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## **Example 1: EK101 Verbal Test 2 Passage 1**

### **Step 1: Reading the Questions**

Question 1: This is a standard PoE question that asks us to select an answer choice that is not supported by evidence presented in the passage.

Question 2: In order to answer this question I must be able to discern the author’s perspective. How would he answer a moral question?

Question 3: This is another “crux of the passage” question. See Question 2.

Question 4: Another PoE question, and since it does not provide me with any relevant information I quickly scanned the answer choices. I must be able to answer what the author believes with respect to producing offspring.

Question 5: This is another crux of the passage question.

Question 6: What does the author think about Darwin’s theory of evolution?

Before reading the passage I know the following: this passage is being written by a proponent of Darwin’s theory of evolution, and it applying it to the moral domain (perhaps Social Darwinism). Question: how do I know that he is a proponent? Who else refers to the birth of a human being as “producing offspring”, but a disillusioned academic? ☹

Now I know what to focus on, and I have a working theory of what the passage is about.

### **Step 2: Read the passage**

Done.

### **Step 3: Discern the crux of the passage**

From my scan of the questions I know that in order to answer four of the six questions I must be able to correctly discern the crux of the passage and therefore the author’s perspective.

The author rejects traditional morality or a universal morality because they cannot be explained in a rational manner. We cannot truly know right from wrong, and if we pursue judgment we may punish good people out of our own ignorance. Morality can only be defined by what we have to do – what

we are genetically/biologically programmed to do for ourselves. This looney-toon author is advocating social Darwinism, and genetic determinism in one fell-swoop!

#### Step 4: Answer the passage's questions!

I already know what the questions demand of me, I know the crux of the passage, I know the author's perspective of the topic...am I ready to answer the questions? Yes!

Question 1 – Within the context of this passage, I am looking for an invalid statement. A – This is false. The author states that traditional/universal morality is *one* source of morality (right/wrong). That is to say, traditional morality does not own a monopoly on right and wrong. The author goes on state right in wrong as defined by Darwinism. **Choice A is correct.** I am so confident in my answer choice I won't bother to read any of the other questions. **Correct!**

Question 2 – Anyone that is remotely familiar with social Darwinism knows the answer to this question: the self. Moreover, the author states that the only time it is right to help another, is when it benefits you! This is one of the most selfish doctrines I have ever encountered. I scan the answer choices for "self" or "selfish". **Answer D is correct.** **Correct!**

Question 3 – This is a neat trick question. We must fall back to the crux of the passage which states: right and wrong is defined by what we are genetically/biologically programmed to do. Does that answer whether premarital sex is immoral? No. Therefore, we are looking for a neutral answer. **Answer C is correct.** However, answer choice A is quite appealing because it adds the element of reproduction which the author is quite fond of. The reason why I did not pick this choice is because of the usage of the word "always". I believe that to be a stretch of the author's perspective. **Correct!**

Question 4 – This question asks us the following: how does the author feel about topic X? Positively? Negatively? Or neutral? We know that the author believes reproduction to be a moral act, and therefore **Answer choice A is correct.** B – The argument that individuals who engage in reproduction are immoral is not supported by the passage. C – This contradicts A. D – Not only does this statement have zero substance, but it is irrelevant. **Correct!**

Question 5 – The logic behind the answer is: reproduction is categorically a moral act, irrespective of which species/race/creed, etc. is engaging in the act. **Answer D is correct.** **Correct!**

Question 6 – Question: which of the following would be conducive to reproduction? Sherlock Holmes' PoE strategy. The first thing I will do is look for which of the answer choices deal with reproduction. C and D are definitely incorrect because neither is conducive to reproduction.

A – This answer should appeal to you; because of the question we just finished answering. However, it is vague! Animal rights could mean a great many things! We just finished reviewing a passage that dealt with animal rights in so far as vivisection is concerned. Animal rights are not solely about reproduction. B –Through PoE we know B to be correct. **Answer B is correct.** Why? Homosexuals are not

capable of reproducing, and extending the author's perspective, he would condemn them for it. Why aren't they doing their duty and reproducing? You may not like this answer, or necessarily agree with the author's perspective, but it is the right answer to choose. **Correct!**

Time to grade the passage! A perfect 6/6!

