

Writing and Language SAT Practice Test 34

The Bullroarer

Apart from the drum, there is perhaps no instrument more widespread among the world's ancient cultures than the curious noisemaker known severally as the "bullroarer," "rhombus," "tundun," or "whizzing-stick." In construction and operation it is perhaps only slightly more sophisticated than the simple percussive instruments of antiquity. It is suspicious that this instrument's significance to bygone peoples, much like the drum, was principally ritual, but perhaps also communicative. Even into modern times, tunduns were commonly used by the Australian Aboriginal cultures during hunting and gathering on the plains of Australia.

The oldest known bullroarers were discovered in the Ukraine, and are estimated to date from the Paleolithic era, approximately 17,000 B.C., but slightly more recent bullroarers have been discovered at archeological sites on every continent apart of Antarctica. Not surprisingly, the instrument exhibits a fairly wide variation in size, shape and ornamentation across history and cultures; but, the essential design is unmistakable: a wooden slat generally measuring between six to twenty-four inches in length affixed at one end to a length of twisted cord.

When one swings the slat by the cord in a circle around the head, the untwisting and re-twisting of the rope caused the slat to rotate laterally. The result is a unique vibrato sound that has been likened both to an animal's roar, and the approach of a distant thunderstorm. Pitch modulation can be achieved by altering the speed of rotation, or the length of the cord. The capacity for pitch modulation has lent credence to the idea that bullroarers could be used to communicate coded messages, with certain meanings attached to certain pitches. This would make bullroarers, like the telegraph machines of the modern era, that transmitted Morse code messages over long distances.

Though we can only speculate on its use among preliterate peoples, some historical anthropologists have suggested that the bullroarer's ubiquity across the world's ancient cultures suggests that its primary function must have been practical rather than ritual. The most common application cited by such scholars is that of long-distance communication. For the reason that no scientific studies on the subject have been published, many witnesses claim that the lower audible frequencies emitted by the bullroarer can travel impressive distances, with listeners clearly discerning its sound from up to two miles away. If indeed bullroarers can be used as musical instruments by early civilizations, then this usefulness would be a logical justification as to why this instrument was invented by the greatest musician in the history of the Aboriginal peoples.

12.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. rhombus,
- C. rhombus,
- D. rhombus

13.

A. NO CHANGE

B. suspected

C. suspect

D. superstitious

14. The writer would like to express that tunduns played a role in significant transitional life events in Aboriginal culture. Which choice best conveys this idea?

A. NO CHANGE

B. the daily preparation of meals.

C. rites of passage and burial ceremonies.

D. creating fires used for both cooking and protection.

15.

A. NO CHANGE

B. a part of

C. apart from

D. a part from

16.

A. NO CHANGE

B. had caused

C. have been causing

D. cause

17.

A. NO CHANGE

B. lended credibility

C. loaned credibility

D. lending credence

18.

A. NO CHANGE

B. This would make bullroarers like, the telegraph machines of the modern era that transmitted Morse code messages over long distances.

C. This would make bullroarers like the telegraph machines of the modern era, that transmitted Morse code messages, over long distances.

D. This would make bullroarers like the telegraph machines of the modern era that transmitted Morse code messages over long distances.

19.

A. NO CHANGE

B. it's

C. its'

D. their

20.

A. NO CHANGE

B. Because

C. Since

D. Though

21. Which choice is most consistent with the argument in the paragraph?

A. NO CHANGE

B. to communicate over long distances with relatively high accuracy,

C. to discover the breeding grounds of prey to be hunted,

D. to symbolize the vibrancy of Aboriginal musical expression,

22. The writer wants to express that there was NOT a single inventor of the bullroarer. Which choice best accomplishes this goal?

A. NO CHANGE

B. as a means to communicate easily between one group and another.

C. independently by prehistoric peoples all over the world.

D. for peoples in the Americas, Asia, and Australia.