



ACT[®] READING TEST

PREPARATION GUIDE

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10. What effect(s) does the Good Citizens’ League have on Zenith?

- I. It strengthens the ruling class.
- II. It helps to maintain several important organizations.
- III. It encourages working class people to cooperate with their employers.
- F. I only
- G. III only
- H. I and II
- J. I, II, and III

Passage II

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from “Dogs of Summer” (©2008 American Book Company).

1 The typical American’s culinary
delight, the hot dog, has been around
for so long that people now generally
take it for granted. What is for many
5 people a staple of summer ballpark and
picnic eating is actually about 400
years old as a Western food item. The
early forerunner of the hot dog, the
frankfurter (a type of sausage), most
10 likely originated in Germany. From
there, it was carried over to the United
States with the nineteenth-century
wave of immigrants.

15 This first version of the hot dog,
the frankfurter, has its own murky past.
The sausage which became known as
the frankfurter was created somewhere
in Germany in either 1487 or the late
1600s, depending on whose story is
20 correct. The exact location is also
disputed. The city of Frankfurt, which
was first associated with the sausage,
claims to be the place where it began in
1487. Here the sausage was nicknamed
25 *dachshund*, after the long-bodied

German hunting dog (*dachs*—badger +
hund—hound). However, some food
historians believe that a butcher from
Coburg, Germany, invented the
sausage two centuries later and then
30 took it to Frankfurt as a form of
promotion. The name association
between the food item and the city of
Frankfurt would become a powerful
image in Germany.

35 Once the frankfurter came to the
United States, the story of how it
morphed into the modern hot dog is
likewise disputed. The most accepted
story is that a German immigrant began
40 to sell “dachshunds” with milk rolls
(small round rolls which did not cover
the sausage ends) and sauerkraut
(cooked cabbage and spice) from a
push cart. This was done in the Bowery
45 section of New York City in the 1860s.
In 1871, a German butcher opened the
first Coney Island hot dog stand,
wrapping the dachshund sausages in
the same type of rolls. The German
50 food was embraced in Chicago in 1893
at the Colombian Exposition. Here,
many tourists found the concoction of
meat and bread to be a quick, tasty way
to have a warm meal while strolling
55 through the exposition.

60 But it was the connection with
baseball that raised the American hot
dog to new heights in tradition. The
owner of the St. Louis Browns, Chris
Von der Ahe, himself a German
immigrant and tavern owner, began
65 (also in 1893) serving sausages at ball
games. Other ballparks took up this
simple way to serve food in a
convenient form.

TAKING THE ACT

- Carefully **read the instructions** on the ACT test booklet. You can read these instructions ahead of time at www.actstudent.org to make sure that you understand them.
- Once you are told that you may open the booklet, thoroughly **read the directions** for a test section before reading its corresponding passage or answering its questions.
- **Read each question carefully**, and use your best approach for answering the questions. Some test-takers like to skim the questions and answers before reading the passage. Others prefer to read the passage before looking at the answers. Decide which approach works best for you.
- **Answer each question** on the exam, as your score is based on the number of questions answered correctly. There is no penalty for guessing, but every spot left blank is automatically a zero.
- If you are uncertain about an answer, **take an educated guess**. Eliminate choices that are definitely wrong, and then choose from the remaining answers.
- **Use your answer sheet correctly**. Make sure the number on your question matches the number on your answer sheet. If you need to change your answer, erase it completely. Use a number two pencil, and make sure the answers are dark. The computerized scanner may skip over answers that are too light.
- **Check your answers**. If you finish a test before time is called, review your exam to make sure you have chosen the best responses. Change answers only if you are sure they are wrong.
- Be sure to **pace yourself**. Since you will have a limited amount of time, be careful not to spend too much time on one passage, leaving no time to complete the rest of the test. Listen for the announcement of five minutes remaining on each test.
- When time is called for each test, **put your pencil down**. If you continue to write or erase, you run the risk of being dismissed and your test being disqualified from scoring.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN YOU TAKE THE READING TEST

- The Reading Test is comprised of **four essays** (or passages), one each focusing on prose fiction, humanities, social studies, and natural sciences.
- **Read the whole passage** quickly but carefully. Questions may ask you about parts of the passage and may refer to particular paragraphs, but ultimately they all reply on your understanding of the passage as a whole.
- Pay attention to the **advance organizers**, the brief title and explanation at the beginning of each passage. These brief intros tell the reader which area the passage is covering (prose fiction, humanities, social studies, and natural sciences), what the passage is about, and where it came from. It also may provide some additional information that will be helpful in understanding the passage.



