Function and Overall Structure Questions

Question Stems: **"Which choice best describes the function of the underlined sentence in the text as a whole?" and "Which choice best describes the overall structure of the text?"**

Most reading questions ask what a text says. These two ask how it is built. A **function** question points to one part of the text, usually an underlined sentence or phrase, and asks what job that part does: does it give an example, raise a problem, explain a cause, admit a limit? An **overall structure** question asks for the plan of the whole text, move by move: first this, then that. The stems come in a handful of versions:

- Which choice best describes the **function of the underlined sentence** in the text as a whole?
- Which choice best describes the **function of the underlined portion** in the text as a whole? (The portion may be a phrase, a clause, a quotation, or a question.)
- Which choice best describes the **function of the third sentence** in the overall structure of the text?
- Taken together, the **underlined portions** most clearly serve which function in the text as a whole?
- Which choice best describes the **overall structure** of the text?

What makes these questions different is that the answer is never just *what the part says*. It is *what the part does*, and a part does something only in relation to the rest of the text: a sentence is an example only of some claim, a contrast only with some view, a reason only for some result. So the right answer names a **job** and, usually, the part of the text that the job points to. *It provides an example of the claim made in the previous sentence. It notes a belief that a finding later in the text calls into question.*

The 3-Step Strategy for Function and Structure Questions

Three steps work for every question of both kinds. After them come eight worked examples, six function questions and two structure questions, close to the mix in the official questions. Two comprehensive drills follow, one at the level of Module 1 and one at the level of the harder Module 2. The chapter closes with the opening pages of the Logic Skeleton Bank, a reference table of every form the official questions take; the rest of the bank is on the MASTER KEY Platform.

❖ Step 1. Map the text: give every sentence a job.

Read the whole text once before you look at the choices, even when the question asks about one underlined phrase, because the job of a part depends on its neighbors. As you read, give each sentence a short label for the job it does. These texts are short, two to six sentences, so the map is quick, and you can keep it in your head: *common view → finding → reason*, or *claim → example → more of the example*. Here are the jobs that sentences, and parts of sentences, do most often, with the signals that mark them:

Background or definition — sets the scene or explains a term: an opening sentence about a place, a person, or a practice; a phrase set off by dashes or parentheses, or introduced by *which is* or *called*.

Claim — the writer's point, or a general statement that the rest supports: often the first or last sentence, and often the most general one.

Common view — what people, or experts, have long believed or usually assume, set up to be challenged: *many assume*, *traditionally*, *long thought*, *it was widely believed*.

Problem or question — a puzzle, a gap, an obstacle, a question still open: *unclear*, *little is known*, *difficult*, *puzzled*, or a sentence that ends in a question mark.

Method or attempt — what researchers, or a character, did about it: *to test this*, *used*, *compared*, *set out to*.

Finding — what they found: *found*, *showed*, *revealed*, *the results suggest*.

Example or evidence — a specific case, number, or fact that backs up something more general: *for example*, *for instance*, *consider*, *such as*, *like these*.

Elaboration — more detail about something already said: a step in a process, a closer look, a fuller description.

Reason — why something happens, or why someone acts: *because*, *since*, *due to*, or the part that comes just before *so*.

Contrast or challenge — a turn against what came before: *however*, *but*, *yet*, *in contrast*, *instead.*

Qualification — a limit placed on a claim, or a point granted to the other side: *while*, *although*, *admittedly*, *it is true that*, *only*.

Implication or conclusion — what follows from it all: *thus*, *therefore*, *so*, *suggests that*.

In the official function questions, the underlined part is most often an elaboration or an explanation (roughly 25%), then an example (15%), a reason (13%), a claim or the start of a new topic (11%), evidence (9%), or a contrast (9%). In stories and poems the labels change a little, to *a feeling*, *a trait*, *a change*, *a setting*, but the map works the same way.

❖ Step 2. Name the job, and what it points to.

For a **function** question, find the underlined part on your map and say its job in one short sentence, before you read the choices: **It [job] [what it points to].** *It gives an example of the claim in the first sentence. It describes the belief that the rest of the text overturns. It explains why the researchers tried a new method.* Look both ways as you do it. Read the sentence just before the underlined part and the one just after, because the job is usually set by its neighbors: a *for instance* looks back to a claim, a *however* looks back to a view, a question looks forward to an answer, and an opening sentence is often defined by everything that follows it. If the underlined part is only a phrase or clause, ask what it adds to its own sentence: a definition, a number, a limit, a reason.

Three kinds of small signals tell you which way a part points. Watch for them as you name the job:

Pointer words — *this*, *that*, *these*, *those*, *such*, and often *the* point back to something already mentioned: *this approach*, *such findings*, *the sauce*. Follow the pointer back, and you have found what the part is linked to.

Transition words — show the direction of the link: *however*, *but*, and *yet* for a contrast; *also* and *in addition* for one more point; *therefore*, *thus*, and *as a result* for cause and effect; *in fact* for emphasis or a correction; *for example* and *for instance* for an example.

Colons and semicolons — what comes right after a colon explains what stands before it: it spells it out, gives the reason, or lists the examples. A semicolon joins two closely linked statements, and the second usually explains or extends the first. If a *however* or a *but* follows the semicolon, though, the second statement turns against the first.

For a **structure** question, your map is already most of the answer. Read it as one sentence: **First it ___, then it ___ (, and then it ___).** Most official structure answers have exactly that shape: 52% of those in the Question

Bank name two moves, and 38% name three. The other 10% describe a pattern that runs through the whole text, such as a series of images or one long comparison.

