

SAT Reading Test 2

This passage is excerpted from the novel *Ramona*, by Helen Hunt Jackson. *Señora* is a Spanish term of respect for an older and/or married woman. *Señorita* indicates an unmarried woman.

Juan Canito and Señor Felipe were not the only members of the Señora's family who were impatient for the sheep-shearing. There was also Ramona. Ramona was, to the world at large, a far more important person than the Señora herself. The Señora was of the past; Ramona was of the present. For one eye that could see the significant, at times solemn, beauty of the Señora's pale and shadowed (5) countenance, there were a hundred that flashed with eager pleasure at the barest glimpse of Ramona's face; the shepherds, the herdsmen, the maids, the babies, the dogs, the poultry, all loved the sight of Ramona; all loved her, except the Señora. The Señora loved her not; never had loved her, never could love her; and yet she had stood in the place of mother to the girl ever since her childhood, and never once during the whole sixteen years of her life had shown her any unkindness in act. She had promised to be a mother to her; and (10) with all the inalienable staunchness of her nature she fulfilled the letter of her promise.

The story of Ramona the Señora never told. To most of the Señora's acquaintances now, Ramona was a mystery. They did not know—and no one ever asked a prying question of the Señora Moreno—who Ramona's parents were, whether they were living or dead, or why Ramona, her name not being Moreno, lived always in the Señora's house as a daughter, tended and attended equally with the adored (15) Felipe. A few gray-haired men and women here and there in the country could have told the strange story of Ramona; but its beginning was more than a half-century back, and much had happened since then. They seldom thought of the child. They knew she was in the Señora Moreno's keeping, and that was enough. The affairs of the generation just going out were not the business of the young people coming in. They would have tragedies enough of their own presently; what was the use of passing down the old ones? Yet (20) the story was not one to be forgotten; and now and then it was told in the twilight of a summer evening, or in the shadows of vines on a lingering afternoon, and all young men and maidens thrilled who heard it.

It was an elder sister of the Señora's,—a sister old enough to be wooed and won while the Señora was yet at play,—who had been promised in marriage to a young Scotchman named Angus Phail. She was a beautiful woman; and Angus Phail, from the day that he (25) first saw her standing in the Presidio gate, became so madly her lover, that he was like a man bereft of his senses. This was the only excuse ever to be made for Ramona Gonzaga's deed. It could never be denied, by her bitterest accusers, that, at the first, and indeed for many months, she told Angus she did not love him, and could not marry him; and that it was only after his stormy and ceaseless entreaties, that she did finally promise to become his wife. Then, almost immediately, she went away to Monterey, and Angus (30) set sail for San Blas. He was the owner of the richest line of ships which traded along the coast at that time; the richest stuffs, carvings, woods, pearls, and jewels, which came into the country, came in his ships. The arrival of one of them was always an event;

and Angus himself, having been well-born in Scotland, and being wonderfully well-mannered for a seafaring man, was made welcome in all the best houses, wherever his ships went into harbor, from Monterey to San Diego.

(35) The Señorita Ramona Gonzaga sailed for Monterey the same day and hour her lover sailed for San Blas. They stood on the decks waving signals to each other as one sailed away to the south, the other to the north. It was remembered afterward by those who were in the ship with the Señorita, that she ceased to wave her signals, and had turned her face away, long before her lover's ship was out of sight. But the men of the San Jose said that Angus Phail stood immovable, gazing northward, till nightfall shut from his sight even the horizon line at which the Monterey ship had long before disappeared from view.

1. In line 4, the phrase shadowed countenance refers to a

- a. shaded veranda
- b. somber face
- c. cool bedroom
- d. dark companion
- e. lonely landscape

Answer: _____

Q2. Why did Ramona live in Señora Moreno's house?

- a. She was the Señora's daughter.
- b. She loved the Señora.
- c. The Señora had promised to raise her.
- d. She was loved by the Señora.
- e. The Señora was her aunt.

Answer: _____

Q3. In lines 9–10, what is meant by the phrase inalienable staunchness of her nature?

