

GRE Reading Comprehension Practice Questions

Passage 1

Question 1 is based on the following passage.

It was supposed that Tezcatlipoca had guided the Nahua, and especially the people of Tezcucó, from a more northerly climb to the valley of Mexico. But he was not a mere local deity of Tezcucó, his worship being widely celebrated throughout the country. His exalted position in the Mexican pantheon seems to have won him special reverence as a god of fate and fortune. The place he took as the head of the Nahua pantheon brought him many attributes which were quite foreign to his original character. Fear and a desire to exalt their tutelary deity will impel the devotees of a powerful god to credit him with any or every quality, so that there is nothing remarkable in the spectacle of the heaping of every possible attribute, human or divine, upon Tezcatlipoca when we recall the supreme position he occupied in Mexican mythology. His priestly caste far surpassed in power and in the breadth and activity of its propaganda the priesthoods of the other Mexican deities.

Summary / Paraphrase

The passage is about a pre-Columbian Mexican deity, Tezcatlipoca. The main idea is that Tezcatlipoca held an especially exalted place in the pantheon of Mexican gods. The major points are (a) Tezcatlipoca was supposed to have guided his people to the valley of Mexico (b) Tezcatlipoca was credited with a tremendous range of beliefs the way that the Nahua worshipped Tezcatlipoca can be generalized to other peoples. The purpose of the passage is to explain Tezcatlipoca's position in the Mexican pantheon.

Question

1. Select the sentence in the passage that predicts the likelihood that a leader will need to deviate from his initial intentions.

Answer to Question 1:

The correct answer is "**The place he took as the head of the Nahua pantheon brought him many attributes which were quite foreign to his original character**". In this case, Tezcatlipoca is assumed by his followers to have attributes that are foreign to him. Because followers or believers have various needs, they will expect a variety and, perhaps, conflicting ideas to do

what the leader can accomplish. The leader is fated to disappoint some of his constituents, at least until he can develop the attributes that they assume he possesses.

Passage 2

Question 2 is based on the following passage

A pleasant and elevated spot being fixed upon, Sheddad dispatched a hundred chiefs to collect skilled artists and workmen from all countries. He also commanded the monarchs of Syria and Ormus to send him all their jewels and precious stones. Forty camel-loads of gold, silver, and jewels were daily used in the building, which contained a thousand spacious quadrangles of many thousand rooms. When finished, Sheddad marched to view it. Suddenly a voice like thunder heard, and Sheddad, looking up, beheld a personage of majestic figure and stern aspect, who said, "I am the angel of death, commissioned to seize thy impure soul." Sheddad exclaimed, "Give me leisure to enter the garden," and was descending from his horse, when the seizure of life snatched away his impure spirit, and he fell dead upon the ground. At the same time, lightning flashed and destroyed the whole army of the infidel, and the rose garden of Irim became concealed from the sight of man.

Passage 2-Summary / Paraphrase

The passage tells the story of Sheddad. The main idea is that although Sheddad was very powerful, he was struck down by a divine force for his impurity. The major points are (a) that Sheddad used his power to construct a lavish garden and (b) that before he had the opportunity to enjoy his garden, he was struck dead for his "impure soul". The purpose of the passage is to warn the reader that no amount of worldly power and wealth can save a bad man.

Question

Select only one answer choice

2. Which of the following is an explanation for concealing the rose garden of Irim from the sight of man?

- A. To prevent theft of the precious metals and gems used in its construction
- B. To reserve its spectacular beauty for God and His angels
- C. To prevent Sheddad's heirs from claiming it as their own
- D. As a preventive against using the riches of other countries to promote oneself

E. As a moral lesson about the sin of excessive pride

Answer to Question 2

The correct answer is E. Shaddad has built a garden to rival the beauty of heaven and has assembled his slaves and courtiers to view it. In the construction of this garden, Shaddad has angered God, who sends the angel of death to take Shaddad's life before he can see the fruits of his labour. Shaddad's pride has caused his downfall, making E the correct answer. There is no evidence in the story to suggest that others might steal the precious metals and jewels, so A is not correct. God and the angels have no need for a beautiful garden on earth, making B an incorrect choice. Based on the words of the angel of death, one cannot presume that the garden was hidden to prevent Shaddad's heirs from claiming it, eliminating C as a correct answer. It appears that Shaddad used the resources of other countries for hundreds of years; if preventing that were the object of the lesson, it likely would have happened before the construction had been completed. D is incorrect.