Two rarer stems need only small adjustments. A question about **"the third sentence"** works exactly like one about an underlined sentence: count to it, then map it the same way. A question about **several underlined portions taken together** asks what the portions share: name the job they do as a group, not the job of any one of them.

❖ Step 3. Match in halves.

Now read the choices. Almost every choice in these questions has two parts, and a wrong answer often gets one part right. So test each part separately:

Function: the job and the link. — Is the job right (example, contrast, reason, limit)? Is the link right: does the choice point to the right part of the text, and describe that part truly? (When a choice names no other part, check that it describes the underlined part truly.)

Structure: every move, in order. — Does the first move match your map? The second? The third? A choice with a perfect first half is still wrong if a later move isn't in the text.

Wrong answers fail in six familiar ways. Learn their names, and you'll start to spot them quickly:

Outside it — a job or a link the text never has: a comparison it doesn't make, a criticism it doesn't offer, a study it doesn't mention. Along with misreads (next), it is the most common wrong answer, about a third of all wrong choices (and the most common in function questions), but it is seldom the hardest one to resist.

Misreads — the text's own content, bent: the right people in the wrong relationship, a hope turned into a plan, one group's view handed to another. It is about three wrong choices in ten in function questions and nearly half in structure questions, and it is the most tempting by far: by our count, the hardest wrong answer to resist is a misreading in half of the official questions.

Wrong part — a description of a different part of the text, often an accurate one: usually the sentence just before or just after the underlined one, or another part of the same sentence. This is the trap that belongs to function questions: about one wrong choice in eight, and, by our count, the most tempting choice in 21% of function questions.

Reverses it — the right part, with the relationship flipped: *supports* for *challenges*, *likens* for *contrasts*, the claim mistaken for the example. About one wrong choice in ten.

Wrong job — the right part doing the wrong thing: *questions* when the sentence only describes, *urges* when it only reports, *defines* when it raises a problem. About one wrong choice in ten in function questions, and rare in structure questions.

Too far — a job pushed past what the text supports: *proves* for *suggests*, *all* for *some*, *primary* for *one of several*. It is rare.

Matching words prove nothing here. In the official questions, the right answer and the wrong ones borrow the passage's words at almost exactly the same rate: in both, a little more than a fifth of the words that carry meaning come from the passage. And a choice that repeats what the underlined words say can still be wrong, because the question asks what they *do*. When two choices both look good, go back to your map and ask: **which one names this part's job, pointed at the right neighbor?**

One more habit, for the hardest questions. Hard choices are long, and they often come in two parts, the second introduced by *that* or *which*: *It describes an approach that, according to the text,* … Often more than one first half is accurate, and the second halves decide. So **read hard choices from the back**: find the part after *that*, *then*, or *in order to*, and test it first.

Recap: The 3-Step Strategy

Here are the three steps in one place. The worked examples label each step with its short name.

Step 1 · Map — Give every sentence a job.

Step 2 · Name — Function: say the part's job and what it points to. Structure: read your map as one sentence.

Step 3 · Match — Test each choice in halves: the job and the link; every move, in order.

The first example has the simplest job of all: a sentence that gives an example. Watch how much its neighbors matter.

SAT Example 1 · The Example

When a word passes from one language into another, its meaning often drifts along the way. The English word "ketchup," for instance, probably comes from *kê-tsiap*, a term in the Hokkien language of southeastern China for a sauce made from fermented fish. British traders encountered the sauce in Southeast Asia in the late 1600s, and English cooks soon began making their own versions from ingredients such as mushrooms, walnuts, and oysters. Tomatoes did not become the usual base until the 1800s, long after the word had settled into English.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined sentence in the text as a whole?

A) It explains why English cooks replaced fish with ingredients such as mushrooms and walnuts.

B) It offers an example that supports the claim made in the first sentence.

C) It identifies the period when tomatoes became the main ingredient in ketchup.

D) It questions the idea that borrowed words tend to change their meanings.

Step 1 · Map **Claim → example → more of the example → more of the example.** The first sentence makes a general claim: borrowed words drift in meaning. The underlined sentence starts one case, flagged by *for instance*. The last two sentences follow that case forward in time, from British traders to English cooks to tomatoes; the pointer *the sauce* ties them back to it.

Step 2 · Name *It gives an example of the claim in the first sentence.* The neighbor that sets the job is the sentence before it, and the signal is *for instance*.

Step 3 · Match **→ B is correct.** The job: "offers an example" is *for instance*. The link: "the claim made in the first sentence" is the claim about drifting meanings, and the example supports it, since a word for a fish sauce now names a tomato sauce.

A — outside it: the text says English cooks used mushrooms, walnuts, and oysters but never says why. And that is the third sentence, not the underlined one.

C — wrong part, and the most tempting choice: the text does say when tomatoes took over, but in its last sentence. The underlined sentence is about where the word came from.

D — reverses it: the underlined sentence supports the claim that borrowed words change meaning. It doesn't question it.

Official practice. QB 590f0ad2, QB 2ec0e43e, QB 74446089, QB cef79fb9 (OG Test 7, harder Module 2, Q6), OG Test 9, Module 1, Q5, and, in a story, QB d168e7c5.

An example looks back to a claim. A common view looks forward, to the sentences that knock it down. When the underlined sentence comes first, read the rest of the text before you name its job.

