussed in the number of pages allowed. The student must narrow down a topic by choosing a more specific element to focus on in the essay. College instructors want to see that the student can focus on one audience-appropriate topic and thoroughly investigate it.

Examples:

Look at these examples of appropriate and inappropriate topics for five-page papers written for an academic audience.

Bad: Business laws

Good: Regulatory agencies

Bad: World War II

Good: Causes of World War II

Bad: Diseases

Good: Cystic fibrosis

Topic Identification (Practice)

F-18 Hornet breaks the sound barrier. When an aircraft is near the sound barrier, an unusual cloud sometimes forms in its wake.

As an aircraft moves through the air, it creates a series of sound or pressure waves in front and behind it, similar to the bow and stern waves created by a boat. When the aircraft is traveling slower than the speed of sound, the sound waves move ahead of the aircraft because they travel at the speed of sound. However, as the speed of the aircraft increases, the waves are forced together and compressed because they cannot "get out of the way" of each other. These waves eventually merge into a single shock wave when the aircraft reaches the speed of sound. This critical speed is known as Mach 1 and is approximately 1,225 km/h (761 mph) at sea level. An aircraft breaks the sound barrier when it flies faster than the speed of sound, which produces a sonic boom when it flies past.

1. Which of the following is the topic of the passage?

- A. F-18 Hornets
 - B. Sound Waves
 - C. Causes of Sonic Booms
 - D. The Speed of Sound
-

According to the American Dietetic Association, appropriately planned vegetarian diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and beneficial in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. The main requirement is to ensure your diet contains a wide variety of grains, vegetables, legumes, and—to a lesser degree—fruits, nuts, and seeds. It is a common misconception that vegetarian diets provide inadequate protein. While protein requirements differ, the ADA has found that a typical varied vegetarian diet that meets one's energy needs also meets one's protein requirements. Even athletes, whose protein requirements are typically greater than non-athletes, can fare well on a vegetarian diet provided they contain a variety of plant-foods.

2. The topic of this passage is

- A. Adequate Protein Levels.
 - B. Main Courses.
 - C. Vegetarian Nutrition.
 - D. Vegetarian Recipes.
-

3. Examine the following list of items:

- lever
- pulley
- wedge

Which of the following provides a general topic under which the items can be grouped?

- A. Laws of Motion
 - B. Household Uses
 - C. Electric Devices
 - D. Simple Machines
-

4. Examine the following list of items:

- primary education
- secondary education
- higher education

Which of the following provides a general topic under which the items can be grouped?

- A. Required Courses of Study
- B. Purposes of Education
- C. Degrees of Formal Education
- D. Teaching Philosophies
-

5. Examine the following list of items:

- college
- library
- museum

Which of the following provides a general topic under which the items can be grouped?

- A. Eternal Structures
- B. Modern Buildings
- C. Educational Buildings
- D. Industrial Structures
-

6. Justin has been assigned to write a five-minute speech about a science topic that he must present to his college class.

Which of the following topics would be the most specific and appropriate for his audience?

- A. unraveling the history of calculus
- B. vaccines and antibody production
- C. the history of scientific thought
- D. science experiments for children
-

7. Jesse has to write a six-page paper about technology.

Which of the following topics is the most specific?

- A. the science behind hybrid vehicles
- B. inventions over the past 400 years
- C. technology and the environment
- D. the Internet and communication
-

8. Which of the following topics is most specific and would be best for a three-page paper about a historical event?

- A. American immigrants
 - B. the Civil War
 - C. the era of Reconstruction
 - D. the Lincoln-Douglas debates
-

9. A problem many writers face is narrowing down or deciding upon a topic. Depending on the purpose, a writer runs the risk of giving too much or not enough information.

Which of the following topics is the most specific and would best be covered in a five-page paper?

