



ANSWER KEY

I hope that you've enjoyed reading the passages in this book and thinking about the kinds of questions the SAT and ACT may ask you.

The answers that follow are my answers. **While I think they are fairly representative of what you may have, remember that they are intentionally brief.** Standardized reading tests don't give you free responses to passages. Rather, you get multiple choice questions with answers to select between. My answers are intended to *guide* me to the correct answers on the test, not *be* correct answer themselves. Be generous with yourself (and me). If you think I'm wrong, post a comment on the book's website, www.professorscompanion.com/50passages. You may even find support from your peers taking me to task!

The passages are ordered in alphabetical order by title.

2-B-R-0-2-B – Kurt Vonnegut

1. To describe a dystopian paradise
2. Serene, eerie, ominous, sardonic
3. A man takes desperate measures for family
4. Sacrificial, bitter, tortured
5. Pragmatic, principled, iron-willed, ancient

A Modest Proposal – Jonathan Swift

1. To argue (satirically) that the infants of the poor be eaten by the wealthy
2. Sarcastic, grim
3. A proposal to fix poverty
4. The best solution for poverty is to sell excess poor children as livestock
5. He doesn't mean it

Advice to Youth – Mark Twain

1. Satirize advice stories / character building
2. Introduction to advice
3. Obey parents, but only if they are there
4. Be respectful, but only to people worthy of it
5. Get up early, but sleep in
6. Lying is good, practice often
7. Read good books: mine
8. Build character, blend in
9. Sarcastic, ironic, biting
10. Character building is useless enterprise

An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge – Ambrose Bierce

1. To describe a man's fantasy as he dies
2. Detailed, colorful, ultimately betraying
3. A man envisions his escape as he is hanged
4. A Southern civilian who plots in vain against the North, fanciful

Common Sense – Thomas Paine

1. To argue for revolution against Britain
2. History destined for America to be free
3. It must end
4. Weak, prejudiced, self-interested, calamitous
5. Unfairly mistreated by the British
6. Self-deceiving and harmful to the future
7. Lines 57–71
8. They cannot judge
9. They are vile murderers
10. It will be a place of safety and peace
11. Vitriolic, persuasive
12. Good people side against the British, weak people seek reconciliation

The Dangers of Spaceflight – NASA

1. To explain a tragedy of space travel
2. To set up what happened
3. To describe the disaster
4. To explain that the disaster led to new safety procedures
5. To explain how Apollo 1 got its name
6. Somber, realistic
7. To describe Armstrong's brush with death
8. To show the gravity of the situation
9. To emphasize the LM's unwieldiness
10. To describe the danger but ultimate utility of the LM.
11. Grateful, severe
12. Both passages describe the dangers of NASA's moon landing trials.

The Discovery of Radium – Tower, Smith & Charles and Marie Curie

1. To explain Marie Curie's discovery of Radium
2. Sterile, many passive voices
3. To describe what she did
4. More engaged, nostalgic/recalling, active
5. The second is a first person account of the first

The Division of Labor – Adam Smith

1. To explain specialization
2. To outline the division of labor
3. To explain division in massive projects
4. To indicate its value at the smallest level
5. To highlight the difference with mass production
6. To outline how a pin is made in a factory
7. To emphasize the simplicity of specialization
8. To indicate the massive benefits of specialization
9. Specialization profoundly increases efficiency
10. Matter-of-fact, structured, persuasive

Don't Wait for the Translation – Adlai Stevenson

1. To argue that the Russians have installed missiles in Cuba
2. Lying
3. Surpasses, goes beyond
4. Disrupted, up-ended
5. Magnificent (but sarcastically)
6. Amount, torrent, waves
7. Permit
8. Work, do what we are here to do
9. Russian is lying about Cuba
10. Angry, principled, argumentative, forceful

Earthquakes – Kaye M. Shedlock and Louis C. Pakiser

1. To explain the history and science of earthquakes
2. Factual, lively, accessible, cautionary
3. A discussion of a natural disaster, its causes, and effects
4. It is vital people understand the power of earthquakes
5. Powerful, multifaceted, but able to be prepared for

Editorials from *The Crisis* – W. E. B. Du Bois

1. To explain how some Black men viewed the election
2. Respectfully firm, explanatory
3. Black men helped elect Wilson, he should remember their needs
4. To remind Wilson that he has not done what he should regarding Black voters
5. More urgent, discontented
6. You should do more regarding segregation
7. The first passage asks for consideration; the second passage warns of failure to consider

Emma (Abridged) – Jane Austen

1. To describe Emma and her romantic schemes
2. Jovial, descriptive, florid
3. A woman schemes to find love for herself and others
4. Shrewd, clever, gossipy

An Essay on the Principle of Population – Thomas Malthus

1. To explain population growth
2. Ordered, pessimistic
3. An examination of population
4. Population grows exponentially, food doesn't

Ex Oblivione – H. P. Lovecraft

1. To describe a man's drive to suicide
2. Little things
3. Showing (through)
4. Desires
5. Gain, grasp
6. Regarded, dealt with
7. Visited
8. Beckoned
9. A man has dreams of a glorious death, but finds sweet oblivion
10. Mysterious, haunting, grey