3. Which of the following statements would be most effective for the author to add to help support the ideas in the passage?
- A. A recent warming of the earth's lower atmosphere, called "global warming," is believed to be due to increased concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.
 - B. Trees are an important element of the natural landscape because they help to prevent soil erosion and provide a sheltered ecosystem in and under their foliage.
 - C. A study in the 1990s showed that part of the Maldives islands under a pollution cloud, blown south from India, had about a 10% reduction in sunlight reaching the surface.
 - D. Deforestation and forest fires contribute to the greenhouse effect because, as the number of trees declines, less carbon dioxide can be recycled, and their burning releases more carbon.

This is a combination question about **author's voice and method** and **comparative relationships**. First, it requires that you determine the author's attitude from the information in the passage. Although the passage is predominantly factual, statements about human activity pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and the cheap, effective results of planting trees do show that the author thinks it is a good idea to use trees to help the environment. Next, it asks you to compare this viewpoint with the statements offered in the answer choices and choose the one that best fits with the author's stance. Choice **A** extends the idea of greenhouse gases to global warming, which may sound like an appropriate point to add. But is it the most effective choice? **B** contains information about trees which is interesting but not relevant, and **C** is unrelated information about a different environmental issue. **The best answer is D**, which directly applies to the author's main point about the relationship between trees and the greenhouse effect.



2. The main point of the third paragraph is that:

- F. Hawaiian authorities have found far more dangerous snakes, but these are very rare compared to the threat of brown tree snakes.
- G. Whether in Guam or Hawaii, the brown tree snake does irreparable damage to bird populations.
- H. Hawaiian authorities are concerned about their islands becoming as overrun by brown tree snakes as Guam is.
- J. Airports in Oahu have gotten very good at capturing brown tree snakes before the snakes can enter the island's vegetation.

FINDING AND INTERPRETING SIGNIFICANT DETAILS

A common type of test question asks you to find a certain detail in a passage. Obviously, this can mean just about anything. Some detail questions are about plainly stated facts, but others involve your reasoning and an ability to connect the logic of multiple sentences. Reread a passage carefully if you are having trouble.

To practice finding significant details, read this passage, and answer the question.

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from "Population and Food Supply" (©2008 American Book Company).

- 1 In 1798, British economist Thomas Malthus predicted that the disparity between the human species and the food supply would soon lead to massive starvation. Human populations were increasing rapidly, while the food supply was increasing slowly. Malthus felt that populations would need to be prevented from growing somehow, or all would suffer. Malthus' ideas were popular and influenced thinkers from naturalist Charles Darwin to science fiction author Isaac Asimov.
- 5 Malthus also faced a variety of critics that ranged about as widely as possible. Both Karl Marx, who paved the way for socialism, and John Stuart Mill, who was a political economist in favor of free markets, attacked Malthus' assertions about the bad aspects of having more people around.
- 10 Some people took Malthusian predictions as a personal challenge. In the 1950s, Norman Borlaug, an American scientist, invented a new kind of wheat that resisted disease and yielded larger crops. His team developed the new wheat in Mexico, where food was scarce. After only a decade with Borlaug's wheat, Mexico had more wheat than it could consume and was able to sell it to other countries, thus increasing the supply of other nations as well. Borlaug's team expanded the experiment to India and Pakistan with similar results. He has since won the Nobel Peace Prize and the United States' highest honors. According to multiple commentators, his innovation has saved almost a billion lives so far.
- 20



CAUSE-EFFECT RELATIONSHIPS

The meaning of the term cause-effect is pretty simple; it's the pairing of a cause with the effect it has. On the ACT Reading Test, these questions will present you with either a cause or an effect and ask you to determine the other. You'll be asked to locate examples of this relationship in both fiction and nonfiction passages. For example, events in a short story can set up unexpected later results. Much like comparison relationships, you'll often have to connect pieces on your own, as **cause-effect relationships** are sometimes not directly stated.

To practice cause-effect, read the following passage, and answer the question.

PROSE FICTION: This passage is adapted from *The Insurgent* by Ludovic Halévy, published in 1907.

1 “Prisoner,” said the president of the
military tribunal, “have you anything to add
in your own defense?”

 “Yes, Colonel,” answered the prisoner.
5 “You assigned me a little lawyer who has
defended me in his fashion. I want to defend
myself in my own. My name is Martin,—
Louis Joseph. I'm fifty-five. My father was
a locksmith. He had a little shop up in the St.
10 Martin quarter, and he had only a little
business. We were able to live. I learned to
read in the *National*, which was, I believe, Monsieur Thiers's newspaper.



 “The 27th of July, 1830, my father went out early in the morning. That evening, at
15 ten o'clock, they brought him back to us, dying on a litter; he had received a bullet in the
chest. By his side, on the litter, was his gun.

 “‘Take it,’ he said to me; ‘I give it to you,—and whenever there shall be an
insurrection against the government,—always, always, always!’

