

TOEIC PRACTICE - Reading Comprehension: Main Idea

Read the following paragraphs and carefully determine what the main idea is for each. The best way to approach these questions is to first read the paragraph and then, in your own words, restate what you think the author is trying to say. From the five choices, select the one statement that best supports the author's point.

Paragraph 1:

The best recipes for clam chowder all include onions and a bay leaf. The onions add a sharpness and zest to the blandness of the clams, and also help remove their slimy texture. The bay leaf complements the onion's strong flavor.

1. This paragraph best supports the statement that
 - a. onions were once thought to be poisonous.
 - b. bay leaves are essential in many soups.
 - c. clam chowder is very nutritious.
 - d. onions and bay leaves go well with clams.
 - e. clams should not be overcooked.

Paragraph 2:

One New York publisher has estimated that 50,000 to 60,000 people in the United States want an anthology that includes the complete works of William Shakespeare. And what accounts for this renewed interest in Shakespeare? As scholars point out, the psychological insights he portrays in both male and female characters are amazing even today.

2. This paragraph best supports the statement that
 - a. Shakespeare's characters are more interesting than fictional characters today.
 - b. people today are interested in Shakespeare's work because of the characters.
 - c. academic scholars are putting together an anthology of Shakespeare's work.
 - d. New Yorkers have a renewed interest in the work of Shakespeare.
 - e. Shakespeare was a psychiatrist as well as a playwright.

Paragraph 3:

Critical reading is a demanding process. To read critically, you must slow down your reading and, with pencil in hand, perform specific operations on the text. Mark up the text with your reactions, conclusions, and questions. When you read, become an active participant.

3. This paragraph best supports the statement that
- a. critical reading is a slow, dull, but essential process.
 - b. the best critical reading happens at critical times in a person's life.
 - c. readers should get in the habit of questioning the truth of what they read.
 - d. critical reading requires thoughtful and careful attention.
 - e. critical reading should take place at the same time each day.

Paragraph 4:

There are no effective boundaries when it comes to pollutants. Studies have shown that toxic insecticides that have been banned in many countries are riding the wind from countries where they remain legal. Compounds such as DDT and toxaphene have been found in remote places like the Yukon and other Arctic regions.

4. This paragraph best supports the statement that
- a. toxic insecticides such as DDT have not been banned throughout the world.
 - b. more pollutants find their way into polar climates than they do into warmer areas.
 - c. studies have proven that many countries have ignored their own anti-pollution laws.
 - d. DDT and toxaphene are the two most toxic insecticides in the world.
 - e. even a worldwide ban on toxic insecticides would not stop the spread of DDT pollution.

Paragraph 5:

The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution protects citizens against unreasonable searches and seizures. No search of a person's home or personal effects may be conducted without a written search warrant issued on probable cause. This means that a neutral judge must approve the factual basis justifying a search before it can be conducted.

5. This paragraph best supports the statement that the police cannot search a person's home or private papers unless they have
- a. legal authorization.
 - b. direct evidence of a crime.
 - c. read the person his or her constitutional rights.
 - d. a reasonable belief that a crime has occurred.
 - e. requested that a judge be present.

Paragraph 6:

Mathematics allows us to expand our consciousness. Mathematics tells us about economic trends, patterns of disease, and the growth of populations. Math is good at exposing the truth, but it can also perpetuate misunderstandings and untruths. Figures have the power to mislead people.

6. This paragraph best supports the statement that
- a. the study of mathematics is dangerous.
 - b. words are more truthful than figures.
 - c. the study of mathematics is more important than other disciplines.
 - d. the power of numbers is that they cannot lie.
 - e. figures are sometimes used to deceive people.

Paragraph 7:

Black-and-white camera film, in the old days of film photography, was very sensitive to blue light but not to red light. Blue skies would often show very little detail, because the film couldn't record all that it was seeing. To compensate, photographers would put a red filter on the lens, darkening the sky enough that the film could record its fluffy clouds.

7. This paragraph best supports the statement that
- a. red filters were very popular in the old days of photography.
 - b. infrared rays are invisible to the naked eye.
 - c. black-and-white photography used to be very popular.
 - d. red filters cut out some blue light on black and white film.
 - e. blue filters cut out red light.