### Moment of Reflection:

One of the reasons that I chose this passage is because I think my stomach may have turned a few times while reading the passage. However, it is important to divorce oneself from the author's perspective. It isn't my goal or your goal to argue with or correct the author's perspective. Our objective is to understand the author's perspective and answer passage questions. Could we critique his perspective Perhaps! However, the MCAT is not the appropriate medium. We must learn to control our emotions and keep our Emotional System (ES) in check.

Question: What is so different between how I solved the passage above, and the two previous passages?

First and foremost, I answered all of the questions correctly without hesitation! As a result of previewing the questions and taking time to discern the crux of the passage, I was able to approach the passage with the confidence that I had an unshakeable command of the content. You may have noticed that for certain questions I did not bother reading other answer choices when I had made up my mind. I validated my reasoning and selected the correct answer. In addition to that, it is an important time management technique.

## **Example 2: TPR Verbal Workbook Passage 33 Page 66**

### Step 1: Read the Questions

Question 1: From this question alone, I know that the passage is about ecology, and specifically - ecosystems.

❓ Question: What does the author think about ecosystems?

Question 2: Question: what is industrial metabolism? When I see this word I will pay enough attention to it that I am able to define the term.

Question 3: Looking for an argument that strengthens "the study of ecosystems"

❓ Question: What does the author say about the study of ecosystems? Question 4: Simple deduction question.

Question 5: What is Rees' model?

## Step 2: Read the passage

I would like to share with you my thoughts as I read through the passage, paragraph by paragraph.

❑ Paragraph 1: The passage is about ecosystems however I knew that from Step 1

❑ Paragraph 2: Defines ecosystems as input and output. Traditional ecosystems (no human activity) are good, but urban ecosystems (human activity) are unbalanced. Possible hint of author bias? Oh, yes!

❑ Paragraph 3: Odum? Not in questions, therefore not important.

❑ Paragraph 4: Rees! Aha, the man of the hour! Rees = ecological footprint which is defined as energy produced in area / energy consumed in area. A necessary corollary would be that urban ecosystems have a significantly larger ecological footprint than traditional ecosystems. Al- so note the language the author uses such as “exploitation of resources”.

❑ Paragraph 5: In many cases? Prove it, buster! “It is weaker”? This is a useless paragraph that is filled with unsubstantiated rhetoric.

❑ Paragraph 6: This paragraph offers a perspective that the author would most likely reject. The entire point of this passage is that human beings are not like other organisms in so far as we are wasteful among other things that the author implies.

❑ Paragraph 7: The author argues that current eco-theory is not enough and we must take into account influence of culture, etc.

## Step 3: Crux of the Passage / Author's Perspective

The author presents the reader with two schools of thought: urban ecosystems and traditional ecosystems. Urban ecosystems are presented to the reader as exploitive and are not supported by eco-theory. Meanwhile, traditional ecosystems are presented as not harmful or abusive – natural. The author maintains a bias against urban ecosystems.

In Elmo terms: urban bad, traditional good. In order to fix urban we must change ecological theory.

## Step 4: Answering the Questions

Question 1 – We are looking for a true statement. PoE strategy.

A – This is a good example of an unsubstantiated inference. The passage does not concern itself with the sustainability of cities. B – This is not supported by the passage, as there is no mention of primary production or respiration. Whatever those mean. C – This is a trick question aimed at a reader who may confuse traditional methods with traditional ecosystems. D – Yes, this is correct. If you read Step

2 Paragraph 2 you will see that the author defines the traditional study of an ecosystem in terms of input and output. **Answer D is correct.**

Question 2 – This is a simple inductive question. We are looking for an answer that involves human activity.

