SAT Timed Practice*: Reading

*These practice questions are designed to be taken within the specified time period without interruption in order to simulate an actual SAT section as much as possible.
1. Some critics suggest that literature leaves us ------- from the ills of society.
   (A) benevolent  
   (B) skeptical  
   (C) quixotic  
   (D) prosperous  
   (E) pragmatic

2. If you’re having trouble sleeping, be aware that the use of sleeping pills may -------.
   (A) insufficient  
   (B) perilous  
   (C) widespread  
   (D) beneficial  
   (E) habitual

3. Now that the company is aware of the buying power of teens, its advertising department is working ------- to ------- the decisions of this market.
   (A) cautiously … deny  
   (B) lackadaisically … impact  
   (C) assiduously … influence  
   (D) ardently … dissuade  
   (E) painstakingly … pique

4. Because the main course looked so -------, even the least finicky eaters were ------- to try it.
   (A) delectable … predisposed  
   (B) appetizing … reluctant  
   (C) unpalatable … eager  
   (D) insipid … loath  
   (E) aberrant … intrigued

5. The tiger cubs were not at all -------; in fact, they were as lovable as kittens.
   (A) frolicsome  
   (B) ferocious  
   (C) affectionate  
   (D) clamorous  
   (E) gigantic

6. Although the physics text was -------, the professor’s ------- lectures enabled me to pass the course.
   (A) ambiguous … pellucid  
   (B) opaque … rambling  
   (C) lucid … enigmatic  
   (D) cryptic … equivocal  
   (E) vague … tenebrous
Questions 7-10 are based on the following two reading passages.

**Passage One**
One section of our country believes slavery is right, and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong, and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute. The fugitive-slave clause of the Constitution, and the law for the suppression of the foreign slave trade, are each as well enforced, perhaps, as any law can ever be in a community where the moral sense of the people imperfectly supports the law itself. The great body of the people abide by the dry legal obligation in both cases, and a few break over in each. This, I think, cannot be perfectly cured; and it would be worse in both cases after the separation of the sections, than before. The foreign slave trade, now imperfectly suppressed, would be ultimately revived without restriction, in one section; while fugitive slaves, now only partially surrendered, would not be surrendered at all by the other.

**Passage Two**
So profoundly ignorant of the nature of slavery are many persons, that they are stubbornly incredulous whenever they read or listen to any recital of the cruelties which are daily inflicted on its victims. They do not deny that the slaves are held as property; but that terrible fact seems to convey to their minds no idea of injustice, exposure to outrage, or savage barbarity. Tell them of cruel scourging, of mutilations and brandings, of scenes of pollution and blood, of the banishment of all light and knowledge, and they affect to be greatly indignant at such enormous exaggerations, such wholesale misstatements, such abominable libels on the character of the southern planters!

7. What is the purpose of the first passage?
(A) to justify the decision of the Confederate states to secede from the Union
(B) to convince readers that separating the nation would only make slavery issues worse
(C) to point out that people around the nation have differing views regarding slavery
(D) to encourage people to obey the laws set forth by the Constitution
(E) to argue about whether slavery is right or wrong

8. What is the purpose of the second passage?
(A) to suggest that people who do not witness slavery first-hand are naïve to the severity of the problem
(B) to argue that people with little knowledge about slavery are ignorant
(C) to argue that accounts of the cruelties of slavery are greatly exaggerated
(D) to point out the atrocities of slavery
(E) to voice an opinion about the character of the southern planters

9. According to the author of the first passage, foreign slave trade goes on because
(A) there is no law against it
(B) citizens haven’t yet agreed on whether or not if should be allowed
(C) fugitive slaves are not fully surrendered
(D) local slave trade is illegal
(E) people who don’t morally support a law will not enforce it
10. Based on an examination of both passages, which of the following statements must be true?

(A) The author of the first passage is in favor of slavery.
(B) The author of the second passage is from a northern state.
(C) The second passage is more subjective than the first.
(D) Both passages are intended to put an end to slavery.
(E) Both passages contain primarily objective information.

Questions 11-17 are based on the following passage.

This passage is excerpted from a 1916 American novel. The setting is a small cabin on a mountainside, with no road or other houses visible.

From the little lean-to kitchen the sound of the sputtering suddenly ceased, and at the door appeared a pair of dark, wistful eyes.

“Daddy!” called the owner of the eyes. There was no answer.

“Father, are you there?” called the voice, more insistently.

From one of the bunks came a slight stir and a murmured word. At the sound the boy at the door leaped softly into the room and hurried to the bunk in the corner.

He was a slender lad with short, crisp curls at his ears, and the red of perfect health in his cheeks. His hands, slim, long, and with tapering fingers like a girl’s, reached forward eagerly.

“Daddy, come! I’ve done the bacon all myself, and the potatoes and the coffee, too. Quick, it’s all getting cold!”