Passage 3

Questions 3 to 5 are based on the following passage.

By the 1890s Social Darwinist ideas were popular and were making themselves felt, influencing social policies in the United States and elsewhere. Social Darwinism saw human society as based on a struggle for survival, in which the superior, the fittest, would triumph and the inferior would be swept to the wayside. It was more or less the ancient "predator ethic" - the idea that might make right, that the strong are entitled to oppress the weak - dressed up in pseudoscientific clothes. If the struggle for survival was the way of the world, then it was only natural that human society should operate in the same way. Social Darwinism also dovetailed with racist thinking: American supremacy notions and German militarism.

Passage 3-Summary / Paraphrase

The passage is about Social Darwinism. The main idea is that Social Darwinism was used to justify oppressive and racist views and policies. The major points are (a) that Social Darwinism is nothing more than the notion that "might makes right" dressed in a quasi-scientific guise and (b) Social Darwinism was used to justify segregation and a belief in a master race. The purpose of the passage is to explain Social Darwinism and how it was used to justify racist ideologies.

Question 3. Select the sentence that explains how humans justified the tenets of social Darwinism.

Answer to Question 3

The correct answer is **"If the struggle for survival was the way of the world, then it was only natural that human society should operate in the same way."** This sentence is an example of conditional logic. Social Darwinists assumed that if this condition exists in the animal world, then it must also exist in the human world.

Consider each of the three choices separately and select all that apply.

Question 4. Based on your understanding of predator ethic, select the events or actions that are examples of such behaviour.

- A. Cyber-bullying
- B. Involuntary commitment to a mental institution
- C. The Holocaust

Answer to Question 4

Both A and C are correct. Bullies adopt the role of predator when they select those who are weak in some way as targets of rumours or harmful insults. The Nazis used predation in the late 1930's and early 1940's to round up Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, and others that they considered inferior in an attempt to prevent sullyng the Aryan race. Involuntary commitment could be the result of a court proceeding that relies on expert testimony and is not necessarily a predatory action.

Select only one answer choice

Question 5. The use of the word "dovetailed" in the context of this passage most closely matches which of the following definitions?

- A. Coincided with
- B. Deviated from
- C. Fit together
- D. Having a series of indentations suggesting dovetails
- E. Split apart

Answer to Question 5:

The correct answer is C. A dovetail is a type of joint used in carpentry to make pieces of wood fit together smoothly. Social Darwinism fit well with

segregationists' ideas that white people were superior to black people and so had the right to repress them. Coincided implies that the two ideas imply that segregationists did not agree with the idea of social Darwinism. D is a definition used to occur at the same time rather than one idea being used to justify the other. Deviated would heraldry, and the definition in E suggests disagreement.

Passage 4

Question 6 is based on the following passage

The aim of this little work is, therefore, limited to the gathering of such facts and phenomena as serve to throw light upon the nature of the magic powers with which man is undoubtedly endowed. Its end will be attained if it succeeds in showing that he actually does possess powers which are not subject to the general laws of nature, but more or less independent of space and time, and which he makes themselves known partly by appeals to the ordinary senses and partly by peculiar phenomena the result of their activity. These higher powers, operating exclusively through the spirit of man, are a part of his nature, which has much in common with that of the Deity, since he was created by God in His own image," and the Lord "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul.

