

## ACT Reading Practice Paper 14

Directions: The ACT Reading passage below is accompanied by several questions. After reading the passage, choose the best answer to each of the questions. You may refer to the passage as often as necessary.

### **SOCIAL STUDIES:**

The quality of almost pyramidal solidity characterizes another great enterprise of the Napoleonic period, the codification of French law. The difficulties of this undertaking consisted mainly in the enormous mass of decrees emanating from the National Assemblies, in political, civil, and criminal affairs. Many of those decrees, the offspring of a momentary enthusiasm, had found a place in the codes of laws which were then compiled; and yet sagacious observers knew that several of them warred against the instincts of the Gallic race. This conviction was summed up in the brief statement of the compilers of the new code, in which they appealed from the ideas of Rousseau to the customs of the past: "New theories are but the maxims of certain individuals: the old maxims represent the sense of centuries."

There was much force in this dictum. The overthrow of Feudalism and the old monarchy had not permanently altered the French nature. They were still the same joyous, artistic, clan-loving people whom the Latin historians described: and pride in the nation or the family was as closely linked with respect for a resolute champion of national and family interests as in the days of Caesar. Of this Roman or quasi-Gallic reaction Napoleon was to be the regulator; and no sphere of his activities bespeaks his unerring political sagacity more than his sifting of the old and the new in the great code which was afterwards to bear his name.

Old French law had been an inextricable labyrinth of laws and customs, mainly Roman and Frankish in origin, hopelessly tangled by feudal customs, provincial privileges, ecclesiastical rights, and the later undergrowth of royal decrees; and no part of the legislation of the revolutionists met with so little resistance as their root and branch destruction of this exasperating jungle. Their difficulties only began when they endeavored to apply the principles of the Rights of Man to political, civil, and criminal affairs.

The chief of these principles relating to criminal law were that law can only forbid actions that are harmful to society, and must only impose penalties that are strictly necessary. To these epoch-making pronouncements the Assembly added, in 1790, that crimes should be visited only on the guilty individual, not on the family; and that penalties must be proportioned to the offences. The last two of these principles had of late been flagrantly violated; but the general pacification of France now permitted a calm consideration of the whole question of criminal law, and of its application to normal conditions.

#### Question 1

The author of the passage would likely agree with all of the following statements EXCEPT:

- A The old code had an abundance of inefficient and contradictory decrees.
- B The abundance of turmoil under Napoleon's rule allowed for the Rights of Man to be adopted.
- C The National Assembly was both a fount of needless bureaucracy and considered reform.

- D The compilers of the new code understood the need to appeal to French cultural identity.

Question 2

The phrase, “warred against” in the first paragraph most nearly means:

- A fought.  
B embittered.  
C belied.  
D opposed.

Question 3

The primary purpose of this passage is to:

- A question the efficacy of the pyramidal solidity model.  
B review the individual Rights of Man utilized in the new code.  
C praise Napoleon’s unerring political sagacity in reforming French criminal law.  
D explain the challenges Napoleon faced in codifying French law.

Question 4

Why does the author mention Caesar in the second paragraph?

- A To compare Napoleon to one of his great forebears.  
B To reveal an aspect of the French character Napoleon utilized.  
C To describe the foundational characteristics of the Gallic people.  
D To emphasize the impact Roman law had on the development of the code.

Question 5

It can be inferred that the author of the passage believed the old code to be flawed because of its:

- A bloated inefficiency.
- B refusal to adopt the Rights of Man.
- C strict adherence to feudal customs.
- D lack of innovation.

Question 6

What is the function of the third paragraph?

- A Describe the manner in which the law was codified.
- B Outline the conditions prior to the codification.
- C Emphasize the Roman and Gallic influences on French law.
- D Explain the principles of the new code that related to criminal law.

Question 7

The phrase “root and branch destruction of this exasperating jungle” is an example of a:

- A metaphor.
- B simile.
- C onomatopoeia.
- D personification.

Question 8

It can be inferred from the passage that a “dictum” is:

- A a type of law.
- B a theory of government.
- C a formal pronouncement.

D a deeply-held prejudice.

#### Question 9

What was added to the law in 1790, according to the passage?

- A Citizens accused of crimes have a right to defend themselves.
- B Defendants are innocent until proven guilty.
- C All non-citizens deserve a fair trial.
- D Punishment should fit the crime.

#### Question 10

It can be inferred from the passage that chronologically (from past to present) Gallic law was influenced by:

- A the Romans, the Assembly, Feudalism.
- B the Romans, the Monarchy, the Assembly.
- C Feudalism, the Franks, the Monarchy.
- D the Franks, Feudalism, the Assembly.

