



SAT & PSAT Preparation

Critical Reading **Short and Long Passages**



Strategies for Critical Reading

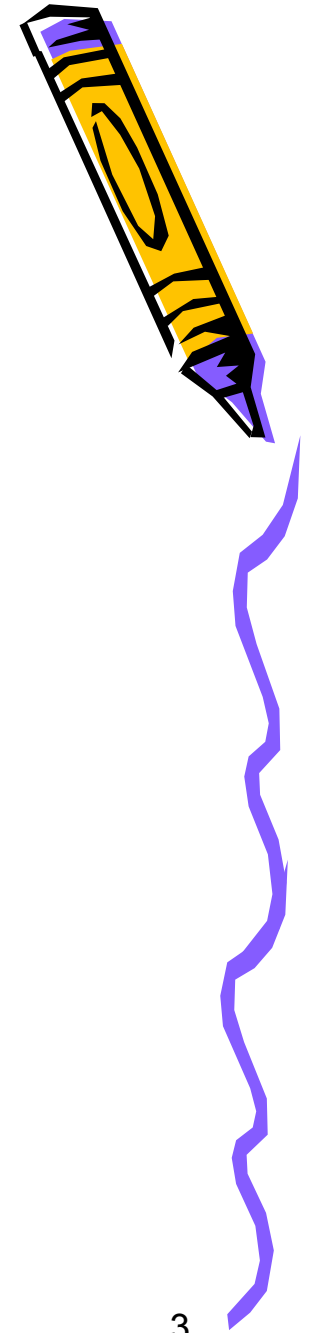


- The SAT contains Critical Reading passages taken from different fields: the humanities, social studies, natural sciences, and fiction.
- Passages vary in style and can include narrative, argumentative, and/or expository elements. The passages are intended to be readable and accessible. There may be as many as 12 or 13 questions on some of the longer reading passages.
- Each test will also contain a pair of related passages presented as one reading selection; one of the two passages will support, oppose, or in some other way complement the point of view expressed in the other.



Strategies for Critical Reading

- The passages are intended to arouse the interest of the test takers. But interest is a matter of personal taste.
- There are two broad categories of reading questions. Some ask what the author says, and others ask what the author means.

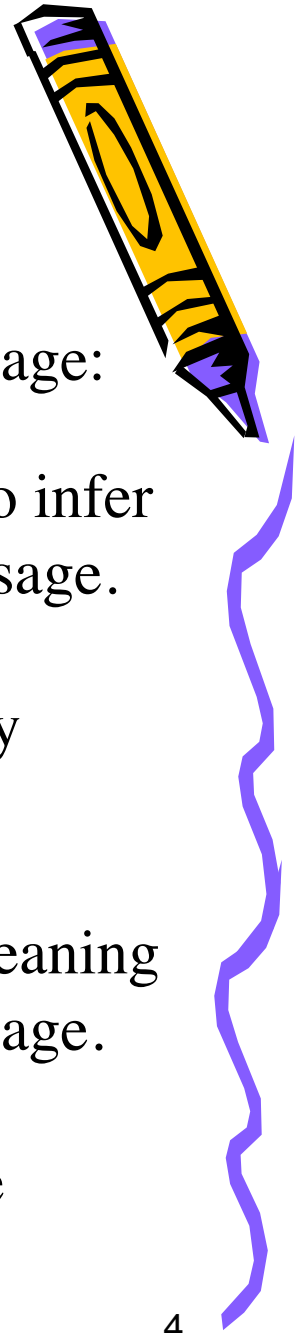
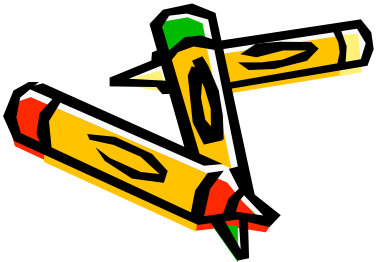


Strategies for Critical Reading

The following kinds of questions may be asked about a passage:

Vocabulary-in-Context. These questions ask you to infer the meanings of words from their context in the reading passage.