The Fad of the Fisherman – G. K. Chesterton

1. To describe a murder investigation
2. Malevolent, mysterious, dramatic
3. A man is murdered to maintain status quo
4. Logical, pragmatic, resigned

The Farmer and the Farmer Refuted – Samuel Seabury and Alexander Hamilton

1. To argue for loyalty to KG3
2. Persuasive, disgruntled, haughty
3. Colonies should remain loyal
4. To argue for revolution
5. Responding, contrarian, refuting
6. Desperate times, desperate measures
7. The second responds to the first

Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions – Edwin A. Abbott

1. To describe a fanciful two-dimensional world
2. To separate our world (space) from their world (Flatland)
3. To explain how things look in a 2D world
4. To explain how an individual shape would appear
5. To illustrate what is described in lines 36–50
6. To explain an analogous situation for people in space (us)
7. To explain that all people in Flatland look alike
8. All people are the same, regardless of class (or in this case, shape)
9. Report of an adventure

Government Is the Problem – Ronald Reagan

1. To argue that government should work for the people
2. Passionate, emphatic, proud
3. An argument that drastic actions must be taken
4. Government has impeded freedom

The Hanging Stranger – Philip K. Dick

1. To describe the takeover of America by aliens
2. Mysterious
3. A man notices that everyone else is amiss
4. Curious, ultimately gullible

A History of the Amazons – Ellen C. Clayton

1. Explain who the Amazons were
2. Balanced, investigative
3. A history of the Amazons
4. The ancient Amazons existed
5. Warriors, respected, powerful

Ich bin ein Berliner and Tear Down this Wall – John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan

1. To instill pride and solidarity
2. Resolute, critical
3. Democracy brings freedom, Communism brings walls
4. To argue that Communism must give way to freedom
5. Demanding, cautiously optimistic
6. Democracy and unity are essential
7. Both address Communism and Democracy in Berlin

Inaugural Addresses – Abraham Lincoln

1. To argue for the peaceful reconciliation of Northern and Southern states
2. Conciliatory, firm
3. No state can legally secede, the federal government will not interfere with slavery
4. To argue that the South started the war and has paid the price
5. Justified, disheartened
6. Slavery was morally wrong, but reconciliation is needed
7. The first seeks to avoid war, the second seeks to reconcile

The King of Vultures – John Stuart Mill

1. To argue that kings need limits
2. They were a necessary evil
3. Lines 6–20
4. He starts talking about the limits placed on authorities
5. People would accept a self-interested authority if it is limited
6. A temporal shift to political rulers who don't exercise power unjustly
7. Temporary rulers are less likely to abuse power
8. Centralized power is efficient, but it must be removable
9. Logical, instructive
10. Centralized power can exist for the good of the many only with limits.

Letter from Birmingham Jail – Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

1. To defend the plights and rights of protesters
2. Distressed, optimistic, discontented
3. A call for unity against oppression from would-be moderates
4. The cause of civil rights is just and divinely sanctioned

Macbeth: A Prose Adaptation – E. Nesbit

1. To describe Macbeth's rise and fall
2. Plain, short
3. A man murders a king to become king himself, but is destined to fail
4. Ambitious, proud, defiant
5. Ambitious, guilty, driven mad
6. Macbeth acquiesces to his wife's ambition

On My Impending Interview with Burr – Alexander Hamilton

1. To describe a man's tragic death in the forest
2. Animated, ultimately resigned
3. A man tries and fails to start a fire
4. Foolish for traveling alone.

On Nomination to the Supreme Court – Sonia Sotomayor

1. To describe her background and argue her suitability for the Supreme Court
2. They instilled a strong work ethic in her
3. She doesn't deserve her education
4. She has seen what happens when the law is not on the side of the marginalized
5. George H. W. Bush nominated her, then Bill Clinton
6. The law should be followed according to precedent and law-makers' intent
7. One needs to understand the stakes for all parties
8. She will uphold the nation's ideals
9. Connects her present to her past
10. Chronological overview of her primary influences and qualifications
11. Plainspoken, persuasive
12. Why I am a good candidate for the Supreme Court

On the Separation of Powers – James Madison and David Hume

1. To argue that the British crown and parliament must be separated
2. Linear, explanatory, questioning
3. Governments need constraints on power to avoid autocracy
4. To argue for the separation of executive, legislative, and judicial branches of US government
5. Balanced, preparing for disputes/counterarguments
6. It is in everyone's interest for the branches of government to be independent
7. The second passage applies the lessons of the first

The Pendulum – Ray Bradbury

1. To describe a dystopian punishment
2. Eternal, painful
3. A man is punished until the world ends
4. An accidental killer, made to suffer

The Pit and the Pendulum – Edgar Allan Poe

1. To describe a man's torture
2. Fearful, detailed, sensory
3. A man is condemned to a slow death, but escapes at the last
4. Tortured, desperate

The Prince – Machiavelli

1. To argue that a feared leader is best
2. It leads to disorder
3. He will be neither distrusted nor too hasty
4. It is fleeting
5. Lines 48-54
6. You can be feared, but not hated, and maintain power
7. They forgive death but not theft
8. When with the troops
9. To hold on to power, you must be feared but not hated
10. Pragmatic, realistic

Report 68 – National Security Council

1. To explain the conflict of the cold war
2. Clinical, dispassionate
3. The status of the West and East in the cold war
4. The free world must use force to stop the spread of Communism
5. To explain the potential actions and reactions of the East and West
6. Urgent
7. A list of potential solutions and their failings
8. The best course of action is to build up the West's power
9. To argue final recommendations for action
10. Insistent
11. A final set of actions for the President to adopt
12. The risks are too great not to defend the West.

