

Hard SAT Reading Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Read each text and question. Circle the best answer based on the text.

1. A survey of surviving nineteenth-century workshop journals found frequent references to tools that do not appear in the workshops' sales catalogs. A historian argues that the catalogs were selective advertisements rather than complete inventories. However, because some journals cover years for which no catalogs survive, the historian limits her conclusion to tools documented in journals and omitted from catalogs issued during the same years.

Which choice best explains the purpose of the historian's limitation?

- A. It shows that the catalogs were written as advertisements.
 - B. It reduces the possibility that apparent omissions simply reflect a comparison of different time periods.
 - C. It proves that the journals list every tool used in the workshops.
 - D. It lets her include tools from years with no surviving catalogs.
2. In an experiment, volunteers who received a diagram completed a mechanical task faster than those given written instructions. Yet the diagram group also received a brief demonstration, whereas the written-instruction group did not. The researchers therefore cautioned against attributing the entire performance difference to the format of the instructions.

Which follow-up study would most directly address the researchers' concern?

- A. Compare diagram and written-instruction groups that receive the same demonstration.
- B. Repeat the original study with more volunteers but the same unequal demonstrations.
- C. Give both groups written instructions and the same demonstration.
- D. Time the diagram group on a harder version of the task.

3. Text 1

Because a poem's unusual word order occurs in several passages, it is best understood as a deliberate stylistic choice rather than an accidental irregularity.

Text 2

Repeated patterns can be deliberate, but repetition alone does not establish why a poet used them. The same pattern may serve a rhythmic purpose in one passage and emphasize a contrast in another.

How would the author of Text 2 most likely respond to Text 1?

- A. By claiming that every repeated pattern must have the same effect
- B. By claiming that a poet's intentions can never be known
- C. By granting that the pattern may be deliberate while noting that repetition alone does not reveal its purpose
- D. By asserting that unusual word order cannot be deliberate

4. A biologist found that insects visited flowers in shaded plots less often than flowers in sunny plots. Although shaded flowers produced less nectar, their color also appeared less distinct against surrounding leaves. The biologist hypothesized that visibility, rather than nectar quantity alone, contributed to the difference in visits.

Which finding would most directly support the hypothesis?

- A. Shaded plots contained fewer hours of direct sunlight.
- B. Insects sometimes visited flowers in both types of plot.
- C. Flowers in sunny plots produced more nectar than shaded flowers.
- D. Making shaded flowers more visually distinct increased visits without changing their nectar quantity.

5. A literary scholar notes that a novelist's published essays praise plain language, while the novels contain elaborate descriptions. Rather than treating this as a contradiction, the scholar observes that the essays discuss instructions intended for immediate practical use, whereas the novels invite prolonged attention to an imagined world.

Which conclusion is best supported by the text?

- A. The novelist preferred elaborate language in every kind of writing.
- B. The novelist may have favored different language styles for different communicative purposes.
- C. The novelist must have regretted publishing elaborate descriptions.
- D. The novelist's essays contradict the style of the novels.

6. An analysis found that neighborhoods with more public benches also had more pedestrians. The authors warned that this association did not show whether benches encouraged walking, whether planners placed benches where people already walked, or whether another feature influenced both.

Which statement would the authors most likely agree with?

- A. The association proves that benches are the only cause of walking.
- B. Removing benches would necessarily eliminate pedestrian traffic.
- C. The association alone cannot establish the direction or existence of a causal effect of benches on walking.
- D. Benches have no effect on how much people walk.

7. A researcher observed that handwritten annotations in several copies of a textbook cluster around its worked examples rather than its definitions. She suggests that at least some readers used the book while solving problems. Because heavily used copies were more likely to be discarded, however, she cautions that the surviving books may understate this pattern.

Which choice best explains the researcher's caution?

- A. It proves that readers never studied definitions.
 - B. It suggests that the surviving copies overstate how often readers solved problems.
 - C. It identifies a preservation bias that could affect how representative the surviving copies are.
 - D. It shows that annotations cannot reveal anything about reading practices.
8. A trial compared two methods of explaining a scientific concept. Students randomly assigned to Method A scored higher on an immediate quiz, but the groups performed similarly on a quiz a month later. The researchers concluded that the advantage depended on when learning was measured.

Which finding would most directly challenge that conclusion?

- A. Students taught with Method B said they enjoyed the lessons more.
- B. Students in both groups completed the later quiz.
- C. The immediate quiz had fewer questions than the later one.
- D. A reliable reanalysis finds that Method A had a comparably large advantage on both quizzes.

9. Text 1

When a language borrows a word, it often changes the word's pronunciation. Such changes show speakers fitting new vocabulary into familiar sound patterns.

