



Vocabulary, Reading,  
and Writing Exercises  
SAT Power Prep

# Sample



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## Reading Test

Each passage or pair of passages, some of which are accompanied by graphics such as maps, charts, or graphs, is followed by a set of questions. Read the passage and then choose the best answer to each of the questions.

### UNIT ONE

#### Lesson 1

#### Questions 1–10 are based on the following passage.

This passage is adapted from Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*, published 1869, translated 1915.

But for all this, the question remains,—what are the novelists to do with commonplace people, and how are they to be presented to the reader in such a form as to be in the least degree interesting? They cannot be  
5 left out altogether, for commonplace people meet one at every turn of life, and to leave them out would be to destroy the whole reality and probability of the story. To fill a novel with typical characters only, or with merely  
10 strange and uncommon people, would render the book unreal and improbable, and would very likely destroy the interest. In my opinion, the duty of the novelist is to seek out points of interest and instruction even in the  
15 characters of commonplace people.

For instance, when the whole essence of an ordinary  
15 person's nature lies in his **perpetual** and unchangeable commonplaceness; and when in spite of all his endeavors to do something out of the common, this person ends, eventually, by remaining in his unbroken line of routine. I think such an individual really does become a type of  
20 his own—a type of commonplaceness which will not for the world, if it can help it, be **contented**, but strains and **yearns** to be something original and independent, without the slightest possibility of being so. To this class of commonplace people belong several characters in this  
25 novel;—characters which—I admit—I have not drawn very vividly up to now for my reader's benefit.

Such were, for instance, Varvara Ardalionovna Ptitin, her husband, and her brother, Gania.

There is nothing so annoying as to be fairly rich, of a  
30 fairly good family, pleasing presence, average education, to be “not stupid,” kind-hearted, and yet to have no talent at all, no originality, not a single idea of one's own—to be, in fact, “just like everyone else.”

Of such people there are countless numbers in this  
35 world—far more even than appear. They can be divided into two classes as all men can—that is, those of limited intellect, and those who are much cleverer. The former of these classes is the happier.

To a commonplace man of limited intellect, for  
40 instance, nothing is simpler than to imagine himself an original character, and to revel in that belief without the slightest misgiving.

Many of our young women have thought fit to cut their hair short, put on blue spectacles and call  
45 themselves **Nihilists**. By doing this they have been able to persuade themselves, without further trouble, that they have acquired new **convictions** of their own. Some men have but felt some little **qualm** of kindness towards their fellow-men, and the fact has been quite  
50 enough to persuade them that they stand alone in the van of enlightenment and that no one has such humanitarian feelings as they. Others have but to read an idea of somebody else's, and they can immediately **assimilate** it and believe that it was a child of their own brain. The  
55 “**impudence** of ignorance,” if I may use the expression, is developed to a wonderful extent in such cases;—unlikely as it appears, it is met with at every turn.

This confidence of a stupid man in his own talents has been wonderfully depicted by Gogol in the amazing  
60 character of Pirogoff. Pirogoff has not the slightest doubt of his own genius,—nay, of his superiority of genius,—so certain is he of it that he never questions it. How





## Lesson 1 continued:

many Pirogoffs have there not been among our writers—scholars, **propagandists**?

65 I say “have been,” but indeed there are plenty of them at this very day.

Our friend, Gania, belonged to the other class—to the “much cleverer” persons, though he was from head to foot **permeated** and saturated with the longing to be original. This class, as I have said above, is far less  
70 happy. For the “clever commonplace” person, though he may possibly imagine himself a man of genius and originality, nonetheless has within his heart the deathless worm of suspicion and doubt; and this doubt  
75 sometimes brings a clever man to despair. (As a rule, however, nothing tragic happens;—his liver becomes a little damaged in the course of time, nothing more serious. Such men do not give up their **aspirations** after originality without a severe struggle,—and there have  
80 been men who, though good fellows in themselves, and even benefactors to humanity, have sunk to the level of **base** criminals for the sake of originality).

Gania was a beginner, as it were, upon this road. A deep and unchangeable consciousness of his own lack  
85 of talent, combined with a vast longing to be able to persuade himself that he was original, had **rankled** in his heart, even from childhood.

He seemed to have been born with **overwrought** nerves, and in his passionate desire to excel, he was  
90 often led to the brink of some rash step; and yet, having resolved upon such a step, when the moment arrived, he invariably proved too sensible to take it. He was ready, in the same way, to do a base action in order to obtain his wished-for object; and yet, when the moment  
95 came to do it, he found that he was too honest for any great baseness. (Not that he objected to acts of petty meanness—he was always ready for them.) He looked with hate and loathing on the poverty and downfall of his family, and treated his mother with **haughty** contempt,  
100 although he knew that his whole future depended on her character and reputation.

