



Virginia Placement Test

Subject: English

Practice Questions and Answers

Question 1

The test you are about to begin is an English Practice Exam. This exam does not contain an essay portion. The actual VPT-English Exam will have an essay portion, in which you will select from two essay topics. You will only be required to respond to one essay topic.

Question 2 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Excerpt from "Biological Diversity: How Are We Changing Life on Earth?" by Tracey Cohen

People tend to think that the crisis of biodiversity, as well as other environmental problems created by human activities, can be corrected with things like better technology. Science and technology can provide crucial information and strategies, but there are limits to their usefulness. Captive breeding programs, for instance, can help save no more than a few hundred of the 1 million known animal species. On a larger scale, too many interdependent species are being lost, often before their ecological roles are fully known. And it would be impossible to create artificially all the conditions necessary for complex, healthy ecosystems.

The true problem of preserving life on Earth is ethical. It means recognizing that other species have a right to continue living. This recognition involves drastic changes in the ways we see and use natural resources. It also means changing the way we see ourselves in the larger community of living things. We need what environmental science professor David Orr called a "biophilia revolution." Biophilia is, in essence, a love of life and things that are alive. A biophilia revolution would combine a reverence for life with efficient use of resources and simpler lifestyles. Until that happens, the plight of biodiversity will not be solved.

Source: Cohen, Tracey. "Biological Diversity: How Are We Changing Life on Earth?" *Biology: Principles and Explorations*. Eds. George B. Johnson and Peter H. Raven. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1998. 412–413. Print.

According to the selection, the author believes that —

- A. Preserving the biodiversity of the planet is an ethical imperative.
- B. captive breeding policies must be implemented correctly and safely.
- C. biophilia is a radical concept with little potential for practical application.
- D. human beings can use technological advances to reverse ecological damage.

Question 3 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

If you wanted to find out more information about "the crisis of biodiversity," which of the following resources would be best to use?

- A. The encyclopedia entry for "biophilia"
- B. An online chat forum for environmentalists
- C. The website for National Geographic magazine
- D. A smartphone app that tracks ecological phenomena

Question 4 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

If you were taking notes on the selection, which of the following details would be most important to include?

- A. Other animal species besides human beings have a right to continue living on the planet.
- B. The planet can only sustain life if we work to sustain the planet, in part through mindful living.
- C. Environmental science professor David Orr defines biophilia as a love of life and all living things.
- D. The decline in biodiversity cannot be undone, even with captive breeding programs and technological advances.

Question 5 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Letter from Birmingham Jail by Martin Luther King Jr.

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling, for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking.

But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

Which of the following best summarizes Martin Luther King Jr.'s view of tension?

- A. All tension can ultimately be used for good.
- B. All tension is unstable, even if it is constructive.
- C. Some tension is necessary to stir people into action.
- D. Some tension is needed to punish and expel prejudice.

Question 6 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

The overall pattern of organization used in this selection is —

- A. simple listing.
- B. Cause and effect.
- C. definition and example.
- D. statement and refutation.

Question 7 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Which of the following assumptions does the author of this selection make about the audience?

- A They do not support equality.
- B They have participated in a sit-in.
- C They respect Socrates as a thinker.
- D They understand the purpose of tension.

Question 8 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Mr. Bojangles's Stoplight

(1) Luther "Bojangles" Robinson was a native of Richmond, Virginia. (2) Having lost both of his parents by the age of seven, Robinson recalled that he stole the name of his brother Bill and began shining shoes and tap dancing for petty cash. (3) After joining a traveling dance troupe, he eventually found himself performing at nightclubs in Chicago. (4) Although his audiences were limited, his talent did not go unnoticed. (5) Under the direction of a stage manager, Marty Forkins, he was soon pulling in \$3,500 a week. (6) Robinson claimed that his feet had a mind and musicality that was all their own, a statement that wasn't too hard to believe given the way he danced: his feet lively and ingeniously creative, his upper body relaxed and lit with an entertainer's face.

