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Verbal Reasoning (Reading)

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*** The correct answers and explanations are located at the end of this PDF.**

Try the following CLT verbal reasoning practice questions that **mirror actual test questions** and **cover each of the domains and subdomains** you'll see on the test.

Each question is followed by a detailed explanation to help you understand the reasoning behind the answers.

- **Read each passage and carefully answer the corresponding questions.**
- **Some questions for each passage are analogy-based. Use your understanding of the passage and the relationships demonstrated within it to arrive at your answers.**
- **Answers are based on the evidence given in a passage; no outside knowledge is required.**

Literature

This passage is adapted from Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, Volume II, Chapter IX, first published in 1817, with minor lexical modernizations for clarity.

¶1 - All who have known the quiet ache of a love long suppressed, who have traced the slow erosion of hope like the tide withdrawing from a cherished shore, may find in this history either a mirror or a warning. Those seeking wild romance or gothic spectacle – turn your eyes elsewhere. Here lies no tempestuous Catherine Morland, no impetuous Marianne Dashwood, but a woman of seven-and-twenty whose bloom has faded not with years alone, but with the patient suffocation of feeling. The path we tread is narrow, paved not with cobblestones but with glances half-intercepted, conversations broken then resumed, and the terrible arithmetic of social advantage.

¶2 - Anne Elliot sat at the pianoforte in the White Hart's private parlor, her fingers tracing a melody she dared not name. The instrument, like its player, showed signs of genteel wear – the ivory slightly yellowed, the pedals emitting the faintest protest when pressed. Yet what it lacked in brilliance it compensated in depth of tone, much as Anne's own countenance, though no longer the fresh rose of Uppercross, retained an elegance that escaped those who valued only first impressions.

¶3 - Beyond the window, the autumn light fell slantwise upon Bath's limestone facades, turning the city into a study in silver and ochre. A carriage rattled past, its wheels throwing up mud that would later require the attention of some anxious housemaid. Such were the invisible threads that bound their world: the labor of the unseen preserving the comfort of the seen, the unspoken maintaining the fragile edifice of the spoken.

¶4 - Captain Wentworth's letter lay heavy in her pocket. Not three hours had passed since its delivery, yet the paper already bore the soft creases of

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repeated examination. The words – oh, the words! – had burned themselves behind her eyelids: "You pierce my soul. I am half agony, half hope..." A phrase so raw it seemed to tear the careful varnish from eight years of practiced composure.

¶5 - "Miss Elliot?" Mr. Shepherd's voice startled her. "Do you find the instrument to your liking?"

¶6 - "It is perfectly adequate, sir," she replied, though in truth it mattered little. The music served only as pretext, a shield against conversation's probing arrows. Across the room, Wentworth stood examining a map of the West Indies, his posture rigid as if braced against some inner tempest. The sunlight caught the gold braid on his naval uniform, each thread a tiny chain linking him to the world of action from which she remained excluded.

¶7 - Lady Russell, that most conscientious of chaperones, observed the scene through lenses of propriety ground to optical perfection. "Anne plays with such feeling today," she remarked to Mrs. Croft, her tone the verbal equivalent of a raised eyebrow.

¶8 - The admiral's wife, whose oceanic wanderings had granted her immunity to subtext, replied cheerfully: "All young ladies ought to play! Why, aboard the Laconia, we–"

¶9 - But Anne heard only the roaring silence between the notes. How strange that a room might contain simultaneously a woman breathing the air of hard-won resignation and a man radiating the suppressed energy of a frigate under full sail! The irony did not escape her – she who had once been persuaded to reject him now sat imprisoned by the very caution that had been meant to protect her.

¶10 - A discordant chord rang out as her finger slipped. Wentworth's head jerked up instinctively, their eyes meeting with the electric recognition of two souls who have charted each other's depths. In that instant, the years collapsed like a spyglass snapped shut: she was again nineteen, he the promising young commander with nothing to offer but his heart and his prospects.