### **HUMANITIES:**

Certain reviewers believe that the novel *Madame Bovary*, an example of a well-crafted and provoking book, has an unusual and subversive theme that undermines its own medium: in short, these critics say that Flaubert's remarkable piece of fiction is in fact a cautionary tale about the dangers of reading novels. As evidence, they point to its unsympathetic protagonist, Emma Bovary, who lives in books, romanticizing the simplest aspects of daily life—eating rich food, buying expensive clothing—as well as her relationships. Constantly dissatisfied with real life, she becomes cruel, dull-witted,

and shortsighted, caring only about immediate physical gratification and material possessions. Her fantasies lead to her downfall; her relationship with her well-meaning but naïve husband Charles gradually disintegrates, her two adulterous affairs with Leon and Rodolfo end in disaster, her constant borrowing leads her family to financial ruin, and her desire to die in a gloriously dramatic fashion leads instead to an unexpectedly agonizing three days of death throes. She expects too much from life, and is punished horribly for it.

But is this undercurrent an essential theme in the novel, or simply a byproduct of character and plot? Are we really to assume that Flaubert thought the novel so dangerous that he wrote a virtual manifesto on the evils of losing oneself in fiction? If this is really the case, why would he choose to disseminate this message in the very medium he so despised (and, in fact, continued to work in for the rest of his life)?

Certainly Emma's flawed personality, as well as her literary obsession, contributes to her downfall, but it is interesting to note that no other character in the novel reads habitually for pleasure. In fact, Charles spends the bulk of the novel engaged in the mundane activities of daily life: running a business, tending to family members, maintaining the household. He is naïve, true, but happy, at least until Emma's penchant for romance begins to interfere with his responsibilities. Therefore, there really are no other appropriate characters with whom to compare her, although we can point out that the novel's non-reading population tends to be a fairly socially responsible group. (It is also interesting to note that Flaubert hardly uses the sort of clinical, dispassionate language you might expect to see in such a novel; for example, even the most stolid characters are prone to "exclaiming" and "crying" their dialogue.) Perhaps

Madame Bovary, then, was not meant to be a criticism of fiction itself, but a caution against allowing suggestible characters like Emma to have access to novels. The permissive environment in the Bovarys' household contributes to their downfall and social ruin; the characters' unwillingness to check Emma's passions (and even their ignorance of the existence of such a problem) leads to the disintegration of their family.

#### Question 1

The second paragraph implies which of the following with its questions?

- A The inability of Flaubert to escape his romantic leanings.
- B The failure of Emma to recognize and overcome her flaws.
- C The possible contradictory relationship between Flaubert's message and his medium.
- D The belief that Flaubert's novel was meant to be a treatise against overly romantic language.

#### Question 2

The author's discussion of "theme" in the second paragraph is most consistent with which of the following statements?

- A By definition, themes are an inherently important, even essential, part of a well-crafted novel.
- B Flaubert did not see the inconsistency in writing about the dangers of reading novels within a novel.
- C Nineteenth-century French novelists were often inconsistent in their examination of themes.
- D If Charles had interfered with Emma's literary obsession, he could have avoided his family's downfall.

#### Question 3

The author mentions "mundane activities of daily life" primarily in order to:

- A downplay the idea that Emma was justified in fantasizing constantly.
- B explain Flaubert's simultaneous attraction to and repulsion by the arts.

- C provide an example of typical daily activities in a nineteenth-century French household.
- D emphasize that Charles did not read habitually for pleasure by listing his typical daily activities.

#### Question 4

In the final paragraph, the author gives examples of how Flaubert used dialogue in order to:

- A prove that Flaubert himself approved of overly romantic characters.
- B illustrate Flaubert's use of hyperbolic language in a novel that supposedly decries romanticism.
- C suggest that Flaubert may have been unaware of his contradictory use of language.
- D demonstrate the romantic leanings of 19th-century French authors in general.

#### Question 5

The "permissive environment" is most accurately paralleled by which of the following situations?

- A A college student who becomes so obsessed with video games that his schoolwork begins to suffer.
- B An employer overlooking an employee's excessive time off and the resulting loss of productivity.
- C A moviegoer who sees five movies a day.
- D A man who golfs constantly.

#### Question 6

The word "passions" in the passage most nearly means:

- A romantic relationships.
- B tantrums.
- C obsessions.
- D biases.

Question 7

The tone of the passage can best be described as:

- A epistolary.
- B skeptical.
- C unsympathetic.
- D balanced.

Question 8

The primary purpose of this passage is to:

- A review common preconceptions plaguing literary criticism.
- B explore tangential opinions regarding a minor work of fiction.
- C reinterpret a certain interpretation of a classic novel.
- D categorize the personality of Flaubert's most famous heroine.

Question 9

Which of the following does the author describe as personality traits of Emma Bovary?

- I. imaginative
- II. restless
- III. spendthrift

- A I and II only.
- B II and III only.
- C I and III only.
- D I, II, and III.

Question 10

According to the passage, which of the following did NOT lead to Emma Bovary's downfall?

- A Her multiple love affairs.
- B Her poor financial investments.
- C Her self-absorption.
- D Her passionate nature.