



Answer Explanations

SAT® Practice Test #4

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Section 1: Reading Test

QUESTION 1.

Choice C is the best answer. The narrator initially expresses uncertainty, or uneasiness, over his decision to set out for the North Pole: “my motives in this undertaking are not entirely clear” (lines 9-10). At the end of the passage, the narrator recognizes that because of this journey he is “on the brink of knowing . . . not an ethereal mathematical spot,” the North Pole, but himself (lines 56-57).

Choices A, B, and D are incorrect because the narrator does not suggest that he fears going on the expedition, doubts his own abilities, or feels disdain for the North Pole.

QUESTION 2.

Choice D is the best answer. Lines 56-57 provide evidence that the narrator eventually recognizes his motives for traveling to the North Pole: “What I am on the brink of knowing, I now see, is not an ephemeral mathematical spot but myself.” The narrator initially was unsure of why he was traveling to the North Pole, but realizes that he has embarked on a journey to find himself.

Choices A, B, and C are incorrect because they do not provide the best evidence that the narrator eventually recognizes his motives for traveling to the North Pole. Rather, choices A, B, and C all focus on the narrator’s preparations and expectations for the journey.

QUESTION 3.

Choice D is the best answer. In lines 1-6, the narrator says that he feels a “vast yearning” and that his emotions are “complicated.” He explains that he does “not understand quite what it is that the yearning desires.” In this context, his emotions are “not readily verifiable,” or not completely understood.

Choices A, B, and C are incorrect because in this context, “not readily verifiable” does not mean unable to be authenticated, likely to be contradicted, or without empirical support.

QUESTION 4.

Choice C is the best answer. In lines 10-13, the narrator explains that “the machinery of [his] destiny has worked in secret” to prepare him for this journey, as “its clockwork” has propelled him to “this time and place.” By using the phrases “the machinery” and “its clockwork,” the narrator is showing that powerful and independent forces are causing him to journey to the North Pole.

Choices A, B, and D are incorrect because they do not indicate the main purpose of lines 10-13. While lines 10-13 mention that these powerful and independent forces have been working “for years, for a lifetime” to convince the narrator to journey to the North Pole, they do not expose a hidden side of the narrator, demonstrate the narrator’s manner, or explain the amount of time the narrator has spent preparing for his expedition.

QUESTION 5.

Choice A is the best answer. In lines 20-21, the narrator states that many people have perished while journeying to the North Pole: “Nobody has succeeded in this thing, and many have died.”

Choices B, C, and D are incorrect because the narrator does not indicate that previous explorers have made surprising discoveries, have failed to determine the exact location of the North Pole, or had different motivations than his own.

QUESTION 6.

Choice A is the best answer. In lines 20-21, the narrator provides evidence that many previous explorers seeking the North Pole have perished in the attempt: “Nobody has succeeded in this thing, and many have died.”

Choices B, C, and D do not mention previous explorers; therefore, these lines do not provide the best evidence that explorers died while seeking the North Pole.

QUESTION 7.

Choice B is the best answer. In lines 27-39, the narrator states that he is “intent” on traveling to the North Pole but acknowledges that the journey is absurd: “Who wants the North Pole! What good is it! Can you eat it? Will it carry you from Gothenburg to Malmö like a railway?” By asking these questions, the narrator recognizes that the North Pole has no practical value.

Still, the narrator admits that finding the North Pole is necessary, as it “must nevertheless be sought for.”

Choices A, C, and D are incorrect because the narrator does not view his expedition to the North Pole as immoral, socially beneficial, or scientifically important.

QUESTION 8.

Choice D is the best answer. In lines 27-31, the narrator asks a series of rhetorical questions about the North Pole: “Who wants the North Pole! What good is it! Can you eat it? Will it carry you from Gothenburg to Malmö like a railway?” In this context, the narrator is suggesting that reaching the North Pole has no foreseeable benefit or value to humanity; unlike trains that bring travelers to specific destinations, the North Pole does not provide humans with a specific benefit or form of convenience.

Choices A, B, and C are incorrect because the question posed in lines 30-31 does not debate modes of travel, examine the proximity of cities that can be reached by trains, or question how often people travel.

QUESTION 9.

Choice D is the best answer. In lines 48-49, the narrator states that the North Pole “is an abstraction, a mathematical fiction” and that “no one but a Swedish madman could take the slightest interest in it.” In this context, the narrator is stating that people would not “take the slightest interest in,” or be curious about, the North Pole.

Choices A, B, and C are incorrect because in this context, “take the slightest interest in” does not mean to accept responsibility for, to possess little regard for, or to pay no attention to something.

QUESTION 10.

Choice A is the best answer. In lines 49-51, the narrator describes his balloon journey toward the North Pole: “The wind is still from the south, bearing us steadily northward at the speed of a trotting dog.” In this context, the wind is “bearing,” or carrying, the narrator in a direction to the North.

Choices B, C, and D are incorrect because in this context, “bearing” does not mean affecting, yielding, or enduring.

QUESTION 11.

Choice C is the best answer. The author states that “demographic inversion is not a proxy for population growth” (lines 32-33). In other words, demographic inversion is distinct from population growth. The author also notes that demographic inversion is evident in many American cities, as it

“can occur in cities that are growing, those whose numbers are flat, and even in those undergoing a modest decline in size” (lines 33-35).

Choices A, B, and D are incorrect because they do not summarize the first paragraph.

QUESTION 12.

Choice D is the best answer. The author notes that one of “the most powerful demographic events of the past decade [was] the movement of African Americans out of central cities” (lines 14-17).

Choices A, B, and C are incorrect because the author does not state that the unemployed, immigrants, or young professionals moved away from central-city areas in large numbers in the early 2000s.

QUESTION 13.

Choice A is the best answer. The author states that democratic inversion “can occur in cities that are growing, those whose numbers are flat, and even in those undergoing a modest decline in size” (lines 33-35). In this context, cities whose “numbers,” or population size, are “flat” have static, or unchanging, populations.

Choices B, C, and D are incorrect because in this context, “flat” does not mean deflated, featureless, or obscure.

QUESTION 14.

Choice B is the best answer. The author states that many major American cities are currently experiencing economic hardship, or “enormous fiscal problems,” because of “public pension obligations they incurred in the more prosperous years of the past two decades” (lines 36-39). The author then provides the example of Chicago, a city that can no longer afford to pay the “public services to which most of [its] citizens have grown to feel entitled” (lines 41-43). The author is arguing that many major American cities face economic hardship due to past promises (such as public services) they made to their constituents.

Choices A, C, and D are incorrect because the passage does not discuss expected tax increases, an inner-city tax base, or manufacturing production as they relate to the financial status of many major American cities.

QUESTION 15.

Choice A is the best answer. In lines 36-39, the author provides evidence that many major American cities are currently experiencing economic hardship due to promises made in past years: “America’s major cities face enormous fiscal problems, many of them the result of public pension obligations