A – No humans, wrong. B – Mention of cities, perhaps correct. Intuitively this seems like the correct answer. C – This is presented in the final paragraph and not a defining characteristic of industrial metabolism. This answer choice is incorrect. D – Interesting answer choice, however this is used in the context of a precise term and not an analogy. It used to describe a city's hunger of resources to the point that humans need to seek out non-renewable energy sources. **Answer B is correct.**

Question 3 - Question: Why is current ecological theory insufficient? Which perspective would it benefit from the most? This question requires a detailed examination of the final paragraph in the passage where the author states that humans adopt strategies to perceived threats (not actual threats). Therefore, we are looking for an example of where humans adopt a strategy to a perceived threat.

A – No relevance. B – “Risk of flooding” humans construct dams and channel rivers. This is most likely the correct answer, because there is not an imminent or defined flood – there is a probability of a flood but not a certainty. This answer agrees with the crux of the passage **Answer B is correct.** C – This is perhaps an interesting answer choice for those who do not believe in the Anthropogenic Global Warming phenomenon. However, your personal beliefs are irrelevant here. This question presupposed the validity of all of the statements. Therefore, the question assumed that anthropogenic global warming is a real phenomenon. Therefore, it cannot be correct. D – No relevance.

Question 4 - This question asks us to highlight the central difference between a typical city and an oyster reef? Refer to the crux of the passage: Question: what is the difference between a traditional and an urban ecosystem? Answer: Urban ecosystems, which involve humans, are wasteful and burn energy. We're looking for an answer that compares humans/nonhumans or city/traditional.

A – This is an irrelevant and unfounded assumption. B – No, there is no comparison/contrast of ideas in this statement. C – Yes, this is correct. This statement contains both of the contrasts that we were looking for: human versus non-human and city energy consumption versus traditional energy consumption. **Answer C is correct.**

Question 5: - Deduction question. PoE strategy.

A – This is one of the wildest assumptions I have ever seen made in an MCAT Verbal passage. So, a handful of farmers are representative of urban settings versus rural societies? I don't think so. And then the statement claims to “prove” a premise...this is laughable. B – Perhaps, perhaps not. Rees' claims are irrelevant to this question, because we are being asked how the author's perspective would be affected by a premise and NOT Rees'. C – This is most likely correct. The whole idea behind this thought experiment is that we are holding a few variables constant, and testing to observe the

consequences to an urban setting. We don't know the consequences – all we know is that there will be consequences. D – Another wild assumption! How many calories one consumes, at what time one eats and spending time with one's family is not culture. Eating a pink orange instead of an purple orange does not instill me with culture, and neither does being in the presence of a select few individuals. This question presumes an incorrect definition of culture. **Now we can state with certainty that Answer choice C is correct!**

Question 6 – Recall: Rees -> carbon footprint Urban ecosystems -> large carbon footprint

I selected answer choice D right away. However, to honor your circumspection, let us examine all of the answer choices. A – This statement assumes that heterotrophic systems have a destructive effect, and that assumption cannot be corroborated with the passage. B – Another bold assumption is made here, that natural ecologies balance their inputs and outputs in the long run. C – This answer choice is quite appealing, because of the suggestive tone that the author uses throughout the passage. However, there is an underlying logical fallacy as to why we ought not to choose this answer choice. Read the statement carefully: “cities are driven solely by industrial exploitation”. Industrial exploitation, in the eyes of the author, may be a correct perspective; however that is a means to an end. We are driven to consume an inordinate amount of energy not for industrial exploitation, but perhaps for other reasons. Industrial exploitation, that is to say, exploiting resources, is simply a means to an end, and certainly is not the driving force. **Answer D is correct.** (Not a run-on sentence, hooray for Jane Aus- ten). Why? What is Rees saying? A necessary corollary to his argument is that urban ecosystems use significantly more energy than a traditional ecosystem. No rationale is provided, nor is it necessary. Choice D reflects Rees' analysis quite simply.

### Thoughts?

So, Saree, why did you pick this Verbal passage in particular? Well, I possess a limited understanding of ecology, and therefore my flow of information was limited. I relied on my intuition and methodology. From this passage, compared to the previous ones, I learned that discerning the crux of the passage is not enough to score a perfect score! Testing premises and not being carried away by fanciful inferences is important!

