

*The Canary in the Coal Mine:
What the SAT Can Tell Us about
What Kids Can't Do*

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Overview

- Performance on released SAT multiple-choice questions
 - Critical Reading
 - Writing
 - Mathematics
- What college-going students can and cannot do
- SAT questions and the College Board Standards for College Success

SAT Critical Reading: Sentence Completion Item

- Unable to discover how the fire started, the inspectors filed a tentative report stating that the cause was _____.
 - A. noteworthy
 - B. definitive
 - C. fundamental
 - D. conclusive
 - E. indeterminate

EDL Reading Core Vocabulary – Grade Level

- A. noteworthy – 9th grade
- B. definitive – 12th grade
- C. fundamental – 7th grade
- D. conclusive – 10th grade
- E. indeterminate – 12th grade

Root Words, Suffixes, Prefixes

- A. noteworthy – worthy of note
- B. definitive – define
- C. fundamental - fund
- D. conclusive - conclude
- E. indeterminate - determine

Sentence Structure or Syntax

- Unable to discover how the fire started, the inspectors filed a tentative report stating that the cause was _____.
- Complex = Dependent clause followed by an independent clause

Sentence Completion Item

- Unable to discover how the fire started, the inspectors filed a tentative report stating that the cause was _____.
 - A. noteworthy
 - B. definitive
 - C. fundamental
 - D. conclusive
 - E. indeterminate

Item Statistics

- p -value is .93
- Approximately 7% - got it wrong
 - A. noteworthy - - 1%
 - B. definitive - - 2%
 - C. fundamental - - 1%
 - D. conclusive - - 3%
 - E. indeterminate - - 93%
 - F. No answer - - less than 1%

Reading CBSCS

- Standard 1 Comprehension of Words, Sentences, and Components of Text
 - Objective R1.1 Student comprehends the meaning of words and sentences.
 - Level 1 Performance Expectation - Uses context of sentence to clarify the meaning of unknown words.
 - Level 1 Performance Expectation - Uses word knowledge, grammar (e.g. subject, verb, pronoun reference) and sentence structure (e.g. clauses, phrases, compound sentences) to determine the meaning of a sentence.
 - Level 2 Performance Expectation - Uses knowledge of roots, prefixes, and suffixes to understand words.

Critical Reading: Sentence Completion Item

- Despite its patent _____, this belief has become so _____ that no amount of rational argument will suffice to eradicate it.
 - A. validity, inconsequential
 - B. implausibility, entrenched
 - C. credibility, prevalent
 - D. absurdity, outmoded
 - E. novelty, infrequent

Vocabulary – Grade Level

- validity (11), inconsequential (8)
- implausibility (10), entrenched (n/a)
- credibility (12), prevalent (10)
- absurdity (6), outmoded (8)
- novelty (7), infrequent (6)

Sentence Structure

- Despite its patent _____, this belief has become so _____ that no amount of rational argument will suffice to eradicate it.
- Complex = **Dependent clause** followed by an independent clause

Sentence Completion Item

- Despite its **patent** _____, this belief has become so _____ that no amount of rational argument will suffice to eradicate it.
 - A. validity, inconsequential - 12%
 - B. implausibility, entrenched – 35%**
 - C. credibility, prevalent – 31%
 - D. absurdity, outmoded – 8%
 - E. novelty, infrequent – 4%
 - Omit – 10%

Reading CBSCS

- Standard 1 Comprehension of Words, Sentences, and Components of Text
 - Objective R1.1 Student comprehends the meaning of words and sentences.
 - Level 2 Performance Expectation - Uses context of sentence to clarify the meaning of unknown words or differentiate between primary and secondary meanings of words.

SAT Critical Reading Passage

Questions 6-7 are based on the following passage.

Duke Ellington considered himself “the world’s greatest listener.” In music, hearing is all. Judging by the two or three thousand pieces of music Ellington wrote, he could probably hear a flea scratching itself and put that rhythm into one of his compositions. For him the sounds of the world were the ingredients he mixed into appetizers, main courses, and desserts to satisfy the appetite of his worldwide audience. He wasn’t averse to going out in a boat to catch the fish himself. He would raise the fowl himself. But when that musical meal appeared before you none of the drudgery showed.