 “An hour after he was dead. I went out into the night. At the first barricade, I stopped
20 and offered myself. A man examined me by the light of a lantern. ‘A child,’ he cried. I
was not yet fifteen. I was very small, very undersized. I answered, ‘A child, that’s
possible; but my father was killed two hours ago. He gave me his gun. Teach me how to
use it.’

 “From that moment I became what I have always been for forty years—an insurgent!
25 If I fought under the Commune, it was not because I was forced for the thirty cents. It was
from liking, for pleasure, by habit, by routine.”

As you read in chapter 2, there are some fundamental items that you will want to determine in order to gain general understanding of any passage you read—the **main idea**, **significant details**, **sequence of events**, and any **unfamiliar words or phrases**. In addition, as you read in chapter 3, you also want to read critically to uncover important **comparisons**, **cause-effect relationships**, **generalizations**, and how the author uses **voice and method** to shape a work. This chapter will help you work through how to read passages and answer questions about fiction prose on the ACT Reading Test.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS YOU WILL SEE

There are two types of questions on the ACT Reading Test:

Referring questions ask you about information that is clearly stated in the passage. For instance, a question may ask about a detail that you can readily find expressed in the passage. Try this example.

Excerpt from passage: This passage was adapted from “The Dog” by Andrew Barton “Banjo” Paterson, published in 1902.

- 1 Dogs, like horses, have very keen intuition. They know
when the men around them are frightened, though they may
not know the cause. In a great Queensland strike, when the
shearers attacked and burnt Dagworth shed, some rifle-
5 volleys were exchanged. The air was full of human
electricity, each man giving out waves of fear and excitement.
Mark now the effect it had on the dogs. They were not in the
fighting; nobody fired at them, and nobody spoke to them; but
every dog left his master, left the sheep, and went away to the homestead, about six miles
10 off. There wasn't a dog about the shed next day after the fight. The noise of the rifles had
not frightened them, because they were well-accustomed to that.



Sample referring question:

Which of the following is NOT answered by information in this excerpt?

- A. Why did these rifle shots cause the dogs to respond unusually?
- B. What other animal reacts to the fear of the human beings around it?
- C. Did the dogs in the Queensland strike try to help their masters?
- D. To what other human emotions do dogs most noticeably respond?



Sample Passage and Questions

DIRECTIONS: After reading the passage, choose the best answer to each question. You may refer to the passage as often as necessary.

HUMANITIES: This passage is adapted from the Foreword of *Woman as Decoration* written by Emily Burbank. It was originally published in New York in 1917.

- 1 Having assisted in setting the stage for woman, the next logical step is the consideration of woman herself as an important factor in the decorative scheme of any setting—the vital spark to animate all interior decoration, private or public. The book in hand is intended as a brief guide for the woman who would understand her own type, make the most of it, and know how simple a matter it is to be decorative if she will but master the few rules underlying all successful dressing. As the costuming of woman is an art, the history of that art must be known—to a certain extent—by one who would be an intelligent student of our subject. We have tried to tell the beguiling story of decorative woman, as she appears in frescoes and bas reliefs of Ancient Egypt, on Greek vases, the Gothic woman in tapestry and stained glass, woman in painting, stucco and tapestry of the Renaissance, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century woman in portraits.

- 5 Contemporary woman’s costume is considered not as fashion but as decorative line and color, a distinct contribution to the interior decoration of her own home or other setting. In this department, woman is given suggestions as to the costuming of herself, beautifully and appropriately, in the ball-room, at the opera, in her boudoir, sun-room or on her shaded porch, in her garden, when driving her own car, by the sea, or on the ice.

- 15 If one would know the story of Woman’s evolution and retrogression—that rising and falling tide in civilization—we commend a study of her as she is presented in Art. A knowledge of her costume frequently throws light upon her age; a thorough knowledge of her age will throw light upon her costume.
- 20

Interpreting Natural Sciences Texts

1. As it is used in line 7, *accretion* most nearly means:

- A. accumulation.
- B. actualization.
- C. incineration.
- D. fluctuation.

The best answer is A. Key words from the surrounding text include *collect*, *become dense*, *pool*, and *form*. Each of these can be used to describe the process of something accumulating. Choice **B** is a vague word that most nearly means something like *achievement*. While space dust collecting into a huge cloud is quite an event, *actualization* could be used to describe a variety of other events and is therefore not a very specific word. The final choices are better, but there is no evidence in the paragraph of anything heating up (**C**), and the passage makes no mention of anything changing back and forth (**D**).

2. The main idea of the last paragraph (lines 43–47) is that:

- F. it takes a long time for a star to form.
- G. some nebulae take millions of years to form; some take trillions.
- H. the death of an old star may begin the life of a new one.
- J. stars must die just as people must die.

