

Questions 1–10. Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers.

(annotated separately)

(1) The town sits in a vale between two rounded-off, thickly wooded mountains. Hot mineral waters pour out of the mountainsides, and the hills for miles around erupt with springs, some of them famous and commercial, with bottled water for sale, others trickling under rotten leaves in deep woods and known only to the natives. From one spring the water gushes milky and sulphurous. From another it comes forth laced with arsenic. Here it will be heavy with the taste of rocky earth, there, as sweet as rainwater. Each spring possesses its magical healing properties and its devoted, believing imbibers. In 1541, on the journey that proved to be his last, Hernando de Soto encountered friendly tribes at these springs. For a thousand years before him the mound-building Indians who lived in the Mississippi Valley had come here to cure their rheumatism and activate their sluggish bowels.

(2) The main street of town, cutting from northeast to southwest, is schizoid, lined on one side with plate-glass store fronts and on the other with splendid white stucco bathhouses, each with its noble portico and veranda, strung along the street like stones in an old-fashioned necklace. All but one of the bathhouses are closed down now. At the head of the street, on a plateau, stands the multistoried Arlington, a 1920's resort hotel and a veritable ducal palace in yellow sandstone. Opposite, fronted in mirrors and glittering chrome, is what once was a gambling casino and is now a wax museum. "The Southern Club," it was called in the days when the dice tumbled across the green baize and my father waited for the results from Saratoga to come in over Western Union. Lots of other horsebooks operated in that same neighborhood—the White Front, the Kentucky Club—some in backrooms and dives in which no respectable person would be seen. But the Southern was another thing. Gamblers from Chicago strolled in and out in their ice-cream suits and their two-tone shoes and nothing smaller than a C-note in their pockets. Packards pulled up to the door and let out wealthy men with showy canes and women in silk suits and alligator pumps who owned stables of thoroughbreds and next month would travel to Churchill Downs. I saw this alien world in glimpses as Mother and I sat at the curb in the green Chevrolet, waiting for the last race at Belmont or Hialeah to be over so that my father could figure the payoffs and come home to supper.

(3) The other realm was the usual realm, Middletown, Everyplace. Then it was frame houses, none very new. Now it is brick ranches and splits, carports, inlaid nylon carpet, and draw-drapes. Now the roads are lined with a pre-fab forest of Pizza Huts, Bonanzas, ninety kinds of hamburger stand, and gas stations, some with an occasional Southern touch: a plaque, for example, that reads "Serve-U-Sef." In what I still remember as horse pasture now stands a windowless high school—windowless—where classes range up to one hundred, and the teacher may not be able to learn everybody's name. My old elementary school, a two-story brick thing that threatened to fall down, had windows that reached to the fourteen-foot ceiling. We kept them shut only from November to February, for in this pleasant land the willows turn green and the winds begin sweetening in March, and by April the iris and jonquils bloom so thickly in every yard that you can smell them on the schoolroom air. On an April afternoon, we listened to the creek rushing through the schoolyard and thought mostly about crawdads.

(annotated separately)

**1. Question: The passage as a whole is best described as.****What is the focus of this question?**

This question is primarily focused on what the *rhetorical situation* is, and the context as to what the passage is directed towards. Knowing this will help the reader identify the necessary information they need to be able to form a well-developed analysis.

**2. Question: The speaker's reference to Hernando de Soto's visit to the springs in 1541 (paragraph 1) serves primarily to.****What is the focus of this question?**

Here the focus is *style*. When it comes to analyzing why the author made a specific word or element choice or how they did it, that has to primarily do with style. Knowing the reasons behind these such choices allow you to understand the perspective of the author, and read through the lenses of them.

**3. Question: With which of the following pairs does the speaker illustrate what she means by "schizoid" in the first sentence of paragraph 2?****What is the focus of this question?**

The focus of this question is on *reasoning and organization*. This question is asking the reader to figure out why the author arranged/placed in something and to what effect they intend out of it, in this specific example being what she did to help explain what is meant by "schizoid."