Text 2

Sound patterns help explain many changes in borrowed words, but speakers may also preserve an unusual pronunciation to signal a word's foreign origin or specialized use.

How would the author of Text 2 most likely respond to Text 1?

- A. By accepting its explanation for many cases while identifying a reason some cases may differ
- B. By denying that borrowed words can change pronunciation
- C. By claiming that every foreign pronunciation must disappear
- D. By arguing that social reasons explain most changes in borrowed words

- 10.** A restoration team removed a yellowed coating from a painting, revealing brighter colors. A critic argued that the change recovered the artist's intended appearance. Yet tests showed that the pigments themselves had also changed chemically with age, in ways the cleaning could not reverse.

Which conclusion is best supported by the text?

- A. The painting now looks exactly as it did when completed.
- B. Removing the coating does not by itself establish that the original appearance has been fully restored.
- C. The coating was the only source of color change.
- D. Cleaning necessarily made every color less accurate.

- 11.** A city report notes that streets with frequent buses also have more shops. It proposes that bus service encourages commercial activity. A subsequent analysis finds that planners historically assigned frequent service to streets that already had many shops.

How does the subsequent finding affect the proposed explanation?

- A. It proves that buses can never affect commerce.
 - B. It shows that bus service caused new shops to open.
 - C. It supports reverse causation as another explanation for the observed association.
 - D. It shows that the original association did not exist.
- 12.** A scholar compares two surviving drafts of a novel. In the later draft, descriptions of the setting are shorter, but conversations are longer. She argues that the revision shifts attention from the environment toward relationships among characters rather than simply making the entire work more concise.

Which observation most directly supports the distinction in the scholar's argument?

- A. The later draft is shorter overall than the earlier draft.
- B. The later draft was completed several years after the earlier one.
- C. Descriptions of the setting are shorter in the later draft.
- D. Some kinds of passages expanded while others contracted.

Answer key

1 B · 2 A · 3 C · 4 D · 5 B · 6 C · 7 C · 8 D · 9 A · 10 B · 11 C · 12 D

1. B: It reduces the possibility that apparent omissions simply reflect a comparison of different time periods.

Comparing journals and catalogs from the same years rules out one competing explanation: a tool might be missing only because the catalog came from a different period. The limitation leaves out years without catalogs, and it narrows her argument without proving it.

2. A: Compare diagram and written-instruction groups that receive the same demonstration.

Giving both groups the same demonstration leaves instruction format as the only difference. More volunteers would keep the unequal demonstration, and giving both groups written instructions removes the format comparison.

3. C: By granting that the pattern may be deliberate while noting that repetition alone does not reveal its purpose

Text 2 grants that repeated patterns can be deliberate but says repetition doesn't show why the poet used them; the purpose may differ from passage to passage. The answer has to keep both the agreement and the limit.

4. D: Making shaded flowers more visually distinct increased visits without changing their nectar quantity.

Changing visibility while holding nectar constant directly tests the proposed additional factor. Repeating the nectar difference cannot distinguish the visibility hypothesis from a nectar-only account.

5. B: The novelist may have favored different language styles for different communicative purposes.

The scholar ties each style to a purpose: plain language for practical instructions, elaborate description for fiction. That is why the scholar declines to call it a contradiction, and nothing suggests regret.

6. C: The association alone cannot establish the direction or existence of a causal effect of benches on walking.

The authors identify reverse causation and a possible common cause. Their caution concerns what the association can establish, not a claim that benches have no effect.

7. C: It identifies a preservation bias that could affect how representative the surviving copies are.

Heavily used copies were thrown away more often, so the surviving copies may show less problem solving than actually happened. The pattern could be stronger than it looks, not weaker, and the annotations still count as evidence.

8. D: A reliable reanalysis finds that Method A had a comparably large advantage on both quizzes.

A similar advantage on both quizzes would mean the advantage did not depend on timing. Enjoyment or quiz length doesn't show that.

9. A: By accepting its explanation for many cases while identifying a reason some cases may differ

Text 2 agrees that sound patterns explain many changes and adds a reason some unusual pronunciations are kept. It doesn't make that reason the main explanation.

10. B: Removing the coating does not by itself establish that the original appearance has been fully restored.

Irreversible pigment changes remain even after the coating is removed. The evidence limits the claim of full recovery without proving that cleaning worsened the appearance.

11. C: It supports reverse causation as another explanation for the observed association.

Existing commerce influenced bus-service decisions, so shop density may partly explain bus frequency. This alternative does not rule out an additional effect of buses on later commerce.

12. D: Some kinds of passages expanded while others contracted.

The distinction needs both changes, shorter descriptions and longer conversations. A draft that is only shorter overall, or only has shorter descriptions, would also fit a simple cut for length.