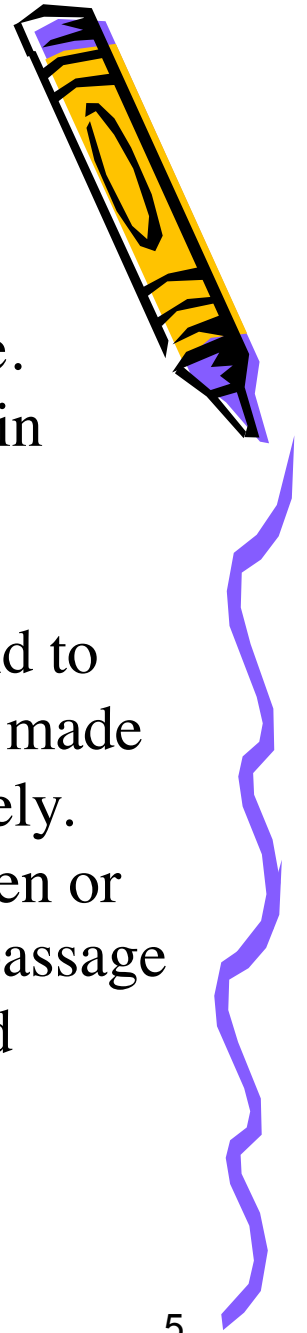
- Sometimes you need to know precisely how a fairly common but abstract word is used in the passage.
- Most questions will ask you to select the correct meaning of a **word with multiple definitions** as it is used in the passage.
- Be sure to read the sentences around the one that contains the word also.



Strategies for Critical Reading

Literal Comprehension Questions. You need to understand significant information presented in the passage. These questions assess a skill that is important for success in college, namely, reading to acquire information.

Extended Reasoning Questions. To synthesize and to analyze information as well as to evaluate the assumptions made and the techniques used by the author, you must read actively. You should be able to recognize points that would strengthen or weaken the author's argument and follow the logic of the passage well enough to make sense of what the author is saying and suggesting.

