

SAT Reading Sample Paper 4

Reading Passage 1

This passage is adapted from Edith Wharton, *Ethan Frome*, originally published in 1911. Mattie Silver is Ethan's household employee.

Mattie Silver had lived under Ethan's roof for a year, and from early morning till they met at supper he had frequent chances of seeing her; but no moments in her company were comparable to those when, her arm in his, and her light step flying to keep time with his long stride, they walked back through the night to the farm. He had taken to the girl from the first day, when he had driven over to the Flats to meet her, and she had smiled and waved to him from the train, crying out, "You must be Ethan!" as she jumped down with her bundles, while he reflected, looking over her slight person: "She don't look much on housework, but she ain't a fretter, anyhow." But it was not only that the coming to his house of a bit of hopeful young life was like the lighting of a fire on a cold hearth. The girl was more than the bright serviceable creature he had thought her. She had an eye to see and an ear to hear: he could show her things and tell her things, and taste the bliss of feeling that all he imparted left long reverberations and echoes he could wake at will. It was during their night walks back to the farm that he felt most intensely the sweetness of this communion. He had always been more sensitive than the people about him to the appeal of natural beauty. His unfinished studies had given form to this sensibility and even in his unhappiest moments field and sky spoke to him with a deep and powerful persuasion. But hitherto the emotion had remained in him as a silent ache, veiling with sadness the beauty that evoked it. He did not even know whether any one else in the world felt as he did, or whether he was the sole victim of this mournful privilege. Then he learned that one other spirit had trembled with the same touch of wonder: that at his side, living under his roof and eating his bread, was a creature to whom he could say: "That's Orion down yonder; the big fellow to the right is Aldebaran, and the bunch of little ones—like bees swarming— they're the Pleiades . . ." or whom he could hold entranced before a ledge of granite thrusting up through the fern while he unrolled the huge panorama of the ice age, and the long dim stretches of succeeding time. The fact that admiration for his learning mingled with Mattie's wonder at what he taught was not the least part of his pleasure. And there were other sensations, less definable but more exquisite, which drew them together with a shock of silent joy: the cold red of sunset behind winter hills, the flight of cloud-flocks over slopes of golden stubble, or the intensely blue shadows of hemlocks on sunlit snow. When she said to him once: "It looks just as if it was painted!" it seemed to Ethan that the art of definition could go no farther, and that words had at last been found to utter his secret soul. . . .

As he stood in the darkness outside the church these memories came back with the poignancy of vanished things. Watching Mattie whirl down the floor from hand to hand he wondered how he could ever have thought that his dull talk interested her. To him, who was never gay but in her presence, her gaiety seemed plain proof of indifference. The face she lifted to her dancers was the same which, when she saw him, always looked like a window that has caught the sunset. He even noticed two or three gestures which, in his fatuity, he had thought she kept for him: a way of throwing her head back when she was

amused, as if to taste her laugh before she let it out, and a trick of sinking her lids slowly when anything charmed or moved her.

Over the course of the passage, the main focus of the narrative shifts from the

- A) reservations a character has about a person he has just met to a growing appreciation that character has of the person's worth.
- B) ambivalence a character feels about his sensitive nature to the character's recognition of the advantages of having profound emotions.
- C) intensity of feeling a character has for another person to the character's concern that that intensity is not reciprocated.
- D) value a character attaches to the wonders of the natural world to a rejection of that sort of beauty in favor of human artistry

In the context of the passage, the author's use of the phrase "her light step flying to keep time with his long stride" (lines 4-5) is primarily meant to convey the idea that

- A) Ethan and Mattie share a powerful enthusiasm.
- B) Mattie strives to match the speed at which Ethan works.
- C) Mattie and Ethan playfully compete with each other.
- D) Ethan walks at a pace that frustrates Mattie.

The description in the first paragraph indicates that what Ethan values most about Mattie is her

- A) fitness for farm labor.
- B) vivacious youth.
- C) receptive nature.
- D) freedom from worry

Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

- A) Lines 1-6 ("Mattie . . . farm")
- B) Lines 6-12 ("He had . . . anyhow")
- C) Lines 12-14 ("But it . . . hearth")
- D) Lines 15-19 ("She had . . . will")

The author includes the descriptions of the sunset, the clouds, and the hemlock shadows (lines 42-45) primarily to

- A) suggest the peacefulness of the natural world.
- B) emphasize the acuteness of two characters' sensations.
- C) foreshadow the declining fortunes of two characters.
- D) offer a sense of how fleeting time can be

Reading Passage 2

Passage 1 is adapted from Susan Milius, "A Different Kind of Smart." ©2013 by Science News. Passage 2 is adapted from Bernd Heinrich, *Mind of the Raven: Investigations and Adventures with Wolf-Birds*. ©2007 by Bernd Heinrich.

