

ACT Reading Practice Paper 10

SET 1

DIRECTIONS: Each passage is followed by several questions. After reading a passage, choose the best answer to each question and fill in the corresponding oval on your answer document. You may refer to the passages as often as necessary.

PROSE FICTION: This passage is adapted from the novel *A Well-Worn Jacket* by Antonia Duke (© 2008 by Antonia Duke).

Monique was enjoying this afternoon more than she had anticipated. Often, the tryouts for the spring musical tested the limits of her patience and nerves, with one hopeful girl after the next taking turns strutting onto the tarnished wooden stage, 5 delivering a competent but uninspired version of some Rodgers & Hammerstein number, and then being politely excused by Mrs. Dominguez as the next name on the list was called.

However, this was to be Monique's third straight year in the musical, and the confidence that her seniority afforded her 10 around the more nervous newcomers allowed her to bask in the radiance of her own poise.

She had already sung her audition song an hour ago, commencing the day's ceremonies. This year, Monique used "God Bless the Child," a choice she found to be quite sophisticated 15 since Billie Holiday's version of it was familiar mostly to adults, and even then, mostly to adults of the previous generation. More importantly, it required a reserved performance, which Monique felt showcased her maturity, especially because most of the other auditioners chose songs that would show their enthusiasm, even 20 if it meant their technical mastery would not be on full display.

Normally, the first audition slot was dreaded by most. Mrs. Dominguez would ask if anyone wanted to volunteer to "get it over with," but no one would make a sound. Then, she would call the first name off her list and the room would drop into an 25 uncomfortably solemn silence as the first student walked nervously up to the stage. Monique often imagined during those moments that she was witness to a death-row inmate taking his inexorable march toward a quick curtain.

But not this year. Monique had decided to make a show
30 of her own self-confidence by volunteering to go first. Such a
defiantly fearless act, she had figured, would probably instill
even more fear into her competition because they would realize
that Monique had something they clearly lacked. Mrs. Dom-
inguez had seemed neither surprised nor charmed by Monique's
35 decision to go first. Although she was annoyed by Monique's
escalating arrogance, she also acknowledged that Monique was
one of the more talented actors and was probably correct in
assuming herself a shoo-in.

At this late stage of the afternoon, Monique felt like a mon-
40 arch, sitting in the back of the auditorium with her royal court
of friends and admirers. They took care to sit far enough away
from Mrs. Dominguez that they would not be caught in the act
of belittling the other students' auditions.

To Monique, the endless parade of aspirants who sang their
45 hearts out for three minutes each were like jesters performing
for her amusement. As Mrs. Dominguez read Esperanza Solito's
name off her list, Monique and her entourage prepared themselves
for a special treat.

Esperanza was one of the most awkward students at Thorn-
50 ton High. Her caramel-colored face was usually hidden behind
thick tortoise shell glasses. Her wavy black hair exploded off her
scalp like a snapshot of an atom bomb. She wore clothing that
looked like it had spent years in a musty attic. Understanding
her debased position on the social totem pole, Esperanza scur-
55 ried through the high school's hallways with her eyes looking
narrowly at the back of the person walking in front of her, trying
to disappear within the herd lest she be recognized by any mali-
cious onlookers as easy prey.

Esperanza had been sitting alone in the front row, paying little
60 attention to the other auditions, working on geometry homework
until her name was called. Shuffling her feet toward the center
of the stage, Esperanza did not look up until she was there, and
even then looked only at Mrs. Dominguez.

"Whenever you're ready," Mrs. Dominguez said politely,
65 sensing the potential for this audition to devolve into a painful
target of ridicule.

As Esperanza began the opening notes to “The Star Spangled Banner,” Monique and her friends looked at each other in total disbelief. Clearly, they thought, Esperanza had no theater pedigree, or she would never stoop to singing such a trite, formulaic song. Standing perfectly still, Esperanza moved methodically through the tune with little flair or emotion. However, the expectant smiles of mockery were quickly vanishing from the faces of all who listened.

Anticipating a tentative, mousy voice that would befit such a quirky presence as Esperanza’s, the audience instead heard an unusually smooth, rich tone with full command of the multiple registers that the national anthem’s melody requires. At the climactic “rocket’s red glare,” Esperanza’s voice filled the room with a calm resonance that forced one’s heart to lift within one’s chest as though some reluctant patriotism was determined to find its way out. The final phrase of the song, so often soaked in vibrato by melodramatic singers, was gently performed, with a touch that felt like a mother tucking in her baby to sleep.