¶11 - Mrs. Clay's sudden laughter at some jest of Sir Walter's shattered the moment. Anne's hands stilled upon the keys. The scent of beeswax and dried lavender filled the pause, undercut by the sharper tang of ink from the letter that even now seemed to pulse against her thigh like a second heartbeat.

¶12 - "Forgive me," she murmured, rising. "I find I have a headache."

¶13 - As she quit the room, the final image she carried was not of Wentworth's anguished expression, but of the map he had been studying – its edges curled like autumn leaves, the West Indies rendered in cartographic hues of possibility and distance. How like life itself, she thought: the most important journeys measured not in nautical miles but in the fathomless space between what is said and what is meant.

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¶14 - Later, alone in her chamber, she unfolded the letter once more. The ink had bled slightly where her tears had fallen earlier, the words now bordered by halos of salt and regret. Beyond her window, the Abbey bells tolled the hour, their bronze voices rolling across the rooftops of Bath – that city of remedies and rituals, where the waters might cure the body but only truth could heal the soul.

CLT Verbal practice question #1: Domain – Analysis, Subdomain – Textual Analysis

The narrator describes the pianoforte's "genteel wear" (Paragraph 2) primarily to

A) Contrast Anne's faded beauty with the instrument's durability

B) Symbolize the tension between societal expectations and inner life

C) Criticize the poor maintenance of the White Hart's furnishings

D) Foreshadow Captain Wentworth's naval career

CLT Verbal practice question #2: Domain – Analysis, Subdomain – Interpretation of Evidence

Which line from paragraph 3 best reflects Austen's theme of hidden effort sustaining outward elegance?

A) "Beyond the window, the autumn light fell slantwise upon Bath's limestone facades"
B) "A carriage rattled past, its wheels throwing up mud that would later require the attention of some anxious housemaid"
C) "Turning the city into a study in silver and ochre"
D) "Such were the invisible threads that bound their world: the labor of the unseen preserving the comfort of the seen"

CLT Verbal practice question #3: Domain – Analysis, Subdomain – Textual Analysis

In paragraph 4, the phrase "the careful varnish from eight years of practiced composure" most clearly refers to…

A) Anne's refined musical training

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B) her years of silent emotional restraint

C) the surface of the pianoforte

D) the style of Captain Wentworth's handwriting

CLT Verbal practice question #4: Domain – Comprehension, Subdomain – Passage Relationships

tears : regret ::

A) ink: confession

B) pianoforte: restraint

C) uniform: status

D) lavender: memory

CLT Verbal practice question #5: Domain – Comprehension, Subdomain – Passage as a Whole

Based on the passage, Anne's primary conflict is between

A) Familial duty and romantic desire

B) Musical talent and social expectations

C) Nostalgia and present reality

D) Religious faith and rational thought

CLT Verbal practice question #6: Domain – Analysis, Subdomain – Interpretation of Evidence

Which lines in the passage best support the idea that Anne struggles between emotion and propriety?

A. "A woman of seven-and-twenty whose bloom has faded" (Paragraph 1)

B. "The admiral's wife…had granted her immunity to subtext" (Paragraph 8)

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C. “The letter that even now seemed to pulse against her thigh” (Paragraph 11)

D. “The Abbey bells tolled the hour” (Paragraph 14)

CLT Verbal practice question #7: Domain – Analysis, Subdomain – Textual Analysis

In Paragraph 1, “the terrible arithmetic of social advantage” refers to

A. The cost of maintaining a Bath townhouse

B. The calculation of marital prospects based on wealth

C. Wentworth’s naval prize money

D. Lady Russell’s disapproval of Mrs. Clay

Correct Answers & Explanations

1. **Correct Answer: B**

Explanation:

The pianoforte’s “genteel wear” serves as a metaphor for Anne Elliot’s own subdued existence, reflecting how societal expectations have worn down her vitality while leaving an air of quiet dignity.

Though the instrument shows signs of age, it remains functional and elegant, much like Anne, whose faded beauty conceals her enduring strength and depth of feeling. This symbolism reinforces Austen’s critique of a society that values superficial youth over lasting character, making B the most comprehensive answer.

While A touches on the contrast between Anne and the instrument, B better captures the broader thematic tension between external appearances and inner life.