---

1

Choose the answer that best describes the purpose of this passage.

- A) an argument against plain characters
- B) commentary on Nihilists
- C) writing advice from an author
- D) an analysis of Pirogoff’s morality

---

2

Which phrase from the passage provides the best evidence for your answer to the previous question?

- A) Lines 11-13 (“In my opinion...people”)
- B) Lines 14-18 (“For instance...routine”)
- C) Lines 23-26 (“To this...benefit”)
- D) Lines 39-42 (“To a commonplace...misgiving”)

---

3

In paragraph 1, the author implies that the traditional approach to portraying common people is to

- A) ensure they are especially unremarkable.
- B) make the boring characters interesting.
- C) use common characters for main characters.
- D) keep the boring character scenes to a minimum.

---

4

According to paragraph 2, the trait that makes a common person (character) most interesting is

- A) the character’s ultimate success.
- B) that character’s inability to change.
- C) the knowledge that he or she can change.
- D) knowing that he or she will never change.



**Lesson 1 continued:****5**

The author suggests that “commonplace” people can be divided into two classes, and that the happier class can be described as having

- A) more opportunities than the other has.
- B) everything handed to it.
- C) reasons for maintaining the status quo.
- D) less intelligence than the other has.

**6**

Choose the statement most closely paraphrases the sentence in lines 39-42 (“To a...misgiving”).

- A) People of limited intellect are frustrated by it.
- B) Ignorance is bliss.
- C) The simple solution is usually the correct one.
- D) Intellectuals have easier lives.

**7**

The author suggests that there are three classifications of people of “limited intellect.” Choose the answer that is *not* one of the three classifications.

- A) those who become experts in a subject
- B) those who simply copy the beliefs of others
- C) those whose common feelings lead them to believe they are unique
- D) those who pretend to be something and then begin to believe it

**8**

As it is used in line 74, *deathless* suggests that a clever person’s despair is

- A) tolerable.
- B) amplified.
- C) permanent.
- D) ancient.

**9**

As it is used in line 82, the word *base* most nearly means

- A) remarkable.
- B) bitter.
- C) questionable.
- D) evil.

**10**

The author of the passage would agree with which one of the following statements?

- A) To create a boring character, simply delve deeper into a character’s personality.
- B) There’s no such thing as an uninteresting person.
- C) The most uninteresting character is one smart enough to know that he or she is not special.
- D) The best novels are filled with strange, uncommon characters.



## Lesson 1 continued:

## Vocabulary: Context Answers

The following sentences contain vocabulary words used in the reading passage. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence. There may be more than one technically correct answer, but one will better exemplify the italicized vocabulary word than the others will.

- 1) Fish that swim \_\_\_\_\_ live in *perpetual* darkness.
- underneath fishing piers
  - in the deepest trenches of the ocean
  - in the Pacific Ocean
  - around the perimeter of coral reefs
  - in the kelp forests of Southern California
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_, Emily gave a *contented* sigh.
- After scheduling her dentist appointment
  - Standing outside in the drizzle
  - Reclining by the hotel's pool
  - Before starting her speech
  - Looking through the jewelry store window
- 3) Walter *yearns* \_\_\_\_\_ as he sits in the dreary waiting room.
- because of the crying child
  - on the cushioned bench
  - that the doctor is late
  - for the summer breeze
  - yet does not complain
- 4) The judge believes \_\_\_\_\_ does not align with his moral *convictions*.
- telling the truth
  - running for mayor
  - accepting bribes
  - donating to local charities
  - taking a day off
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_, Ben has no *qualms* about copying his friend's essay.
- Afraid of failing the class
  - Under the guidance of his friends
  - Even though his grades are satisfactory
  - Although the paper is due next week
  - Despite the threat of punishment
- 6) Because Heather \_\_\_\_\_, she needed to *assimilate*.
- received detention
  - wanted good grades
  - did not study for the math exam
  - left her textbooks at home
  - transferred to a new school
- 7) Roger spoke with *impudence*, his voice \_\_\_\_\_.
- shaking with fear
  - defiant and strong
  - quiet from embarrassment
  - loud and uncertain
  - stern and commanding
- 8) Rain from the heavy storm *permeated* \_\_\_\_\_.
- the hard soil
  - the truck's roof
  - my plastic umbrella
  - the backyard deck
  - the large lake



**Lesson 1 continued:**

- 9) Since Ricky \_\_\_\_\_, he has *aspirations* of becoming an actor.
- A. understands the basics of movie making
  - B. has stage fright
  - C. grew up watching movies
  - D. did not get the leading role
  - E. drove his friend to the audition
- 10) His actions were so *base* that \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. I refused to remain friends with him
  - B. nobody seemed to notice
  - C. he became exhausted
  - D. he left us all confused
  - E. we nominated him for office
- 11) Lori was clearly *overwrought* when she discovered \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. her pet cat was missing
  - B. her brother was coming home for Thanksgiving
  - C. her favorite team won the football tournament
  - D. she forgot to do the laundry
  - E. she was chosen as class president
- 12) Jackie's *haughty* remarks \_\_\_\_\_ her supervisor during the company meeting.
- A. amused
  - B. irritated
  - C. inspired
  - D. helped
  - E. informed





## Lesson 1 continued:

## Writing Practice

The underlined portion of each sentence possibly contains a flaw related to pronoun use. Select the answer that best corrects the flaw. Select NO CHANGE if the underlined portion is correct.