Although Monique was loath to admit it and Esperanza was reluctant to want it, Esperanza had just set herself apart from the herd.

1. It can reasonably be inferred from the passage that Monique believed the song she chose for her audition:

- A. would be the most inspiring Rodgers & Hammerstein number she could choose.
- B. was the most sophisticated song in Billie Holiday’s repertoire.
- C. would likely be more recognizable to Monique’s parents than to her friends.
- D. would allow Monique to more effectively showcase her enthusiasm.

2. The passage initially portrays Monique and her friends as:

- F. concerned and nervous.
- G. confused and surprised.
- H. friendly and inclusive.
- J. aloof and disparaging.

3. According to the narrator, what did Esperanza do prior to singing “The Star Spangled Banner”?

- A. Looked only at Mrs. Dominguez

- B. Walked confidently up to the stage
- C. Watched the other auditions carefully
- D. Finished her geometry homework

4. The main purpose of the statement in line 29 is to:

- F. inform the reader that students' fears of going first were largely a thing of the past.
- G. present reasons for why this year's audition was the strangest yet.
- H. suggest that Monique's imagination no longer involved the same imagery.
- J. offer a contrast created by Monique's choice of audition slot.

5. It can be reasonably inferred from the passage that Esperanza Solito:

- A. was teased more than anyone else at her school.
- B. was not sitting near Monique and her friends during the auditions.
- C. had her audition immediately after Monique's audition.
- D. had previously explained her stage fright to Mrs. Dominguez.

6. According to the passage, Monique figured that volunteering to perform "God Bless the Child" as the first audition of the day would:

- F. bolster her confidence in her performance.
- G. make the other auditioners feel they could not compete with her.
- H. guarantee her a part in the play.
- J. impress and charm Mrs. Dominguez.

7. According to the passage, when Esperanza Solito got to the climax of "The Star Spangled Banner," she:

- A. raised her voice to emphasize the lines.
- B. demonstrated her patriotism.
- C. had a sudden bout of nerves.
- D. could be heard throughout the auditorium.

8. The passage states that Mrs. Dominguez suspected Esperanza's audition could be:

- F. vulnerable to ridicule.
- G. one of the most awkward.
- H. a special treat.

J. neither surprising nor charming.

9. Which of the following details is used in the passage to describe how Monique and her friends responded to hearing Esperanza's audition?

A. Their decision to sit comfortably behind Mrs. Dominguez

B. Their preconceived notions about Esperanza's voice

C. Their fading facial expressions of mockery

D. Their fondness for patriotic songs

10. The passage most strongly suggests that Esperanza's choice of audition material was:

F. good for a mousy voice.

G. often partly sung with vibrato.

H. an impressive, original choice.

J. something Monique's friends had anticipated.

SET 2

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from the article "Information Stupor-highway" by Cal Jergenson (© 2005 by Cal Jergenson).

Think about a remote control. Something so simple in function is seemingly capable of invisible magic to most of us. Only those with an engineering and electronics background probably have any real idea of *why* a remote control works. The rest of us
5 just assume it *should*. And the longer a given technology exists, the more we take it for granted.

Consider for a moment a split screen showing modern remote control users versus the first remote control users: the original users would be cautiously aiming the remote directly at
10 the television, reading the names of the buttons to find the right one, and deliberately pressing the button with a force that adds nothing to the effectiveness of the device. The modern users would be reclined on a sofa, pointing the remote any which way, and instinctively feeling for the button they desired, intuiting its
15 size, shape, and position on the remote.

Humans are known for being handy with tools, so it is no surprise that we get so comfortable with our technology. However, as we become increasingly comfortable with how to *use* new technologies, we become less aware of how they *work*.

20 Most people who use modern technology know nothing of its underlying science. They have spent neither mental nor financial resources on its development. And yet, rather than be humbled by its ingenuity, we consumers often become unfairly demanding of what our technology should do for us.

25 Many of the landmark inventions of the twentieth century followed predictable trajectories: initial versions of each technology (television, video games, computers, portable phones, etc.) succeeded in wowing the general public. Then, these wondrous novelties quickly became commonplace. Soon, the focus of
30 consumer attitudes toward these inventions changed from awed gratitude to discriminating preference.

Televisions needed to be bigger and have a higher resolution. Video games needed to be more realistic. Computers needed to be more powerful yet smaller in size. Cell phones needed to be
35 smaller yet capable of performing other tasks such as taking pictures, accessing the Internet, and even playing movies.

