R1 PART 2



MAIN IDEA QUESTIONS		
HOW TO IDENTIFY THE QUESTION	on both paper and computer tests	*What is the **topic** of the passage?* *What is the **subject** of the passage?* *What is the **main idea** of the passage?* *What is the author's **main point** in the passage?* *With what is the author **primarily concerned**?* *Which of the following would be the **best title**?*
WHERE TO FIND THE ANSWER	The answer to this type of question can generally be determined by looking at the first sentence of each paragraph.	
HOW TO ANSWER THE QUESTION	1. Read the first line of each paragraph. 2. Look for a common theme or idea in the first lines. 3. Pass your eyes quickly over the rest of the passage to check that you have really found the topic sentence(s). 4. Eliminate any definitely wrong answers and choose the best answer from the remaining choices.	

TOEFL EXERCISE 1: Study each of the passages and choose the best answers to the questions that follow. In this exercise, each passage is followed by several main idea, topic, or title questions so that the students can practice this type of question. On the TOEFL test, one passage would probably not have two such questions because they are so similar.

PASSAGE ONE (Questions 1–2)

Fort Knox, Kentucky, is the site of a U.S. army post, but it is even more renowned for the Fort Knox Bullion Depository, the massive vault that contains the bulk of the U.S. government's gold deposits. Completed in 1936, the vault is housed in a two-story building constructed of granite,
Line steel, and concrete; the vault itself is made of steel and concrete and has a door that weighs more
(5) than twenty tons. Naturally, the most up-to-date security devices available are in place at Fort Knox, and the army post nearby provides further protection.

1. Which of the following best describes the topic of the passage?
   (A) The city of Fort Knox, Kentucky
   (B) The federal gold depository
   (C) The U.S. army post at Fort Knox
   (D) Gold bullion

2. Which of the following would be the best title for this passage?
   (A) The Massive Concrete Vault
   (B) Fort Knox Security
   (C) Where the United States Keeps Its Gold
   (D) A Visit to Kentucky

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PASSAGE TWO (Questions 3–4)

One identifying characteristic of minerals is their relative hardness, which can be determined by scratching one mineral with another. In this type of test, a harder mineral can scratch a softer one, but a softer mineral is unable to scratch the harder one. The Mohs' hardness
Line scale is used to rank minerals according to hardness. Ten minerals are listed in this scale, ranging
(5) from talc with a hardness of 1 to diamond with a hardness of 10. On this scale, quartz (number 7) is harder than feldspar (number 6) and is therefore able to scratch it; however, feldspar is unable to make a mark on quartz.

3. Which of the following best states the subject of this passage?
   (A) The hardness of diamonds
   (B) Identifying minerals by means of a scratch test
   (C) Feldspar on the Mohs' scale
   (D) Recognizing minerals in their natural state

4. The main idea of this passage is that
   (A) the hardness of a mineral can be determined by its ability to make a mark on other minerals
   (B) diamonds, with a hardness of 10 on the Mohs' scale, can scratch all other minerals
   (C) a softer mineral cannot be scratched by a harder mineral
   (D) talc is the first mineral listed on the Mohs' scale

PASSAGE THREE (Questions 5–6)

Hurricanes generally occur in the North Atlantic from May through November, with the peak of the hurricane season in September; only rarely will they occur from December through April in that part of the ocean. The main reason for the occurrence of hurricanes during this
Line period is that the temperature on the water's surface is at its warmest and the humidity of the air
(5) is at its highest.

Of the tropical storms that occur each year in the North Atlantic, only about five, on the average, are powerful enough to be called hurricanes. To be classified as a hurricane, a tropical storm must have winds reaching speeds of at least 117 kilometers per hour, but the winds are often much stronger than that; the winds of intense hurricanes can easily surpass 240 kilometers
(10) per hour.

5. The passage mainly discusses
   (A) how many hurricanes occur each year
   (B) the strength of hurricanes
   (C) the weather in the North Atlantic
   (D) hurricanes in one part of the world

6. The best title for this passage would be
   (A) The North Atlantic Ocean
   (B) Storms of the Northern Atlantic
   (C) Hurricanes: The Damage and Destruction
   (D) What Happens from May through November

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PASSAGE FOUR (Questions 7–9)

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882) was perhaps the best-known American poet of the nineteenth century. His clear writing style and emphasis on the prevalent values of the period made him popular with the general public if not always with the critics. He was particularly recognized for his longer narrative poems *Evangeline, The Song of Hiawatha,* and *The Courtship of Miles Standish,* in which he told stories from American history in terms of the values of the time.

Line
(5)

Evangeline was set during the French and Indian War (1754–1763), when the British forced French settlers from Nova Scotia; two lovers, Gabriel and Evangeline, were separated by the British, and Evangeline devoted her lifetime to the search for Gabriel. With its emphasis on sentimental, undying love, *Evangeline* was immensely popular with the public.

(10)

In *The Song of Hiawatha,* Longfellow depicted the noble life of the American Indian through the story of the brave Hiawatha and his beloved wife Minehaha. The tear-inspiring poem follows Hiawatha through the tragedies and triumphs of life, ending with the death of Minehaha and Hiawatha's departure into the sunset in his canoe.

The Courtship of Miles Standish takes place during the early period of the settlement of New

(15)

England, a period which was viewed as a time of honor and romance. In this poem centered around a love triangle, Miles Standish asks his friend John Alden to propose to Priscilla Mullins for him; John Alden ends up marrying Priscilla Mullins himself, and it takes time for his friendship with Miles Standish to recover. As with Longfellow's other narrative poems, the emphasis on high ideals and romance made the poem extremely popular.

7. Which of the following best describes the main idea of the passage?
   (A) American history is often depicted in poetry.
   (B) Longfellow described American history even though people really did not enjoy it.
   (C) The popularity of Longfellow's poems results from his stress on the values of the people.
   (D) Longfellow wrote long narrative poems that were not always popular with the critics.

8. The best title of the passage is
   (A) Longfellow's Popular Appeal
   (B) Historical Narrative Poems
   (C) The Lyric, Dramatic, and Narrative Poems of Longfellow
   (D) Longfellow and the Critics

9. The subject of the fourth paragraph is
   (A) nobility and honor in the poems of Longfellow
   (B) the love triangle involving Miles Standish
   (C) the popular appeal of *The Courtship of Miles Standish*
   (D) the period of the early settlement of New England

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