SAT Example 2 · The View the Text Corrects

For much of the twentieth century, books, including school textbooks, repeated the claim that the Great Wall of China is the only human-made structure visible from space. Astronauts who have looked for it tell a different story. When Yang Liwei became China's first astronaut in 2003, he reported that he had not been able to see the wall at all. The problem is not the wall's length, which runs to thousands of kilometers, but its width: most sections are less than ten meters across, and they are built of stone and earth close in color to the land around them. Large airports and the lights of cities, by contrast, are easy to pick out.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined sentence in the text as a whole?

A) It states a conclusion that Yang Liwei set out to confirm during his spaceflight.

B) It explains why the Great Wall is difficult to see from orbit.

C) It presents a popular belief that the rest of the text calls into question.

D) It describes how the Great Wall came to stretch for thousands of kilometers.

Step 1 · Map **Common view → turn → evidence → reason → contrast.** The underlined first sentence gives a claim that people repeated for decades. The second sentence turns against it ("tell a different story"). The third gives evidence (Yang Liwei saw nothing), the fourth gives the reason, spelled out after a colon (the wall is long but narrow, and close in color to the land around it), and the last offers a contrast (airports and city lights stand out).

Step 2 · Name *It presents the belief that the rest of the text argues against.* This job is set by what comes after it: every sentence that follows argues against it.

Step 3 · Match **→ C is correct.** The job: "presents a popular belief" is "books, including school textbooks, repeated the claim." The link: "the rest of the text calls into question" is the astronauts' "different story."

A — misreads, and the most tempting choice: Yang Liwei does appear later, but the text never says he set out to test the claim, only that he reported not seeing the wall. And the underlined sentence isn't a conclusion; it is the belief his report undercuts.

B — wrong part: the reason the wall is hard to see comes in the fourth sentence ("its width"), not in the underlined one.

D — outside it: the text mentions the wall's length but never how it was built.

Official practice. OG Test 7, Module 1, Q5; QB dbb56a02; and QB 1f2d6173 (OG Test 6, harder Module 2, Q6). For an opening question that the text then sets against a different approach: QB ca50de52.

❖ When the underlined part sits in the middle of a description, its neighbors are full of true details, and the wrong answers borrow them. This is where the wrong-part trap does its damage.

SAT Example 3 · The Elaboration and Its Neighbors

Weaver ants, which live in the treetops of tropical Asia, Africa, and Australia, build their nests from living leaves. First, rows of workers grip the edge of one leaf in their jaws and pull it toward another; where the gap is too wide for a single ant, several ants link their bodies into a living chain to span it. Other workers then carry the colony's larvae to the seam and gently tap them with their antennae, so that each larva releases a thread of silk that glues the leaves together. Adult weaver ants cannot produce silk, so the colony depends on its young for this final step.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined portion in the text as a whole?

A) It explains how the colony's larvae contribute to building the nest.

B) It compares the nests of weaver ants with those of ants that nest underground.

C) It notes that adult weaver ants are unable to produce silk themselves.

D) It describes how the workers bring the edges of two leaves together.

Step 1 · Map **Background → first step (pulling leaves together) → second step (gluing them with silk) → why the young are needed.** The underlined portion is the end of the second step, and the pointer *this final step* in the last sentence looks back to it.

Step 2 · Name Ask what the underlined portion adds to its own sentence. The sentence says the workers tap the larvae; the portion says what the tapping accomplishes: each larva releases silk that glues the leaves. *It explains how the larvae help build the nest.*

Step 3 · Match **→ A is correct.** The job: "explains how" is the portion's *so that*, which gives the result of the tapping. The link: "the colony's larvae contribute to building the nest" is the silk "that glues the leaves together."

B — outside it: no other kind of ant, and no underground nest, appears in the text.

C — wrong part: adult weaver ants really can't produce silk, but that is the point of the next sentence. The underlined portion is about what the larvae do, not what the adults can't.

D — wrong part, and the most tempting choice: the text does describe workers pulling the edges of leaves together, but in the sentence before. That step comes first; the underlined portion belongs to the step that follows it.

Official practice. QB 422c5068, QB 8bc66f89, and OG Test 4, easier Module 2, Q7.

❖ Hard function questions look like the next example: long choices, each with two parts joined by *that* or *which*. Read them from the back.

SAT Example 4 · The Reason Behind a New Method

To study the health of wild whales, researchers have long relied on biopsy darts: fired from a boat, a dart removes a small plug of skin and blubber that can be analyzed in a laboratory. Getting close enough to dart a whale can disturb the animal, however, so in the 2010s the research group Ocean Alliance began testing a gentler approach. The group's drones, nicknamed SnotBots, fly through the cloud of mist that a whale breathes out when it surfaces and catch the droplets in open dishes. That mist carries DNA, hormones, and microbes from the whale's lungs and airways, giving researchers a record of its health without anyone touching the animal.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined portion in the text as a whole?

A) It describes a weakness of the drone method that the researchers had to overcome before they could use it.

B) It identifies a drawback of biopsy darts that the researchers overcame by firing the darts from farther away.

C) It introduces the cloud of mist that a whale breathes out, which carries DNA and hormones from its lungs.

D) It points out a drawback of a familiar method, one that helps explain why researchers tried a different approach.

Step 1 · Map **Familiar method → its drawback → a new method → how it works → what it yields.** The first sentence describes biopsy darts. The underlined portion raises a problem with them ("however"). The rest of its sentence, introduced by *so*, says what the problem led to: a gentler approach. The last two sentences describe the drones and what the mist contains.

Step 2 · Name *It gives a drawback of darting that led researchers to try drones.* It has two links: back to the dart method, and forward, through *so*, to the new approach.