Passage 4-Summary/Paraphrase

The passage is about supernatural powers for humans. The main idea is that, since man is created in God's image, man too must possess supernatural abilities. The major point is that the work from which the passages use other words, that humans have supernatural powers. The purpose of the passage is to serve as a primer for excerpted hopes to demonstrate that humans possess powers "not subject to the general laws of nature demonstrating that humans are capable of possessing magical abilities.

Select only one answer choice

Question 6. Based on the information in this passage, what makes it likely that the author will find it difficult to conduct an objective investigation?

- A. His belief in God
- B. His preconceived idea that man has magical powers
- C. The lack of previous research on the subject
- D. The refusal of the church to cooperate in his endeavour

E. The likelihood that the public will scoff at his ideas

Answer to Question 6:

B is the correct answer. The author states his conviction that man is undoubtedly endowed with magic powers. This belief may lead him to make the facts fit his theory, which is contrary to objective. The correct answer is B. His belief in God should not be an impediment, as many who conduct scientific research also believe in God, making A an incorrect answer choice. The reader cannot tell from the information presented here if there is little or no research on this topic, eliminating C as the correct answer choice. The reader cannot assume that the church will not cooperate, nor that the public will scoff at his ideas, making both D and E incorrect.

Passage 5

Question 7 is based on the following passage

I must confess, though, that I am a bibliophile with War books. Any book about the Great War is good enough for me. I am to that class of literature what little boys are to stamps. Yes, I know the dread implication. I am aware of the worm in the mind; that I probe a wound; that I surrender to an impulse to peer into the darkness of the pit; that I encourage a thought which steals in with the quiet of midnight, and that it keeps me awake while the household sleeps. I know I consort with ghosts in a region of evil. I get the horrors, and I do not repel them. For some reason I like those ghosts. Most of them have no names for me, but I count them as old friends of mine; and where should I meet them again, at night, but amid the scenes we knew.

Passage 5-Summary/Paraphrase

The passage is about the author's fascination with books about WWI. The main idea is that although the author is aware that his fascination may seem horrific, he is nonetheless unable to resist it. The major point is that the author feels comfortable in the setting and characters of the war, however appalling the war itself may have been. The purpose of the passage is confessional: the author is admitting the oddities of his fascination while justifying and affirming it.

Question 7. Select the sentence that suggests that the writer may be performing a cathartic act in this passage.

Answer to Question 7:

The correct answer is **"I must confess, though, that I am a bibliophile with War books."** Confession is generally a form of catharsis. One may confess to a priest or someone he/she has harmed in the past. In this case, the author thinks that others may find his love of war books strange as the author, himself, was most likely a witness to the horrors about which he reads. By revealing his love of these books, he has eliminated the necessity to keep it a secret and probably feels relieved.

Passage 6

Questions 8 and 9 are based on the following passage.

Out we drove at last. It was December, but by luck we found a halcyon morning which had got lost in the year's procession. It was a Sunday morning, and it had not been ashore. It was still virgin, bearing a vestal light. It had not been soiled yet by any suspicion of this trampled planet, this muddy star, which its innocent and tenuous rays had discovered in the region of night. I thought it still was regarded as a lucky find there. Its light was tremulous, as if with joy and eagerness. I met this discovering morning as your ambassador while you still slept, and betrayed not, I hope, any greyness and bleared satiety of ours to its pure, frail, and lucid regard. That was the last good service I did before leaving you quite. I was glad to see how well our old earth did meet such a light, as though it had no difficulty in looking at the day in the face. The world was miraculously renewed.

Passage 6-Summary / Paraphrase

The passage is about morning as a metaphor for renewal. The main idea is that, although the author is apparently rather world weary, the beauty of the morning renews some sense of hope in the world. The main points contrast (a) the freshness and innocence of the morning to (b) the sense of the world as "trampled" and the characters as 'grey' and 'sated'. The purpose of the passage is to contrast the author's general state of mind with the symbolic purity of the morning.

