

Reading SAT Practice Test 29

This passage is excerpted from the 1854 book *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau, which details Thoreau's experiences living in a cabin alone for two years.

I think that I love society as much as most,
and am ready enough to fasten myself like a
bloodsucker for the time to any full-blooded man
Line that comes in my way. I am naturally no hermit,
5 but might possibly sit out the sturdiest frequenter
of the bar-room, if my business called me thither.

I had three chairs in my house; one for
solitude, two for friendship, three for society.
When visitors came in larger and unexpected
10 numbers there was but the third chair for them
all, but they generally economized the room by
standing up. It is surprising how many great men
and women a small house will contain. I have
had twenty-five or thirty souls, with their bodies,
15 at once under my roof, and yet we often parted
without being aware that we had come very near
to one another.

One inconvenience I sometimes experienced
in so small a house, the difficulty of getting to
20 a sufficient distance from my guest when we
began to utter the big thoughts in big words. You
want room for your thoughts to get into sailing
trim and run a course or two before they make
their port. The bullet of your thought must have
25 overcome its lateral and ricochet motion and
fallen into its last and steady course before it
reaches the ear of the hearer, else it may plow
out again through the side of his head. Also,
our sentences wanted room to unfold and form
30 their columns in the interval. Individuals, like
nations, must have suitable broad and natural
boundaries, even a considerable neutral ground,
between them. I have found it a singular luxury
to talk across the pond to a companion on the
35 opposite side. In my house we were so near that
we could not begin to hear—we could not speak
low enough to be heard; as when you throw two
stones into calm water so near that they break
each other's undulations. As the conversation
40 began to assume a loftier and grander tone, we
gradually shoved our chairs farther apart till they

If one guest came he sometimes partook of my frugal meal, and it was no interruption to conversation to be stirring a hasty-pudding, or watching the rising and maturing of a loaf
55 of bread in the ashes, in the meanwhile. But if twenty came and sat in my house there was nothing said about dinner, though there might be bread enough for two, more than if eating were a forsaken habit; but we naturally practised
60 abstinence; and this was never felt to be an offence against hospitality, but the most proper and considerate course. The waste and decay of physical life, which so often needs repair, seemed miraculously retarded in such a case, and the vital
65 vigor stood its ground. I could entertain thus a thousand as well as twenty; and if any ever went away disappointed or hungry from my house when they found me at home, they may depend upon it that I sympathized with them at least. So
70 easy is it, though many housekeepers doubt it, to establish new and better customs in the place of the old. You need not rest your reputation on the dinners you give.

As for men, they will hardly fail one
75 anywhere. I had more visitors while I lived in the
woods than at any other period in my life; I mean
that I had some. I met several there under more
favorable circumstances than I could anywhere
else. But fewer came to see me on trivial business.
80 In this respect, my company was winnowed by
my mere distance from town. I had withdrawn so
far within the great ocean of solitude, into which
the rivers of society empty, that for the most part,
so far as my needs were concerned, only the finest
85 sediment was deposited around me.

1. The main narrative point of view of the passage is of

- A. a man adjusting to life in a big city after growing up on a farm.
- B. a discussion of visitors to a small house away from city life.
- C. a sailor discussing the pond on which he grew up and how it affected his friendships.
- D. a man discussing the potential of big thoughts and their need to be expressed.

2. The passage suggested which of the following about the author?

- A. He enjoyed living in the country near a pond.
- B. He had more visitors to his home in the country than at any other time in his life.
- C. He felt that having more than three people in his house was too many.
- D. He needed to throw dinner parties to entice guests to come from town to his home.

3. Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous answer?

- A. Lines 7-11 ("I had three...for them all")
 - B. Lines 33-35 ("I have found...opposite side")
 - C. Lines 72-73 ("You need...you give")
 - D. Lines 75-76 ("I had more...in my life")
4. As used in line 11, "economized" most nearly means

- A. wasted.
- B. used efficiently.
- C. squandered.
- D. purchased.

5. It can be inferred from the passage that "big thoughts" (line 21) must

- A. become violent before settling down.
- B. bounce around and break out of one's head.
- C. be mulled over and formulated before being heard.
- D. have time to move around before being heard.

6. In the context of the passage, the phrase "as when you throw two stones into calm water so near that they break each other's undulations" (lines 37-39) is best described as

- A. a reference to the author's childhood days when he threw stones into a lake.
 - B. an analogy used to elaborate on a previous statement.
 - C. a way to expand on the reasons national boundaries are always changing.
 - D. a reason that the author and his companion had to continually move their chairs to be heard.
7. As used in line 27, "plow" most nearly means

- A. push.
- B. furrow.
- C. cultivate.
- D. walk.

8. What happens when the author does not have enough food for his guests?

- A. He shares.
- B. He turns them away.
- C. He buys more food.
- D. They refrain from eating.

9. The passage suggests that housekeepers most likely

- A. are stuck in their ways and unable to change.
- B. feel that traditions should not change.
- C. believe there is a certain protocol that must be followed when hosting guests.
- D. feel that pudding and bread are not a suitable meal.

10. What does the author mean when he said that "only the finest sediment was deposited" (lines 84-85) on him?

- A. He was living far from town and his visitors were of a higher caliber.
- B. He was covered in a fine dust while living in the woods.
- C. The pond near his home frequently flooded, leaving sediment in his "best" room.
- D. Many people came to see him about the dirty business of trivial matters.

11. What choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

- A. Lines 48–50 ("a priceless...order")
- B. Lines 75-77 ("I had more...some")
- C. Lines 70–72 ("though many...old")
- D. Line 79 ("But fewer...business")