Step 3 · Match **→ D is correct.** Read it from the back. The second part, "helps explain why researchers tried a different approach," is "so … Ocean Alliance began testing a gentler approach." The first part, "a drawback of a familiar method," is the disturbance that darting can cause. Choices A, B, and D all begin with a drawback of some method; only the back halves tell them apart.

A — misreads: the weakness in the underlined portion belongs to the darts, not the drones, and the text never says the researchers had a problem to solve before using the drones. The choice hands the old method's problem to the new one.

B — outside it, and the most tempting choice: its first part is exactly right, since darting does have a drawback. But read the back: the text never says anyone fixed the darts. The researchers turned to drones instead.

C — wrong part: the mist and what it carries come in the last two sentences. The underlined portion is about darting.

Official practice. QB de059199, QB 662ebff2 (OG Test 9, Module 1, Q8), QB 153aaae2, and QB a2f64e58. For a problem that the rest of the text tries to solve: QB e818241b.

❖ Literary texts (stories, plays, poems, and memoirs) get function questions too, more than a quarter of the official ones. The jobs are the same: a sentence in a novel can give an example, elaborate, or qualify. In the next example the underlined portion qualifies, which means it places a limit on what was just said.

SAT Example 5 · The Qualification

The following text is from Booth Tarkington's 1918 novel *The Magnificent Ambersons*. The Ambersons are a wealthy family in a growing Midwestern town. "Magnificent Lorenzo" is Lorenzo de' Medici, a famously rich ruler of Florence in the 1400s.

Major Amberson had "made a fortune" in 1873, when other people were losing fortunes, and the magnificence of the Ambersons began then. Magnificence, like the size of a fortune, is always comparative, as even Magnificent Lorenzo may now perceive, if he has happened to haunt New York in 1916; and the

Ambersons were magnificent in their day and place. Their splendour lasted throughout all the years that saw their Midland town spread and darken into a city, but reached its topmost during the period when every prosperous family with children kept a Newfoundland dog.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined portion in the text as a whole?

A) It suggests that the Ambersons were even wealthier than the richest families in New York.

B) It qualifies the description of the Ambersons as magnificent by noting that such splendor is relative.

C) It notes that Major Amberson made his fortune at a time when others were losing theirs.

D) It reveals the narrator's envy of the wealth that the Ambersons enjoyed.

Step 1 · Map **Claim (the Ambersons' magnificence began with the fortune) → qualification → the claim restated with the limit → elaboration (how long the splendor lasted).** The first sentence calls the Ambersons magnificent. The underlined portion stops to put a limit on that word, and the rest of its sentence, after the semicolon, restates the claim with the limit built in: "magnificent in their day and place."

Step 2 · Name *It limits "magnificence": splendor is splendor only by comparison.* The joke about Lorenzo makes the same point: even a famously rich ruler of Renaissance Florence might look modest beside the New York of 1916.

Step 3 · Match **→ B is correct.** The job: "qualifies … by noting that such splendor is relative" is "always comparative." The link: "the description of the Ambersons as magnificent" is "the magnificence of the Ambersons" in the sentence before.

A — reverses it, and the most tempting choice, because New York is named. But New York is the measure that makes all such splendor look small; the Ambersons were magnificent only "in their day and place."

C — wrong part: the Major did make his fortune "when other people were losing fortunes," but that is the sentence before. The underlined portion doesn't mention the Major or 1873; it comments on the word "magnificence."

D — wrong job: the portion makes a general point about magnificence. It doesn't reveal the narrator's feelings, and nothing in the text expresses envy.

Official practice. For a qualification: QB df46a2ee, QB 0f2933b9, and QB e23f50b9 (OG Test 6, Module 1, Q6). For a sentence in a story that reveals a character: QB 5336f2e4 (OG Test 8, harder Module 2, Q5) and QB 39857700 (OG Test 10, harder Module 2, Q6).

- Punctuation can set the job, too. Remember the colon signal from Step 2: what comes right after a colon explains what stands before it. So when the underlined part begins right after a colon, look to the left of the colon first.

SAT Example 6 · What the Colon Spells Out

Japanese train drivers and conductors follow a safety habit that can puzzle visitors: they point at signals and other key points on the job and call out what each one shows. The practice, known as *shisa kanko*, can look theatrical, but it has a practical purpose. In a 1994 study by Japan's Railway Technical Research Institute, workers asked to do a simple task made 2.38 errors per 100 actions when they took no special steps but only 0.38 when they both pointed and called, a reduction of almost 85 percent.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined portion in the text as a whole?

A) It presents evidence that the habit reduces workers' errors.

B) It explains why the habit makes workers less likely to make mistakes.

C) It compares the habit with safety practices on railways in other countries.

D) It spells out the safety habit that the first part of the sentence mentions.

Step 1 · Map **Practice → what it is → its purpose → evidence.** The first sentence names a safety habit and then, right after the colon, says what the habit is. The second sentence says it has a practical purpose, and the third gives the evidence: the 1994 study. Because the underlined portion begins right after a colon, it explains what stands before it.

Step 2 · Name *It spells out the safety habit named just before the colon.* Here the link is inside the portion's own sentence. Look to the left of the colon to see what the portion is about: "a safety habit that can puzzle visitors."

Step 3 · Match **→ D is correct.** The job: "spells out" is the colon's job, turning "a safety habit" into what the workers actually do, point and call. The link: "the safety habit that the first part of the sentence mentions" is the words before the colon.

A — wrong part: the evidence that the habit cuts errors is the 1994 study in the last sentence. The underlined portion only says what the workers do.

B — wrong job, and the most tempting choice, because the portion does describe the habit and the text does call its purpose practical. But the portion says what the habit is, not why it works. The text never explains why pointing and calling prevents mistakes, only that it does.