**4. Question: In describing the bathhouses and the Arlington hotel (paragraph 2), the speaker emphasizes their:****What is the focus of this question?**

Here we are dealing with *style*. The question is trying to get the reader to understand the effect of a specific stylistic choice the author made, as to what purpose mentioning the bathhouses and the Arlington hotel has and what it does collectively to the passage.

**5. Question: The sentence structure and diction of the sentences "Lots of other horsebooks . . . travel to Churchill Downs" (paragraph 2) suggest that the scene is viewed by:****What is the focus of this question?**

*Style* is the focus here again. The question specifically is asking about the sentence structure and diction, which are examples of stylistic choices made by the author; further helping the reader to understand the intended perspective by the author.

6. Question: The attitude of the speaker toward the gamblers from Chicago is primarily one of:

**What is the focus of this question?**

Here the focus is on *style*, as it is focusing on the specific attitude of the speaker toward the gamblers, which has to do with the specific tone emitted from that.

7. Question: The terms "Middletown, Everyplace" (paragraph 3) are best interpreted as:

**What is the focus of this question?**

*Style* is the focus of this question, as it asks what the terms "Middletown, Everyplace" can be best interpreted as, tasking the reader to uncover the diction and use of words that collectively add specific meaning to the passage.

8. Question: The speaker mentions the "Serve-U-Sef" plaque (paragraph 3) chiefly as an example of:

**What is the focus of this question?**

Since the question is asking about the specific choice and use of words here and what effect they have on the passage, this is another example of a question with a focus on *style*.

9. Question: The speaker's tone at the conclusion of the passage ("... windowless—where classes range up to one hundred ... thought mostly about crawdads.") is primarily one of:

**What is the focus of this question?**

*Style* is the focus of this question, as the reader is tasked with understanding the specific tone that the author uses in this instance of the passage.

10. Question: Which of the following is most likely a deliberate exaggeration?

**What is the focus of this question?**

The focus of this question is *style*. It asks the reader to determine which of the following is styled in such a way that it can be interpreted as a deliberate exaggeration. To determine this, the reader would need to understand the relationship the responses have with the rest of the passage, and the effect that the way they are set up has.

**Questions 11–17. Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers.**

(1) Most people believe that the important decisions they make—from what car they buy to whom they vote for—are rational ones based on facts and analysis. (2) However, because of the phenomenon known as confirmation bias, logical decision-making is rarely so simple. (3) Confirmation bias, which describes the human tendency to interpret new information in a way that supports our preexisting beliefs, makes people tend to accept information that confirms what they already believe and reject information that undermines those beliefs.

(4) Research has repeatedly demonstrated just how prevalent this phenomenon is in the world. (5) Confirmation bias has been found to affect the decisions of doctors, judges, and jurors. (6) It has even been shown to affect memory. (7) In a classic experiment, students who watched their schools compete in a football game subsequently remembered the adversary's team performing worse than their own: confirmation bias caused the students, who already believed in their own school's superiority, to interpret what they had seen as support for their preexisting beliefs. (8) Confirmation bias has also been shown to affect completely inconsequential decisions, as in experiments involving what direction dots are moving in or the average size of a number series. (9) Here, too, subjects' interpretations were found to be affected by decisions they had already made about what they were being asked to evaluate.

(10) Confirmation bias does admittedly have its uses: it can, for example, increase the efficiency with which we process information and also protect us against information that might be damaging to our self-esteem. (11) But when the stakes are high, the risks of making biased decisions are simply too great. (12) An example of a high-stakes situation would be when jurors are deliberating a defendant's fate. (13) Fortunately, there are techniques, like those used by Warren Buffett (born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1930) when he makes his financial decisions, that can minimize the risks of confirmation bias. (14) The first is to be aware that our decisions may be affected by our tendency toward confirmation bias. (15) The second is to test our beliefs by seeking out points of view that differ from our own.

**(annotated separately)**

**11. Question: Which of the following sentences in the passage can best be described as the writer's thesis statement?**

**What is the focus of this question?**

This question's focus is on *claims and evidence*. It specifically refers to the author's thesis statement, which includes what their overall claim is.