### Example 3: AAMC 6R Passage 4

Questions (I realize that these old exams are not easy to come by)

98. The author apparently believes that young men normally resolve the Oedipus complex by:
- A) defying their father and identifying with their mother.
  - B) rejecting the symbolic order for the imaginary.
  - C) leaving the matriarchy to join the patriarchy.
  - D) leaving their mother and marrying someone like her.
99. The author hints that the fact of the novel's having been written by a woman indicates that its plot is:
- A) an argument for the magical powers of nature.
  - B) a denunciation of patriarchal attitudes.
  - C) evidence of the novelist's feelings about giving birth.
  - D) a demonstration of women's skill with symbolic language.
100. The passage suggests that family opposition to Victor's university studies results from his father's:
- A) distrust of the irreligious influence of modern scientific ideas.
  - B) concern that they represent rebellion against accepted values.
101. Assume that a later, revised manuscript of Shelley's *Frankenstein* is discovered. The single plot change that would most *compromise* the author's analysis would be that Victor:
- A) courts and marries Elizabeth.
  - B) nurses his mother into old age.
  - C) is unable to animate the monster.
  - D) creates and marries a female monster.
102. Apparently, the author's preferred approach to the interpretation of a novel is to concentrate on:
- A) the social attitudes of the intended readers.
  - B) the unconscious motives of the characters.
  - C) the socio-historical context of the plot.
  - D) correspondences between the characters and the novelist.



### Step 1: Read the Questions

98. Oedipus complex. A man who aspired to do weird things with his mother, and had to kill his father along the way. I know of one looney-toon who loves this complex: Freud. We'll see.

Take-away: Focus on Oedipus complex when you see it!

99. Plot? This passage is about a book, so figure out what the author of the novel is saying about women.

100. Focus on father.

101. Aha! Frankenstein. I have read this book! This is a crux question, so there is no information to extract. It can only be answered after Step 3. Sure, we know that it's about Frankenstein, but we cannot let our biases sway our answer choices.

102. Another crux question. No take away here.

I'm looking for: Oedipus, Victor's father, involvement of women in the novel.

I already know the crux of the passage: psychoanalyzing Frankenstein (novel) with respect to sexual relationships between the characters.

### Step 2: Read the Passage



#### Paragraph 1

Within Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, the world is divided between the public realm and the private, almost delusional, relation between Victor and the monster, according to Jacques Lacan, a psychoanalytic critic, between the symbolic and imaginary orders. On the one hand, there are Alphonse Frankenstein, dutiful father and judge, the families of the Frankensteins and the De Laceys, the possibility of Victor's marriage with Elizabeth, the responsible science of M. Krempe, and the operation of law in the trial of Justine and the imprisonment of Victor. All these exemplify in varying degrees a social order rooted in patriarchal marriage, legality, and genital (phallic) sexuality. On the other hand, there is the curious solitude of Victor and the monster, neither of whom can ever belong to a family, their endless fascination with each other, and their utter incapacity to communicate their situation with anyone else. Victor's obsession with this imaginary double of the self, outside of society and language, compels him to resist or attack his father, friend, and potential wife whenever they threaten that self.

#### Paragraph 4 cont'd

duplicate Caroline Frankenstein's, as if she is in fact the perfect person to complete the Oedipal drama. Victor resists the seemingly inevitable marriage to Elizabeth, leaves home, and chooses another, forbidden erotic object: the mystery of the way nature works in "her" hiding places—the mystery of the feminine body. That is, he chooses to take exactly the opposite of the typical path, spurning the social realm in favor of the imaginary, bodily mother, whom he attempts to recover by creating the monster.