Select only one answer choice

Question 8. In the context of this passage, which of the following is the best definition for "lucid"?

- A. Easily understood
- B. Shining or bright
- C. Rational or sane

- D. Clear, transparent
- E. Evident

Answer to Question 8:

The correct answer is B. The narrator is speaking about morning and the manner in which it is regarding this portion of the earth early in the day.

Consider each of the three choices separately and select all that apply.

Question 9. Select the statement that can replace the second sentence of the passage without altering the overall meaning of the author's words.

- A. Although it was December, we were fortunate to discover tranquil weather that seemed a better fit for a warmer month
- B. It was December, and we discovered a holiday celebration that we had neglected to observe earlier in the year
- C. Because it was December, we felt as carefree on that morning as we had in the summer months

Answer to Question 9:

The correct answer is A. When the author says that this particular morning must have got lost in the year's progression, he implies that it should have occurred earlier in the year. Halcyon, when describing weather, means calm, or peaceful, or tranquil. A is the only answer that includes both of these descriptors of the day in question. There is no suggestion of a holiday celebration, making B an incorrect choice. The author mentions nothing about the emotions or attitudes of the "we" in the passage. He is describing the morning rather than people. C is not the correct choice.

Passage 7

Questions 10 and 11 are based on the following passage

Friends - This lecture has been delivered under these circumstances: I visit a town or city, and try to arrive there early enough to see the postmaster, the barber, the keeper of the hotel, the principal of the schools, and the ministers of some of the churches, and then go into some of the factories and stores, and talk with the people, and get into sympathy with the local conditions of that town or city and see what has been their history, what opportunities they had, and what they had failed to do - and every town fails to do something - and then go to the lecture and talk to those people about the subjects which applied to their locality. "Acres of Diamonds"- the idea - has continuously been

precisely the same as he does in his own environment, with his own skill, with his own energy, and with his own same. The idea is that in this country of ours every man has the opportunity to make more of himself than he does in his own environment, with his own skill, with his own energy, and with his own friends.

Passage 7 - Summary / Paraphrase

The passage is about the author's strategy for speaking to local populations. The main idea is that the author always attempts to learn some particulars about the place where he is going to speak before overlaying the particulars with a more general theme. The major points are (a) that the author speaks to various townsfolk to The passage is about the author's strategy for speaking to local populations. The main idea is that the author modifies his speech with its general themes of civic pride with certain specific features. The purpose of the find out about their town, what they are proud of, and where they see failures and (b) that the author then passage is to reveal the author's way of addressing each town. The rhetoric suggests that the author may be somewhat cynical about his vocation.

Select only one answer choice

Question 10. Based on the information in this passage, select the word that best describes his delivering his presentation, "Acres of Diamonds".

- A. Information
- B. Confirmation
- C. Innovation
- D. Motivation
- E. Intimidation

Answer to Question 10:

The correct answer is D. The purpose of his presentation is to help the residents realize their potential for improvement. He aims to motivate them, making D the best answer. The writer gathers information in order to confirm what he believes about the inhabitants of towns everywhere. He hopes that their behavior will become new or innovative. There is nothing in this passage that he attempts to intimidate them or cause fear. He desires to use what he knows to motivate them to realize their full potential. D is the correct answer.

Select only one answer choice

Question 11. What is the relationship of the last two sentences to the preceding portion of the passage?

- A. They invalidate the process of the writer's visiting local officials and work places.
- B. They contrast the universality of the idea with the specificity of the points for each town or city.
- C. They cast aspersions on the officials and townsfolk that he has visited.
- D. They summarize the information that he has discovered from his visits to officials and work places.
- E. They support the assumption of failure on the part of the town's inhabitants.