- A. computer viruses through the years
- B. the debate over downloading music
- C. the email problem

the
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Figures of Speech

Figurative language is a tool that an author uses to help the reader see what is happening in a story or poem. Some common types of figurative language are: simile, metaphor, alliteration, idiom, euphemism, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, and personification. Below are some definitions and examples of these types of figurative language.

Alliteration - The repetition of the same consonant sounds or of different vowel sounds at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables

Example: My big brother bought a baseball.

Onomatopoeia - The formation or use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to

Example: moo, buzz, splat

Idiom - A speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to itself grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements

Example: Don't put your eggs in one basket!

Euphemism - A euphemism is a milder, less direct term that means the same thing as one that is considered harsh, blunt, or offensive

Example: senior citizen

Symbolism - The practice of representing things by symbols, or of investing things with a symbolic meaning or character.

Example: If an author wants to show a happy ending to a story without saying "and everybody lived happily ever after," he or she might describe a sunny day or a rainbow--symbols of happiness and cheer.

Simile - A simile is a comparison using like or as. It usually compares two dissimilar objects

Example: The man was as tall as a tree.

Example: The crater was wide like a football field.

Metaphor - A metaphor states that one thing is something else. It is a comparison, but it DOES use like or as to make the comparison.

Example: The river was a winding snake in the forest.

Example: The pillow was a cloud when I put my head upon it after a long day.

Extended Metaphor -

An extended metaphor is a metaphor used frequently throughout a single passage. A single image is developed at length.

Example: "America has given the Negro a bad check: a check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds.' But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation." (from Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech)

Personification - A figure of speech in which things are given human qualities or are shown as having human form.

Example: The thunder boomed angrily.

Example: The moon smiled down on Earth.

Hyperbole - A figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect. To exaggerate means to make something bigger, smaller, longer, shorter, better, or worse than it really is.

Example: This book weighs a ton.

Example: I could sleep for a year.

Oxymoron - An oxymoron is a phrase that uses contradicting words.

Example: "Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow." (from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*)

Figures of Speech (Figurative Language) [Practice]

Aaron asked me why I looked frightened. What was I supposed to tell him? He was my friend, and he had rebuilt his car by himself. He was so proud of it. He always talked about how the car was over 70 years old, as if that excused all the dents and the problems with the motor. As I looked over at him, I wanted to say, "The problem is that I don't like barreling down the road in a tin can on wheels," but I wanted to keep the peace, so I said, "I'm not scared. Keep driving!"

1. What does the author mean by the figurative phrase "barreling down the road in a tin can on wheels"?

- A. throwing trash on the side of the road
- B. spending the afternoon with a friend
- C. speeding in an old, beat-up car
- D. rolling down the road in a trashcan

Alex was walking down the road by himself. He knew that it was late at night and that walking alone could be dangerous. However, he also knew that he was out in the country, and that made him believe that being alone late at night was less dangerous. Just as he turned onto a dirt road that he had never been on, he saw hovering above him a bright light that looked to be the size of a football field. Upon seeing it for the first time, he was staggered. He could not believe that such a thing, whatever it was, existed. It seemed too big to fly and too bright to be from Earth.

2. Based on its context in the passage above, what does the word "staggered" mean?

- A. unsteady on his feet
- B. arranged in alternating positions
- C. frightened
- D. overwhelmed, impressed

Louis was a good dog. He wasn't the kind of dog that would save your life. He wasn't the kind of dog that would get your paper. He wasn't even the kind of dog that would listen to you. However, he was a good dog. He was pretty grumpy most of the time. He was probably grumpy because he was older than dirt. My grandma said that old dogs have bad attitudes. Anyway, even when he was grumpy, he was still pretty friendly. He would lick your face. He would let you rub his belly. Then he'd go to sleep. That's pretty much all he did.

3. Which sentence from the passage above contains figurative language?

- A. "He was probably grumpy because he was older than dirt."
- B. "However, he was a good dog."
- C. "My grandma said that old dogs have bad attitudes."
- D. "He wasn't the kind of dog that would save your life."