For children of the last twenty years born into this modern life, these technological marvels seem like elements of the periodic table: a given ingredient that is simply part of the universe.
40 Younger generations don't even try to conceive of life without modern conveniences. They do not appreciate the unprecedented technology that is in their possession; rather, they complain about the ways in which it fails to live up to ideal expectations.

"The videos that my phone can record are too pixelated."
45 "My digital video recorder at home doesn't allow me to program it from my computer at work." "It's taking too long for this interactive map to display on my portable GPS." "My robotic vacuum cleaner never manages to get the crumbs out of the cracks between the tiles."

50 If it sounds as though we're never satisfied, we aren't. Of course, our fussy complaints do actually motivate engineers to continually refine their products. After all, at the root of our tool-making instinct is the notion that "there must be a better way." Thus, the shortcomings of any current version of technology are
55 pinned on the limitations of its designers, and the expectation is that someone, somewhere is working on how to make the existing product even better.

The most dangerous extension of this mindset is its effect on our outlook on solving global climate problems. The firmly
60 substantiated problem of global warming threatens to quickly render the planet Earth inhospitable to most humans.

The solution? If you ask most people, you will hear that the solution resides in creating more efficient versions of our current technologies and devising alternative forms of energy
65 than those that burn fossil fuels.

Blindly confident that the creativity of human problem-solvers can wriggle us out of any dilemma, most people feel guiltless in continuing to live their lives with the assumption that someone else is working on these problems.

70 Unfortunately, having no real scientific perspective on the problems to be solved or the complexity of global weather patterns, most people are unduly optimistic about humanity's ability to think its way out of this problem. In a culture completely spoiled by the idea that technology can achieve whatever
75 goal it is tasked to perform, the idea that a global climate crisis may be beyond the reach of a clever technological solution is unthinkable.

Hence, the idea that we, as a culture, may need to reexamine our lifestyles and consumer habits is too alien to take seriously.
80 In contemporary society, the leaders who are most able to communicate the state of the world do not dare suggest to the public the unpopular ideas that "times will be rough," "sacrifices must be made," or "we may have to take some steps backwards."

As a result, the human race will continue defiantly with the
85 status quo and, ultimately, blame technology when problems arise. At that point, we'll all be searching for the "rewind" button on the remote control.

1. The passage states that original users of remote controls likely did all of the following EXCEPT:

- A. use more strength pressing the button than is necessary.
- B. aim the remote directly at the television.
- C. feel instinctively for the desired button.
- D. read the names of the buttons carefully.

2. In the passage, the author answers all of the following questions EXCEPT:

- F. How do most people think the global climate crisis should be solved?
- G. What was the most significant invention of the twentieth century?
- H. What idea underlies humanity's tool-making instinct?
- J. How do consumer attitudes about new technology change?

3. The descriptions offered by the author in the second paragraph (lines 7-15) are used to illustrate the concept that:

- A. consumer behavior toward new forms of technology changes over time.
- B. modern humans do not pay enough attention to instructions.
- C. the first consumers of new technology used new devices with ease and comfort.
- D. remote controls have become far more effective over the years.

4. The principal tone of the passage can best be described as:

- F. nostalgic.
- G. critical.
- H. sympathetic.
- J. frightened.

5. As it is used in line 79, the word *alien* most nearly means:

- A. extraterrestrial.
- B. repetitive.
- C. unusual.
- D. hilarious.

6. The author uses the statement "these technological marvels seem like elements of the periodic table" (lines 38-39) most nearly to mean that:

- F. children learn technology while they learn chemistry.
- G. consumers regard many technological inventions as unremarkable.

- H. space exploration gives us most of our technology.
- J. consumers complain when modern conveniences break down.

7. The phrase *the status quo* (line 85) most likely refers to:

- A. reexamining the scope and complexity of technology.
- B. making sacrifices to combat the global climate crisis.
- C. blaming technology for the problems we encounter.
- D. our current pattern of lifestyles and consumer habits.

8. One form of consumer behavior the author describes is a discriminating preference for:

- F. less realistic video games.
- G. needing to understand technology.
- H. more powerful computers.
- J. wanting to make sacrifices.

9. Among the following quotations from the passage, the one that best summarizes what the author sees as a potential danger is:

- A. the shortcomings of any current version of technology (line 54).
- B. devising alternative forms of energy (line 64).
- C. the complexity of global weather patterns (lines 71-72).
- D. our outlook on solving global climate problems (line 59).

10. The last paragraph differs from the first paragraph in that in the last paragraph the author:

- F. makes a prediction rather than making an observation.
- G. refutes a scientific theory.
- H. quotes experts to support his opinions.
- J. uses the word "we" instead of "I."