6. The author most likely refers to the “flea” in line 4 in order to
- (A) highlight Ellington’s prodigious memory
 - (B) emphasize the quality of Ellington’s listening skills
 - (C) indicate Ellington’s interest in different animal sounds
 - (D) suggest that Ellington’s compositions were marked by rhythmic similarities
 - (E) imply that Ellington could be overly concerned about minutia

- Correct answer is “B”
- 91% correct
- Most common incorrect answer was “D” (5%)

7. In lines 5-11 (“For him . . . drudgery showed”), the author’s point is primarily developed through the use of

- (A) comparison and contrast
- (B) appeal to emotion
- (C) exaggeration
- (D) metaphor
- (E) humor

- Correct answer is “D”
- metaphor = figurative language
- 74% correct
- Most common incorrect answer was “A” (7%)

Reading CBSCS

- Objective R4.2 – Student uses strategies to interpret the meaning of words, sentences, and ideas in texts.
 - Uses text structures to make connections among ideas and improve comprehension.
- Objective R3.2 – Student analyzes how authors use language, stylistic devices, literary devices, and figurative language to achieve specific effects.
 - Understands that authors use literary devices and figurative language (e.g. sensory details, symbolism, foreshadowing, metaphor, hyperbole) to achieve specific effects. Recognizes their use in texts.

SAT Writing – Improving Sentences

7. In the nineteenth century, reproductions of cathedrals or castles made entirely of ice was often a popular feature in North American winter carnivals.
- (A) was often a popular feature
 - (B) often were popular features
 - (C) often was featured popularly
 - (D) often being popular features
 - (E) have been featured popularly

- Subject/verb agreement task with intervening modifying phrase
- Correct answer is “B”
- 71% correct
 - Possibly because they could identify the subject
- Most common incorrect answer was “A” (20%)
 - These students thought it was correct as is

SAT Writing – Identifying Sentence Errors

15. Twenty-five years after Alex Haley's *Roots* stimulate

A

B

many people to research their family histories, new

C

technology has been developed to make the task

easier . No error

D

E

- Correct answer is “B”
- Verb tense problem – past tense related to past time
- 88% correct
 - Possibly because they understood the time element and past-tense verb forms
- Most common incorrect answer was “E” (5%)
 - These students thought it was correct as is

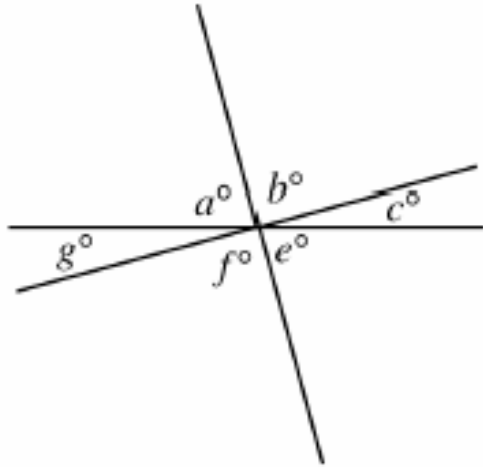
Writing CBSCS

- Standard 3 – Drafting
 - Objective W3.2 – Student makes stylistic choices with language to achieve intended effects.
- Standard 4 - Evaluating and Revising Texts
 - Objective W4.2 – Student evaluates drafted text to determine the effectiveness of stylistic choices.
- Standard 5 – Editing to Present Technically Sound Texts
 - Objective W5.1 – Student edits for conventions of standard written English and usage.

Writing CBSCS

- Level 1 Performance Expectation – Corrects errors in grammatical conventions (e.g. complete sentences, independent and dependent clauses, conjunctions for subordination and coordination, subject-verb agreement, use of adjectives and adverbs) appropriate for the genre.

SAT Mathematics



Note: Figure not drawn to scale.

2. In the figure above, three lines intersect at a point.

If $f = 85$ and $c = 25$, what is the value of a ?

- (A) 60
- (B) 65
- (C) 70
- (D) 75
- (E) 85

- Correct answer is “C”
- 88% correct
- Need to know
 - 180° = a straight angle
 - Vertical angles are equal

Mathematics and Statistics CBSCS

- Middle School Math I
 - Standard M1.3 Two-Dimensional Geometry and Measurement
 - Performance Expectation – Makes and supports conjectures about general properties of figures, such as the 180° angle sum for triangles, measures of the opposite angles in parallelograms, measure of vertical angles, and angle relationships in common shapes and figures.

SAT Mathematics

3. If Marisa drove n miles in t hours, which of the following represents her average speed, in miles per hour?

(A) $\frac{n}{t}$

(B) $\frac{t}{n}$

(C) $\frac{1}{nt}$

(D) nt

(E) n^2t

- Correct answer is “A”
- 89% correct
- Ratio of distance to time
- Similar to miles per gallon

Mathematics and Statistics CBSCS

- Middle School Math I
 - Standard M1.2 Ratios and Rates
 - Performance Expectation – Identifies one or more ratios that represent a given comparison and expresses the ratios using appropriate notation (i.e., a/b , a to b, $a : b$)