Timothy scanned the audience, looking for a girl with purple hair. That hair color was the only thing he could think of that would distinguish Jennifer from the rest of the crowd. Unfortunately for Timothy, purple was the hair color of the week. It seemed like every other person had chosen that color. Timothy attempted, but failed, to pinpoint Jennifer in the sea of violet that stretched out before him.

4. What does the word "pinpoint" mean as it is used in the passage above?

- A. know the direction
 - B. locate exactly
 - C. touch with a pin
 - D. visit with
-

Carol had only been in the small Texas town for a few minutes. She could not believe that she was supposed to play a concert there later in the evening. Seeing that the town had only one stoplight and very few businesses, she assumed that fewer people lived in the town than had shown up to her previous concert.

As the clock struck nine, the manager of the dancehall opened the doors and in came a deluge. Carol could not believe her eyes. It was the biggest crowd she had seen on the entire tour. When she asked where they discovered her music, they all yelled, "The Internet!"

5. What is the meaning of the phrase "in came a deluge"?

- A. A big crowd of people arrived.
 - B. The dancehall was flooded.
 - C. It started raining hard.
 - D. An unfortunate accident occurred.
-

Aaron asked me why I looked frightened. What was I supposed to tell him? He was my friend, and he had rebuilt his car by himself. He was so proud of it. He always talked about how the car was over 70 years old, as if that excused all the dents and the problems with the motor. As I looked over at him, I wanted to say, "The problem is that I don't like barreling down the road in a tin can on wheels," but I wanted to keep the peace, so I said, "I'm not scared. Keep driving!"

6. What does the author mean by the figurative phrase "barreling down the road in a tin can on wheels"?

- A. spending the afternoon with a friend
- B. speeding in an old, beat-up car
- C. rolling down the road in a trashcan
- D. throwing trash on the side of the road

Mom marched into the living room with a hand on her hip. She was fuming while carrying a plastic bag with something that once resembled food. The food was different because it had ice crystals covering every bit of it.

"Look at this! This piece of steak has freezer burn all over it. The worst thing is that I just put it in last night, and this is how it came out this morning," Mom said, exasperated by the situation.

I just nodded along because I didn't have a clue as to how that could happen to the steak. Then, suddenly, a sickening realization came upon me—I had changed the temperature of the freezer for the entire week to a temperature just above zero degrees. I had adjusted the temperature to accommodate my science project.

Trying to cover up my mistake, I replied, "That's old news, Mom. That ancient freezer of ours likes to be very finicky; it doesn't make any sense sometimes."

"Yeah, you're right. We've had problems with this freezer before," Mom said with a sigh.

I wiped away the sweat from my forehead after that reply.

7. Read the following sentences from the passage.

"Look at this! This piece of steak has freezer burn all over it. The worst thing is that I just put it in last night, and this is how it came out this morning," Mom said, exasperated by the situation.

Which phrase from the passage is an oxymoron?

- A. worst thing
- B. freezer burn
- C. last night
- D. this morning

8. How does the use of the oxymoron "old news" affect the passage?

- A. It suggests the freezer has had problems long before this one.
- B. It confirms that the mom does not cook often in the kitchen.
- C. It shows that the freezer is a key appliance in the household.
- D. It reveals the relationship between the mom and the narrator.

9. Which of the following sentences contains an oxymoron?

- A. "How should we format our summary? Should it be typed?" asked Tim after raising his hand.
- B. Mrs. Kitts announced, "I would like you all to write a detailed summary about the book."
- C. The class began reading *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare at the beginning of the year.
- D. Standing in front of the entire class, Owen begins to read his paper about *The Great Gatsby*.

10. Which of the following sentences contains an oxymoron?

- A. The snake that slithered into the Smith's house was an uninvited guest.
- B. He gave me the run-around before finally confessing the entire truth.
- C. He gorged on the delicious pizza until his belly was as tight as a drum.
- D. The rain poured down in buckets and drenched everyone at the picnic.