#### Paragraph 5 (final)

This relation between the mother and monster is made clear in the episodes surrounding Victor's going to the university. The break from the family represents Victor's entrance into the public world and his separation from his mother. Thus her death immediately before his leaving is highly appropriate; it represents Victor's accepting his place in the symbolic order. Yet once he gets to the university he refuses to partake in authorized scientific activities and falls prey to his longing for forbidden knowledge. He identifies with his mother, recovering her body in his own body as he attempts to become pregnant himself, to labor in childbirth, and to watch the child awaken, gesture, and attempt to speak. As Ellen Moers has pointed out, this story of monstrous creation is thus a "birth myth" built around Mary Shelley's own experiences with pregnancy and childbirth.

#### Paragraph 2

The imaginary quality of Victor's solitude is made clear. As a young scholar, Victor studies "neither the structure of languages, nor the code of governments, nor the politics of various states," all subjects associated with the symbolic order, but rather the "physical secrets of the world." Moreover, within the physical sciences, Victor pursues an outmoded, erroneous, semimagical science in defiance of his father's prohibition, as if replaying the Oedipus complex in his intellectual pursuits. In an unofficial, magical nature, Victor hopes to recover the mother who has died.

#### Paragraph 3

Victor's search for a substitute mother does not take the normative Oedipal path. Typically, the son relinquishes his mother and desires a person who resembles her. Margaret Homans argues that in effect the son seeks a substitute for the physical mother in the realm of language or social relations. Homans goes on to propose that Victor's development *is* quite typical, because he attempts to recreate his mother in his scientific, intellectual project and thus in the realm of language.

#### Paragraph 4

But the authorized figure for the mother is Elizabeth, not the monster; her personality and biography almost

Paragraph 1 – What did I tell you? Psychoanalysis. Freud. ALERT! The father is mentioned here: dutiful, and apparently he’s a judge. This paragraph is introducing the reader to Frankenstein, and Victor’s world. He’s creating a “monster”, and attacks those around him in order to complete that objective.

Paragraph 2 – Oedipus is mentioned! Victor is studying Physics so that he can recreate his mother, and therefore rebel against his father.

Paragraph 3 – First sentence describes what the Oedipus complex is.

Paragraph 4 – Useless paragraph.

Paragraph 5 – Victor is divorcing himself from society and its norms; preferring to re-animate his mother (or a mother like figure). The book was written by Shelley, so she could comment on her own experiences with childbirth.

Oedipus? Check. Father? Check. Connection between the author, Shelley, and women? Check.

### Step 3: Crux of the Passage

Already stated. Let’s answer some questions!

### Step 4: Solve questions

98. This question is asking us: how do we solve the Oedipus complex? Well, obviously, we need to figure out some strategy so the son doesn’t end up with his mother. PoE time!

A – Identifying with the mother? No, this answer choice IS the Oedipus complex.

B – This answer choice has nothing to do with the Oedipus complex.

C – Was he ever in the matriarchy? The passage states that he was divorced from society.

**D** – Yes, exactly. The author states that a solution would be for Victor to jettison his affinity towards his mother for Elizabeth – who shares similarities with his mother.

99. PoE. Scan questions first.

The answer is C. This is a word-for-word description of what is provided in the final paragraph.

100. Before you engage in PoE, ask yourself what you know about Victor’s father. He’s dutiful, and he’s a judge. This is an inference question.

A – Religion is not mentioned

B – Yes. Why? We know that Victor is in conflict with society and its norms, and that his father is a judge. His father’s duties are to uphold society’s norms.

C – This is a trick question. We know that Victor is imprisoned at some point in the story, but we don’t know whether or not his father foretold of such an event. This is a feel good assumption.

D- We already know the answer is B, but...there is no evidence from the passage to support this claim.

101 – Weaken the crux question. Crux? Oedipus and Psychoanalysis. The question is asking us: how do we weaken the Oedipus complex. PoE time.

A – Yes. We know from 98, that the author’s recommended solution to the Oedipus complex is to distance oneself from their mother.

B – This answer choice exacerbates the Oedipus complex!

C – The monster is irrelevant here.

D – This is a tricky choice. The monster symbolizes Victor’s mother. Therefore, any attachment to the monster would support the Oedipus complex – not weaken it.

102 – Another crux question. I’m looking for an answer choice that examines the sexual relationships between various characters. PoE. Right away, I know it’s B!

