

PERSONAL BEST TEST TRAINING

ORDINARY READING STUDY GUIDE

ACT and PSAT/SAT and Other Standardized Tests

 Doorway to College
FOUNDATION
Supporting the transition to higher education™

YOU CONTROL—

- 1) Level and intensity of advance preparation
- 2) Your personal scoring goals
- 3) Attack strategy for each type of question
- 4) Sequence of questions as you choose to answer them
- 5) Mental attitude before and during the test

Do not surrender control of the factors you can control.

GOAL: To help you achieve your PERSONAL BEST on the ACT or SAT Ordinary Reading questions

Your personal “highest-possible score” depends on your academic ability in each subject area tested. When you take the ACT or SAT, there are a number of factors that can lower your score. The goal of test preparation is to minimize the effects of those negative factors.

OBJECTIVE 1: To demystify the Ordinary Reading questions

In this book, we call the Reading tests for the ACT and PSAT/SAT the “Ordinary Reading Test.” We do this to illustrate that there’s nothing mystical or especially scary about these tests. They’re similar to other standardized tests you’ve had to take. If you think of them as *ordinary*, you take away some of their power to intimidate. In order to reach your personal best on an Ordinary Reading Test, you need to know as much as possible about it. This program will give you insights into how the tests are constructed. It will expose you to the types of questions you can expect to see on the test, the difficulty levels you should expect, and the content you need to master.

OBJECTIVE 2: To reduce test anxiety and its negative effects on your scores

College-admissions tests are guaranteed to create as much anxiety as possible. Although we can’t change the testing situation, we can help you take control of it. These study materials will help you know what to expect so that you will find the situation more familiar. And when the test actually begins, your preparation will reduce your overall anxiety. You will be less likely to panic during the test because you will have a variety of strategies to employ when you don’t know the answer to a question.

OBJECTIVE 3: To teach you both general and specific strategies for taking multiple-choice tests

This *Study Guide* covers numerous strategies for taking tests. Some of these methods will become tools that you may apply to any multiple-choice test. Other strategies are specific to the types of items that appear on an Ordinary Reading Test.

The emphasis of this book is on what to do when you don’t immediately know the correct answer to a question. The main strategy, called *ZAPPING*, teaches you to identify and eliminate incorrect choices before selecting an answer. This strategy is modified slightly for each type of question. *ZAPPING* is a technique you can transfer to every multiple-choice test that you take in high school or college.

**Be prepared for challenging text.**

Some of the passages on an Ordinary Reading Test will feel like the introduction to a textbook or a selection from a serious magazine article. A few of them will probably contain some old-fashioned language, such as a literature passage from a century ago. Unless you're an avid reader, these passages can be a little challenging to understand.

Ordinary Reading Tests also occasionally include selections from historical documents, such as from the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, or George Washington's Farewell Address.

It's important to keep in mind that the questions will never require information outside of the reading selection itself. That is to say, even if a passage is taken from the Constitution, you'll be tested only on the reading selection, rather than the Constitution in general.

**You don't have to do the passages in order.**

As we just said, some passages will be harder to read and more time-consuming, so take a little time to rearrange the passages on the Ordinary Reading Test into an order that benefits you. As you work through the Ordinary Reading Test, if you come to a passage that seems especially difficult, skip it. Come back to it after you've worked through all of the other passages. Just be sure you also skip those item numbers on your answer sheet. You don't want to get off track, or you'll lose points.

If you put the hardest reading passage last, you'll gain two benefits:

- 1) By doing the easier passages first, you'll get those points safely in the bank.
- 2) If you find yourself running out of time on the Ordinary Reading Test and have to guess, you'll be guessing on the ones you had the least chance of answering correctly anyway.

**On paired passages, do the first passage first.**

Sometime passages are "paired" together. There will be two short passages on the same topic and they will be related in some way. Then you will see questions about each individual passage and about the two passages together.

Attack the paired passages in this order:

- Step 1. Read Passage 1.
- Step 2. Answer the questions related only to Passage 1.
- Step 3. Go back up and read Passage 2.
- Step 4. Answer the questions related only to Passage 2.
- Step 5. Finally, answer the questions that ask you about both passages.

Why do it this way? Because the questions are always in this order. Questions about Passage 1 come first. Questions about Passage 2 come next. And questions about both passages together come last. Always. So why not use that to your advantage?



Practice Set 416

This passage is adapted from “Paul’s Case: A Study in Temperament” by Willa Cather, 1905. Public domain.

It was Paul’s afternoon to appear before the faculty of the Pittsburgh High School to account for his various misdemeanors. He had been suspended a week ago, and his father had called at the principal’s office and confessed his perplexity about his son. Paul entered the faculty room suave and smiling. His clothes were a trifle outgrown, and the tan velvet on the collar of his open overcoat was frayed and worn; but for all that there was something of the dandy about him, and he wore a red carnation in his buttonhole. This latter adornment the faculty somehow felt was not properly significant of the contrite spirit befitting a boy under the ban of suspension.

Paul was tall for his age and very thin, with high, cramped shoulders and a narrow chest. His eyes were remarkable for a certain hysterical brilliancy, and he continually used them in a conscious, theatrical sort of way, peculiarly offensive in a boy. The pupils were abnormally large, as though he were addicted to belladonna, but there was a glassy glitter about them which that drug does not produce.