The Death of King Arthur – Thomas Malory

1. To describe acts of mercy, retribution, and shame
2. Continuous, ongoing
3. Three knights are given quests
4. Merciful, culpable, shamed
5. Merciful and honored
6. Hurried, shameful
7. To describe a tournament between King Arthur's knights and Lancelot's courtship of Elaine
8. Somber, tragedy
9. A knight betrays his queen in favor of a maiden, whom he abandons
10. Seemingly gallant, but he abandons Elaine
11. Distressed, noble, lovestruck
12. To describe Arthur's vengeance against Lancelot
13. Sorrowful, fated
14. A betrayal leads to vengeance and a battle that kills everyone
15. Willing to forgive when commanded, headstrong
16. Dies repentant
17. Traitorous, noble?
18. Hotheaded
19. Traitorous, scoundrel
20. Ultimately loyal, if human
21. An ideal that none followed, and their failures led to their demise

Silly Novels by Lady Novelists – George Eliot

1. A describe purported novels written by women and their "flaws"
2. Seemingly austere, balanced
3. A satirical review of made up novels
4. Reviews of books written by women are comically bad

The Story of an Hour – Kate Chopin

1. To describe a woman's reaction to her husband's death
2. They comfort her
3. Shock and grief
4. Lines 14-19
5. She considers her new independence
6. Resolve to be autonomous
7. Freed, relieved
8. She dies of a heart attack
9. A woman responds to newfound freedom and its sudden removal
10. Grave, tragic

Three Short Stories – Saki

Quail Seed

1. To describe a grocer's attempt to increase customers
2. Mystery, gossip, satirical
3. A man tricks people via intrigue
4. Conniving
5. Gullible, gossips

Tobermory

6. To describe the incredible story of a talking cat
7. Sarcastic
8. A man teaches a cat to speak, but the cat is snarky and spill secrets
9. Overly intelligent, but tactless

Toys of Peace

10. To describe mother and uncle's attempt to give the children "peaceful" toys
11. Satirical, snide
12. A man and woman try to change human nature
13. Well-meaning, but ignorant
14. Resourceful, typical
15. Aristocrats are clueless, people are easily tricked

To Build a Fire – Jack London

1. To describe a man's slow death by freezing
2. Fated, descriptive
3. An ill-prepared man freezes to death
4. Fool-hearty, desperate

War of the Worlds – H. G. Wells

1. To describe the coming war between the Martians and humans
2. Nobody knew they were watching
3. We thought they would be harmless
4. What Mars is like
5. We underestimated them
6. Mars's atmosphere is a problem
7. Earth would be great for them
8. We have also invaded for resources
9. The outlines of a coming conflict are set out
10. Ominous, self-aware

What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July? – Frederick Douglass

1. To argue that while slavery exists, the Fourth of July is meaningless
2. Slaves are subject to human laws
3. Lines 10-22
4. He refuses to debate this point
5. It underscores the irrationality of his opponents
6. Forceful, argumentative, plaintive
7. Slavery is a human institution
8. They agree with him on slavery
9. Lines 1-7
10. To demand that he defend the humanity of slaves is an insult
11. Proud, indignant, unbending

Where I Lived, and What I Lived For – Henry David Thoreau

1. To argue for a simpler life
2. Philosophical, peaceful
3. A description of the things the author found he gained and lost
4. I did not need the things I thought I would

Women's Rights are Human Rights – Hillary Rodham Clinton

1. To argue for a global expansion of rights for women
2. Forceful, principled
3. An argument for the rights of women
4. When women have rights, families and children have improved rights

The Yellow Wallpaper – Charlotte Perkins Gilman

1. To describe woman's descent into madness and her husband's well-meaning condescension
2. Slowly degrading, personal
3. A woman slowly goes mad at her imprisonment
4. Well-wishing, but harmful
5. Heroic, tragic

Yosemite Fall – John Muir

1. To describe the climb up the fall(s)
2. Geological shifts as one climbs
3. Shift from rocks to water
4. Plants, rocks
5. Shift from the views below to the plants around the hiker
6. The narrative traces the hike
7. A description of the features of a climb up a natural wonder
8. Grandeur, awestruck, detailed
9. Yosemite Fall and its features

The Young Edda – Snorri Sturluson

1. To describe the creation and destruction of the world
2. Ice-cold rivers
3. Lines 4-6
4. The slain body of Ymer
5. Two trees
6. The creation of the cosmos
7. He is too powerful
8. Odin
9. An outline of mythic events
10. Ultimately pessimistic followed by renewal