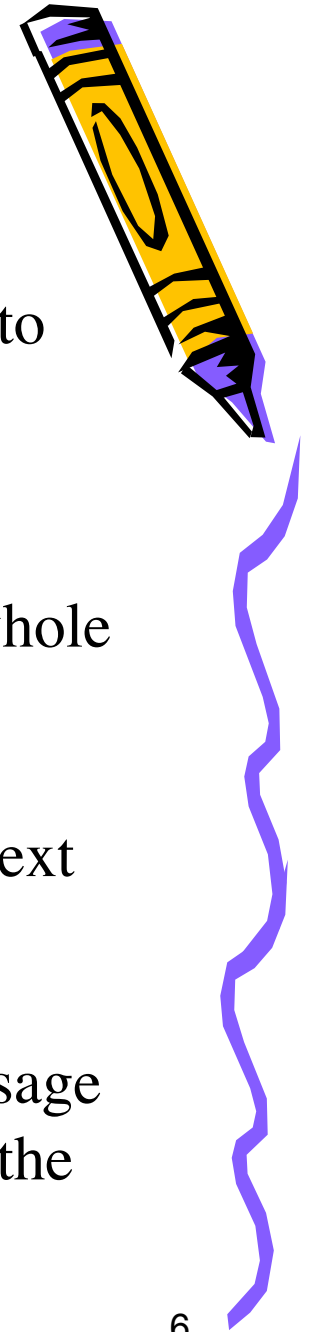


Strategies for Critical Reading

Extended Reasoning includes questions that require you to

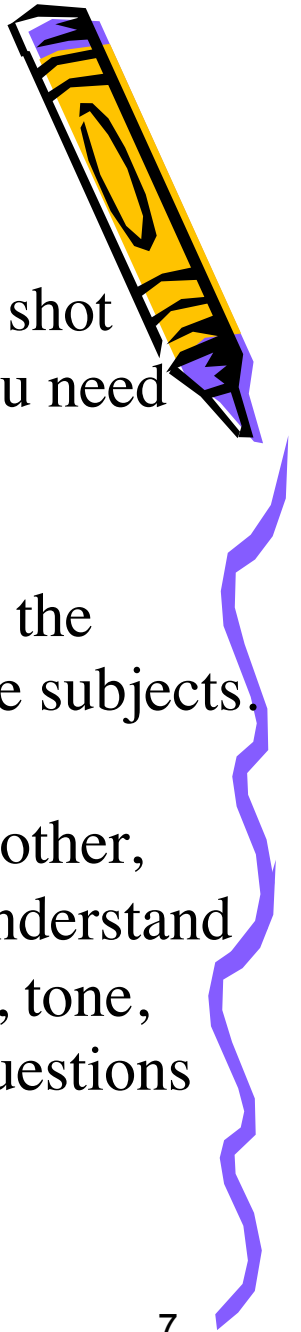
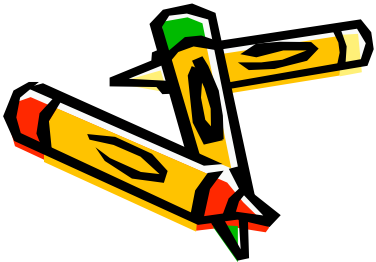
- make inferences
- fill in gaps
- see implications
- relate parts of the text to each other or to the whole
- follow the logic of an argument
- identify cause and effect
- recognize consistency or inconsistency in the text
- interpret the purpose of rhetorical devices
- compare or contrast arguments

Questions about the overall theme or meaning of the passage and about the purpose, attitude, or tone of the speaker are also included in this category.



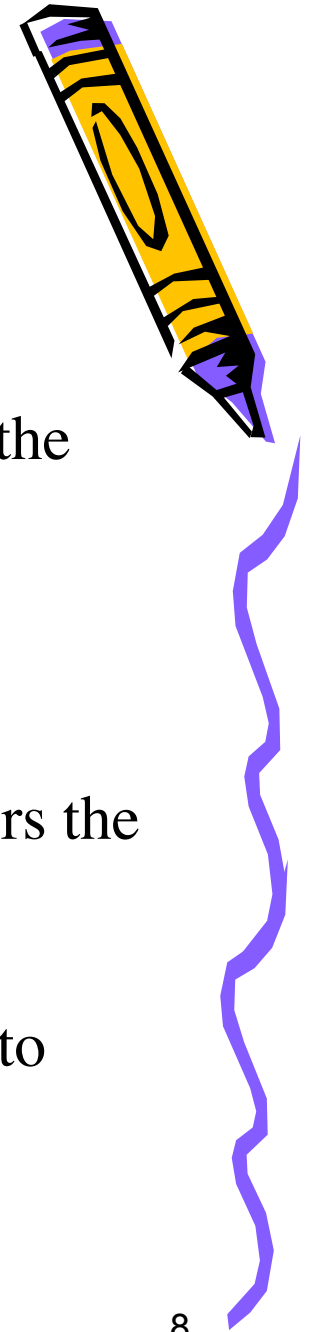
Strategies for Critical Reading

- The Critical Reading questions give you the best shot at getting the right answers because all the information you need is in the passages although they may be implied.
- The passages are selected so that you can answer the questions without prior study or in-depth knowledge of the subjects.
- You'll have to relate parts of the passage to each other, compare and contrast different theories and viewpoints, understand cause and effect, and pay attention to the author's attitude, tone, and overall purpose. The great majority of the Reading questions will require extended reasoning.



Strategies for Critical Reading

- Every word counts, especially in conveying the mood or tone or intent. Marking important words or sentences is appropriate, but not a great deal of time should be spent doing so.
- The correct choice is the one that best answers the question, not any choice that makes a true statement.
- Compare each answer choice to the passage to find choices that can be eliminated as wrong.



Strategies for Critical Reading

- When you've gone through all the questions on a passage, go back and review any that were left out. Sometimes questions that you answered have clues about the questions you did not answer.

- One of the reading selections will involve a pair of passages that will have a common theme or subject. If one of the paired passages seems easier or more interesting than the other, you may want to start with that one and answer the questions specific to it first. The questions are usually grouped.



The Critical Reading Section

- Measures knowledge of genre, cause and effect, rhetorical devices, comparative arguments, and the ability to recognize relationships among parts of a text.