12. Question: The writer is considering adding the following sentence to the passage after sentence 3.

*“Though the phenomenon has been observed throughout history by philosophers, historians, and novelists, the term “confirmation bias” itself wasn’t invented until the 1960s by British psychologist Peter Wason.”*

Should the writer add this sentence after sentence 3?

What is the focus of this question?

The focus of this question is a mix between *claims and evidence* and as well *reasoning and organization*. For *claims and evidence*, this has to do with more of the sentence itself. The author here is using a specific piece of evidence to support their claim. This question also fits under *reasoning and organization* as a whole as well since the reader here has to figure out whether or not this sentence would fit in well enough to best support the claims and evidence being brought forward by the author.

13. The writer is considering adding the sentence below immediately after sentence 1 in order to further develop the argument in the first paragraph.

*“When I decided where to go to college, for example, I thought I had considered every factor and made the best possible choice.”*

Should the writer add this sentence after sentence 1?

What is the focus of this question?

With this question, the main focus is *claims and evidence*, and as well *reasoning and organization*. It deals with both how the sentence helps to support the argument, and as well how the sentence would fit into the argument to best support the claim the author is trying to make on college.

14. In sentence 3 (reproduced below), the writer is considering deleting the underlined portion, adjusting the punctuation as necessary.

*“Confirmation bias, which describes the human tendency to interpret new information in a way that supports our preexisting beliefs, makes people tend to accept information that confirms what they already believe and reject information that undermines those beliefs.”*

Should the writer keep or delete the underlined text?

What is the focus of this question?

*Claims and evidence* is the main focus here, as the reader needs to determine how effective the argument would be with or without this sentence, and determine which outcome will best suit the author in their argument on confirmation bias.

15. In the context of the passage, which of the following versions of the underlined text is the most effective way to introduce the evidence provided in sentence 10 (reproduced below)?

**“Confirmation bias does admittedly have its uses: it can, for example, increase the efficiency with which we process information and also protect us against information that might be damaging to our self-esteem.”**

**What is the focus of this question?**

The focus of this question is *claims and evidence*, and as well *reasoning and organization* since the reader needs to determine which sentence will best support the argument and how it will impact the claims and evidence that it follows. *Style* is another “side” focus as well since this also has to do with the word choice and other stylistic choices within the sentences.

16. The writer wants to combine sentences 11 and 12 (reproduced below) into a single sentence.

**“But when the stakes are high, the risks of making biased decisions are simply too great. An example of a high-stakes situation would be when jurors are deliberating a defendant's fate.”**

**Which of the following revisions to the underlined portion of sentences 11 and 12 most effectively accomplishes this goal?**

**What is the focus of this question?**

The main focus here is *reasoning and organization*, with *claims and evidence* tied into it. The question here is asking which revision that combines these two sentences together best fits into the argument, and best ties into the claims being made with their supporting evidence. Specifically as well, this has to do with how things are arranged, and the effect of that arrangement.

17. In sentence 13 (reproduced below), the writer wants to include a piece of relevant evidence that will help convince the reader to accept the techniques used by Warren Buffet as credible.

*“Fortunately, there are techniques, like those used by Warren Buffett (born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1930) when he makes his financial decisions that can minimize the risks of confirmation bias.”*

Which of the following versions of the underlined portion of sentence 13 best accomplishes this goal?

**What is the focus of this question?**

*Claims and evidence* is the focus of this question. It is asking which alteration of the sentence best supports the author’s overall claim, and helps to keep the flow of it going.

As well, *style* plays a bit of a role as the question is tasking the reader to determine which stylistic choices have the greatest outcome.

**Reflection**

Throughout this assignment I noticed a lot of patterns fairly quickly. Most of the beginning questions (the ones within the first half) seemed to have more of a focus on style for the most part, while the second half of the questions were mainly focused on claims and evidence (with reasoning and organization tied in as well). When it came down to whether or not it was hard for me to determine the focus of the questions, in all honesty it was not that difficult. I was able to see the root of the question, and in what direction it wanted me to go. For the multiple-choice questions, I did a pretty good job when implementing the focus of the questions. I answered around 11 questions correctly, and 6 incorrectly. However, I will say that the process of narrowing down the focus did without a doubt help me a lot in answering these questions and narrow down in the right direction.