

Reading SAT Practice Test 12

Directions: *The SAT Reading test consists of five passages on a variety of topics. Each passage is followed by a series of 10 or 11 questions. Carefully read the passage that is provided and answer the multiple choice questions based on what is stated or implied. **The answers and explanations will be provided at the end of the test***

Questions 1–10 are based on the following passage.

This passage is adapted from Edith Wharton’s “The House of Mirth.”

Selden paused in surprise. In the afternoon rush of the Grand Central Station his eyes had been refreshed by the sight of Miss Lily Bart.

It was a Monday in early September, and he was returning to his work from a hurried dip into the country; but what was Miss Bart doing in town at that season? If she had appeared to be catching a train, he might have inferred that he had come on her in the act of transition between one and another of the country-houses which disputed her presence after the close of the Newport season; but her desultory air perplexed him. She stood apart from the crowd, letting it drift by her to the platform or the street, and wearing an air of irresolution which might, as he surmised, be the mask of a very definite purpose. It struck him at once that she was waiting for someone, but he hardly knew why the idea arrested him. There was nothing new about Lily Bart, yet he could never see her without a faint movement of interest: it was characteristic of her that she always roused speculation, that her simplest acts seemed the result of far-reaching intentions.

An impulse of curiosity made him turn out of his direct line to the door, and stroll past her. He knew that if she did not wish to be seen she would contrive to elude him; and it amused him to think of putting her skill to the test.

“Mr. Selden—what good luck!”

She came forward smiling, eager almost, in her resolve to intercept him. One or two persons, in brushing past them, lingered to look; for Miss Bart was a figure to arrest even the suburban traveller rushing to his last train.

Selden had never seen her more radiant. Her vivid head, relieved against the dull tints of the crowd, made her more conspicuous than in a ball-room, and under her dark hat and veil she regained the girlish smoothness, the purity of tint, that she was beginning to lose after eleven years of late hours and indefatigable dancing. Was it really eleven years, Selden found himself wondering, and had she indeed reached the nine-and-twentieth birthday with which her rivals credited her?

“What luck!” she repeated. “How nice of you to come to my rescue!”

He responded joyfully that to do so was his mission in life, and asked what form the rescue was to take.

“Oh, almost any—even to sitting on a bench and talking to me. One sits out a cotillion—why not sit out a train? It isn’t a bit hotter here than in Mrs. Van Osburgh’s conservatory—and some of the women are not a bit uglier.” She broke off, laughing, to explain that she had come up to town from Tuxedo, on her way to the Gus Trenors’ at Bellomont, and had missed the three-fifteen train to Rhinebeck. “And there isn’t another till half-past five.” She consulted the little jewelled watch among her laces. “Just two hours to wait. And I don’t know what to do with myself. My maid came up this morning to do some shopping for me, and was to go on to Bellomont at one o’clock, and my aunt’s house is closed, and I don’t know a soul in town.” She glanced plaintively about the station. “It IS hotter than Mrs. Van Osburgh’s, after all. If you can spare the time, do take me somewhere for a breath of air.”

He declared himself entirely at her disposal: the adventure struck him as diverting. As a spectator, he had always enjoyed Lily Bart; and his course lay so far out of her orbit that it amused him to be drawn for a moment into the sudden intimacy which her proposal implied.

“Shall we go over to Sherry’s for a cup of tea?”

She smiled assentingly, and then made a slight grimace.

“So many people come up to town on a Monday—one is sure to meet a lot of bores. I’m as old as the hills, of course, and it ought not to make any difference; but if I’m old enough, you’re not,” she objected gaily. “I’m dying for tea—but isn’t there a quieter place?”

He answered her smile, which rested on him vividly. Her discretions interested him almost as much as her imprudences: he was so sure that both were part of the same carefully-elaborated plan. In judging Miss Bart, he had always made use of the “argument from design.”

“The resources of New York are rather meagre,” he said; “but I’ll find a hansom first, and then we’ll invent something.” He led her through the throng of returning holiday-makers, past sallow-faced girls in preposterous hats, and flat-chested women struggling with paper bundles and palm-leaf fans. Was it possible that she belonged to the same race? The dinginess, the crudity of this average section of womanhood made him feel how highly specialized she was.

A rapid shower had cooled the air, and clouds still hung refreshingly over the moist street.