(7) At the age of fifty, Robinson finally broke into Broadway. (8) The musical Blackbirds allowed him to debut his self-choreographed "stair dance," which became one of his most memorable performances. (9) From then on, Robinson's career also included acting, earning him a number of famous roles alongside America's sweetheart, Shirley Temple. (10) Yet, underneath his new-found stardom, Robinson never forgot his rocky childhood. (11) During a visit to his hometown, he witnessed a near accident as a couple of schoolchildren attempted to cross a busy street. (12) According to reports, he immediately put down enough money to have a traffic light installed. (13) Over the course of his lifetime, he gave away more than one million dollars, leaving him bankrupt at the time of his death. (14) To this day, a statue of Bill Robinson remains at the intersection of Adams and West Leigh Streets. (15) It features Bojangles atop a set of stairs, much like the ones that graced his feet in real life.

Which of the following word changes would convey a more skeptical tone?

- A. Change "stole" to "borrowed" (Sentence 2).
- B. Change "claimed" to "believed" (Sentence 6).
- C. Change "allowed" to "was a chance for" (Sentence 8).
- D. Change "According to reports" to "Allegedly" (Sentence 12).

Question 9 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Which of the following sentences contains an opinion?

- A Sentence 3
- B Sentence 6
- C Sentence 9
- D Sentence 12

Question 11 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Based on its use in the selection, the word exiles could be replaced with which of the following words?

- A Outcasts
- B Refugees
- C Deportees
- D Immigrants

Question 12 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Based on its use in the selection, the word brazen most likely means —

- A bold or flashy.
- B careful or prudent.
- C proud or dignified.
- D modest or unnoticeable.

Question 13 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Excerpt from "Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed" by Ray Bradbury

The rocket metal cooled in the meadow winds. Its lid gave a bulging pop. From its clock interior stepped a man, a woman, and three children. The other passengers whispered away across the Martian meadow, leaving the man alone among his family.

The man felt his hair flutter and the tissues of his body draw tight as if he were standing at the center of a vacuum. His wife, before him, seemed almost to whirl away in smoke. The children, small seeds, might at any instant be sown to all the Martian climes.

The children looked up at him, as people look to the sun to tell what time of their life it is. His face was cold.

"What's wrong?" asked his wife.

"Let's get back on the rocket."

"Go back to Earth?"

"Yes! Listen!"

The wind blew as if to flake away their identities. At any moment the Martian air might draw his soul from him, as marrow comes from a white bone. He felt submerged in a chemical that could dissolve his intellect and burn away his past.

Which of the following details best supports the idea that the main character is uneasy about their arrival on Mars?

- A "His wife, before him, seemed almost to whirl away in smoke."
- B "The children looked up at him, as people look to the sun to tell what time of their life it is."
- C "At any moment the Martian air might draw his soul from him, as marrow comes from a white bone."
- D "The other passengers whispered away across the Martian meadow, leaving the man alone among his family."

Question 14 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

If you were to rewrite the selection, which of the following would best convey a cause-and-effect pattern?

- A A description of the setting, including vivid imagery
- B A description of each character's impressions of the planet
- C A description of the arrival, followed by what happens afterward
- D A description of the narrator's motivations for wanting to return home

Question 15 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

According to the logic of the text, readers can assume that —

- A time travel is a dangerous pursuit.
- B the family will return home immediately.
- C this story is told in the genre of science fiction.
- D technological advances now allow tourists in space.

Question 16 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Should schools stop selling soda to students? Choose a stance and explain your position.

The primary purpose of this essay is to —

- A. inform.
- B. narrate.
- C. entertain.
- D. persuade.

Question 17 of 36

Using the model provided, answer the question.

K	I	M
covert	secret or concealed; not meant to be known or discovered	

If you were using this model to learn the word covert, as shown, which of the following pictures would most likely be included under the "M" heading?

- A A locked and hidden diary
- B An opened letter on a desk
- C An illustrated poster on a wall
- D A messy or disorganized room

Question 18 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

"I am fond of pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals." —Winston Churchill

Which of the following correctly integrates the quotation?

- A According to Winston Churchill, "Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals."
- B Winston Churchill believed that "dogs looked up to us, cats looked down on us, and pigs treated us as equals."
- C According to Winston Churchill, "I am fond of pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals."
- D Winston Churchill believed that dogs look up to us and cats look down on us. This is why he eventually stated "I am fond of pigs."

Question 19 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

"I love America more than any other country in the world, and exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually." —James Baldwin

Which of the following paraphrases is an example of plagiarism?

