

## Basic Information and Inferencing Questions

### Type 1: Factual Information Questions

These questions ask you to identify factual information that is explicitly stated in the passage. Factual Information questions can focus on facts, details, definitions, or other information presented by the author. They ask you to identify specific information that is typically mentioned only in part of the passage. They generally do not ask about general themes that the passage as a whole discusses. Often, the relevant information is in one or two sentences.

#### *How to Recognize Factual Information Questions*

Factual Information questions are often phrased in one of these ways:

- According to the paragraph, which of the following is true of X?
- The author's description of X mentions which of the following?
- According to the paragraph, X occurred because . . .
- According to the paragraph, X did Y because . . .
- According to the paragraph, why did X do Y?
- The author's description of X mentions which of the following?

#### *Tips for Factual Information Questions*

- You may need to refer back to the passage in order to know what exactly is said about the subject of the question. Since the question may be about a detail, you may not recall the detail from your first reading of the passage.
- Eliminate choices that present information that is contradicted in the passage.
- Do not select an answer just because it is mentioned in the passage. Your choice should answer the specific question that was asked.

#### **Example**

**PASSAGE EXCERPT:** “. . . Sculptures must, for example, be stable, which requires an understanding of the properties of mass, weight distribution, and stress. Paintings must have rigid stretchers so that the canvas will be taut, and the paint must not deteriorate, crack, or discolor. These are problems that must be overcome by the artist because they tend to intrude upon his or her conception of the work. For example, in the early Italian Renaissance, bronze statues of horses with a raised foreleg usually had a cannonball under that hoof. This was done because the cannonball was needed to support the weight of the leg. In other words, the demands of the laws of physics, not the sculptor's aesthetic intentions, placed the ball there. That this device was a necessary structural compromise is clear from the fact that the cannonball quickly disappeared when sculptors learned how to strengthen the internal structure of a statue with iron braces (iron being much stronger than bronze) . . .”

According to paragraph 2, sculptors in the Italian Renaissance stopped using cannonballs in bronze statues of horses because

- ☐ they began using a material that made the statues weigh less
- ☐ they found a way to strengthen the statues internally
- ☐ the aesthetic tastes of the public had changed over time
- ☐ the cannonballs added too much weight to the statues

**Explanation**

The question tells you to look for the answer in the excerpted paragraph, which in this case is paragraph 2. You do not need to skim the entire passage to find the relevant information.

Choice 1 says that sculptors stopped putting cannonballs under the raised legs of horses in statues because they learned how to make the statue weigh less and not require support for the leg. The passage does not mention making the statues weigh less; it says that sculptors learned a better way to support the weight. Choice 3 says that the change occurred only because people's taste changed, meaning that the cannonballs were never structurally necessary. That directly contradicts the passage. Choice 4 says that the cannonballs weakened the structure of the statues. This choice also contradicts the passage. Choice 2 correctly identifies the reason the passage gives for the change: sculptors developed a way to strengthen the statue from the inside, making the cannonballs physically unnecessary.

## Type 2: Negative Factual Information Questions

These questions ask you to verify what information is true and what information is NOT true or not included in the passage based on information that is explicitly stated in the passage. To answer this kind of question, first locate the relevant information in the passage. Then verify that three of the four answer choices are true and that the remaining choice is false. Remember, for this type of question, the correct answer is the one that is NOT true.

### *How to Recognize Negative Factual Information Questions*

You can recognize negative fact questions because the word “NOT” or “EXCEPT” appears in the question in capital letters.

- According to the passage, which of the following is NOT true of X?
- The author’s description of X mentions all of the following EXCEPT . . .

### *Tips for Negative Factual Information Questions*

- Usually a Negative Factual Information question requires you to check more of the passage than a Factual Information question. The three choices that are mentioned in the passage may be spread across a paragraph or several paragraphs.
- In Negative Factual Information questions, the correct answer either directly contradicts one or more statements in the passage or is not mentioned in the passage at all.
- After you finish a Negative Factual Information question, check your answer to make sure you have accurately understood the task.

## Example

**PASSAGE EXCERPT:** “The United States in the 1800s was full of practical, hardworking people who did not consider the arts—from theater to painting—useful occupations. In addition, the public’s attitude that European art was better than American art both discouraged and infuriated American artists. In the early 1900s there was a strong feeling among artists that the United States was long overdue in developing art that did not reproduce European traditions. Everybody agreed that the heart and soul of the new country should be reflected in its art. But opinions differed about what this art would be like and how it would develop.”

According to paragraph 1, all of the following were true of American art in the late 1800s and early 1900s EXCEPT:

- ☐ Most Americans thought art was unimportant.
- ☐ American art generally copied European styles and traditions.
- ☐ Most Americans considered American art inferior to European art.
- ☐ American art was very popular with European audiences.

### *Explanation*

Sometimes in Negative Factual Information questions, it is necessary to check the entire passage in order to make sure that your choice is not mentioned. However, in this example, the question is limited to one paragraph, so your answer should be based just on the information in that paragraph. Choice 1 is a restatement of the first sentence in the paragraph: since most Americans did not think that the arts were useful occupations, they considered them unimportant. Choice

2 makes the same point as the third sentence: “. . . the United States was long overdue in developing art that did not reproduce European traditions,” which means that up to this point in history, American art did reproduce European traditions. Choice 3 is a restatement of the second sentence in the paragraph: American artists were frustrated because of “the public’s attitude that European art was better than American art. . . .” Choice 4 is not mentioned anywhere in the paragraph. Because you are asked to identify the choice that is NOT mentioned in the passage or that contradicts the passage, the correct answer is choice 4.