

---

## SSAT Reading Comprehension Practice Test 2

**Directions:** Read the following passages and then decide which of the responses is the best answer to each question.

### Passage: 1

Early in the nineteenth century, American youths were playing a game, somewhat like the English game of rounders, which contained all the elements of modern baseball. It was neither scientifically planned nor skillfully played, but it furnished considerable excitement for players and spectators alike. The playing field was a sixty-foot square with goals, or bases, at each of its four corners. A pitcher stationed himself at the center of the square, and a catcher and an indefinite number of fielders supported the pitcher and completed the team. None of these players, usually between eight and twenty on a side, covered the bases. The batter was out on balls caught on the fly or the first bound, and a base runner was out if he was hit by a thrown ball while off base. The bat was nothing more than a stout paddle with a two-inch-thick handle. The ball was apt to be an *impromptu* affair composed of a bullet, cork, or metal slug tightly wound with wool yarn and string. With its simple equipment and only a few rules, this game steadily increased in popularity during the first half of the century.

#### 1. Which title best expresses the main idea of this selection?

- (A) "Baseball Rules"
- (B) "An English Game"
- (C) "Baseball's Predecessor"
- (D) "American Pastimes"

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. The rules of this game required

- (A) eight fielders.
- (B) a pitcher, a catcher, and one fielder for each base.
- (C) twenty fielders.
- (D) no specific number of players

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 3. This selection suggests that

- (A) the game of baseball has grown more complicated over the years.
- (B) the game described was very dangerous.
- (C) baseball originated in the United States.
- (D) the game described required skilled players.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. The word *impromptu* means

- (A) carefully planned.
- (B) careless.
- (C) informal.
- (D) skillful

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: 2**

John J. Audubon, a bird watcher, once noticed that a pair of phoebes nested in the same place year after year, and he wondered if they might be the same birds. He put tiny silver bands on their legs, and the next spring the banded birds returned to the same nesting place. This pair of phoebes were the first birds to be banded. Since that time, naturalists, with the aid of the federal government's Fish and Wildlife Department, band birds in an effort to study them. The bands, which are made of lightweight aluminum so as not to harm the birds, bear a message requesting finders to notify the department. Careful records of these notifications are kept and analyzed. In this way, naturalists have gained a great deal of knowledge about the nesting *habits*, migration patterns, and populations of a large variety of bird species. Most importantly, they are able to identify those species that are in danger of extinction

**5. Which title below best expresses the main idea of this passage?**

- (A) "The Migration of Birds"
- (B) "One Method of Studying Birds"
- (C) "The Habits of Birds"
- (D) "The Work of John Audubon"

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Audubon's purpose in banding the phoebes was to**

- (A) satisfy his own curiosity.
- (B) start a government study of birds.
- (C) gain fame as the first birdbander.
- (D) chart the phoebe's migration patterns.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Audubon proved his theory that**

- (A) silver and aluminum are the best metals for birdbands.
- (B) the government should study birds.
- (C) phoebes are the most interesting birds to study.
- (D) birds return to the same nesting place each spring

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. The word *habits* means**

- (A) naturalists.
- (B) living environments.
- (C) behaviors.
- (D) ecosystem.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: 3**

An ancient dinosaur-like animal called the *Archaeopteryx* has long been considered to be the world's first bird. Based on what has been pieced together from fossil evidence, *Archaeopteryx* was more like a cross between a bird and a dinosaur, rather than fitting clearly in one group or the other. It had teeth, a tail, and claws on its wing—all characteristics that more closely resemble dinosaurs. It also had feathers and wings, like today's birds. Whether the creature was a bird with teeth or a feather-covered dinosaur is a matter of debate, but its existence proved that a link exists between birds and reptiles. A recent discovery leads us to question the *accepted wisdom* of *Archaeopteryx* as the first known bird. According to an article in National Geographic magazine by author Brian Switek, a creature known as *Aurornis xui* was described by paleontologist Pascal Godefroit in May of 2013. *Aurornis* was discovered in China. It is believed to have lived 160 million years ago, about 10 million years before *Archaeopteryx*.

Switek notes that controversy exists over whether *Archaeopteryx* even was a bird. But for those who believe it was, it appears that it may not have been the first.

Researchers cannot say with certainty that *Aurornis* was a bird either. There are too few details in the fossil record to make this determination definitively. But one thing based on these discoveries is clear: birds are descendants of dinosaurs. Today's common bird shares an ancestry with predator dinosaurs such as the *velociraptor*, lending even more meaning to the idea that the early bird gets the worm.

**9. Which title best expresses the topic of this selection?**

- (A) "Studying Dinosaurs"
- (B) "The Earliest Birds"
- (C) "Birds versus Dinosaurs"
- (D) "The History of the Velociraptor"

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. According to the passage, *Archaeopteryx* could best be described as**

- (A) an ancient bird without feathers.
- (B) more like a dinosaur than a bird.
- (C) part bird and part dinosaur.
- (D) more like a mammal than a reptile.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**11. In the context of the passage, the phrase *accepted wisdom* most nearly means**

- (A) invalid theory.
- (B) historical myth.
- (C) helpful advice.
- (D) widely held view.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. According to the passage, today's birds are descendants of**

- (A) dinosaurs that hunted other animals.
- (B) land-based dinosaurs without tails.
- (C) dinosaurs that ate vegetarian diets.
- (D) ancient Egyptian and Asian reptiles.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: 4**

The proud, noble American eagle appears on one side of the Great Seal of the United States, which is printed on every dollar bill. The same majestic bird can be seen on state seals, half dollars, and even in some commercial advertising. In fact, though we often encounter artistic representations of our national symbol, it is rarely seen alive in its native habitat. It is now all but extinct.

