

Context Clues

Question 1 .

Directions: Select the correct text in the passage.

Which word in the passage helps the reader to understand what fallacious means?

Phrenology is a theory that suggests a person's personality can be determined from "reading" the shape of his or her skull. Although this theory was quite **popular** in the nineteenth century, phrenology has since been proven **inaccurate**. **Modern** medical and psychological professionals generally consider the theory to be fallacious.

The first attempts to connect skull shape and personality were made by Franz Joseph Gall, a German doctor, in the 1700s. After Gall published a book on the subject in 1809, phrenology became a **respected** practice, and many people viewed it as a valuable source for psychological insight.

During the Victorian era, people visited phrenologists for advice on a wide variety of issues—from hiring employees to predicting a child's future or choosing a marriage partner. In the 20th century, a new branch of psychology called psychoanalysis was created, which led to the decline in popularity of phrenology. Today, the practice of phrenology has, for the most part, been abandoned.

Question 2 .

The produce at the grocery store can be hit or miss. Last week, I bought a bunch of grapes that were extremely sour; however, this week I bought a cantaloupe that was fresh, sweet, and flavorful.

What does the underlined phrase mean?

- ☐ **A.** The produce at the grocery store is sometimes available to buy, but sometimes it is out of stock.
- ☐ **B.** The produce section of the grocery store is disorganized and not well-planned for shopping.
- ☐ **C.** The different produce at the grocery store can be used to practice hitting with a bat in baseball.
- ☐ **D.** The produce from the grocery store is good to eat some of the time but not all the time.

Question 3 .**CHARACTERS:**

CURTIS JAYSON

MARTHA, his wife

RICHARD BIGELOW

SCENE: Living-room of CURTIS JAYSON'S house in Bridgetown, Conn. A large, comfortable room. Four chairs are grouped about the table. It is around four o'clock of a fine afternoon in early fall.

As the curtain rises, MARTHA, CURTIS, and BIGELOW are discovered. MARTHA is a fine-looking woman of thirty-eight. Her strenuous life in the open has kept her young and fresh. CURTIS is a tall, rangy, broad-shouldered man of thirty-seven. RICHARD is a large, handsome man of thirty-nine. His face shows culture, tolerance, and a sense of humor. CURTIS is reading an article in some scientific periodical, seated by the table. MARTHA and BIGELOW are sitting nearby, laughing and chatting.

BIGELOW: (Is talking with a comically worried but earnest air.) Do you know, I'm getting so I'm actually afraid to leave them alone with that governess. She's too romantic. I'll wager she's got a whole book full of ghost stories, superstitions, and yellow-journal horrors up her sleeve.

MARTHA: Oh, pooh! Don't go milling around for trouble. When I was a kid I used to get fun out of my horrors.

BIGELOW: But I imagine you were more courageous than most of us.

MARTHA: Why?

BIGELOW: Well, Nevada—the Far West at that time—I should think a child would have grown so accustomed to violent scenes—

MARTHA: (Smiling.) Oh, in the mining camps; but you don't suppose my father lugged me along on his prospecting trips, do you? Why, I never saw any rough scenes until I'd finished with school and went to live with father in Goldfield.

BIGELOW: (Smiling.) And then you met Curt.

MARTHA: Yes—but I didn't mean he was a rough scene. He was very mild even in those days. Do tell me what he was like at Cornell.

BIGELOW: A romanticist—and he still is!

MARTHA: (Pointing at CURTIS with gay mischief.) What! That sedate man! Never!

CURTIS: (Looking up and smiling at them both affectionately—lazily.) Don't mind him, Martha. He always was crazy.

BIGELOW: (To CURT—accusingly.) Why did you elect to take up mining engineering at Cornell instead of a classical degree at the Yale of your fathers and brothers? Because you had been reading Bret Harte in prep. school and mistaken him for a modern realist. You devoted four years to grooming yourself for another outcast of Poker Flat. (MARTHA laughs.)

CURTIS: (Grinning.) It was you who were hypnotized by Harte—so much so that his West of the past is still your blinded New England-movie idea of the West at present. But go on. What next?

adapted from The First Man by Eugene O'Neill

Locate the word strenuous in this play. By reading the word in context, the reader can tell that strenuous means

- ☐ A. sedate.
- ☐ B. poor.
- ☐ C. quiet.
- ☐ D. active.

Question 4 .

Being raised by immigrant parents caused my life to appear, to my friends, to be incongruent. My sense of style—crafted by watching too many music videos—clashed with my parents' senses of style, which made them look like they had not been in the U.S. for twenty years. My goth CDs, with their dark and ominous covers, looked strange next to my parents' collection of merengue.

Needless to say, my goth music also sounded strange to my parents' uninitiated ears. They always said the music I listened to was too loud, too dark, and too depressing. They always asked me why I did not listen to music from the Old World. I told them that America was the only world, new or old, that I knew.

Merengue is **most likely** a type of

- ☐ A. language.
- ☐ B. food.
- ☐ C. music.
- ☐ D. instrument.

Question 5 .

As of 5 p.m. yesterday, the Durhman Foundation and the Willright Corporation have agreed to the cessation of a financial partnership that began in 1914. Through the years, the two financial giants have combined forces to bring millions of dollars into the bank accounts of their clients. The dividing of company assets was conducted amicably, as evidenced by the fact that the company presidents and corporate officers went to dinner together soon after the end of the business day. In the next few weeks, the two corporations will decide whether they will move from their current building into different office buildings or remain in proximity with one another.

Based on this news article, the word cessation means

- ☐ A. a beginning.
- ☐ B. an agreement.
- ☐ C. an ending.
- ☐ D. a partnership.