- A Writer James Baldwin believed that a love for one's country requires one to look critically at the practices of that country.
- B If we wish to be truly patriotic, then we must exercise our right and responsibility to "criticize [America] perpetually," as James Baldwin has said.
- C Writer James Baldwin said that he loved America more than any other country in the world, and exactly for this reason, he insisted on the right to criticize her perpetually.
- D If you say, "I love America more than any other country in the world," as James Baldwin has said, then you must also, like Baldwin, "insist on the right to criticize her perpetually."

Question 20 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Mightier Than the Sword: An All-Too-True Tale of Felt-Tipped Woe

Twenty-five years ago, in a none-too-remarkable British town, a rather unremarkable thing happened: a woman swallowed a felt-tipped pen. Doctors, of course, will tell you that there is nothing unusual about finding foreign objects in people's stomachs, particularly if those "people" happen to be curious children. (In anticipation of the reader's question, the person in question here was not a child but a middle-aged woman in her fifties. No doubt by now, the reader is wondering just how a grown woman managed to swallow a pen.) The story goes that the woman was using the pen to examine a tonsil that was causing her pain. She opened her mouth and pointed to the tonsil at the back of her throat with the handy pen-turned-pointer; then, at what would prove to be a fateful moment, the woman's hand slipped, the pen fell, and, presumably by reflex, the woman swallowed it.

When her husband came home, she told him the story. He did not quite believe her, but he drove her to the hospital anyway, as any good husband would do. When they met with the physician, the physician did not quite believe her but performed all the appropriate medical exams anyway, as any good physician would do. The test results showed that everything was normal, and the woman was sent home with a good laugh by husband and physician alike.

Fast-forward to the present day: the woman is now seventy-six years old, still living in her none-too-remarkable town in Britain, when she begins to experience stomach pains. She goes to the doctor, who refers her to another doctor, who then runs a slew of standard medical exams. When the test results for the CT scan return, the doctor is stunned to find, floating inside the woman's digestive tract, what appears to be a single, felt-tipped marker. The woman only nods matter-of-factly at this news because, for her, it was not news at all.

The surprise, as it turned out, was not in the pen's discovery, but in its removal. After spending a quarter of a century inside the entrails of a human being, the pen still worked!

Which of the following alternate titles would lead readers to expect a more serious tone?

- A Well, That's One Way to Write a Medical History
- B An Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly—or, a Pen
- C Dangers of Ingesting Foreign Objects by the Elderly
- D Eating Your Way to the Truth (or Just to the Hospital)

Question 21 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

The author's primary purpose in this selection is to —

- A provide readers with an entertaining anecdote.
- B convince readers that medical miracles can happen.
- C warn readers of the dangers of swallowing foreign objects.
- D motivate readers to advocate for themselves during doctor visits.

Question 22 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

It can be inferred from the selection that the —

- A townspeople thought the woman foolish for having swallowed a pen.
- B husband had complained about his missing pen in the weeks leading up to the incident.
- C physician cautioned the woman against using pens to examine her own tonsils in the future.
- D woman experienced no side effects from swallowing the pen in the intervening twenty-five years.

Question 23 of 36

Excerpt from *Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville

(1) It was not a great while after the affair of the pipe, that one morning shortly after breakfast, Ahab, as was his wont, ascended the cabin-gangway to the deck. (2) There most sea-captains usually walk at that hour, as country gentlemen, after the same meal, take a few turns in the garden.

(3) Soon his steady, ivory stride was heard, as to and fro he paced his old rounds, upon planks so familiar to his tread, that they were all over dented, like geological stones, with the peculiar mark of his walk. (4) Did you fixedly gaze, too, upon that ribbed and dented brow; there also, you would see still stranger foot-prints—the foot-prints of his one unsleeping, ever-pacing thought.

Which of the following revisions would make the language of this selection less formal?

- A Change "as was his wont" to "as usual" (Sentence 1).
- B Change "take a few turns" to "meander" (Sentence 2).
- C Change "to and fro" to "hither and thither" (Sentence 3).
- D Change "fixedly gaze" to "steadily stare" (Sentence 4).

Question 24 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

The tone of this selection can best be described as —

- A ominous.
- B oblivious.
- C objective.
- D optimistic.

Question 25 of 36

Which of the following is correct?