A – A contemporary historical critique is not offered. The passage’s author states the social critique from WITHIN the novel, and not from the Victorian England of reality.

B – Yuppies! Classic Freudian answer.

C – No historical analysis is offered.

D - There is no correspondence between Mary Shelley and her characters. How would that even be possible? Oh, it is Saturday morning let me send an email to my favorite book character. Oh wait! They’re imaginary. Oops.

## **Example 4 – Random [fluffy] Passage EK Test 10 Passage 8**

### Step 1: Pre-read Questions



48. Comparison in the passage? There is no information to extract from here.

49. Ah, self-defense and women passage. Line 10 = paragraph 1. Focus on the usage of the word fool-proof.

50. Paragraph 1 – tearful

51. Crux question. Skip.

52. Line 32? Realistic.

53. Crux question. Skip.

I'm looking for: Paragraph 1 – fool-proof and tearful. Line 32 – realistic. If I read this passage correctly I should be awarded 3 easy marks!

### Step 2: Read the Passage

Paragraph 1: The author describes his position early on: he is not a supporter of women's self-defense courses. He questions their efficacy. Oh! There's fool-proof! The phrase is under quotation marks – he's mocking it. There's tearful! Context: classmates celebrating, tearfully, "driving off" a fictional perpetrator. The author doubts a woman's competence to fend off any attacker, and states that teaching otherwise is dangerous.

Paragraph 2: Introduction of boxing. Equivalence of martial arts and women's self-defense technique in so far as they both are "stylized dances".

Paragraph 3: Men weigh more than women, and even if they are of the same weight-class they are more fit. His argument by now fairly simple: women are at a biological disadvantage when compared to men.

Paragraph 4: This is a useless fluffy duffy bunny paragraph. I have read the questions, and I know I don't need any of this content. In addition to that, the author is repeating what he said in paragraph: teaching women to defend themselves is dangerous and silly.

Paragraph 5: For the third time, the author is repeating himself, but at the end he offers a solution: women ought to scare their assailants away, and hope they assault someone else.

### Step 3: Crux

Women's self-defense courses are dangerous and foolish, because women are at a biological disadvantage against men.

#### Step 4: Answer Questions!

##### 48. PoE

A – Remember, the crux: women's self defense courses!

B – Martial arts and women's self-defense courses complement each other, so how could this be an important comparison? We learn nothing new.

C – This is a trick question. We want to think: boxing proves that women are weak. However, pay careful attention to the wording of this answer choice: "the way in which boxers train". This was never contrasted with women's self-defense training!

D – The competencies and capabilities of any assailant are not mentioned in the passage.

No answer? PoE states that A, C, and D are incorrect. Therefore according to Sherlock Holmes' PoE – **B is correct**. Why? I deemed that B contains an unimportant comparison, and not the passage. A, C, and D can be invalidated by passage information and the crux.

**49.** Remember, "fool-proof" was used mockingly. We're looking for an answer choice that is the opposite of fool-proof (or invulnerable, etc.). Fool-proof: even someone who lacks knowledge can be successful. Simple PoE.

A – Let's not get carried away. The author is calling the defense courses foolish, but not the women themselves! He's not that big of a jerk.

B – No, this is the opposite of the answer that we're looking for.

**C** – Yes, this is the opposite of fool-proof.

D – The author never said that these techniques are simple. Actually, the author never enumerates any of the techniques that are taught.

**50.** Remember the context: tearful...classmates were rejoicing that one of their peers had successfully drives off her assailant. We're looking for a word that describes a happy feeling.

Quick PoE! A and C are not words that describe a happy feeling. The question is whether B or D is correct. Exultant means triumphantly happy, and depicts a much more accurate description of what the class is feeling. Their classmate just triumphed over her assailant. **B is correct**.

**51.** Crux question. Smaller child beats up big mean scary bully? The passage author will have none of it. Why? Women, he contends, are on average smaller (mass) than men. PoE time.

A – Gender is irrelevant, this is about mass!