Paragraph 8:

Today's postal service is more efficient than ever. Mail that once took months to move by horse and foot now moves around the country in days or hours by truck, train, and plane. If your letter or package is urgent, the U.S. Postal Service offers Priority Mail and Express Mail services. Priority Mail is guaranteed to go anywhere in the United States in two days or less. Express Mail will get your package there overnight.

8. This paragraph best supports the statement that
- a. more people use the post office for urgent deliveries than any other delivery service.
 - b. Express Mail is a good way to send urgent mail.
 - c. Priority Mail usually takes two days or less.
 - d. mail service today is more effective and dependable.
 - e. mail was once delivered by horse and foot.

Paragraph 9:

Reality TV shows will have an adverse effect on traditional dramas and comedies. As reality TV increases in popularity, network executives will begin canceling more traditional programs and replacing them with the latest in reality TV.

9. This paragraph best supports the statement that
- a. reality TV is low quality.
 - b. reality TV shows get the highest ratings.
 - c. more and more people love to watch and participate in reality TV.
 - d. as reality TV gets more popular, more traditional television shows may be threatened.
 - e. network executives make hasty and unwise decisions.

Paragraph 10:

When winding an old clock, it is important not to overwind it. Overwinding occurs when the mainspring is almost fully wound, but the operator continues to turn the winding key. This causes the main spring to coil too tightly, and might even break it.

10. This paragraph best supports the statement that
- a. clocks have changed over the years.
 - b. old-fashioned clocks become fragile with age.
 - c. old-fashioned clocks were operated by an internal spring.
 - d. overwinding clocks used to be a common mistake.
 - e. time flies when you're having fun.

Answers:

- 1. d.** The passage speaks specifically about onions and bay leaves in clam chowder—not about soups in general, and thus choice **b** is not correct. No mention is made to nutrition or poison, nor does the passage address over-cooked clams.
- 2. b.** The last sentence in the paragraph clearly supports the idea that the renewed interest in Shakespeare is due to the development of his characters. Choice **a** is incorrect because the writer never makes this type of comparison. Choice **c** is wrong, because even though scholars are mentioned in the paragraph, there is no indication that the scholars are compiling the anthology. Choice **d** is wrong because there is no support to show that most New Yorkers are interested in this work. There is no support for choice **e**.
- 3. d.** This answer is implied by the whole paragraph. The author stresses the need to read critically by performing operations on the text in a slow and specific manner. Choice **a** is incorrect because the author never says that reading is dull. Choices **b**, **c**, and **e** are not supported by the paragraph.
- 4. a.** The support for this choice is in the second sentence, which states that in some countries, toxic insecticides are still legal. Choice **b** is incorrect because even though polar regions are mentioned in the paragraph, there is no support for the idea that warmer regions are not just as affected. There is no support for choice **c**. Choice **d** can be ruled out because there is nothing to indicate that DDT and toxaphene are the most toxic. Choice **e** is illogical.
- 5. a.** The second and third sentence combine to give support to choice a. The statement stresses that there must be a judge's approval (i.e., legal authorization) before a search can be conducted. Choices **b** and **d** are wrong because it is not enough for the police to have direct evidence or a reasonable belief—a judge must authorize the search for it to be legal. Choices **c** and **e** are not mentioned in the passage.
- 6. e.** This answer is clearly stated in the last sentence of the paragraph. Choice **a** can be ruled out because there is no support to how that studying math is dangerous. Words are not mentioned in the passage, which rules out choice **b**. There is no support for choice **c**. Choice **d** is a contradiction to the information in the passage.

7. d. The passage addresses the fact that a red filter could remove some blue light in black and white photography, so choice d is best. No mention is made of infrared light or of the popularity of black-and-white photography, and choice e is the exact opposite of what the passage states.

8. d. Choices **a** and **c** are not supported by the paragraph. Choices **b** and **e** only tell us about particular parts of the paragraph and are too specific to be the main idea. Choice **d**, however, is general enough to encompass all the sentences and the paragraph as a whole. Every sentence supports the idea asserted in choice **d**.

9. d. Both sentences in the paragraph support this choice. Choices **a** and **e** are opinions and are not in the paragraph. Choices **b** and **c** may be true, but they are also not supported by the paragraph.

10. c. The passage cautions against overwinding, stating that it can break the clock's main spring. From this, one can infer that the clock is run by a spring. The other choices may or may not be true, but they are not addressed in the passage.