Slowly, with the aid of the boy’s firm hands, the man pulled himself half to a sitting posture. His cheeks, like the boy’s, were red—but not with health. His eyes were a little wild, but his voice was low and very tender, like a caress.

“David—it’s my little son David!”

“Oh course it’s David! Who else should it be?” laughed the boy. “Come!” And he tugged at the man’s hands.

The man rose then, unsteadily, and by sheer will forced himself to stand upright. The wild look left his eyes, and the flush his cheeks. His face looked suddenly old and haggard. Yet with fairly sure steps he crossed the room and entered the little kitchen.

Half of the bacon was black; the other half was transparent and like tough jelly. The potatoes were soggy, and had the unmistakable taste that comes from a dish that has boiled dry. The coffee was lukewarm and muddy. Even the milk was sour.

David laughed a little ruefully.

“Things aren’t so nice as yours, father,” he apologized. “I’m afraid I’m nothing but a discord in that orchestra today! Somehow, some of the stove was hotter than the rest, and burnt up the bacon in spots; and all the water got out of the potatoes, too,—though that didn’t matter, for I just put more cold in. I forgot and left the milk in the sun, and it tastes bad now; but I’m sure next time it’ll be better—all of it.” The man smiled, but he shook his head sadly.

“But there ought not to be any ‘next time,’ David.”

“Why not? What do you mean? Aren’t you ever going to let me try again, father?” There was real distress in the boy’s voice.

The man hesitated. His lips parted with an indrawn breath, as if behind them lay a rush of words. But they closed abruptly, the words still unsaid. Then, very lightly, came these others:

“Well, son, this isn’t a very nice way to
treat your supper, is it? Now, if you please, I’ll take some of that bacon. I think I feel my appetite coming back.”

If the truant appetite “came back,” however, it could not have stayed; for the man ate but little. He frowned, too, as he saw how little the boy ate. He sat silent while his son cleared the food and dishes away, and he was still silent when, with the boy, he passed out of the house and walked to the little bench facing the west.

Unless it stormed very hard, David never went to bed without this last look at his “Silver Lake,” as he called the little sheet of water far down in the valley.

“Daddy, it’s gold tonight--all gold with the sun!” he cried rapturously, as his eyes fell upon his treasure. “Oh, daddy!”

It was a long-drawn cry of ecstasy, and hearing it, the man winced, as with sudden pain.

“Daddy, I’m going to play it--I’ve got to play it!” cried the boy, bounding toward the cabin. In a moment he had returned, violin at his chin.

The man watched and listened; and as he watched and listened, his face became a battleground whereon pride and fear, hope and despair, joy and sorrow, fought for the mastery.

It was no new thing for David to “play” the sunset. Always, when he was moved, David turned to his violin. Always in its quivering strings he found the means to say that which his tongue could not express.

Across the valley the grays and blues of the mountains had become all purples now. Above, the sky in one vast flame of crimson and gold, was a molten sea on which floated rose-pink cloud-boats. Below, the valley with its lake and river picked out in rose and gold against the shadowy greens of field and forest, seemed like some enchanted fairyland of loveliness. And all this was in David’s violin, and all this, too, was on David’s uplifted, rapturous face.

11. The author of this passage calls the boy’s eyes “wistful” (Paragraph 1/line 3) because he

(A) is wishfully yearning  
(B) is terribly afraid  
(C) is straining to see in the dark  
(D) has been crying  
(E) has poor vision

12. Which of the following does not provide evidence that the father is in poor health?

(A) His son awakens him for supper.  
(B) He winces with pain when his son cries out joyfully.  
(C) His cheeks are red, and his eyes are a little wild.  
(D) He silently looks at the lake with his son.  
(E) He enters the kitchen with fairly sure steps.

13. Based on its use in the passage, the word “ruefully” (Line 55) means

(A) sorrowfully  
(B) quietly  
(C) uncomfortably  
(D) excitedly  
(E) relieved

14. The father’s comment “I think I feel my appetite coming back” (Lines 85-86) serves to

(A) show that the father is now hungry  
(B) demonstrate the father’s desire to protect his son’s feelings  
(C) illustrate the father’s inconsistent personality  
(D) show that the father’s health is improving  
(E) suggest that the food tastes better than he expected
15. Which of the following does the author use as a metaphor to illustrate the father’s internal conflict?

(A) His face looked suddenly old and haggard.
(B) I’m nothing but a discord in that orchestra today!
(C) his voice was low and very tender, like a caress
(D) his face became a battleground
(E) the sky in one vast flame of crimson and gold, was a molten sea

16. Which of the following words best characterizes David?

(A) sullen
(B) defeated
(C) talented
(D) spoiled
(E) innocent

17. The mood of the passage can best be described as

(A) cheerful
(B) foreboding
(C) indignant
(D) regretful
(E) frustrated

Questions 18-24 are based on the following passage:

In this passage, an American from the early 1800s writes about his early experiences traveling abroad.