Answer to Question 11:

The correct answer is B. The writer's basic assumption is that, although each town has its unique characteristics, they all fail in the same way. The last two sentences provide the general idea that he uses to illuminate the specific failure of the town he is visiting. B is the correct answer. A is incorrect because he uses those visits to tailor his presentation. There is no indication that he looks down on the people in positions of power in the town, making C incorrect as well. This passage is an overview of his process and reveals nothing specific about any town, eliminating D as a possible answer. The lecture focuses on possibilities, not failures. E is incorrect.

Passage 8

Questions 12 and 13 are based on the following passage

Nowhere is there anything just like them. In his best work - and his tales of the great metropolis are his best - he is unique. The soul of his art is unexpectedness. Humour at every turn there is, and sentiment and philosophy and surprise. One never may be sure of himself. The end is always a sensation. No foresight may predict it, and the sensation is always genuine. Whatever else O. Henry was, he was an artist, a master of plot and diction, a genuine humorist, and a philosopher. His weakness lay in the very nature of his art. He was an entertainer bent only on amusing and surprising his reader. Everywhere is brilliant, but too often it is joined to cheapness; art, yet art merging swiftly into caricature. Like Harte, he cannot be trusted. Both writers on the whole may be said to have lowered the standards of American literature, since both worked on the surface of life with theatrical intent and always without moral background, O. Henry moves, but he never lifts.

Passage 8-Summary / Paraphrase

The passage is about O. Henry. The main idea is that although O. Henry was a superb literary craftsman, his work is gimmicky and lacking in depth. The major points are (a) O. Henry was a unique and skillful writer (b) that his work favours sensation and surprise over genuine substance and (c) that he can be accused of lowering the overall standards of American literature. The main purpose of the passage is to severely critique O. Henry's works while giving some credit for certain topical skill.

Select only one answer choice

Question 12. Consider the words of this critic and select the word or phrase that best identifies what is missing from O. Henry's writing.

- A. Tension
- B. Style
- C. Subtlety
- D. Plot
- E. Conflict resolution

Answer to Question 12

The correct answer is C. The writer's use of words like caricature and cheapness describe the overall effect of O. Henry's writing, and they point to a lack of subtlety, making C the correct choice. The critic states that the reader can never be sure of himself, indicating that the stories do create tension, eliminating A as the correct answer. The writer of this passage deals with O. Henry's style extensively, so B is not the correct answer. The writer also provides information about plot elements, so it would be incorrect to assume that plot is a weakness; D is not correct. There is too little information here to select conflict resolution, answer E, as a weakness.

Consider each of the three choices separately and select all that apply

Question 13. Which of the following statements, if true, would have altered this critic's opinion of both O. Henry's and Harte's literary endeavors?

- A. The readers of the stories crafted by Harte and O. Henry is left with a sense of satisfaction.
- B. Harte's and O. Henry's stories continue to appear in secondary school anthologies.
- C. The themes in the works of both writers provide significant insight into the motivations of human behaviour

Answer to Question 13:

Both A and C are correct choices. The author of this passage implies that both writers entertain but fail to reach the level of important literature. Their writing lacks a moral background. Answer B does not provide enough information to justify a change in the critics' opinions. One would need to know the reason for the authors' inclusion in those anthologies.

Passage 9

Questions 14 to 19 are based on the following passage

Men's ideas root pretty far back. Their religious creeds are very old. By means of interest and hope and largely fear, they manage to hang on to the old, even when they know it is not true. The idea of man's importance came in the early history of the human race. He looked out on the earth, and of course he thought it was flat! It looks flat, and he thought it was. He saw the sun, and he formed the conception that somebody moved it out every morning and pulled it back in at night. He saw the moon, and he had the opinion that somebody pulled that out at sundown and took it in the morning. He saw the stars, and all there was about the stars was, "He made the stars also." They were just "also." They were close by, and they were purely for man to look at, about like diamonds in the shirt bosoms of people who like them.