C — outside it: no other country's railways are mentioned.

Official practice. Right after a colon: QB 8bc66f89 (it explains how something happens), QB ac9a3a26 (it elaborates on a claim), and, in a novel, QB d168e7c5 (it gives examples).

❖ Now the whole text. For a structure question, Step 2 is nearly done once Step 1 is: read your map as one sentence, and match the choices move by move.

SAT Example 7 · Overall Structure: Two Moves

In 1900, the archaeologist Arthur Evans began excavating the ancient palace of Knossos on the island of Crete. Among his finds were thousands of clay tablets written in an unknown script, which he named Linear B. For half a century no one could read them, and many scholars, Evans among them, doubted that the language they recorded was Greek. In 1952, however, Michael Ventris, an English architect who had been fascinated by the script since boyhood, showed that it was: building on charts of related signs compiled by the American scholar Alice Kober, he demonstrated that Linear B recorded an early form of Greek.

Which choice best describes the overall structure of the text?

A) It describes an archaeological excavation, then lists the most important objects found there.

B) It presents a scholarly debate about an ancient script, then explains why the debate remains unsettled.

C) It describes a puzzle that went unsolved for decades, then explains how it was finally solved.

D) It compares two ancient writing systems, then explains which of them is older.

Step 1 · Map **Discovery → puzzle (no one could read the tablets, and many doubted the language was Greek) → solution (Ventris).** The signal is *however*, together with the jump to 1952: after half a century of doubt, the puzzle is solved.

Step 2 · Name *First it describes a script no one could read, then how someone finally read it.*

Step 3 · Match **→ C is correct.** The first move: "a puzzle that went unsolved for decades" is "For half a century no one could read them." The second move: "how it was finally solved" is Ventris's demonstration.

A — misreads, and the most tempting choice, because its first move fits the first sentence. But the text doesn't go on to list Evans's finds; it names one, the tablets, and follows them for fifty years.

B — reverses it: the doubts were settled in 1952, when Ventris showed the script recorded Greek.

D — outside it: only one script is described, and its age is never compared with anything.

Official practice. Two moves: QB f6352bd3, QB b4d29611, QB 34d7bb25, QB 8963273a (OG Test 4, harder Module 2, Q7), and QB d69bc408 (OG Test 10, harder Module 2, Q5).

❖ Hard structure questions add a third move. Their choices sometimes describe the first two moves in different words, and then the last move decides, so read the choices from the back.

SAT Example 8 · Overall Structure: Three Moves

Since Charles Darwin, biologists have used the peacock's enormous, eye-spotted train as a textbook example of sexual selection: the train is costly to grow and to carry, the reasoning goes, so it must persist because peahens prefer males with the most impressive ones. A 1991 study by Marion Petrie and colleagues seemed to confirm this, finding that males with more eyespots in a free-ranging English population mated more often. But when Mariko Takahashi and colleagues watched a feral population in Japan for seven years, they found that the number of eyespots did not predict which males succeeded with females.

Which choice best describes the overall structure of the text?

A) It presents a long-standing explanation for a trait, describes a study that supported it, and then reports a later study whose results conflicted with it.

B) It introduces a widely accepted account of a feature, discusses research that backed that account, and then describes a later study that replicated the earlier findings.

C) It introduces two competing explanations for a trait, describes a study that favored one of them, and then explains why that study's methods were flawed.

D) It describes a trait that Darwin could not explain, presents two studies that disagreed about its cause, and then proposes a new explanation of its own.

Step 1 · Map **Long-standing explanation (sexual selection) → supporting study (Petrie, 1991) → conflicting study (Takahashi; *But*).** The pointer *this* in "seemed to confirm this" ties Petrie's study back to the explanation, and the colon in the first sentence introduces the reasoning behind it.

Step 2 · Name *First an explanation, then a study that supported it, then a later study that didn't.*

Step 3 · Match **→ A is correct.** Read it from the back. The third move, "a later study whose results conflicted with it," is "But … the number of eyespots did not predict which males succeeded." The first two moves are the Darwin-era explanation and Petrie's study, which "seemed to confirm" it.

B — reverses it, and the most tempting choice: its first two moves say the same thing as A's in different words. But the third move flips the result. Takahashi's findings conflicted with Petrie's; they didn't replicate them.

C — outside it: the text gives one explanation, not two competing ones, and it never says anyone's methods were flawed.

D — misreads: the explanation comes from Darwin's line of thinking, so it isn't a trait he couldn't explain, and the text proposes no new explanation of its own.

Official practice. Three moves: QB f61c22f3 (OG Test 5, harder Module 2, Q7), QB 4ed09415, QB 6ae393f7, QB 5127fc1e (OG Test 8, Module 1, Q8), and OG Test 6, easier Module 2, Q6.

- ❖ Eight examples, one method. Each time, the right answer named a job and fit it to the right part of the text, and each time a wrong answer was waiting for the reader who skipped a step: the true detail from a neighboring sentence, the fix the text never mentions, the third move flipped at the end. Map the text, name the job, and match the choices in halves.

Comprehensive Drill: Module 1

Now put it all together. Here are twenty questions at Module 1 level: fourteen function questions (one of them about a first sentence, and one about two underlined portions taken together) and six overall structure questions, mixed the way the test mixes them. Each question is modeled on an official question from the Official Guide practice tests (the same tests you'll find in Bluebook) or from the College Board's Question Bank: the same skeleton, meaning the same kind of question, the same job for the underlined part, and the same pattern of wrong answers, built on a different subject. Every literary excerpt is word for word from the published text; words in square brackets are glosses. Work each one through the three steps: Map, Name, Match. To keep pace with the real test (about 71 seconds a question), give yourself 24 minutes.