- A If soccer practice had been cancelled, we can rent a movie.
- B If soccer practice had been cancelled, we will have rent a movie.
- C If soccer practice had been cancelled, we are able to rent a movie.
- D If soccer practice had been cancelled, we could have rented a movie.

Question 26 of 36

Which of the following shows correct punctuation?

- A "Have you lost your mind?" he asked.
- B "Have you lost your mind," he asked?
- C "Have you lost your mind"? he asked.
- D "Have you lost your mind!" he asked?

Question 27 of 36

Choose the word that means the same as the underlined word.

A jubilant person is —

- A kind.
- B happy.
- C pleasant.
- D thoughtful.

Question 28 of 36

Which of the following is the root of the word "autobiographical"?

- A auto-
- B -bio-
- C -graph-
- D -ical

Question 29 of 36

Which of the following words has the most positive connotation?

- A Stubborn
- B Steadfast
- C Stiff Necked
- D Strong Willed

Question 30 of 36

If you were researching early Native American history, which of the following sources would give you the most reliable material for your topic?

- A A map of early Native American populations
- B A Colonial journal entry on Native Americans
- C An interview with a Native American descendent
- D An archaeological report from a Native American site

Question 31 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

"When I Was One-and-Twenty" by A. E. Housman

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free."
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.
When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
"The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty
And sold for endless rue."*
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

*rue means "sorrow"

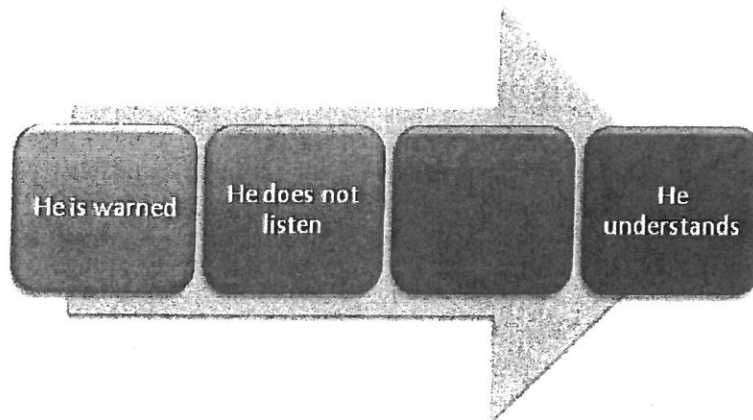
Which of the following reading strategies would be most helpful in approaching this selection?

- A Locate key words and write a definition for each.
- B Research British life and culture in the early 1900s.
- C Skim the selection to make predictions about key concepts.
- D Adjust your reading rate to accommodate the poetic language.

Question 32 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

The graphic organizer shows the order of events that occur in the poem.



Which of the following terms best completes the graphic organizer?

- A His heart is broken.
- B He is warned again.
- C He loses all his money.
- D He becomes a wise man.

Question 33 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Based on its use in the selection, the word guineas most likely refers to —

- A pets.
- B coins.
- C livestock.
- D treasures

Question 34 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Urban Homesteading: Where City and Farm Become One

(1) It used to be that farms looked like, well, farms: great, open spaces of rural land, where barnyard animals grazed contentedly on acres of sprawling cropland and grass. (2) These days, if you want to find a farm, you don't have to look any further than your own fenced backyard—or your neighbor's—in the city. (3) Urban homesteading is on the rise among people who favor healthy, sustainable, and community-based growing practices. (4) The movement toward urban homesteading is just about as local as it gets—homegrown produce harvested with admirable do-it-yourself stamina, even if doing it yourself means growing herbs in a container garden on your apartment balcony. (5) Some homesteaders in city and suburban neighborhoods even raise their own chickens. (6) (While most neighborhood ordinances prohibit roosters—neighbors usually don't take kindly to that pesky "cock-a-doodle-doo" morning ritual—they often permit residents to keep chickens as an ultra-local source of eggs.)

(7) Many urban homesteaders are moved to become more knowledgeable about, and involved in, the food they eat. (8) In an age when more and more food products are being genetically altered, transported thousands of miles, or grown with potentially harmful pesticides, one way of ensuring that food is safe and healthy is simply to grow it yourself. (9) It is a matter of health and conscience, sure, but also a matter of basic human joy. (10) Urban homesteaders may grow their own food, even if all they have is a modest community garden plot, because they believe in local, organic, and/or sustainably harvested food. (11) After all, such practices are good for people and planet alike. (12) But the movement to grow your own food is more than a political, social, or even economic one. (13) It is about the joys of getting dirty, cultivating delicious food, and reconnecting with that most basic of human pleasures: sharing homegrown food in a community.

