

## STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF QUESTIONS

There are eight main types of reading comp questions used on the GRE.

### TYPE 1: THEME QUESTIONS

These general questions ask you for the author's main idea, which is the primary thing you were looking for when you skimmed and summarized the passage. Theme questions typically either come first or last. They can be phrased in any of several different ways:

“The author's main purpose is...”

“The main idea of the passage is...”

“Which of the following is the best title for the passage?”

“Which of the following questions does the passage answer?”

#### Strategy:

- Theme questions invariably have *general* answers, so eliminate choices that are too detailed or specific.
- Do *not* refer back to the passage in answering these questions; the details will only lead you astray.
- Beware of answer choices that too closely resemble the first or last sentence of the passage.

### TYPE 2: TONE QUESTIONS

- Tone questions ask you to identify the author's tone, style, or overall point of view. Is the author being critical, neutral, or sympathetic? Is the passage subjective or objective? These are also general questions. They can be phrased in several ways:

“The author's tone is best described as...”

“The author views his subject with...”

“The author's presentation is best characterized as...”

“The passage is most likely from ...”

“The author most likely thinks his audience is...”

**Strategy:** Answer these questions without looking back at the passage.

- Make a quick mental assessment of the author's tone *before you look at the answer choices*. Specifically, decide whether the author's tone is *objective* (neutral, unbiased, descriptive, nonpartisan) or *subjective* (biased, impassioned, partisan, argumentative).

### TYPE 3: ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS

These general questions ask you to analyze how the author organized his thoughts, facts, or arguments. Here are some examples of the way these questions are phrased:

“The author develops his argument in which of the following ways?”

“Which of the following best describes the relationship between the

first paragraph and the rest of the passage?”

**Strategy:** These are general questions, so answer them without referring back to the passage. Look out for disputable answer choices. (Did the author really “prove” his “thesis”? Or did he merely “discuss” some of the associated problems?)

#### **TYPE 4: EXPLICIT QUESTIONS**

These are specific questions that ask for facts or ideas stated in the passage. If you skimmed properly, you’ll have to go back to the passage to find ETS’s answer but you’ll know roughly where to look. Here are some of the ways that explicit questions can be phrased:

“The passage states that...”

“According to the author...”

“According to the passage...”

**Strategy:** Turn back to the passage and scan quickly for the answer. Then eliminate two or three choices quickly, remembering to use common sense.

#### **TYPE 5: INFERENTIAL QUESTIONS**

These are questions that ask you to draw a conclusion from the facts or ideas stated in the passage. They do *not* ask for those ideas themselves. Inferential questions can be phrased in a variety of ways:

“It can be inferred from the passage that...”

“The author would most likely agree with which of the following statements?”

“The passage suggests that...”

“The processes described in the passages most resemble...”

**Strategy:** Beware of choices containing substantial repetitions from the passage.

- You are supposed to be making a deduction or inference from the passage. Therefore, you should be certain to pick a choice that says more than the passage says. That is, if a choice sounds too much like something you’ve heard recently, it’s probably wrong.

#### **TYPE 6: LITERARY TECHNIQUE QUESTIONS**

These questions ask you to interpret the meaning of a certain word or phrase in the context of the passage. You will usually be referred to a specific line number in the text.

These questions can be phrased in a number of ways:

“The ‘great conversation’ (line29) is used as a metaphor for...”

“Which of the following words would be the best substitute for the word ‘adopted’ (line11)...”

“The author uses the term ‘indigenous labor’ (line 40) to mean...”

“The author quotes Richard Hofstadter in order to...”

**Strategy:** You will generally *not* find ETS’s answer in the exact line referred to. *Read the five lines before it and the five lines after it as well.*

- Pay attention to trigger words and trigger punctuation.
- The answer to a literary technique question will not be the general theme of the essay. Make certain you understand exactly what the question is asking for.
- Beware of choices containing substantial repetitions from the passage. ETS's answer will most likely be a paraphrase.

### **TYPE 7: LEAST/EXCEPT/NOT QUESTIONS**

Lots of careless errors are made on these questions. To keep from making them yourself, you need to keep reminding yourself that ETS's answer will be the choice that is *wrong*. Here are some of the ways these questions are phrased:

"Which of the following statements would the author be **LEAST** likely to agree with?"

"According to the passage, all of the following are true **EXCEPT**.."

"Which of the following does **NOT** support the author's argument that the best offense is a good defense?"

#### **Strategy:**

- ETS's answer will be the dumb choice, the wrong choice, the crazy choice.
- Look for "correct" answers -- and eliminate them. That is, refer back to the passage with each uneliminated choice and see if the passage supports it. If it does, cross it out. You're looking for the one choice that doesn't make sense.

### **TYPE 8: TRIPLE TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS**

These time-consuming clunkers really contain three true-false questions. Unfortunately, you have to get all three right to receive credit. Here's an example:

22. *It can be inferred from the passage that conciliation procedures differ from arbitration in that:*

- I. *Conciliation precludes the idea of an impartial judge dispensing justice.*
- II. *Conciliation seeks a mutual coming to terms between the parties whereas arbitration imposes a binding decision.*
- III. *Conciliation proceedings are more binding than arbitration because in conciliation the parties have effected a compromise themselves.*

- (A) *I only*
- (B) *III only*
- (C) *I and II only*
- (D) *II and III only*
- (E) *I, II, and III*

**Strategy:** Triple true/false questions are very time-consuming.

- Although time-consuming, these questions are a good place to use POE.
- Start with the shortest of the Roman-numeral statements. Go back to the passage to find out if it's true or false.
- When you find a false statement, be sure to eliminate all appropriate answer choices. For example, if statement I in the item above is false you'll be able to eliminate choices A, C, and E, all of which include statement I.

Don't do more work than you have to. **You'll often be able to find ETS's answer by checking out just two of the Roman-numeral statements.** Using the example above, you need only to determine whether statement II is true in order to find ETS's answer (statement III is in both remaining answers, so it must be true).

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