Question 1

For centuries, Europeans could only guess where storks, swallows, and other birds went when they vanished each autumn. Some naturalists believed that these birds did not travel far at all but spent the cold months hidden nearby, perhaps asleep in the mud at the bottoms of ponds. Then, in 1822, a white stork was shot near the village of Klütz, in what is now northern Germany, with a long spear stuck through its neck. The spear had come from central Africa, which meant that the stork had flown there and back with the weapon lodged in its body.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined sentence in the text as a whole?

A) It explains how naturalists first learned that some birds fly to Africa in winter.

B) It presents a belief about birds that the discovery described later in the text challenges.

C) It explains why naturalists found it difficult to study birds in the mud at the bottoms of ponds.

D) It explains why the stork was able to survive with a spear in its neck.

Question 2

In the late 1700s, most American farmers still broke up their fields with heavy wooden plows. Charles Newbold of New Jersey patented a plow made of cast iron in 1797, but many farmers refused to try it, partly because they believed that iron would poison the soil and encourage weeds to grow. Only in the 1810s and 1820s, after improved iron plows such as the one patented by Jethro Wood had proved themselves in the fields, did farmers begin to accept the new tool widely.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined portion in the text as a whole?

A) It explains how Jethro Wood improved on Newbold's design.

B) It notes how much Newbold charged for his plow.

C) It identifies the kinds of soil in which the first iron plows worked best.

D) It presents a belief that held back the spread of iron plows.

Question 3

The following text is from Arnold Bennett's 1908 novel *The Old Wives' Tale*. Every Thursday afternoon, Mr. Critchlow, a pharmacist, keeps company with his old friend John Baines, who is ill and confined to his bedroom. Both men are well known to their neighbors on St. Luke's Square.

How they spent the time did not seem to be certainly known, but the impression was that politics occupied them. Undoubtedly Mr. Critchlow was an extremely peculiar man. He was a man of habits. He must always have the same things for his tea. Black-currant jam, for instance. (He called it "preserve.") The idea of offering Mr. Critchlow a tea which did not comprise [include] black-currant jam was inconceivable by the intelligence of St. Luke's Square.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined sentence in the text as a whole?

A) It makes a claim about Mr. Critchlow that the next sentences back up with one of his habits.

B) It adds to the narrator's guess about how the two friends pass their Thursday afternoons.

C) It shifts the focus from Mr. Critchlow to the people who live on St. Luke's Square.

D) It suggests that Mr. Critchlow and John Baines often disagree about politics.

Question 4

The composer Antonio Salieri is often remembered as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's jealous rival, an image spread by Alexander Pushkin's 1830 play *Mozart and Salieri* and, much later, by the 1984 film *Amadeus*. In 2015, however, musicologist Timo Jouko Herrmann came across a short piece for voice and piano in the Czech Museum of Music in Prague. Dating from 1785, the piece had been composed jointly by Salieri, Mozart, and a third composer, which suggests that the two men were at least willing to work together.

Which choice best describes the overall structure of the text?

A) It contrasts how audiences in the 1780s and audiences today have judged Salieri's operas and other music.

B) It lists the pieces that Salieri and Mozart wrote

together, then explains why most of them were lost.

C) It explains where a familiar view of Salieri comes from, then describes a find that calls it into question.

D) It explains why Herrmann went to Prague, then describes what he hoped to find in the museum there.

Question 5

Most fish die when the shallow pools they live in dry up. A few species, however, survive the dry season by sealing themselves away until the rains return. As its pool shrinks, the African lungfish burrows into the soft mud and coats itself with mucus that hardens into a cocoon, leaving a small opening through which it breathes air. Its body processes slow dramatically, and it can stay this way for months, or even years. When the rains come back, the water softens the cocoon, and the fish swims free.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined sentence in the text as a whole?

A) It uses a single species to illustrate the survival method mentioned just before it.

B) It explains why lungfish are unable to escape to deeper water as their pools dry up.

C) It compares the lungfish's body with the bodies of other fish.

D) It explains what happens to the fish once the rains return to its pool.

Question 6

A murmuration is a huge flock of starlings that twists and turns through the evening sky as if it were a single animal. In a 2008 study, physicists Andrea Cavagna, Giorgio Parisi, and their colleagues filmed starling flocks over Rome with several cameras at once and worked out the positions of the birds in three dimensions. They found that each starling adjusts its flight to that of roughly seven of its nearest neighbors, no matter how close or far away those neighbors happen to be.

Which choice best describes the function of the first sentence in the text as a whole?

A) It identifies the city where the researchers filmed the starling flocks they studied.

B) It summarizes the main result of the study that the researchers published in 2008.

C) It offers a reason that starlings gather in such large flocks in the evening.

D) It explains a term for the kind of starling flock that the researchers went on to study.

Question 7

The following text is from Kate Douglas Wiggin's 1911 novel *Mother Carey's Chickens*. Kathleen and Nancy Carey are sisters in a large, close-knit family.

Kathleen had fair curls, skin like a rose, and delicate features; not a blemish to mar her exquisite prettiness! All colors became [looked good on] her; all hats suited her hair. She was the Carey beauty so long as Nancy remained out of sight, but the moment that young person appeared Kathleen left something to be desired. Nancy piqued [stirred people's interest]; Nancy sparkled; Nancy glowed; Nancy occasionally pouted and not infrequently blazed. Nancy's eyes had to be continually searched for news, both of herself and of the immediate world about her.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined sentence in the text as a whole?