Which of the following sentences could be eliminated without compromising the logic of the selection?

- A Sentence 3
- B Sentence 6
- C Sentence 8
- D Sentence 10

Question 35 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

According to the selection, the practice of urban homesteading is on the rise due to —

- A the desire for healthy, community-based growing methods.
- B recent increases in the use of potentially harmful pesticides.
- C new ordinances that allow chickens in neighborhood backyards.
- D the prevailing do-it-yourself philosophy of many young city-dwellers.

Question 36 of 36

Read the selection and answer the question.

Which of the following sentences best reveals the author's bias in this selection?

- A Sentence 3
- B Sentence 5
- C Sentence 7
- D Sentence 9

VPT ENGLISH PRACTICE TEST – ANSWER KEY

Ques.	Answer	Student Learning Outcome	Skill
1	A	English	Local Question
2	A	6	6.C.5: Use analysis, synthesis, and perspective on a basic level to interpret texts
3	C	8	8.C.1: Identify and retrieve possible sources for a given topic
4	D	8	8.C.3: Demonstrate note-taking competency
5	C	1	1.C.6: Annotate, summarize, paraphrase, and respond to text
6	D	4	4.C.2: Identify many of the rhetorical patterns, such as narrative, description, process, comparison/contrast, classification, and definition
7	C	4	4.C.5: Evaluate the appropriateness of text to audience
8	D	6	6.C.9: Apply appropriate language to achieve a particular tone and point of view when writing
9	B	6	6.C.2: Distinguish fact from opinion in a text
10	D	3	3.C.1: Use dictionary, thesaurus, and reference materials to determine appropriate unknown word meaning based on context
11	B	3	3.C.3: Use and explain word analysis strategies to decode general-purpose vocabulary and some specialized/academic vocabulary
12	A	3	3.C.5: Select appropriate word meaning based on context
13	C	6	6.C.3: Identify valid points of supporting evidence for a text
14	C	4	4.C.3: Identify and use a variety of organizational patterns/rhetorical modes in the context of reading as well as in writing
15	C	4	4.C.6: Evaluate the logic of text
16	D	2	2.C.1: Identify audience, purpose, and topic for a given writing prompt
17	A	3	3.C.9: Apply strategies for learning new words, such as K-I-M, Frayer Models, Minute Sketches, Pyramid Summaries
18	A	8	8.C.4: Integrate quoted and paraphrased material into a text, with some accuracy
19	C	8	8.C.5: Identify the meaning and consequences of plagiarism
20	C	1	1.C.1: Use titles, subtitles, illustrations and text to make general predictions about the text: topic, purpose, audience, tone, and main idea

Ques.	Answer	Student Learning Outcome	Skill
21	A	1	1.C.3: Identify the topic, purpose, audience, stated and implied main idea, and key details
22	D	1	1.C.5: Answer content and inferential questions based on facts, opinions, context clues, connotation, and structure
23	A	3	3.C.4: Demonstrate understanding and use of vocabulary for informal and formal communication
24	A	6	6.C.4: Identify tone and make valid inferences in a text
25	D	2	2.C.5: Edit to correct most basic errors in sentence structure, agreement, consistency, usage, spelling, and mechanics
26	A	2	2.C.6
27	B	3	3.C.6: Recognize synonyms, antonyms, and word parts
28	B	3	3.C.7: Analyze word parts to discern meanings of new words
29	B	3	3.C.8: Demonstrate understanding of the difference between denotation and connotation
30	D	8	8.C.2: Evaluate the relevance and reliability of a source
31	D	1	1.C.2: Adjust reading strategies according to text
32	A	1	1.C.4: Use a graphic organizer or outline to show structure of text
33	B	3	3.C.2: Use context clues to discern meaning in difficult texts
34	B	2	2.C.4: Revise for content, clarity, structure, and unity
35	A	5	5.C.2: Differentiate between major and minor supporting details accurately and consistently
36	D	1	1.C.7: Reflect critically, interpret content, and make connections to other texts, situations, or disciplines