But Europe held forth the charms of storied and poetical association. There were to be seen the masterpieces of art, the refinements of highly-cultivated society, the quaint peculiarities of ancient and local custom. My native country was full of youthful promise: Europe was rich in the accumulated treasures of age. Her very ruins told the history of times gone by, and every mouldering stone was a chronicle. I longed to wander over the scenes of renowned achievement--to tread, as it were, in the footsteps of antiquity--to loiter about the ruined castle--to meditate on the falling tower--to escape, in short, from the commonplace realities of the present, and lose myself among the shadowy grandeurs of the past.

I had, beside all this, an earnest desire to see the great men of the earth. We have, it is true, our great men in America: not a city but has an ample share of them. I have mingled among them in my time, and been almost withered by the shade into which they cast me; for there is nothing so baleful to a small man as the shade of a great one, particularly the great man of a city. But I was anxious to see the great men of Europe; for I had read in the works of various philosophers, that all animals degenerated in America, and man among the number. A great man of Europe, thought I, must therefore be as superior to a great man of America, as a peak of the Alps to a highland of the Hudson; and in this idea I was confirmed, by observing the comparative importance and swelling magnitude of many English travellers among us, who, I was assured, were very little people in their own country. I will visit this land of wonders, thought I, and see the gigantic race from which I am degenerated.

It has been either my good or evil lot to have my roving passion gratified. I have wandered through different countries, and witnessed many of the shifting scenes of life. I cannot say that I have studied them with the eye of a philosopher; but rather with the sauntering gaze with which humble lovers of the picturesque stroll from the window of one print-shop to another; caught sometimes by the delineations of beauty, sometimes by the distortions of caricature, and sometimes by the loveliness of landscape. As it is the fashion for modern tourists to travel pencil in hand, and bring home their portfolios filled with sketches, I am disposed to get up a few for the entertainment of my friends. When, however, I look over the hints and memorandums I have taken down for the purpose, my heart almost fails me at finding how my idle humor has led me aside from the great objects studied by every regular traveler who would make a
book. I fear I shall give equal
disappointment with an unlucky landscape
painter, who had traveled on the continent,
but, following the bent of his vagrant
inclination, had sketched in nooks, and
corners, and by-places. His sketchbook was
accordingly crowded with cottages, and
landscapes, and obscure ruins; but he had
neglected to paint St. Peter’s, or the
Coliseum; the cascade of Terni, or the Bay
of Naples; and had not a single glacier or
volcano in his whole collection.

18. The author’s desire to go to Europe is based
on

(A) idealism kindled by the many books he
has read
(B) his desire to prove that Americans are not
inferior to Europeans
(C) his desire to elevate his position in
society
(D) skepticism promoted by his life in
America
(E) curiosity stemming from previous trips
abroad

19. The word “baleful” (line !!!) as it is used in
this passage means

(A) refreshing
(B) beneficial
(C) miserable
(D) evil
(E) understandable

20. Which of the following is not an example of
a poetic device used by the author of the
excerpt?

(A) every mouldering stone was a chronicle
(B) ruins told the history of times gone by
(C) great man of Europe … must therefore be
as superior to a great man of America, as
a peak of the Alps to highland of the
Hudson
(D) have studied them with the eye of a
philosopher
(E) sometimes by the loveliness of landscape

21. The author states that he “…observes the
comparative importance and swelling
magnitude of many English travelers among
us, who, I was assured, were very little
people in their own country…” This
comment serves to demonstrate

(A) the arrogance of the English
(B) the greatness of other men in Europe
(C) the author’s lack of confidence
(D) the scarcity of great men in America
(E) the insignificance of most Englishmen

22. In the last paragraph, the author claims that
his opportunity to travel has been a “good or
evil lot” because

(A) bad things happened during his travels
(B) he has come to question the world’s
perceptions of greatness
(C) he failed to visit the most important
sights in Europe
(D) he liked some aspects of his trip and
detest others
(E) he has mixed feelings about whether or
not he wants to return

23. The author compares himself to a landscape
painter who doesn’t paint the great
landmarks because

(A) he enjoys painting
(B) he has no artistic ability
(C) there are no great landscapes left to be
painted
(D) he feels he has wasted his time and failed
to see what he went to see
(E) he prefers to write about the simpler
pleasures of the countries he has visited
24. An important lesson that the author as yet to learn is that

(A) Europe isn’t as great as it seems 
(B) you never get a second change to do the right thing 
(C) greatness is in the eye of the beholder 
(D) no one wants to read stories about print-shops in small towns 
(E) he would have been better off staying at home
SAT Reading Timed Section: Answers and Explanations

**Answers**

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Explanations

1. C. In this sentence, we need a word that sums up the portion of the sentence following the comma. *Quixotic*, meaning idealistic without regard to practicality, does just that.