A) It explains how Kathleen and Nancy felt about each other's looks.

B) It contrasts the two sisters, preparing for the details about Nancy that follow.

C) It introduces a conversation in which the two sisters compare their appearances.

D) It reveals that the family often argued over which of the sisters was prettier.

Question 8

In many of his prints, the Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai set scenes of ordinary working life against the calm, distant shape of Mount Fuji. In *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, from his series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* (published in the early 1830s), an enormous wave curls over three long boats whose crews bend low over their oars. Far behind them, the snowcapped mountain looks tiny and still, as if the struggle in front of it were only a passing moment.

Which choice best describes the overall structure of the text?

A) It compares Hokusai's prints with those of other artists, then explains why his became more famous.

B) It explains how Hokusai learned printmaking, then describes the first print he sold.

C) It makes a general point about Hokusai's prints, then describes one print that illustrates it.

D) It tells how one famous print was made, then lists the other prints in the series.

Question 9

Camera traps, cameras that take a picture whenever an animal moves in front of them, let researchers record animals that avoid people, since no one has to be nearby when the picture is taken. In the Annamite Mountains of Vietnam, conservationists have set camera traps to look for the saola, a shy forest relative of cattle so seldom seen that it is nicknamed the "Asian unicorn." In 2013, one of these cameras photographed a saola walking through the forest, the first confirmed record of the animal in Vietnam in fifteen years.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined sentence in the text as a whole?

A) It describes a feature of the Annamite Mountains that makes saola hard to find.

B) It explains how conservationists chose where in the

forest to set their cameras.

C) It shows how a research tool's advantage paid off in the search for one animal.

D) It reports the sighting that first led conservationists to search for the saola.

Question 10

Napoleon Bonaparte is often imagined as unusually short, but the historical record does not support that image. At his death, his height was recorded as five feet two inches in French units; because the French inch was longer than the English one, that equals about five feet six inches, or roughly 168 centimeters. While Napoleon was not a tall man, he was about average height for a Frenchman of his day. The myth owes much to British cartoonists, who liked to draw him as a tiny, furious figure.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined portion in the text as a whole?

A) It grants a point about Napoleon's height that the rest of the sentence then puts in context.

B) It points out an error in the measurement of Napoleon's height that was taken at his death.

C) It suggests that most Frenchmen of Napoleon's time were shorter than most Englishmen.

D) It reveals that Napoleon was sensitive about his height.

Question 11

The following text is from Thomas Hughes's 1857 novel *Tom Brown's School Days*. Tom once attended Rugby School, where Thomas Arnold was headmaster. Now a student at Oxford, he is on a summer fishing trip in Scotland with two college friends, one of whom is reading an old newspaper.

"Hullo, Brown! here's something for you," called out the reading man [the friend who was reading] next moment. "Why, your old master, Arnold of Rugby, is dead."

Tom's hand stopped half-way in his cast, and his line and flies went all tangling round and round his rod; you might have knocked him over with a feather. Neither of his companions took any notice of him luckily; and with a violent effort he set to work mechanically to disentangle his line.

Which choice best describes the overall structure of the text?

A) It describes a fishing trip, then explains why one character decides to go home early.

B) It presents an argument between two friends, then shows how one of them tries to make peace.

C) It explains how a character learned to fish, then shows how strongly some news affects him.

D) It reports news that a character receives, then shows how deeply the news shakes him.

Question 12

Surtsey, an island off the southern coast of Iceland, did not exist until 1963, when an undersea volcano began erupting and built it up out of the ocean. Because the island offered a rare chance to watch living things settle on brand-new land, it was quickly made a protected area, and only a few people with special permission, mostly scientists, may go ashore. Even they must take great care, so that they do not carry seeds or insects onto the island by accident. Over the decades, researchers have recorded the arrival of insects, seabirds, and dozens of kinds of plants, most of the plants carried in by wind, waves, or birds.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined portion in the text as a whole?

A) To describe how the island rose out of the ocean

B) To describe how seeds and insects first reached the island

C) To suggest that visitors have already harmed the island's plant life

D) To give the purpose of the care that visitors to the island must take

Question 13

In the third century BCE, the Greek scholar Eratosthenes wanted to know how big Earth is, but no one could travel all the way around the planet to measure it. Eratosthenes realized that he did not need to make the trip: by comparing the angle of the noon sun on the same summer day in two Egyptian cities, Syene and Alexandria, and using the distance between them, he could calculate the whole distance around Earth. At Syene, the sun was directly overhead, while at Alexandria it was about one-fiftieth of a circle away from overhead. His result was not far from the figure that scientists accept today.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined sentence in the text as a whole?

A) To reveal how close Eratosthenes's result came to today's accepted value

B) To explain how Eratosthenes got around an obstacle to measuring Earth

C) To describe the dangers of traveling long distances in the ancient world

D) To suggest that Eratosthenes doubted that Earth is round

Question 14

In the early 1900s, Henrietta Swan Leavitt worked at the Harvard College Observatory, studying photographs of the night sky. She identified more than a thousand stars whose brightness changes over time. In 1912 she reported that for one group of these stars, which brighten and dim in a steady rhythm, the brighter a star was, the longer each cycle took. Astronomers soon realized that this pattern could be used to measure the distances to faraway stars, and it later helped Edwin

Hubble show that the universe extends far beyond our own galaxy.

Which choice best describes the overall structure of the text?

A) It names a scientist, presents a pattern she discovered, and then describes what that discovery made possible.

