**CRITICAL READING**

**REMEMBER**: Certain questions are easier and/or faster to answer. Instead of answering the questions sequentially, consider which questions you’re more likely to answer quickly and correctly.

**“Foes”**

-**Inferential** (“suggests,” “best illustrates,” “most likely”)

-**Cross-over questions** that compare Passage 1 with Passage 2 (these are often inferential as well – a double whammy!) – for example, “How would the critics in Passage 1 most likely respond to the students mentioned in Line 4-10 of Passage 2?”

-**Triple Statements** – not as common, but time consuming.

-**LEAST/EXCEPT** – time consuming, but you can still find evidence to rule out the other answers.

**“Friends”**

 **-Vocabulary in Context :** (in line \_\_\_, the word “\_\_\_” most nearly means..) – if you are short on time, these can be answered without reading the whole passage

-**Pinpointable** (gives you the line # where the answer is) – go back and pinpoint your answer to ensure accuracy

-**Fact questions** (“according to the passage” or “according to the author”)

-**Main Idea/Author’s Purpose** – Read the italics, topic sentences, and last sentence in the passage. This can be done quickly if time is short, so these are “go to” questions.

**Critical Reading – Tips:**

* Don't skip introductions to passages. **Read the *italics!***
* Read each passage and any accompanying information carefully. Follow the author's reasoning and be aware of features such as assumptions, attitudes, and tone.
* Mark the passages as you are reading, but don't spend too much time making notes.
* Read each question and all the answer choices carefully.
* When a question asks you to compare an aspect of a pair of passages, don't be misled by choices that are correct for only one of the two passages.
* Select the choice that best answers the question asked. Don't select a choice just because it is a true statement.

**PINPOINTING:**

1. Read the questions first (do NOT read the answers).
2. **PRE-PINPOINTING**: Mark the lines in the passage where the answers can be found according to the line numbers specified in the question. Mark 2 lines up and 2 lines down – sometimes the answers are in the surrounding area.
3. Read the passage – you can choose to read the whole passage and then answer, or you may choose to **CHUNK** the passage: Read until the end of the paragraph, then answer the questions pertaining to that part of the reading.
4. As you’re answering, go back and underline your evidence for your answer – this is **PINPOINTING**. This may slow you down at first, but it will increase your accuracy. **\*\*You’re score is better if you get 5 correct and omit 5, than if you get 5 correct and 5 incorrect.**

**Types of Passages:**

* Short Passages
* Long Passages
* Double Passages – Strategy:
* Pre-pinpoint Passage 1
* Read Passage 1
* Do Questions involving Passage 1 only
* Pre-Pinpoint passage 2
* Read Passage 2
* Answer questions on Passage 2
* Answer remaining questions (referring to both)

**Samples from:** <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html>

**Directions:**

The passage below is followed by questions based on its content; questions following a pair of related passages may also be based on the relationship between the paired passages. Answer the questions on the basis of what is stated or implied in the passage and in any introductory material that may be provided.

(Note: Passages on the PSAT/NMSQT are between 100 and 850 words long.)

*This passage is an excerpt from a work published in 2000 by a Chinese American writer.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Line |    | In kindergarten, I learned the Pledge of Allegiance. Or rather, I learned to imitate it. The words spilled out of my mouth in one long jumble, all slurred and sloppy. I'd stand tall and put my right hand over my  |
| 5 |  | heart, mumbling proudly. Even then, I understood that "'Merica" was my home-and that I was an American. Still, a flicker of doubt was ever present. If  |
| 10 |  | I were truly American, why did the other American people around me seem so sure I was foreign? By the time I was a teenager, I imagined that I was a "dual citizen" of both the United States and China.  |
| 15 |  | I had no idea what dual citizenship involved, or if it was even possible. No matter, I would be a citizen of the world. This was my fantasy. When I got to college, I decided to learn more about  |
| 20 |  | "where I came from" by taking classes in Asian history. I even studied Mandarin Chinese. This had the paradoxical effect of making me question my Chinese-ness. Other students, and even the teachers, expected me to spout perfectly  |
| 25 |  | accented Chinese. Instead I stumbled along as badly as the other American students next to me. Still my fantasy persisted; I thought I might "go back" to China, a place I had never been.  |
| 30 |  | President Richard Nixon's historic trip to China in February 1972 made a visit seem possible for me. That summer, China cracked open the "bamboo curtain" that separated it from the  |
| 35 |  | West, allowing a small group of Chinese American students to visit the country as a goodwill gesture to the United States. I desperately wanted to be one of them, and I put together a research proposal that got  |
| 40 |  | the support of my professors. With a special fellowship, I joined the group and became one of the first Americans, after Nixon, to enter "Red" China.  |
| 45 |  | In China I fit right in with the multitude. In the cities of Shanghai and Suzhou, where my parents were from, I saw my features everywhere. After years of not looking "American" to the "Americans" and not  |
| 50 |  | looking Chinese enough for the Cantonese who made up the majority of Chinese Americans, I suddenly found my face on every passerby. It was a revelation of sameness that I had never experienced at  |
| 55 |  | home. The feelings didn't last long. While in China, I visited my mother's eldest sister; they hadn't seen each other since 1949, the year of the  |
| 60 |  | Communist revolution in China, when my mother left with their middle sister on the last boat out of Shanghai. Using my elementary Chinese, I struggled to communicate with Auntie Li. My vocabulary  |
| 65 |  | was too limited and my idealism too thick to comprehend my family's suffering from the Cultural Revolution,\* still very much in progress. But girlish fun transcended language as my older cousins took me by  |
| 70 |  | the hand and dressed me in a khaki Mao suit, braiding my long hair in pigtails, just like the other young, unmarried Chinese women.  |
| 75 |  | All decked out like a freshly minted Red Guard in my new do, I passed for a local. Real Chinese stopped me on the street, to ask for directions, to ask where I got my tennis shoes, to complain about the long  |
| 80 |  | bus queues, to say any number of things to me. As soon as I opened my mouth to reply, my clumsy American accent infected the little Chinese I knew. My questioners knew immediately that I was a foreigner,  |
| 85 |  | a Westerner, an American, maybe even a spy-and they ran from me as fast as they could. I had an epiphany common to Asian Americans who visit their ancestral homelands. I realized that I didn't fit  |
| 90 |  | into Chinese society, that I could never be accepted there. If I didn't know it, the Chinese did: I belonged in America, not China.  |