**B – Yes.** The author will have none of it. This statement defeats his position that women, who are on average smaller than men, cannot defeat male assailants.

**C –** The author does not hold martial arts in high regard.

**D – No.** The author states that a heavier male will beat a male in a lighter weight class.

**52.** Realistic probably means: fighting women, or people of the same weight class. Just to double check, let's go to line 32. Okay, PoE time.

**A – Yes,** this is exactly what I'm looking for. However, let's keep going and see if weight is mentioned.

**B – No,** the author states that it takes time to master boxing. How is two hours realistic?

**C –** The author views martial arts as a dance form, so how would employing martial arts techniques in a fight be realistic?

**D – No,** in the eyes of the author, this will probably make it even harder for women – and therefore much more unrealistic. Although, as mentioned previously, no quality of the assailants are mentioned in the passage. If you chose this answer, you probably read too much into it.

**53.** Crux question. This question is asking us to find the statements that most severely weakens the author's position of: women should do X in order to scare away the assailant. Okay? PoE time. We're looking for a statement that says the assailant will NOT be scared off.

**A – No,** this would prove the author correct, because the assailant runs away.

**B – Possibly.** But wait! The key phrase is "perceived vulnerability". If the girl begins to scare away her assailant – is she less vulnerable? You bet. This answer is incorrect as it agrees with the author's position.

**C – No.** The key phrase is "targets of opportunity". Is a potential victim who is ready to defend herself an "opportune victim"? No.

**D – Yes.** If the assailant has chosen his victim it doesn't matter whether she employs her Hong-Kong fu or not, he will complete his you know.

## Thoughts

Why is this passage random? The author begins discussing women's self-defense courses, and then ventures off to an analogy between boxing and martial arts. He then discusses the responsibilities of instructors, and possible alternatives to the courses. Yes, understanding his analogy of boxing was important to solving a couple of questions, but was the crux affected by any of those paragraphs? No. What makes random passages difficult is that they contain fluff and red herrings that distract us from the crux of the passage. Once you have discerned the crux of the passage, do not let it go for anything! After step 3, the crux ceases to become malleable.

Pre-reading questions makes dealing with red herrings easy. We can go in and out of a paragraph knowing exactly what information to extricate.

## Example 5 – Contrast Passage TPR Test 4 Passage 2

This is my favorite passage :D

### Step 1: Read Qs

- 7. Correlativity thesis?
- 8. Aquinas. This passage is about animal rights.
- 9. Contrast Q: Aquinas and Descartes
- 10. Crux. Skip
- 11. Correlativity thesis again!
- 12. Sentience? Rationality?
- 13. Inference Q. Skip.

I'm looking for: Thomas Aquinas, correlativity thesis, and sentience/rationality.

### Step 2: Read the passage

Paragraph 1: This was expected – the passage is about animal rights

Paragraph 2: Sentience: ability to feel pleasure and pain. Rationality is the capacity to reason

Paragraph 3: Aquinas is introduced – important. Oh, here's Descartes. Descartes doesn't believe those animals are sentient (pleasure/pain). Aquinas disagrees, and believes that it is wrong to treat them that way, but humans still don't have a duty towards them.



Paragraph 4: Aquinas continued. We have duty towards beings that are rational. Although we have an indirect duty towards them – if it benefits rational beings.

Paragraph 5: Counter-argument, and correlativity thesis is introduced. If we have obligations towards an animal, then conversely – they do have rights. Basically: duties = rights.

Paragraph 6: Counter-counter argument. We may have duties towards them, but since they don't have any duties towards us, how can they possess rights?

Paragraph 7: The correlativity thesis only applies to direct duty. What does direct duty mean? Duty towards humans (rational creatures).

### Step 3: Crux

This passage provides a contrast between two perspectives on whether humans have duties towards beings that are not capable of reason, and as a corollary, whether or not they possess rights. The correlativity thesis affirms their rights; while Aquinas would disagree.

### Step 4: Solve the passage

7. We're looking for an answer that BEST describes the correlativity thesis.

A – Hmm!