In the days of the founding fathers, the American eagle resided in nearly every corner of the territory now known as the continental United States. Today the eagle survives in what ornithologists call significant numbers only in two regions. An estimated 350 pairs inhabit Florida, and perhaps another 150 live in the Chesapeake Bay area of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. A few stragglers remain in other states, but in most, eagles have not been sighted for some time.

A federal law passed in 1940 protects these birds and their nesting areas, but it came too late to save more than a pitiful remnant of the species' original population.

**13. An ornithologist is a person who studies**

- (A) geographical regions.
- (B) the history of extinct species.
- (C) the populations of certain areas.
- (D) the habits and habitats of birds.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Today eagles are found in the greatest numbers in**

- (A) Florida.
- (B) Delaware.
- (C) the Chesapeake Bay region.
- (D) Virginia

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**15. The selection implies that**

- (A) the number of eagles is likely to increase.
- (B) the eagle population decreased because of a lack of protective game laws.
- (C) there were only two localities where eagles could survive.
- (D) the government knows very little about eagles.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: 5**

The Alaska Highway, which runs 1,523 miles from Dawson Creek, British Columbia, to Fairbanks, Alaska, was built by U.S. Army Engineers to counter a threatened Japanese invasion of Alaska. It was rushed through in an incredibly short period of nine months and

was therefore never properly surveyed. Some of the territory it passes through has not even been explored.

Although the story that the builders followed the trail of a wandering moose is probably not true, the effect is much the same. The leading bulldozer simply crashed through the brush wherever the going was easiest, avoiding the big trees, swampy hollows, and rocks. The project was made more complicated by the necessity of following not the shortest or easiest route but one that would serve the string of United States-Canadian airfields that stretch from Montana to Alaska. Even on flat land, the road twists into hairpin curves. In rough *terrain* it goes up and down like a roller coaster. In the mountains, sometimes clinging to the sides of cliffs 400 feet high, it turns sharply, without warning, and gives rear seat passengers the stomach-gripping sensation of taking off into space. There is not a guardrail in its entire 1,500-mile length. Dust kicks up in giant plumes behind every car and on windless days hovers in the air like a thick fog.

Both the Canadian Army and the Alaskan Road Commission, which took over from the Army Engineers in 1946, do a commendable but nearly impossible job of maintaining the road. Where it is built on eternally frozen ground, it buckles and heaves, on the jellylike muskeg it is continually sinking and must be graveled afresh every month. Bridges thrown across rivers are swept away in flash floods. Torrential thaws wash out miles of highway every spring. On mountain-sides, you can tell the age of the road by counting the remains of earlier roads that have slipped down the slope.

**16. Which title best expresses the main idea of this selection?**

- (A) "The Alaskan Road Commission"
- (B) "Building and Maintaining the Alaska Highway"
- (C) "Exploring Alaska"
- (D) "Driving Conditions in the Far North"

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**17. The Alaska Highway was built to**

- (A) make the route between Alaska and the States shorter.
- (B) promote trade with Canada.
- (C) meet a wartime emergency.
- (D) aid exploration and surveying efforts

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**18. The job of maintaining the road is complicated by the**

- (A) threat of invasion.
- (B) forces of nature.
- (C) lack of surveying.
- (D) age of the road

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**19. The word *terrain* refers to**

- (A) geographical features of the land.
- (B) geographical mountains and valleys.
- (C) a specific land area.
- (D) swamps.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: 6**

When the first white men came to North America, they found an abundance of valuable natural resources. Forests covered enormous areas; the soil was extremely fertile; and the forests, prairies, streams, and rivers abounded with wildlife. Later, huge quantities of gas, oil, and minerals were discovered.

These resources were so vast that it seemed they could never be exhausted. The forests were cleared for farmland. Grasslands and prairies were plowed and planted with crops. Mammals and birds were hunted for food and sport, and eventually factories, mills, and power companies were built on nearly every river. Minerals and oil were used to supply and power a young industrial nation.

The effects of these actions became apparent within a relatively short period of time. Timber shortages were predicted. The fertile soil was washed away by rain and blown about in great dust storms by the wind. Several species of birds began to disappear, and some of the great mammals became extinct. Many rivers were made unfit for fish by the pollution of factories. The seemingly inexhaustible stores of oil and minerals began to show signs of depletion.

Since that time, Americans have sponsored the creation of conservation programs in the hope that future generations may continue to share and enjoy the natural resources that are part of our heritage.

**20. Which title best expresses the main idea of this selection?**

- (A) "The First White Men in America"
- (B) "The Loss of America's Natural Resources"
- (C) "Our American Heritage"
- (D) "The Cause of Our Timber Shortages"

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**21. The word depletion means**

- (A) extinction.
- (B) running out.
- (C) having the quality of being inexhaustible.
- (D) destruction.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**22. It seemed to the early settlers that**

- (A) there was a shortage of minerals.
- (B) there had been a great deal of soil erosion.
- (C) the natural resources were inexhaustible.
- (D) resources should be carefully used.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

## Answer Keys Link

<https://gotestprep.com/ssat-reading-comprehension-practice-test/>