The best answer is H. The paragraph describes the possibility of a dying star forming a new nebula. **F** and **G** are factual details used to qualify this idea, while **J** is a supporting detail used to relate the idea to our conditions on earth.

3. At what stage is our sun?

- A. planetary nebula stage
- B. protostar stage
- C. main sequence stage
- D. red giant stage

The best answer is C. This answer is stated in the third paragraph.



18. According to the details of the passage, what was most likely the cause of John Marshall Clemens' growing up "with a taste for work" (line 57)?

- I. His family needed the income.
 - II. He became the head of the family at an early age.
 - III. His father made him work, and Marshall accepted it.
- F. I only
 - G. II only
 - H. I and II only
 - J. I, II, and III

19. What attitude does the author seem to have toward Mark Twain's family ancestry?

- A. He seems to doubt the authenticity of Twain's family line.
- B. He seems boastful about the family's well-documented legacy.
- C. He seems embarrassed by the conduct of some of Twain's ancestors.
- D. He seems to feel that Twain's immediate forebears had a much greater influence on him than did earlier ancestors.

20. Judging by the overall tone of the passage, how was the last paragraph (lines 112–116) of the passage most likely meant to be understood by its original readers?

- F. as an insult to women
- G. as a compliment to Twain's mother
- H. as an inside joke
- J. as a criticism of Twain's mother

Passage III

HUMANITIES: This passage is adapted from *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech* by Edward Sapir.

1 Speech is so familiar a feature of
daily life that we rarely pause to define
it. It seems as natural to man as
walking, and only less so than
5 breathing. Yet it needs but a moment's
reflection to convince us that this
naturalness of speech is but an illusory
feeling. The process of acquiring
speech is, in sober fact, an utterly
10 different sort of thing from the process
of learning to walk. In the case of the
latter function, culture, in other words,
the traditional body of social usage, is
not seriously brought into play. The
15 child is individually equipped, by the
complex set of factors that we term
biological heredity, to make all the
needed muscular and nervous
adjustments that result in walking.
20 Indeed, the very conformation of these
muscles and of the appropriate parts of
the nervous system may be said to be
primarily adapted to the movements
made in walking and in similar
25 activities. In a very real sense the
normal human being is predestined to
walk, not because his elders will assist
him to learn the art, but because his
organism is prepared from birth, or
30 even from the moment of conception,
to take on all those expenditures of
nervous energy and all those muscular
adaptations that result in walking. To
put it concisely, walking is an inherent,
35 biological function of man.

30. In terms of developing the main idea of the passage, the second paragraph serves to:

- I. introduce the topic as a comparison.
- II. develop the details of the novel.
- III. introduce the movie.

F. I only

G. II only

H. I and III only

J. I, II, and III

Passage IV

NATURAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from “Geothermal Power” (©2008 American Book Company).

- 1 Geothermal energy refers to the heat located deep inside the earth. This heat continuously flows outward from the earth’s core. When temperatures and pressures become high enough, some mantle rock melts, becoming magma. This magma rises, moving slowly up toward the earth’s crust, carrying heat further upward. Usually, magma remains below the earth’s crust, heating nearby rock and rainwater that has seeped deep into the earth—sometimes as hot as 700 degrees Fahrenheit. Some of this hot superheated water reaches the earth’s surface as hot springs or geysers, but most of it stays deep underground. This natural collection of hot water is called a geothermal reservoir.
- 20 Engineers can drill wells into reservoirs to bring hot water to the surface. Once hot water and steam travel up these wells, they can be used

- 25 to generate electricity in geothermal power plants. Steam, heat, and hot water from reservoirs provide force, which spins the plant’s turbine generators and produces electricity. Used water is then returned down an injection well into the reservoir to be reheated, to maintain pressure, and to sustain the reservoir.
- 30

- 35 What is the environmental impact of geothermal energy? The impact is usually a positive one. The greatest advantage is that it is very clean. Geothermal power plants do not manufacture steam or smoke by burning any fuels. Generating electricity with hot, underground water helps to conserve non-renewable fossil fuels. Decreasing the use of these fuels also reduces emissions, thereby preventing damage to the atmosphere.
- 40 In fact, some geothermal plants are built in the middle of farms, towns, and forests, sharing land with cattle, people, and local wildlife. For ten years, Lake County, California, has been home to five geothermal electric power plants. It is the first and only county in California to meet the strictest air quality standards in the United States.

- 55 The use of geothermal energy for electricity has grown worldwide to about 7,000 megawatts in 21 countries around the world. The United States annually produces about 2,900 megawatts of electricity from geothermal energy, comparable to transporting and burning 60 million barrels of oil each year. Considering a barrel of oil can be used to make about 40 gallons of gas, and each burned gallon of gas releases about 20 pounds
- 65