

TOEFL Reading Practice Paper

Question 1

Part of a passage: The stone was promptly dispatched to Cairo's Institute of Egypt for further study by Napoleon's scholars, where it was christened 'The Rosetta Stone', for obvious reasons. Although it quickly became clear that the same message was indeed engraved in three different languages, only the bottom script, in Greek, could be read. The top script consisted of fourteen rows of hieroglyphics, followed by thirty-two rows of an undecipherable Egyptian writing that was simply termed 'demotic'.

Question: The word promptly in the passage is closest in meaning to

- A. purportedly
- B. secretly
- C. forcefully
- D. hastily

Question 2

Part of a passage: Finally, for a fear to truly be a phobia, it must be recurring. That is, if the man on the plane had flown before without incident and continued to use planes after this one panic attack without experiencing further bouts of unreasonable fear, then he would not be said to be suffering from a phobia. A true aviophobic could never contemplate flying in any form without experiencing severe symptoms of acute nervousness. In this case, the man's single onset of severe panic would most likely be viewed as symptomatic of some other mental disorder, perhaps brought on by unrelated stresses in his life. Obviously, the fact that phobias are recurring fears, or rather, that they involve constant fear of the object of the phobia, should not be taken to mean that the fear can never be overcome. A person who is suffering from a phobia may, either through great effort of will, or, more likely, through a course of psychiatric treatment, conquer his phobia and cease to be frightened of whatever it was he was formerly afraid of.

Question: According to the author, in paragraph 4, what might be one cause of a single instance of a phobic-like episode?

- A. Seeing plane crashes on the news
- B. Watching too much violent television
- C. Possessing a desire for public attention
- D. Having too much stress in one's life

Question 3

Part of the passage: Thus, American slaves soon found that music was one of the few methods of expressing themselves that their masters would permit and even encourage, as many of the slave owners found it pleasant to have slaves who could play music for them in the evenings. However, the plantation owners naturally wished to listen to music from their own culture, as well as to what they considered slave work songs. As a result, many slaves learned to play Western instruments and began to pick up Western songs, such as European dance music. European dance music at that time was characterized by harmony, or the playing of notes simultaneously to create a pleasing sound, an element previously lacking in the slave songs. It did not take long for blacks to begin experimenting with ways in which harmonic elements could be fused with the more tribal rhythms of the music of their own culture. The result of these experiments was the first type of jazz, known as the blues. The blues took their name from the reliance on blue notes, which are notes that are played at a lower pitch than would normally be expected in classical European music.

Question: Why does the author mention European dance music in paragraph 2?

- A. To describe one influence that helped turn African slave songs into jazz

- B. To argue that European dance music was inferior to jazz's antecedents
- C. To provide an example of a type of music that contrasts sharply with jazz
- D. To explain why slave owners found the music of their slaves refreshing

Question 4

Part of a passage: Their demise also resulted in the extinction of a half-dozen species of forest insects and the severe crippling of other animal populations such as the wild turkey: these all relied on the American Chestnut as a source of habitat and food. Affected wildlife attempted to adapt to their disrupted environment by looking to other species of trees, such as the Acorn, and seed-bearing plants for food. This placed great ecological pressure on those species, as none could equal the American Chestnut in its ability to provide a consistently abundant crop of nuts. The problems the American Chestnut blight engendered thus show the ripple effects that can occur within any ecosystem when new elements are introduced in an unsound manner.

Question: According to paragraph 3, all of the following were results of the wide disappearance of American Chestnut trees EXCEPT:

- A. The loss of creatures who required the tree's resources for their survival.
- B. Overuse of other types of trees by wildlife attempting to compensate for the change.
- C. A reduction in the total output of harvested nut crops within many major American forests.
- D. Macro-changes to the environment in which the trees previously flourished.

Question 5

Part of a passage: Men are more likely to manifest recessive biological traits than women are, because some traits are what scientists call X-linked. This means that the genes responsible for expressing the recessive trait are found only on the X chromosome. **Men are much more likely to express these recessive traits, because the male genome consists of an X and a Y chromosome, whereas the female genome consists of two X chromosomes.** If the male X chromosome contains any genes capable of expressing recessive traits, those genes will therefore be free to manifest themselves, as there will be no corresponding genes to interfere with them.

Question: Which of the following best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence? Incorrect choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.

- A. The two X chromosomes in the female genome makes women more likely to express recessive traits than men because the male genome has two different chromosomes.
- B. The two different chromosomes in the male's genetic make-up, instead of the same two chromosomes in the female genome, makes men likely to have more dominant traits than women.
- C. Women are less likely than men to have recessive traits due to the differences between their genes.
- D. The male genome is comprised of an X and a Y chromosome which allows recessive traits to be more readily found in men than in women as the female genome has two X chromosomes.

Question 6

Part of a passage: The astrological nature of the Mayan use of astronomical data explains in part why so few written records exist of that data. The Mayans believed that the passage of the sun continued throughout the night, only, then, **it** was traveling through the underworld. This was believed to be a perilous journey, with many demonic figures lurking in the darkness, waiting to ambush the sun to prevent it from returning to the sky at dawn. .