“How delicious! Let us walk a little,” she said as they emerged from the station.

They turned into Madison Avenue and began to stroll northward. As she moved beside him, with her long light step, Selden was conscious of

taking a luxurious pleasure in her nearness: in the modelling of her little ear, the crisp upward wave of her hair—was it ever so slightly brightened by art?—and the thick planting of her straight black lashes. Everything about her was at once vigorous and exquisite, at once strong and fine. He had a confused sense that she must have cost a great deal to make, that a great many dull and ugly people must, in some mysterious way, have been sacrificed to produce her. He was aware that the qualities distinguishing her from the herd of her sex were chiefly external: as though a fine glaze of beauty and fastidiousness had been applied to vulgar clay. Yet the analogy left him unsatisfied, for a coarse texture will not take a high finish; and was it not possible that the material was fine, but that circumstance had fashioned it into a futile shape?

Question 1

As used in paragraph 1, the word “refreshed” most nearly means

- A recreated.
- B reanimated.
- C repaired.
- D reinvigorated.

Question 2

In the context of the passage, the author’s use of the sentence, “There was nothing new about Lily Bart,” (paragraph 2) is primarily meant to convey the idea that

- A Lily Bart’s income doesn’t allow her to keep up with the latest fashions.
- B Lily Bart is twenty-nine years old, and older than most of Selden’s peers.
- C Selden and Lily have been acquaintances for some time, and Selden could read her behavior.

D Lily's manner and behavior has a timeless quality in Selden's eyes.

Question 3

The description in the second paragraph indicates that what Selden values most about Lily is her

- A physical attractiveness.
- B ability to incite curiosity.
- C kind and generous nature.
- D way of standing out in a crowd.

Question 4

Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

(Use the left arrow below to go back and review the previous question.)

- A Paragraph 2, Sentence 1 ("It was a Monday in early...in town at that season?").
- B Paragraph 2, Sentence 2 ("If she had appeared to be...desultory air perplexed him.").
- C Paragraph 2, Sentences 3–4 ("She stood apart from the...why the idea arrested him.").
- D Paragraph 2, Sentence 5 ("There was nothing new...far-reaching intentions.").

Question 5

The author includes the following detail: "it amused him to think of putting her skill to the test" (paragraph 3) in order to

- A indicate that Lily has some experience in avoiding people she does not want to talk to.
- B imply that Lily has had numerous suitors in the past.
- C reveal that Lily has snubbed Selden on previous occasions.

D show that Lily has a strong and stubborn sense of pride.

Question 6

What is implied by the author's inclusion of the detail, "she regained the girlish smoothness, the purity of tint, that she was beginning to lose after eleven years of late hours and indefatigable dancing" (paragraph 6)?

- A Though attractive, Lily Bart was not as energetic and youthful as she had once been.
- B Lily's skin and hair always looked very smooth, and today she looked no different.
- C Selden had not seen Lily for eleven years.
- D Lily had been participating in the social activities of high society for quite some time.

Question 7

The author's statement that, "his course lay so far out of her orbit," (paragraph 10) has mainly which effect?

- A It explains why Selden has not run into Lily in several years.
- B It describes how inferior Selden feels in relation to Lily.
- C It shows that they do not live in the same neighborhood in New York.
- D It reveals that they move in different social circles.

Question 8

Details from the passage imply that the Trenors are

- A members of Lily's social class.
- B personal friends of Selden.
- C New York acquaintances of both Lily and Selden.

D members of Lily's extended family.

Question 9

Why does Selden say, "The resources of New York are rather meagre... but I'll find a hansom first, and then we'll invent something" (paragraph 15)?

- A Selden is frustrated with the speed of the city's public transportation.
- B Selden is being playful and friendly for Lily's benefit.
- C Selden is confident in his ability to impress Lily.
- D There is nowhere close by where they can have tea.

Question 10

Over the course of the passage, the main focus of the narrative shifts from the

- A curiosity that Selden has about Miss Lily Bart, who he has just run into, to a growing fondness he has for her beauty.
- B annoyance Selden feels about the volatile nature of Miss Lily Bart to the Selden's recognition of the common ground between them.
- C nervousness Selden feels regarding Miss Lily Bart to Selden's concern that his romantic feelings are not reciprocated.
- D value Selden attaches to the wonders of the natural world to a rejection of that sort of beauty in favor of human artistry.