This was not an unreasonable idea, considering what they had to go on. The people who still believe it have no more to go on. Blind men can't be taught to see or deaf people to hear. The primitive people thought that the stars were right nearby and just the size they seemed to be. Of course now we know that some of them are so far away that light travelling at nearly 286,000 miles a second is several million light years away from the earth, and some of them are so large that our sun, even, would be a fly-speck to them. The larger the telescopes the more of them we see, and the imagination can't compass the end of them. It is just humanly possible that somewhere amongst the infinite number of infinitely larger and more important specks of mud in the universe there might be some organisms of matter that are just as intelligent as our people on the earth. So to have the idea that all of this was made for man gives man a great deal of what Weber and Field used to call "Proud flesh." Man can't get conceited from what he knows today, and he can't get it from what intellectual people ever knew. You remember, in those days the firmament was put in to divide the water below from the water above. They didn't know exactly what it was made of, but they knew what it was. Heaven was up above the firmament. They knew what it was, because Jacob had seen the angels going up and down on a ladder. Of course, a ladder was the

only transportation for such purposes known to Jacob. If he had been dreaming now, they would have been going up in a flying machine and coming down in the same way. Our conceptions of things root back; and that, of course, is the reason for our crude religions, our crude laws, our crude ideas, and our exalted opinion of the human race.

Passage 9-Summary / Paraphrase

The passage is a critique of the human race's self-importance. The main idea is that people have always tended to view the world with an erroneous belief in their own importance and that this way of looking at things continues to influence important aspects of our beliefs. The major points are (a) people hold on to old, outmoded beliefs for fear of the unknown (b) that out of ignorance, people formed all manner of wrong beliefs about the nature of their world, tending to privilege things relatively close at hand (c) that modern science has proven the bulk of our earlier beliefs wrong and destroyed our ability to hold ourselves above the rest of creation (d) our tendency to hold onto the old is the reason for our "crude religions, our crude laws, our crude and our exalted opinion of the human race." There is a minor point that uses the story of Jacob's ladder to illustrate our way of understanding the world according to our most current knowledge. The purpose of the passage is to give the author's view of why we maintain older beliefs in the face of countervailing evidence.

Select only one answer choice

Question 14. In the context of this passage, which of the following definitions most closely fits the use of the word "crude" in the last sentence of the passage?

- A. Lacking in intellectual subtlety, perceptivity
- B. Unrefined or natural
- C. Lacking finish, polish, or completeness
- D. Lacking culture, refinement, tact
- E. Undisguised; blunt

Answer to Question 14:

The best choice is A. B refers to resources in their natural state, such as crude oil. C could describe a creative product like an essay or a hand-made piece of furniture. D and E describe behavior rather than beliefs and ideas.

Select only one answer choice

Question 15. What purpose is served by the author's using the speed of light in the second paragraph?

- A. To reveal the author's level of education
- B. To demonstrate how man's understanding of the universe has increased
- C. To help the reader understand the context of the passage
- D. To explain how distant the stars actually are
- E. To show the value of telescopes

Answer to Question 15:

The correct answer is B. The writer is contrasting what man knew in the past with what he now knows to be true. B is the correct answer. The writer is not attempting to show off his own level of education or intelligence, nor is he touting the value of telescopes, eliminating both A and E as correct choices. Answer D is what he is telling the reader but not why. The figure does nothing to enhance the words surrounding it; C is incorrect.

Select only one answer choice

Question 16. What does the author's use of the words "blind" and "deaf" in the second paragraph reveal about his attitude toward his topic?

- A. They make evident his optimism for the human race
- B. They demonstrate his fear for the human race
- C. They show his scorn for members of the human race
- D. They reveal his feelings of superiority over other men
- E. They reinforce his sense of hopelessness about science in general

Answer to Question 16:

The correct answer is C. The writer has a low regard for those who refuse to revise their opinions and ideas despite the availability of new information, making C the correct choice. There is nothing in the passage that leads the reader to believe that the writer has any optimism for the human race, so A is incorrect. He does not speculate about the future of the human race, nor reveal any fears about that future, making B the wrong answer. The writer does not tout his own beliefs, so does not express hopelessness in its desire to hold on to old ideas, but it is overshadowed by his contempt for them. E is not superior over others, eliminating D as the correct answer. The writer may feel that humankind is hopeless in its desire to

hold onto old ideas, but it is overshadowed by his concept for them. E is not the best answer.