Question: The word **it** in the passage refers to

- A. night
- B. sun

- C. passage
- D. data

Question 7

Part of a passage: Derived from the penicillium mold, penicillin is one of the most powerful antibacterial agents ever developed. Penicillin and its derivatives have saved countless millions of lives by reducing once lethal infections to the status of minor inconveniences. Countless others have kept limbs that once would have needed amputating to stop the spread of an infection because penicillin stopped that spread in its tracks. The history of the discovery of such a wondrous medicine is long and complicated, but the man who normally gets the credit for discovering it is Alexander Fleming, who published papers on penicillin in 1928. It is well-known that several others, including a French medical student and a Costa Rican scientist, had noted the mold's antibacterial properties prior to Fleming. However, it was Fleming who drew the attention of the Western scientific establishment to the mold, and whose work eventually led to penicillin being developed into a potent medicine.

Question: What can be inferred from paragraph 1?

- A. Mortality rates from infections are much lower today than they were in the 1920s.
- B. Penicillin has proven very useful but can also have potentially deadly side effects.
- C. Alexander Fleming was disorganized in several aspects of his professional life.
- D. A Costa Rican scientist should really get the credit for first discovering penicillin.

Question 8

Part of a passage: Their demise also resulted in the extinction of a half-dozen species of forest insects and the severe crippling of other animal populations such as the wild turkey: these all relied on the American Chestnut as a source of habitat and food. Affected wildlife attempted to adapt to their disrupted environment by looking to other species of trees, such as the Acorn, and seed-bearing plants for food. This placed great ecological pressure on those species, as none could equal the American Chestnut in its ability to provide a consistently abundant crop of nuts. The problems the American Chestnut blight engendered thus show the ripple effects that can occur within any ecosystem when new elements are introduced in an unsound manner.

Question: Look at the four squares that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the passage.

In fact, it is widely believed that the scope of its devastation far eclipses even that of the fungal disease, also accidentally introduced, that ravaged Dutch Elm trees across Europe and North America, from 1910 to 1928.

Where would it best fit?

Question 9

Technology is rapidly expanding the scope of capabilities for both professional and personal use; such is the case with smart phones. Professionals now have devices available to them capable of digital media, internet access, phone communication, multi-person scheduling and office tools for documents and presentations. Businesspeople that are often mobile may maximize the use of these critical features on smartphones. Individuals who simply enjoy the luxury of multi-function devices often use these devices for frivolous pursuits such as downloading catchy ringtones, instant messaging about the latest gossip and looking up the world record for most cans crushed on one's head during the Superbowl. This fusion of capabilities and increased availability of such devices could be a sign of a growing blend in society between work and personal life, or individuals could simply be taking a luxurious approach to their connectivity in personal lives.

The term “frivolous” implies that the author

- A. is fascinated by the endless capabilities on smart phones.
- B. hopes that technology ceases to expand its scope.
- C. believes that the average individual does not need a smartphone.
- D. has a smartphone.
- E. wants to see more developments added to smart phone technology.

Question 10

What is the purpose of the conclusion sentence?

- A. Draw a conclusion about what we know smartphones can do
- B. Assume where technology is headed and how it will affect society
- C. Comment on human connectivity through the use of smartphones
- D. Predict how the government will regulate and guide future technology
- E. Present two possible explanations for the growing popularity of smartphones

Question 11

But man is not destined to vanish. He can be killed, but he cannot be destroyed, because his soul is deathless and his spirit is irrepressible. Therefore, though the situation seems dark in the context of the confrontation between the superpowers, the silver lining is provided by the amazing phenomenon that the very nations which have spent incalculable resources and energy for the production of deadly weapons are desperately trying to find out how they might never be used. They threaten each other, intimidate each other and go to the brink, but before the total hour arrives they withdraw from the brink.

The main point from the author's view is that

- A. Man's soul and spirit can not be destroyed by superpowers.
- B. Man's destiny is not fully clear or visible.
- C. Man's soul and spirit are immortal.
- D. Man's safety is assured by the delicate balance of power in terms of nuclear weapons.
- E. Human society will survive despite the serious threat of total annihilation.

Question 12

The phrase 'Go to the brink' in the passage means

- A. Retreating from extreme danger.
- B. Declare war on each other.
- C. Advancing to the stage of war but not engaging in it.
- D. Negotiate for peace.
- E. Commit suicide.

Question 13

In the author's opinion

- A. Huge stockpiles of destructive weapons have so far saved mankind from a catastrophe.
- B. Superpowers have at last realized the need for abandoning the production of lethal weapons.
- C. Mankind is heading towards complete destruction.
- D. Nations in possession of huge stockpiles of lethal weapons are trying hard to avoid actual conflict.
- E. There is a silver lining over the production of deadly weapons.

Question 14

'Irrepressible' in the second line means

- A. incompatible
- B. strong
- C. oppressive
- D. unrestrainable
- E. unspirited

Question 15

Greek mythology is a vehicle that uses mythological characters and creatures to teach people about the dangers, beauties and possible outcomes of life. In many myths, characters face moral dilemmas involving honor and practicality. The protagonists of epics face creatures that represent values and challenges such as respect, temptation and redemption. How has Greek mythology inevitably evolved with time and new story tellers? Scholars that have interpreted Greek mythology seek to maintain the universal values conveyed in these stories, while ensuring the validity of adapting these stories to their own distinct cultures. It is up to each reader to seek their own truths and learn from epic Greek mythology as best they can.

According to the author's description, which of the following is most likely to be a message from Greek mythology?

- A. Love is difficult, but it will last if the lovers are meant to be together.
- B. Resisting temptation and immediate gratification will lead to ultimate success.
- C. It is important to keep track of your personal history.
- D. Passing down Greek mythology has taken on a new form since oral records faded.
- E. It is not the fastest, but the longest lasting that wins the race.