Question 6 .

I have to credit my unusual upbringing for my ability to become the youngest person to circumnavigate the globe in a sailboat. I grew up in a peripatetic family, and I attended over 50 schools during the course of my education. My father was a traveling salesman who would rather study his many maps than watch television. He was the quintessential dreamer, and he was always full of plans for the future. Despite being raised in a home that valued beauty over brains, my mother was a true iconoclast. She believed in education for all people in a time when many women were denied entrance into colleges and universities. She also believed that all professions should be available to any person—male or female—who was willing to work hard. Together, my parents created an atmosphere that challenged and inspired me.

As used in this passage, quintessential is closest in meaning to which word?

- ☐ A. unhappy
- ☐ B. unusual
- ☐ C. only
- ☐ D. typical

Question 7 .

The house stood hunkering in front of a darkened backdrop. The clouds, their edges as sharp as spearheads, looked like the weapon of a Roman sentry, guarding the point of the landscape where the forest meets the field of cotton. The farm sat alone underneath the vast sky.

A single light shone from the second floor window and cut through the night giving the walkway that led to the house's front door a burning orange patina and outlining the steps that shone like well-polished shoes. The glow was so brilliant, that from a distance, it looked like the house was on fire.

The caw and cackle of the grackles and crows was a welcome clamor in the silence that usually filled the farmhouse at dusk. It was the kind of quiet that makes ghosts quake in fear until their dirty sheets shake off of their bodies.

The word sentry **most likely** means

- ☐ A. 100 years.
- ☐ B. stars in the sky.
- ☐ C. group of guards.
- ☐ D. a majority of votes.

Question 8 .

Last week, the Seahaven Sea Hawks flew to victory on the wings of their new quarterback, Truman Burbank. As Truman led his team to victory in the fourth quarter, a cacophonous cheer rang out from the excited crowd and nearly drowned out the referees' voices. The cheers did, however, cover the groans of the losing team whose ignominious defeat came after they failed to score even one touchdown the entire game. The Sea Hawk's now-famous quarterback is humble about his victory.

"To tell you the truth," Truman told this reporter, "I am even more surprised than I am excited. This was the first football game I have ever played." The team's new quarterback, a self-described dilettante, is also the captain of the yacht club, the founding member of the chess team, and an active participant in the environmental activism group.

Based on the information in this article, a dilettante is a person who

- ☐ A. does not enjoy speaking to reporters.
- ☐ B. is involved in many different activities.
- ☐ C. is humble about his or her victories.
- ☐ D. only cares about winning football games.

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adapted from The First Man by Eugene O'Neill

Locate the word sedate in this play. Based on its use in this context, the word sedate means

- ☐ A. using a lot of painkillers.
- ☐ B. having a calm attitude.
- ☐ C. refusing to go to college.
- ☐ D. having a romantic spirit.

Question 10 .

Chester took a deep breath and **bolstered** his courage before he approached the king's throne to make his request. "Your Majesty, if it pleases you, may I play my flute for you?"

"Why, it would please me indeed. Play thy flute," King Milton responded.

Chester inhaled deeply, pursed his lips, carefully placed his fingers, raised his flute to his mouth, and blew. A sweet, steady melody came forth from Chester's flute. He felt as though he had conquered the world with this single act of bravery.

What does the word **bolstered** mean in the story?

- ☐ A. reinforced
- ☐ B. hindered
- ☐ C. carried
- ☐ D. allowed

Answers

1. --
2. D
3. D
4. C
5. C
6. D
7. C
8. B
9. B
10. A

Explanations

1. The word "fallacious" means "based on a false or mistaken idea." The second sentence of the passage helps the reader to understand the meaning of this word because it describes phrenology as "inaccurate." The author writes that even though phrenology was once considered correct, it is currently considered erroneous.
2. The phrase "hit or miss" is referring to the taste and quality of the produce sold at the grocery store. The second sentence describes how one week the grapes were not good to eat but, the next week the cantaloupe was very good to eat. When the produce is good to eat, it is a "hit." When the produce is not good to eat, it is a "miss." The context of the way "hit or miss" is used in the sentence tells that it means something is uncertain.
3. In this play, the character of Martha is described as "young and fresh" due to her strenuous life in the open. The reader can tell that an active, or strenuous, life in the outdoors would most likely keep a person looking young and fresh.
4. The author writes about his or her goth CDs, then, in the same sentence, goes on to talk about his or her parents' merengue collection, and compare the two. This tells you that "merengue" is a kind of music. It would not make sense for the writer to compare things that do not share similarities.
5. The article states that the two corporations are "dividing company assets." This gives the reader a clue that the cessation of a partnership means the ending of a partnership.
6. The passage states that the narrator's father is a dreamer who is always full of plans. The reader can conclude that the father is a typical, or quintessential, dreamer—one who imagines a brighter future.
7. In the paragraph, the author has just told the reader that the clouds are guarding guarding the landscape. A guard usually protects something, and since there is more than one cloud mentioned, it makes sense that there is a group.

8. The article states that Truman, who calls himself a dilettante, plays football, leads the yacht club, is a member of the chess team, and is an activist for the environment. The reader can tell that a dilettante is involved in many different activities.

9. In this excerpt, Martha calls Curt "very mild" and then laughs that he is a sedate man. As used in this context, sedate is an adjective describing a person who has a calm attitude.

10. In the story, the word **bolstered** means reinforced or strengthened. The reader can use the context of the story and the words around "**bolstered**" to gain information about what the word means. Chester was doing something that takes a lot of courage. He reinforced his courage before asking to play for the king.