2. E. This sentence warns *(be aware)* readers of two negative effects of sleeping pills: They’re dangerous and they’re *[blank]*. Choices A, C, and D don’t work because they are not negative effects. Choice B means the same thing as dangerous and would therefore be redundant. Only choice E provides another effect of sleeping pills appropriate for a warning.

3. C. On the double-blank questions, remember to eliminate one blank at a time. The company wouldn’t work lackadaisically (or lazily), so eliminate B. They wouldn’t want to deny or dissuade the market, so eliminate A and D. You can pique someone’s interest, but you can’t pique a decision, so E doesn’t make sense.

4. D. Even the least finicky eaters wouldn’t be eager to eat something that looks unpalatable or intrigued to eat something that looks aberrant, so eliminate C and E. Nor would they be reluctant to eat something that looks appetizing, so eliminate B. However, even an eater who is not picky would be hesitant to eat something that looks tasteless, so D is the best choice.

5. B. The sentence calls for a characteristic that is opposite of lovable. Only ferocious fits the bill.

6. A. The word *although* in this sentence tells us we’re looking for opposites. If the professor’s lectures helped the speaker pass the course, then the lectures were clearer than the text. Hence, A is the only choice that works here.

7. B. Although the author does point out that people have different views (choice C), his main point in the paragraph is to argue that those differences will only be made worse if the nation separates.

8. A. The author does mention the atrocities of slavery but only as an illustration to make his main point about the naivety of people removed from the problem.

9. E. The author states directly that the law is enforced as well as any law can be “in a community where the moral sense of the people imperfectly supports the law itself.” In other words, if people don’t believe in the spirit of the law, they’re not going to work hard at enforcing it.

10. C. There is no question that the second passage contains more subjective information. It is full of opinion and charged language. Although choices A and B may be true, there is no evidence to support them. The purpose of the first passage, as addressed in question 7, is to discourage separation of the nation; therefore, choice D can’t be correct. Nor can choice E, since we have already established the fact that the second passage is subjective rather than objective.

11. A. You must read on further to determine how the boy feels here. He has tried so hard to prepare a meal and desperately wants his father to be pleased with it. The passage provides no evidence for the other choices.

12. D. Although the other choices all point to physical or emotional strain, a man need not be unhealthy to look silently at a lake.

13. A. The boy tries to laugh, but he feels sorrow because the entire meal is ruined. Also, he apologizes in the next paragraph. Choice C seems possible, but based on his attitude toward his father up to this point in the passage, we know that he feels comfortable around his father and just wants very much to please him.

14. B. It is necessary to look at the preceding paragraphs to understand the meaning of this line. The father holds back any comments that might hurt the boy’s feelings and “lightly” says he’s eager to eat some of his supper. The fact that he doesn’t eat much confirms that the comment is intended to the boy’s feelings.

15. D. Choices A and C are not metaphors, so they can be eliminated. Choices B and E, although metaphors, do not refer to any type of struggle on the father’s part. Choice D provides an outward sign of his internal struggle. His face is a battle ground as the battle is waged inside him.

16. E. David shows his innocence in many ways throughout the passage, especially in his joy and optimism in spite of the obvious undercurrent of sadness. The father has clearly protected his son from sorrow to the best of his ability.
17. **B.** Plenty of foreshadowing throughout the passage suggests that something bad will happen. Although the boy is cheerful, the reader realizes that it is only his innocence that allows him to feel this way.

18. **A.** In the first paragraph of the passage, the author speaks of the grand illusions he has of Europe. In the second paragraph, he mentions philosophical works that have lead him to believe in the grandeur of Europe.

19. **C.** The word baleful is used today to mean evil or sinister, but in the early 1800s it meant miserable as well. A close look at the context clues in the passage should make the meaning clear. Remember, in this section of the test, you will be asked to figure out the meanings of words as they are used in passages.

20. **D.** Although the author uses all of these lines, only choice D does not include a poetic device. Choice A is a metaphor; choice B is personification; choice C is a simile; and choice E is an example of alliteration.

21. **B.** The author reasons that, if these little men are so important, others in their country must be truly great. Don’t be tricked by choice A. As readers, we detect arrogance in the Englishmen he speaks about, but the naïve author is sincere not sarcastic.

22. **C.** Although it’s good that he was able to travel, he’s frustrated by the fact that he returned home without seeing what he set out to see.

23. **D.** Rather than taking in the great sights, he enjoyed the small towns. Once he returned home, however, his heart almost fails him when he realizes that he missed out on the sights of the “regular traveler.”

24. **C.** The things that author saw in his travels may not be considered important by “regular travelers,” but that doesn’t make them any less great. The author must learn that it’s okay to appreciate things that others deem unimportant.