- 1) If anyone dislikes my music, they can go somewhere else.
  - A. NO CHANGE
  - B. they can goes
  - C. he or she can go
  - D. they go
- 2) The teacher said that either girl could write her answer on the board.
  - A. NO CHANGE
  - B. could write their
  - C. can write their
  - D. write her
- 3) We saw the stars on the badge and remembered that each symbolize a precept of the organization.
  - A. NO CHANGE
  - B. it each symbolizes a precept of the organization
  - C. each symbolizes a precept of the organization
  - D. each of the stars symbolize the organization's precept
- 4) Neither Janet nor Laurie drives their car to school.
  - A. NO CHANGE
  - B. drive her
  - C. drive their
  - D. drives her
- 5) Dad said that if anything is not returned to their proper place, we will be in trouble.
  - A. NO CHANGE
  - B. its
  - C. everything's
  - D. one's
- 6) Party planners praised the decorating committee because it has worked so hard.
  - A. NO CHANGE
  - B. they have worked
  - C. they worked
  - D. it have worked
- 7) Every tech company wants to retain their innovative employees.
  - A. NO CHANGE
  - B. its
  - C. it's
  - D. one's
- 8) Helena confided in her sister that something about their dad's actions seem off.
  - A. NO CHANGE
  - B. seems
  - C. seem to be
  - D. were seemingly

**Lesson 1 continued:****Vocabulary: Choosing the Right Use**

The following sentences contain vocabulary words used in the reading passage. Identify the sentence or sentences that use the italicized vocabulary word properly. We have changed the form of some vocabulary words to provide new contexts; for example, some adjectives and verbs have been used as nouns.

- 1)
  - A. In the weeks following his daughter's accident, Brandon was in a *perpetual* state of worry about her safety.
  - B. The *perpetual* length of the speech allowed the spectators enough time to take photos of all the guest speakers afterwards.
  - C. In the vacuum of space, absent of air to create friction, the planet will revolve around the sun *perpetually*.
  - D. The *perpetual* snowstorm we had yesterday means that school will probably be in session today.
  
- 2)
  - A. Trudy hoped her ripe and *contented* tomatoes would at least make her a finalist at the county fair competition.
  - B. Even though he had really wanted the promotion, Jared remained *content* with his current position.
  - C. The sun's rays shone *contentedly* through the clouds.
  - D. After a long day, Janie *contented* herself with a bubble bath.
  
- 3)
  - A. Although he tries to hide it, we all know that Tim *yearns* for a chance to play as the team's quarterback.
  - B. Courtney takes the *yearning* back roads when she wants to go to Sarah's house.
  - C. The door creaks loudly whenever it *yearns* open.
  - D. The child cries whenever he is hungry or *yearns* for his mother.
  
- 4)
  - A. Martin's *convictions* about standing up for himself faded immediately when he was caught off guard and forced to open the bank vault at gunpoint.
  - B. After the autopsy, the coroner noted his *conviction* that the death was not accidental.
  - C. Mary believes her neighbors have standing *convictions* against them, as they are very private people.
  - D. Todd's *convictions* with the Florida summer season led him to buy a house in Alaska.
  
- 5)
  - A. When the *qualm* between Jeff and Nick became physical, both of them were sent to the principal's office.
  - B. The mechanic told me he would not be able to fix the *qualms* with my car until next week.
  - C. Because Judy had proven herself able to handle stressful situations, her boss had no *qualms* about increasing her workload.
  - D. The house looks good overall, but potential buyers may voice some *qualms* over the outdated electricity.



**Lesson 1 continued:**

**Synonyms and Antonyms**

Match the word with its *antonym*.

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1) perpetual   | A. calm        |
| 2) content     | B. politeness  |
| 3) yearn       | C. short-lived |
| 4) overwrought | D. modest      |
| 5) haughty     | E. reject      |
| 6) impudence   | F. displeased  |

Match the word with its *synonym*.

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| 7) assimilate  | A. misgiving |
| 8) permeate    | B. dream     |
| 9) rankle      | C. pervade   |
| 10) qualm      | D. integrate |
| 11) conviction | E. anger     |
| 12) aspiration | F. judgment  |

END  
of  
LESSON 1