B) It describes how certain stars change in brightness, explains why astronomers misunderstood the change, and then offers a corrected view.

C) It describes Leavitt's early life, explains how she became interested in astronomy, and then lists the stars she discovered.

D) It describes Leavitt's job at the observatory, presents the pattern she reported in 1912, and then explains why Hubble doubted it.

Question 15

The following text is from Lafcadio Hearn's 1894 essay "In a Japanese Garden." Hearn, a writer who taught English in western Japan, describes the garden of the old samurai house where he lived.

Those antique garden walls, high-mossed below their ruined coping [top layer] of tiles, seem to shut out even the murmur of the city's life. There are no sounds but the voices of birds, the shrilling of semi [cicadas], or, at long, lazy intervals, the solitary plash [splash] of a diving frog. Nay, those walls seclude me from much more than city streets. Outside them hums the changed Japan of telegraphs and newspapers and steamships; <u>within dwell the all-reposing peace of nature and the dreams of the sixteenth century</u>.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined portion in the text as a whole?

A) It sums up the sounds of birds, insects, and frogs that the text has already described.

B) It explains how the walls keep the noise of the city from reaching the garden.

C) It presents the garden as a peaceful retreat from the modernizing country beyond its walls.

D) It suggests that the writer wishes the garden were less cut off from the city outside.

Question 16

Archaeologists had long been puzzled by pottery fragments from early farming villages in what is now Poland: many came from vessels pierced with small holes, like a sieve. In 2012, a research team reported that chemical tests showed the fragments, which were about 7,000 years old, still held traces of milk fat. <u>Putting these clues together, the team concluded that the farmers had used the sieves to strain solid curds from liquid whey (in other words, to make cheese) and that the pieces were the earliest clear evidence of cheesemaking yet found.</u>

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined sentence in the text as a whole?

A) It describes how the pottery fragments were dug up and pieced back together.

B) It suggests that the vessels were used mainly to store milk rather than to strain it.

C) It identifies the village where the oldest of the vessels was made.

D) It explains what the holes and the milk fat, taken together, told the researchers.

Question 17

In recent years, a growing number of companies have begun raising lettuce, herbs, and other crops indoors, in stacked trays under LED lights. These vertical farms offer real advantages: they can harvest crops all year, close to the cities where the food is eaten, and because they recycle water, they use far less of it than field farms do. But they also face a serious challenge. Their lights and climate controls use enormous amounts of electricity, and high energy costs have driven several vertical-farming companies out of business.

Which choice best describes the overall structure of the text?

A) It describes a newly invented farming method, explains who invented it, and then predicts that it will replace field farming.

B) It introduces a growing kind of farming, notes what it does well, and then points out a weakness that has hurt it.

C) It traces how farming has changed over several centuries, and then explains why vertical farms appeared only recently.

D) It describes how lettuce is grown in stacked trays and then explains why LED lights are better for plants than sunlight.

Question 18

In 2005, researchers in Israel planted a date palm seed that archaeologists had found decades earlier in the ruins of Masada, an ancient fortress near the Dead Sea, and the seed sprouted. <u>The seed, which radiocarbon dating showed to be about 2,000 years old, had been kept dry the whole time, first in the desert ruins and then in a drawer.</u> The seedling, nicknamed Methuselah, therefore shows that under the right conditions, some seeds can stay alive far longer than scientists once thought possible.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined sentence in the text as a whole?

A) It gives facts about the seed that the last sentence uses to draw a broader conclusion.

B) It suggests that keeping the seed in a drawer may have damaged it.

C) It describes the conditions in which the seed was planted and cared for in 2005.

D) It explains how the seedling that grew from the seed came to be nicknamed Methuselah.

Question 19

The following text is from H. G. Wells's 1896 novel *The Wheels of Chance*. Mr. Hoopdriver, a young shop assistant from London, is spending his holiday on a bicycle tour of southern England. Here he is riding toward the village of Milford.

A finger-post [signpost] suddenly jumped out at him, vainly indicating an abrupt turn to the right, and Mr. Hoopdriver would have slowed up and read the inscription, but no!—the bicycle would not let him. The road dropped a little into Milford, and the thing shied, put down its head and bolted, and Mr. Hoopdriver only thought of the brake when the fingerpost was passed. Then to have recovered the point of intersection would have meant dismounting.

Which choice best describes the function of the underlined portions in the text as a whole?

A) To show that Mr. Hoopdriver would rather travel on horseback than by bicycle

B) To describe a horse that runs into Mr. Hoopdriver's path on the road to Milford

C) To stress how little control Mr. Hoopdriver has over his bicycle

D) To convey Mr. Hoopdriver's frustration with a road sign that gives confusing directions

Question 20

When London's Millennium Bridge, a footbridge over the River Thames, opened in June 2000, it began to sway from side to side under the crowds crossing it. Engineers traced the problem to the walkers themselves: as the bridge moved slightly, people adjusted their steps to keep their balance, and their footsteps fell into a shared rhythm that pushed the bridge even farther. Rather than rebuild the bridge, the engineers fitted it with dozens of dampers, devices that soak up motion much as a car's shock absorbers do. Since this work was finished in 2002, the bridge has stayed steady.

Which choice best describes the overall structure of the text?

A) It traces the history of a famous bridge, explains why it was built, and then argues that it should be replaced.

B) It describes a problem with a new bridge, explains what caused it, and then tells how engineers fixed it.

C) It compares two plans for fixing a bridge, explains why one was rejected, and then describes what the other cost.

D) It describes the crowds that crossed a new bridge, explains why they came, and then compares the bridge with others in London.