Consider each of the three choices separately and select all that apply

Question 17. Which of the following is akin to the story of Jacob's ladder?

- A. President Kennedy's declaration that the United States would send a man to the moon by the end of the 1960's
- B. The belief that the Earth is the centre of the universe
- C. Columbus' calling the natives of the New World Indians

Answer to Question 17:

All of the answers are acceptable choices based on the premise that the people in question were basing their statements or beliefs on what they had to go on. President Kennedy probably could not. All of the answers are acceptable choices based on the premise that the people in question have imagined the day that scientists would say that human travel to Mars is likely. Until advances in astronomy and physics and mathematics evolved, it was reasonable to assume that everything revolved around the Earth. Columbus believed that he had found a shorter route to India and, logically, called the inhabitants of the New World Indians.

Consider each of the three choices separately and select all that apply.

Question 18. What does the author imply when he says at the beginning of the third paragraph that man can't get conceited from what he knows today?

- A. Man has failed to make significant progress in knowledge
- B. Man's current knowledge will be made insignificant by the knowledge of future generations
- C. The knowledge that man possesses is not used for the advancement of the human race

Answer to Question 18:

B is the best answer choice. The author suggests that, at each stage of history, men thought that they had discovered all of the answers only to be proven wrong by successive generations. The same is true for man today. The next best answer is just around the corner. The writer does not suggest that man has made no progress despite his fondness for old ideas. A is not a good answer choice. Although the author expresses contempt for those who cling to old ideas, he does mention the way in which new technology has created new, beneficial understanding, making C an incorrect choice.

Question 19. Select the sentence that supports the author's opinion that man is conceited.

Answer to Question 19

The correct answer is **"So to have the idea that all of this was made for man gives man a great deal of what Weber and Field used to call "Proud flesh.""**Conceitedness comes from having a high opinion of oneself. The idea that the universe and everything in it was created for man's comfort and/or amusement is the height of conceitedness.

Passage 10

Question 20 is based on the following passage

Is human nature intrinsically good or inherently evil? One of the most prominent and influential arguments for the latter was put forward by the British political philosopher Thomas Hobbes. In his seminal work, *Leviathan*, Hobbes established his theory of the social contract, in which he claimed that humans without government exist in a state of nature where each individual has a right to everything, engendering a "war against all". This environment creates a constant fear of death and prevents humans from both obtaining and hoping for the necessities needed to survive. It is only through the establishment of a civil society by way of a social contract that individuals are able to unite and thrive collectively. For Hobbes, society is what tames and controls the ultimately selfish and corrupt natural state of the human being.

Passage 10-Summary / Paraphrase

The passage is about the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes. The main idea is that Hobbes developed a theory in which humans are seen as naturally inclined to do evil and require a government to reign in their naturally evil tendencies. The main points are: (a) that Hobbes believes that in a state of nature, humans are engulfed in perpetual state of conflict (b) that Hobbes believes that only in civil society governed by a social contract are humans able to escape the evils of their "natural" condition. A minor point, the mention of the age-old debate between whether human nature is inherently good or bad, is used to introduce the discussion of Hobbes' ideas. The purpose of the passage is to briefly summarize Hobbes' political thought: although the passage presents a potentially controversial matter, the author avoids any indication of bias and merely presents the content.

Question 20. Select the sentence that best illustrates Hobbes' view on human nature.

Answer to Question 20

“For Hobbes, society is what tames and controls the ultimately selfish and corrupt natural state of the human being”.