\*During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese leaders used the Red Guard—young soldiers—to impose desired behaviors on members of Chinese society.

1. The passage as a whole suggests that becoming a ["citizen of the world"](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep/reading/read01.html#citizen) (line 17) might best be characterized as

**(A)** a worthwhile endeavor
**(B)** a painful reality
**(C)** a modest achievement
**(D)** an unrealistic goal
**(E)** an uncommon ambition

2. The author most likely cites the information in lines [75 - 81 ("All . . . to me")](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep/reading/read02.html#all54) in order to

**(A)**  suggest her preference for staying in China

**(B)**  point out her industriousness

**(C)**  demonstrate her acceptance of people who differed from her

**(D)**  illustrate the degree to which she appeared to be Chinese

**(E)**  show her deep appreciation of Chinese culture

3. Which of the following most directly calls into question the ["revelation" (line 53)](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep/reading/read03.html#revelation)?

**(A)** [The "feelings" (line 55)](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep/reading/read03.html#feelings)
**(B)** [The "revolution" (line 60)](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep/reading/read03.html#revolution)
**(C)** [The "idealism" (line 65)](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep/reading/read03.html#idealism)
**(D)** [The "girlish fun" (line 68)](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep/reading/read03.html#girlish)
**(E)** [The "epiphany" (line 87](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep/reading/read03.html#epiphany)

I remember the summer of 1940 when I first left here. After my final school year my days had been reduced to waiting, anticipating the preinduction physical for the year of compulsory service required of all physically fit seventeen and eighteen year olds, both men and women. Although I wanted the medical reports to declare me perfectly fit and would have felt inferior if they had not, I was not looking forward to upcoming camp life. Yet without any say in my future, all I hoped to know was where and when. Then the paralyzing uncertainty ended. My orders to report to a never-heard-of location in Czechoslovakia even kindled a spark of anticipation for traveling to a foreign country and moving toward new experiences, whatever they might be. I was assigned to a camp that was an agricultural teaching facility, where I was expected to learn to run a large rural household. Like me, most of the girls at the camp enjoyed the hearty meals and learned to ignore our servant status. After years of having subsisted on ration diets in the cities, we blossomed into robust young women whose physical well-being countered surges of hurt pride, resentment, and periods of homesickness. And so began just one of the many disjointed and unpredictable periods I endured before the subsiding waves of war swept me an ocean away.

4. The author uses the phrase ["disjointed and unpredictable"](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep/reading/read04.html#disjointed) to describe

**(A)** her infrequent reunions with her family
**(B)** her plans for her life after the war
**(C)** the varied situations she experienced during the war
**(D)** her prior experiences with foreign traveling
**(E)** her preparation for performing skilled labor

5. The passage indicates that if the author had failed the preinduction physical, she would most likely have felt

**(A)**  grateful for the excuse to spend more time with her family

**(B)**  wistful about having missed the opportunity to travel

**(C)**  upset that she was not classified as completely healthy

**(D)**  dejected because her friends would be leaving without her

**(E)**  unconcerned since she was already unable to control her destiny

...His name was Akaky Akakyevitch. No one has been able to remember when and how long ago he entered the department. However many directors and high officials of all sorts came and went, he was always seen in the same place, at the very same duty, so that they used to declare that he must have been born a perpetual titular councillor in uniform all complete and with a bald patch on his head. The porters, far from getting up from their seats when he came in, took no more notice of him than if a simple fly had flown across the vestibule. His superiors treated him with a sort of domineering chilliness. The head clerk's assistant used to throw papers under his nose without even saying "Copy this" or "Here is an interesting, nice little case," as is usually done in well-behaved offices. And he would take it, gazing only at the papers without looking to see who had put them there and whether he had the right to do so; he would take the papers and at once set to work to copy them. The young clerks made jokes about him to the best of their clerkly wit, and told before his face all sorts of stories of their own invention about him. They would enquire when the wedding was to take place, or would scatter bits of paper on his head, calling them snow. In the midst of all this teasing, Akaky Akakyevitch never answered a word, but behaved as though there were no one there. Only when they jolted his arm and prevented him from going on with his work would he cry out, "Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?" There was something strange in the words and in the voice in which they were uttered, so that one young clerk, new to the office, was cut to the heart, and in those words thought that he heard others: "I am your brother."

6. The response to Akaky's words by the clerk who is "[new to the office](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep/reading/read06.html#new)" is best described as

**(A)** confused
**(B)** mocking
**(C)** disbelieving
**(D)** timid
**(E)** compassionate

7. The "[simple fly](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep/reading/read07.html#fly)" is used primarily as an image of something that is

**(A)** annoying
**(B)** uncomplicated
**(C)** fast-moving
**(D)** easily overlooked
**(E)** potentially harmful