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The pianoforte's wear is not just a comparison to Anne's fading looks but a commentary on how social norms stifle authentic emotion, a central concern in *Persuasion*.

2. **Correct Answer: D) "Such were the invisible threads that bound their world: the labor of the unseen preserving the comfort of the seen"**
   Explanation:

This line most effectively conveys Austen's use of Bath's setting to reflect the deeper emotional and social dynamics within the characters' world. The metaphor of "invisible threads" captures how much of polite society depends on restraint, silence, and hidden labor. The sentence suggests that what holds their world together is not what is visible or spoken, but what is carefully concealed. This parallels Anne's emotional state, as she too is held together by unexpressed feelings and quiet endurance.

The other options offer vivid descriptions of the environment, but they do not comment on its symbolic relationship to the characters. Only option D provides a clear thematic link between the outer world and the inner life of the protagonist. The sentence reflects Austen's broader critique of a society that values appearances while disregarding the hidden efforts required to maintain them, reinforcing one of the novel's central tensions.

3. **Correct Answer: B) her years of silent emotional restraint**

Explanation:

The phrase "the careful varnish from eight years of practiced composure" metaphorically describes the emotional restraint Anne has maintained since her separation from Wentworth. The "varnish" implies a deliberate, protective surface that has preserved her outward calm, even as she has quietly suffered beneath. His words in the letter are so raw and sincere that they break through this emotional façade, forcing her to confront feelings she has long suppressed.

This aligns directly with Anne's primary conflict in the passage, her struggle between propriety and buried emotion. Option B is the only choice that recognizes this internal state. The other options misread the metaphor as referring to physical or external details rather than the inner life Austen emphasizes. The passage uses imagery like this to illustrate how Anne's surface-level composure masks deep, enduring pain.

4. **Correct Answer: A**
   Explanation:

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The pairing A (ink: confession) mirrors the relationship between tears and regret, as both show how physical traces express hidden emotions. Just as tears externalize sorrow, the “bleeding ink” of Wentworth’s letter materializes his emotional disclosure, making this the most apt analogy.

B, C, and D lack the same cause-effect dynamic. Austen frequently uses objects to symbolize interior states, and here, the parallel between tears/regret and ink/confession highlights her narrative technique.

5. **Correct Answer: A**
   Explanation:

Anne’s central conflict pits her lingering love for Wentworth against her sense of duty to family and societal expectations; a tension rooted in her earlier “persuasion” to reject him.

This struggle defines her character arc, embodying Austen’s exploration of women’s constrained agency in Regency England. Thus, A is the clearest answer, as it encapsulates the novel’s core dilemma.

The other options like musical talent (B), nostalgia (C), or faith (D), are secondary to Anne’s battle between personal desire and external pressures. The novel’s title itself, *Persuasion*, underscores the consequences of yielding to social dictates over heartfelt conviction.

6. **Correct Answer: C**

Explanation:

The description of the letter “pulsing against her thigh” (C) best illustrates Anne’s struggle between emotion and propriety, as it physically embodies her repressed feelings. Unlike the more abstract options (A, D), this visceral imagery captures the tension between her outward composure and inner turmoil.

While B contrasts Mrs. Croft’s bluntness with Anne’s restraint, it doesn’t directly address her conflict. C, however, makes the internal struggle tangible, reinforcing Austen’s theme of concealed passion beneath societal decorum.

7. **Correct Answer: B**

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Explanation:

The phrase “the terrible arithmetic of social advantage” critiques the Regency-era marriage market, where relationships were evaluated like financial equations rather than emotional bonds. Anne’s past rejection of Wentworth was dictated by this cold calculus, illustrating how societal pressures override personal happiness. This aligns perfectly with B, as the metaphor underscores Austen’s disdain for a system that reduces love to a transaction.

A, C, and D misinterpret the phrase’s figurative meaning, it refers not to literal costs (A) or naval prizes (C) but to the dehumanizing assessment of romantic partners based on wealth and status. The word “arithmetic” sharpens Austen’s satire, framing societal expectations as a rigid, unfeeling formula.

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