In 1894, British psychologist C. Lloyd Morgan published what's called Morgan's canon, the principle that suggestions of humanlike mental processes behind an animal's behavior should be rejected if a simpler explanation will do. Still, people seem to maintain certain expectations, especially when it comes to birds and mammals. "We somehow want to prove they are as 'smart' as people," zoologist Sara Shettleworth says. We want a bird that masters a vexing problem to be employing humanstyle insight. New Caledonian crows face the high end of these expectations, as possibly the second-best toolmakers on the planet. Their tools are hooked sticks or strips made from spikeedged leaves, and they use them in the wild to winkle grubs out of crevices. Researcher Russell Gray first saw the process on a cold morning in a mountain forest in New Caledonia, an island chain east of Australia. Over the course of days, he and crow researcher Gavin Hunt had gotten wild crows used to finding meat tidbits in holes in a log. Once the birds were checking the log reliably, the researchers placed a spiky tropical pandanus plant beside the log and hid behind a blind. A crow arrived. It hopped onto the pandanus plant, grabbed the spiked edge of one of the long straplike leaves and began a series of ripping motions. Instead of just tearing away one long strip, the bird ripped and nipped in a sequence to create a slanting stair-step edge on a leaf segment with a narrow point and a wide base. The process took only seconds. Then the bird dipped the narrow end of its leaf strip into a hole in the log, fished up the meat with the leaf-edge spikes, swallowed its prize and flew off. "That was my 'oh wow' moment," Gray says. After the crow had vanished, he picked up the tool the bird had left behind. "I had a go, and I couldn't do it," he recalls. Fishing the meat out was tricky. It turned out that Gray was moving the leaf shard too forcefully instead of gently stroking the spines against the treat. The crow's deft physical manipulation was what inspired Gray and Auckland colleague Alex Taylor to test other wild crows to see if they employed the seemingly insightful stringpulling solutions that some ravens, kea parrots and other brainiac birds are known to employ. Three of four crows passed that test on the first try.

Passage 2

For one month after they left the nest, I led my four young ravens at least once and sometimes several times a day on thirty-minute walks. During these walks, I wrote down everything in their environment they pecked at. In the first sessions, I tried to be teacher. I touched specific objects— sticks, moss, rocks—and nothing that I touched remained untouched by them. They came to investigate what I had investigated, leading me to assume that young birds are aided in learning to identify food from the parents' example. They also, however, contacted almost everything else that lay directly in their own paths. They soon became more independent by taking their own routes near mine. Even while walking along on their own, they pulled at leaves, grass stems, flowers, bark, pine needles, seeds, cones, clods of earth, and other objects they encountered. I wrote all this down, converting it to numbers. After they were thoroughly familiar with the background objects in these woods and started to ignore them, I seeded the path we would later walk

together with objects they had never before encountered. Some of these were conspicuous food items: raspberries, dead meal worm beetles, and cooked corn kernels. Others were conspicuous and inedible: pebbles, glass chips, red winterberries. Still others were such highly cryptic foods as encased caddisfly larvae and moth cocoons. The results were dramatic. The four young birds on our daily walks contacted all new objects preferentially. They picked them out at a rate of up to tens of thousands of times greater than background or previously contacted objects. The main initial criterion for pecking or picking anything up was its novelty. In subsequent trials, when the previously novel items were edible, they became preferred and the inedible objects became “background” items, just like the leaves, grass, and pebbles, even if they were highly conspicuous. These experiments showed that ravens’ curiosity ensures exposure to all or almost all items in the environment. 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 Chapter

Within Passage 1, the main purpose of the first two paragraphs (lines 1-10) is to

- A) offer historical background in order to question the uniqueness of two researchers’ findings.
- B) offer interpretive context in order to frame the discussion of an experiment and its results.
- C) introduce a scientific principle in order to show how an experiment’s outcomes validated that principle.
- D) present seemingly contradictory stances in order to show how they can be reconciled empirically

According to the experiment described in Passage 2, whether the author’s ravens continued to show interest in a formerly new object was dictated primarily by whether that object was

- A) edible.
- B) plentiful.
- C) conspicuous.
- D) natural.

The crows in Passage 1 and the ravens in Passage 2 shared which trait?

- A) They modified their behavior in response to changes in their environment.
- B) They formed a strong bond with the humans who were observing them.
- C) They manufactured useful tools for finding and accessing food.
- D) They mimicked the actions they saw performed around them.

One difference between the experiments described in the two passages is that unlike the researchers discussed in Passage 1, the author of Passage 2

- A) presented the birds with a problem to solve.
- B) intentionally made the birds aware of his presence.
- C) consciously manipulated the birds’ surroundings.
- D) tested the birds’ tool-using abilities.

Is the main conclusion presented by the author of Passage 2 consistent with Morgan's canon, as described in Passage 1?

- A) Yes, because the conclusion proposes that the ravens' behavior is a product of environmental factors.**
- B) Yes, because the conclusion offers a satisfyingly simple explanation of the ravens' behavior.**
- C) No, because the conclusion suggests that the ravens exhibit complex behavior patterns.**
- D) No, because the conclusion implies that a humanlike quality motivates the ravens' behavior.**