

SAT Writing and Language Practice Test 24

Set 1

I Object!

Crime stories are as old as narrative itself. Some of the earliest texts we have center on questions of 1 murder, theft, and other transgressions. Still, while people often remember the crimes and criminals themselves, typically these stories will revolve around a separate 2 issue, guilt, and innocence. Courtroom dramas in our own day attest to this correlative fascination.³

1.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. murder, theft, and, other transgressions.
- C. murder theft and other transgressions.
- D. murder: theft and other transgressions.

2.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. issue; guilt and innocence.
- C. issue: guilt and innocence.
- D. issue: guilt, and innocence.

3. Which of the following choices would most effectively conclude this paragraph and provide an effective transition into the next?

- A. The most famous courtroom drama of all time is probably *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
- B. Errol Morris has made many interesting films throughout his career.
- C. We all have our fascinations in life, and there's usually some TV show that lines up with these fascinations.
- D. One of the great modern examples of such a fascination is Errol Morris's famous documentary *The Thin Blue Line* (1988).

Morris's story takes up the real-life case of Randall Dale Adams, 4 a Texas police officer was killed by this Ohio man allegedly. Although the evidence in the trial was thin, Adams was sentenced to life in prison. Morris's film in a sense reopens the case, interviewing many of those involved: 5 many more people than just the defendant are involved in a case. All of the interviewees raise notable objections to Adams's murder charge, and the film concludes with a sobering message from the prosecutor's closing statement: the police are the "thin blue line" separating society from 6 anarchy. At least they should be, the film wants us to see, but should this separation come at the expense of a man's legal rights?

4.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. a man from Ohio who would be convicted of the murder of Texas police officer.
- C. a Texas police officer being killed by this Ohio man allegedly.
- D. a verdict of guilty was this Ohio man's fate for the murder of a Texas police officer.

5. Which of the following choices gives the most detailed explanation of the words those involved, which appear before the colon?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. witnesses, attorneys, detectives, and the judge who presided over the case.

- C. he couldn't interview the victim of the crime for obvious reasons.
- D. there is nothing that says those involved can't talk after the trial has concluded.

6. Which of the following alternatives to the underlined portion would be LEAST acceptable?

- A. lawlessness.
- B. chaos.
- C. tyranny.
- D. mayhem.

Within a year of the film's 1988 release, Adams's sentence was overturned. It's not hard to see that it was Morris's film that helped to build the appeals case. Such an event is remarkable, not only because of the relative rarity of a court overturning its verdict ⁷ (one that peaked in the year of Morris's film), but also because it was seemingly done outside of the courts.

The significance of *The Thin Blue Line* is again with us today with the podcast *Serial*, hosted by journalist Sarah Koenig. The podcast analyzes the records from the 1999 trial and conviction of Adnan Syed, a then-17-year-old high school student, who was convicted of killing his ex-girlfriend. ⁸ While Koenig's stated purpose is merely to understand the ins-and-outs of the trial, not necessarily to get Syed's sentence overturned, she does identify a degree of uncertainty about the trial's verdict. Unlike Morris, Koenig is not quite convinced of her subject's innocence as Morris was, but she is equally interested in how the legal system determines that guilt and innocence, often showing how decidedly extralegal matters can play a serious role.⁹