When questioned by the principal as to why he was there, Paul stated, politely enough, that he wanted to come back to school. This was a lie, but Paul was quite accustomed to lying—found it, indeed, indispensable for overcoming friction. His teachers were asked to state their respective charges against him, which they did with such a rancor and aggrievedness as evinced that this was not a usual case. Disorder and impertinence were among the offenses named, yet each of his instructors felt that it was scarcely possible to put into words the real cause of the trouble, which lay in a sort of hysterically defiant manner of the boy’s; in the contempt which they all knew he felt for them, and which he seemingly made not the least effort to conceal. Once, when he had been making a synopsis of a paragraph at the blackboard, his English teacher had stepped to his side and attempted to guide his hand. Paul had started back with a shudder and thrust his hands violently behind him. The astonished woman could scarcely have been more hurt and embarrassed had he struck at her. The insult was so involuntary and definitely personal as to be unforgettable. In one way and another he had made all his teachers, men and women

alike, conscious of the same feeling of physical aversion. In one class he habitually sat with his hand shading his eyes; in another he always looked out of the window during the recitation; in another he made a running commentary on the lecture, with humorous intention.

His teachers felt this afternoon that his whole attitude was symbolized by his shrug and his flippantly red carnation flower, and they fell upon him without mercy, his English teacher leading the pack. He stood through it smiling, his pale lips parted over his white teeth. (His lips were continually twitching, and he had a habit of raising his eyebrows that was contemptuous and irritating to the last degree.) Older boys than Paul had broken down and shed tears under that baptism of fire, but his set smile did not once desert him, and his only sign of discomfort was the nervous trembling of the fingers that toyed with the buttons of his overcoat, and an occasional jerking of the other hand that held his hat. Paul was always smiling, always glancing about him, seeming to feel that people might be watching him and trying to detect something. This conscious expression, since it was as far as possible from boyish mirthfulness, was usually attributed to insolence or “smartness.”

As the inquisition proceeded, one of his instructors repeated an impertinent remark of the boy’s, and the principal asked him whether he thought that a courteous speech to have made to a woman. Paul shrugged his shoulders slightly and his eyebrows twitched.

“I don’t know,” he replied. “I didn’t mean to be polite or impolite, either. I guess it’s a sort of way I have of saying things regardless.”

The principal, who was a sympathetic man, asked him whether he didn’t think that a way it would be well to get rid of. Paul grinned and said he guessed so. When he was told that he could go he bowed gracefully and went out. His bow was but a repetition of the scandalous red carnation.

1

The author of Passage 1 suggests that one major effect of carbon nanotube semiconductors will be

- A) stronger steel.
- B) new diseases.
- C) faster travel.
- D) thinner hardware.

2

Which choice gives the best evidence for answering question 10?

- A) Lines 6–10 (“In the . . . promise”)
- B) Lines 16–17 (“One . . . nanotube”)
- C) Lines 31–35 (“Imagine . . . paper”)
- D) Lines 47–49 (“Although . . . overcome”)

3

As used in line 39 of Passage 1, “operations” most nearly means

- A) surgical procedures.
- B) mechanical processes.
- C) military campaigns.
- D) exertions of force.

4

The author of Passage 2 discusses asbestos, an old-fashioned technology, as a way of

- A) creating a metaphor for potential problems with carbon nanotube technology.
- B) warning against technological innovation because of its potential for danger.
- C) arguing in favor of government regulation to ensure public safety.
- D) comparing asbestos concerns to public concerns about carbon nanotube technology.

5

The author of Passage 2 suggests that negative medical reports about asbestos were kept from the public partly because

- A) doctors disagreed over whether the reports were accurate.
- B) companies making products with asbestos wanted to keep making them.
- C) the EPA had already ordered that asbestos be phased out of most consumer products.
- D) asbestos was considered a modern-day miracle.

6

Which choice gives the best evidence for answering question 5?

- A) Lines 57–61 (“Asbestos . . . carpet”)
- B) Lines 66–69 (“But . . . eye”)
- C) Lines 69–74 (“It . . . ban”)
- D) Lines 83–86 (“Some . . . silica”)

7

Which choice best states the relationship between the two passages?

- A) Passage 1 explains why a new technology will work; Passage 2 explains why it will fail.
- B) Passage 1 strongly advocates a new technology; Passage 2 encourages caution about it.
- C) Passage 1 lists practical applications of a new technology; Passage 2 explains its theoretical foundations.
- D) Passage 1 attacks criticism of a new technology offered in Passage 2.

Her voice was dry and cold. "I have no taxes
90 in Jefferson. Colonel Sartoris explained it to me.
Perhaps one of you can gain access to the city
records and satisfy yourselves."

"But we have. We are the city authorities,
Miss Emily. Didn't you get a notice from the
95 sheriff, signed by him?"

"I received a paper, yes," Miss Emily said.
"Perhaps he considers himself the sheriff . . . I
have no taxes in Jefferson."

"But there is nothing on the books to show
100 that, you see. We must go by the—"

"See Colonel Sartoris. I have no taxes in
Jefferson."

"But, Miss Emily—"

"See Colonel Sartoris." (Colonel Sartoris had
105 been dead almost ten years.) "I have no taxes in
Jefferson. Tobe!" The [servant] appeared. "Show
these gentlemen out."

1

The event that the passage is mainly about is:

- A) the death of Colonel Sartoris.
- B) the slow decay of Miss Emily's house.
- C) the death of Miss Emily.
- D) the refusal of Miss Emily to pay taxes.

2

As the former mayor explained it to her, Miss
Emily did not need to pay taxes because:

- A) the city owed her father a sum of money.
- B) she was very poor and in bad health.
- C) her father left the city money to cover her
taxes in his will.
- D) the Board of Aldermen paid her taxes.

3

According to the narrator, the street that was
once the "most select street" in Jefferson:

- A) was where many of the town's older
citizens still lived.
- B) had become quite attractive.
- C) had been almost totally changed.
- D) was bordered by a cemetery.

4

As used in line 50, *archaic* means:

- A) thin.
- B) triangular.
- C) old-fashioned.
- D) difficult to read.