B – No, it was being examined using an indirect analogy. This was critiqued in the final paragraph.

C – I love this question. This is a contrast passage, and the author does not have a defined position. This question is false!

D - Hmm!

So, A or D? Question: what does the correlativity thesis have to say about animal rights? Well, we have duties, and therefore animals have corresponding rights. Are these duties or rights enumerated? No. It's vague. A presumes too much. **D is correct!**

8. We're looking for a statement that would disagree with Aquinas' perspective (as presented in this passage). PoE! Just kidding. Remember, before we PoE, we must ask ourselves on what our PoE is based on. Question: What is Aquinas saying in this passage about animals? Well, he's saying that it is wrong to treat animals cruelly, but we don't have a duty towards them – only towards rational beings.

A – Love has nothing to do with duties/rights (in this passage). I'm sure Disney Princess would disagree :D Oh right, let's focus.

B – This is a universal statement that clearly contradicts Aquinas' position as presented in the passage. It is a categorical rejection of murder whether or not a creature has the capacity to reason!

C – No, this is precisely what Aquinas is saying. We only have a duty towards animals, etc. if it directly affects rational creatures.

D – Again, this clearly states the divide between creatures that employ reason and those that do not.

9. Remember, we read this! Aquinas and Descartes disagree over sentience. Descartes doesn't think those animals are sentient – capable of experiencing pleasure/pain. Let's PoE and look for that contrast.

A – No. The only comment on Descartes is that of sentience. This answer choice presumes too much.

B – Same as above! This is incorrect.

C – Yes, they would disagree over whether animals can experience pleasure or not (sentience).

D- No! We are unaware of Aquinas and Descartes opinion of the correlativity thesis.

10. Crux question. This question is asking us: Which concept introduced in this passage is represented by the quote?

So, what does this quote say? Human nature has no defining characteristics. Man, through time and experience, builds his character by himself. This is a quote that is discussing free will from an existentialist point of view.

A – No, Satre probably assumes that humans are capable of reason - we define ourselves.

B,C – No. The quote has nothing to do with the correlativity thesis. Direct and indirect duties are not mentioned.

D – Yes. Free will and autonomy go hand in hand!

11. This question asks us: What is the correlativity thesis? And, which of the following statements best describes it? Recall that the thesis implies that humans have a direct duty to other humans in order to achieve goal X. PoE time.

A – The correlativity thesis is not handing out universal and categorical judgments. This is incorrect.

B – Trick question. We do not have a duty to non-rational beings or things. No, we do not have a direct duty to the oceans, etc. only humans. This answer choice is framed in such a way that it benefits humans, but is done for oceans, etc.

C – In the final paragraph, proponents of thesis defend its usage for direct duties, not indirect duties.

D – By our PoE, this must be right. Yes, we have a direct duty to our descendants – other rational beings – to preserve the ecosystem.

## Thoughts

So, why is this passage your favorite?

It is the most difficult type of passage! What was the author's bias/perspective? I have no idea. What was the conclusion? I have no idea.

So, how do I deal with contrast passages?

Well, with standard and, to an extent, random passages, author bias and conclusions are present. We become accustomed and comfortable with those passages. That is what makes contrast passages so challenging! However, contrast passages are usually framed around a macro (big-picture) topic. For example, the passage that we just examined dealt with animal rights.

Steps:

1. Focus on the macro [big picture]
2. What ideas, axioms, etc are introduced?
3. How are they discussed? Through whose perspectives?
4. Is there a clash between those perspectives?

Let's apply those steps to the passage above:

1. Animal Rights
2. Sentience, rationality, and autonomy. The correlativity thesis.
3. Thomas Aquinas, followed by proponents of the correlativity thesis.
4. Yes, there was a debate between proponents and opponents of the correlativity thesis.

The objective of a contrast passage is not for the author to pick a side. There are no winners and losers here! Only an intelligent discussion of, usually, two ideas/perspectives. Your job is to discern on what foundations do those perspectives rest on, and what their conclusions are. If, in a rare case, that the author does have an opinion, it will be presented after Step 4.