Figure 2C: Direct Appeal Reversal Rate
by Year of Review, 1973-1995

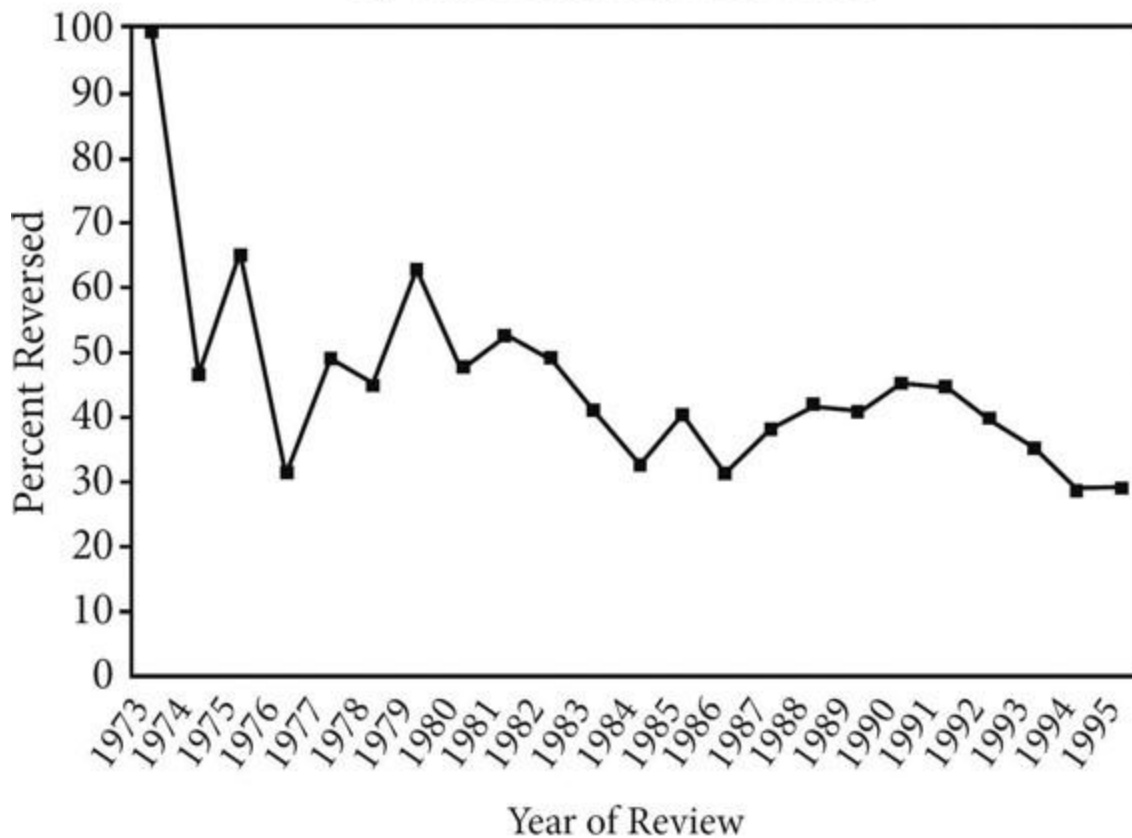


Image courtesy of Columbia Law School

7. Which of the following gives accurate information based on the graph?
- A. NO CHANGE
 - B. (the data do not account for repeated attempts to overturn verdicts),
 - C. (in 1989, the direct-appeal reversal rate was approximately 14%),
 - D. (one that actually trended downward in the years after Morris's film),
- 8.
- A. NO CHANGE
 - B. Koenig's stated purpose
 - C. Because Koenig's stated purpose
 - D. However, Koenig's stated purpose
9. The author is considering deleting the phrase as Morris was, placing the comma after the word innocence. Should the phrase be kept or deleted?
- A. Kept, because the contrast with Errol Morris's project is not clear without it.
 - B. Kept, because Koenig is clearly interested in duplicating Morris's work in the podcast format.
 - C. Deleted, because the information is given elsewhere in the sentence.

- D. Deleted, because it is not reasonable to suppose that a film and a podcast could be usefully compared.

Morris's film and 10 Koenig's podcast both raise some serious questions about the legal system. For instance, how conclusive does the evidence have to be to prove someone's guilt? And how can questions of innocence or guilt ever be determined by so many imperfect human actors? 11 They both remind us that even though justice itself may be blind, and the U.S. court system prides itself on legal objectivity, such a thing may not be possible, especially as it promises that all of those on trial are innocent until proven guilty.

10.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. the podcast of Koenig's
- C. the podcast Koenig is making
- D. Koenig's

11.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. Koenig and Morris
- C. The two
- D. DELETE the underlined portion (beginning the sentence at the word Both).

Set 2

And Justice for All

Her father got her the job. Amanda was between semesters at college, and her 1 work at the mall wouldn't do much for her when she got out of school. It was time to do something more serious, something that meant more to her. Many of her friends were getting internships in the city, working for this or that publishing house or TV studio. Amanda, however, wanted something different. She would start applying to law schools 2 soon and she wanted to know what the law looked like in action.

1.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. work, at the mall, wouldn't do much for her when
- C. work at the mall wouldn't do much for her, when
- D. work, at the mall, wouldn't do much for her, when

2.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. soon and,
- C. soon, and
- D. soon,

Fortunately, her dad knew someone from high school, a friend 3 named Ellen, who had then gone on to study at Duke University. It was a thankless job, and although the Department building itself covered almost one hundred acres (in New York City, there was an entire island devoted to it), no one paid the Department of Corrections much mind. Most people never come near a jail cell, so 4 it's easy for them to dismiss inmates as totally removed from society.

[1] At the Department, however, Amanda learned about prisoners' rights. [2] Or, by the same token, when was the use of force appropriate from the officers? [3] There is a clear provision in the Constitution that prohibits "cruel and unusual punishment." [4] The meaning of these four words 5 were nowhere more ambiguous than in prisons. [5] Everyone within these walls had been convicted of a crime and was now paying 6 they're debt to society, but how could a government ensure that the place would deliver the "reform" in a reformatory or the "penitence" in a penitentiary? [6] Should inmates with, for example, mental illnesses be treated differently from others?7

3. Which of the following true statements contains information most in keeping with the main idea of this passage?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. who had gone on to law school and now worked at the County Department of Corrections.
- C. with whom he had not spoken in twenty-five years, though with whom he still felt very close.
- D. DELETE the underlined portion.

4. Which of the following best concludes this paragraph by reinforcing ideas presented in this sentence and the preceding one?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. people often know literally nothing about prison life, though they are endlessly fascinated.
- C. movie studios are famous for their sordid but often wrong depictions of prison life.
- D. incarceration rates in the United States are some of the highest in the world.

5.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. have been
- C. are
- D. is

6.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. their
- C. there
- D. his or her

7. In the sequence of the paragraph, the best placement for sentence 2 would be

- A. where it is now.
- B. before sentence 1.
- C. after sentence 3.
- D. after sentence 6.

While Amanda did not gain any answers from her summer at the Department of Corrections, she 8 gathered together a whole new set of questions. She had uncovered questions and conundrums about the prison system itself, but she had begun to see prisoners' rights as central to the question of free rights as well. She began to wonder exactly what it was that a government owed its people and how much freedom was too much. Her internship that summer made her realize that politics and the law 9 was a living thing. As she applied to law schools the

following fall, Amanda wrote passionately about what she had uncovered. "Although law has long been considered a profession of privilege and prestige," she concluded her essay, "I have seen firsthand how it affects the lives of all of us. We may believe that we never come into contact with the law; however, it is written into everything around us, including how we see ourselves."

8.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. gathered up
- C. collected up
- D. gathered

9.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. were living things.
- C. was a thing that was alive.
- D. were things that were living.

10.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. law, however
- C. law, however;
- D. law, however,

11. Suppose the writer's goal had been to write an essay that criticizes the American justice system. Would this essay fulfill that goal?

- A. Yes, because it refers to much of what Amanda learns as "conundrums."
- B. Yes, because it shows that the U.S. justice system has some problems.
- C. No, because it tells the story of one person becoming interested in the justice system.
- D. No, because it suggests that working in the justice system inspired one person's entire career.