- a. her natural mothering instinct
- b. her steadfastness
- c. her inability to love
- d. her facility as a correspondent
- e. her potential to be a good person

Answer: _____

Q4. In lines 18–19, when the author says they would have tragedies enough of their own presently, she means

- a. they should mind their own business
- b. young people are not especially curious about old stories
- c. it would be bad luck for them to hear the story
- d. the story was not very important to anyone
- e. why sadden young people with the story

Answer: _____

Q5. In line 25, to what does the phrase bereft of his senses refer?

- a. heightened sensitivity
- b. insanity
- c. without potential
- d. persistence
- e. being in love

Answer: _____

Q6. In lines 25–28, what excuse is offered for Ramona Gonzaga’s action?

- a. She did not love Angus.
- b. She had to leave town.
- c. Angus had to leave town.
- d. She had promised to marry Angus without knowing him.
- e. She had tried in vain to escape Angus’s attentions.

Answer: _____

Q7. It can be inferred from the final paragraph (lines 34–39) that

- a. Ramona was more devoted than Angus was
- b. Ramona had a short attention span
- c. Ramona and Angus never married
- d. Angus’ devotion surpassed Ramona’s
- e. it was a very long way to San Blas

Answer: _____

Questions 8–20 are based on the following passages.

Both these passages were written in the 19th century by authors who felt they had learned some important things about life. Passage 1, about the importance of thoughtful observation to a successful life, is excerpted from an early book on child-raising. Passage 2 is an excerpt from Walden, by Henry David Thoreau.

Passage 1

From the beginning to the end of this book, I have most earnestly represented the necessity of forming early habits of observation. It is a strong foundation, on which any kind of character may be built, as circumstances require. It makes good writers, good painters, good botanists, good mechanics, good cooks, good housewives, good farmers—good everything! It fits us for any situation in which

(5) Providence may place us, and enables us to make the most of whatever advantages that come in our way. It is a sort of vital principle, that gives life to everything.

Not fifty miles from Boston is a farmer, quite famous for the improvements he has made in the wild grape. He found a vine in the wood, which dozens of his neighbors passed every week, as well as he; but he observed that where the oxen fed upon the vine the grapes were **(10)** largest and sweetest. He took the hint. The vine was transplanted, and closely pruned. This produced the same effect as browsing had done; the nourishment, that in a

wild state supported a great weight of vines and tendrils, went entirely to the body of the grape. His neighbors would have known this as well as he, if they had thought about it; but they did not observe.

In ancient Greece, the beneficial effect of closely trimming grape-vines was discovered by observing the extreme luxuriance of a vine, **(15)** which an ass had frequently nibbled as he fed by the way-side. The man who availed himself of this hint, became celebrated throughout Greece, by means of the far-famed grapes of Nauplia; and, with less justice, statues were erected to the ass, and high honors paid to his memory. The grape had never been cultivated in this country, when, by a singular coincidence, an observing American farmer made the same discovery, and by the same means, that gave celebrity to the observing Grecian farmer, in very ancient times.

(20) Even in infancy, the foundation of this important habit should be begun, by directing the attention to the size, shape, color, etc, of whatever objects are presented. In childhood it should be constantly kept alive, by never allowing anything to be read, or done, carelessly; and during the teens, when the mind is all alive and busy, very peculiar care should be taken to strengthen and confirm it. A **(25)** young lady should never be satisfied with getting through with a thing some how or other; she should know how she has done it, why she has done it, and what is the best way of doing it. She should use her thoughts in all her employments. There is always a best way of doing everything; and however trifling the occupation, this way should be discovered; in making a shirt, for instance, she should be led to observe that it is much more convenient to put in the sleeves before the collar is set on. It is the want of these habits of **(30)** **(30)** observation, which makes some people so left-handed and awkward about everything they undertake.

Passage 2

Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion* which covers the globe, through

* flood

Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through Church and State, through poetry and philosophy and religion, **(35)** until we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call reality, and say, This is, and no mistake; and then begin, having a point d'appui, below freshet** and frost and fire, a place where you might find a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely, or perhaps a gauge, not a Nilometer, but a Realometer, that future ages might know how deep a freshet of shams and appearances had gathered from time to time. If you stand right fronting and face to face to a fact, you will see the sun glimmer on both its surfaces, as if **(40)** it were a scimitar***, and feel its sweet edge dividing you through the heart and marrow, and so you will happily conclude your mortal career. Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business. (Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin **(45)** current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars. I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet. I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born. The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My

head is hands and feet. I feel all my best faculties concentrated in it. My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as (50) some creatures use their snout and forepaws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the diviningrod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine.

** stream

*** a curved sword

Q8. In line 6, what is it that the author of Passage 1 says gives life to everything?

- a. Providence
- b. the vital principle
- c. character
- d. habit of observation
- e. a strong foundation

Answer: _____

Q9. In lines 10–12, what kind of improvement did the farmer decide to make in the grape?

- a. He pruned it.
- b. He ate it.
- c. He fed his oxen with it.
- d. He cross-bred it with domestic grapes.
- e. He supported its weight.

Answer: _____

Q10. In lines 10–13, why were some grapes larger and sweeter than others?

- a. The oxen ate some of the grapes.
- b. That vine was transplanted.
- c. Those grapes received more nourishment.
- d. The farmer observed those grapevines.
- e. The neighbors passed them by.

Answer: _____

Q11. In line 15, the word luxuriance refers to

- a. the state of being pruned
- b. being fed upon
- c. beauty
- d. being well observed
- e. abundance

Answer: _____

Q12. The author of Passage 1 says in the final paragraph that in the teen years, it is most important to

- a. learn to make shirts correctly
- b. keep one's mind on the task at hand

- c. unlearn any left-handed habits
- d. have fun
- e. think about the best way to do everything

Answer: _____

Q13. The word peculiar in line 24 most nearly means

- a. odd
- b. distinctive
- c. uniform
- d. rigid
- e. enthusiastic

Answer: _____

Q14. In line 27, the phrase however trifling the occupation most nearly means

- a. no matter what the line of work
- b. even in the least important task
- c. particularly in one's employment
- d. whenever one needs to work
- e. no matter how undignified one's job is

Answer: _____

Q15. In the opening of Passage 2 (lines 31–38), the author states the belief that what stands between us and reality is

- a. facts
- b. poetry and philosophy
- c. a wall or a state
- d. mud and slush
- e. opinion, prejudice, delusion, appearance, and tradition

Answer: _____

Q16. Toward delusion, it can be inferred that the author of Passage 2 feels

- a. indifferent
- b. threatened
- c. frustrated that it is so pervasive
- d. happy that it is so rare
- e. ready to accept it as a part of life

Answer: _____

Q17. In the last paragraph of Passage 2, the author indicates that

- a. our brain is our best tool
- b. mining is an honorable occupation
- c. fishing makes one foolish
- d. humans are superior to other animals
- e. it can be hard to tell up from down when looking in a stream

Answer: _____

Q18. With which of the following statements would the authors of both passages agree?

- a. Reality is whatever you define it as.
- b. That which is real is plain, if not always easy, to see.
- c. Society cloaks reality in mystery.
- d. What one actually does is more important than what one thinks.
- e. Hard work is the most important thing in life.

Answer: _____

Q19. The two passages differ in that the author of Passage 1

- a. offers advice, while the author of Passage 2 does not
- b. is writing for parents, and the author of Passage 2 is not
- c. believes that observation is of paramount importance, but the author of Passage 2 thinks observation is overrated
- d. offers practical advice, while the author of Passage 2 takes a more intellectual approach
- e. cares about public opinion, while the author of Passage 2 does not

Answer: _____

Q20. Both passages illustrate the idea that

- a. thinking for oneself has many rewards
- b. a well-bred person is industrious
- c. a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
- d. life in the country is more rewarding than city life
- e. if one takes ones time, one will do a better job

Answer: _____

Answers and Explanation

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