- Long and short reading passages are taken from different fields:

- Natural sciences
- Humanities
- Social sciences
- Literary (fiction)

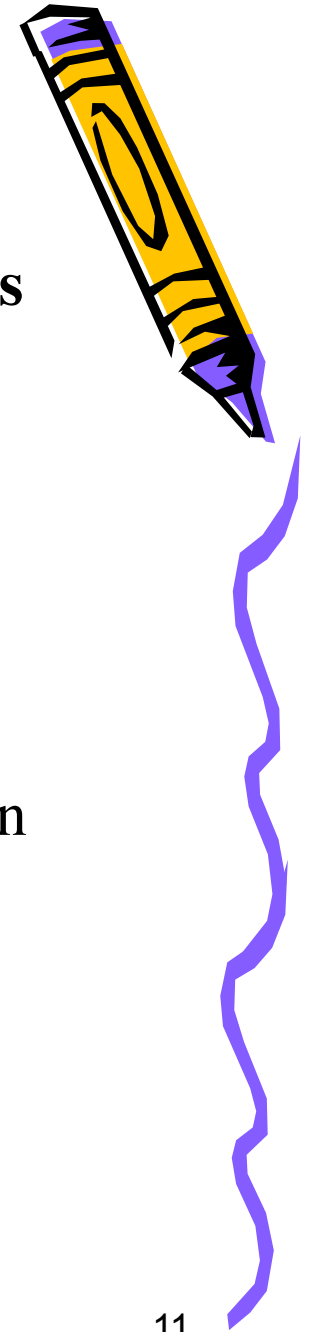
- Short reading passages, which replaced analogies, measure the kind of reasoning formerly measured by the analogy section.



The Critical Reading Section

Measures critical reading skills as shown in a student's ability to

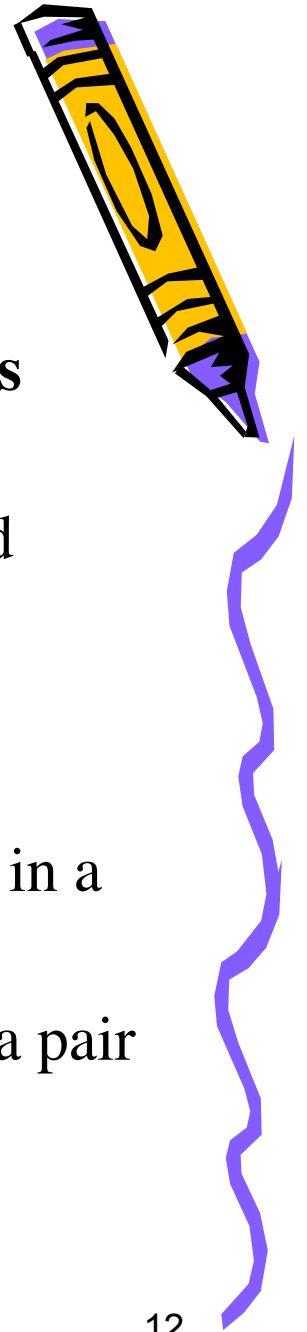
- Determine word meanings
- Analyze sentence structures
- Analyze organizational structures of longer passages
- Synthesize longer passages into summaries, main points, or themes
- Make inferences, draw conclusions, recognize implications
- Recognize tone.



The Critical Reading Section

Measures critical reading skills as shown in a student's ability to

- Analyze and evaluate author's purpose, audience, and rhetorical strategies.
- Compare or contrast ideas in a passage or in a pair of related passages.
- Analyze and evaluate ideas, opinions, and arguments in a passage or in a pair of related passages.
- Distinguish conflicting viewpoints in a passage or in a pair of related passages.



Strategies for Critical Reading--Princeton Review



- You should have two goals when you read the passage:
1) find the main idea and 2) get a vague idea of what is going on in the different paragraphs. (In fact, **Princeton Review** encourages students to skip parts of the passage.)

- Each passage is prefaced by a “blurb” in italics that explains the context of the passage. The blurb can be quite important, so read it carefully.

- But then read only the first two sentences of the first paragraph, the first sentence of each of the rest of the paragraphs, and finally the last sentence of the passage. PR refers to this strategy as B-2-1-1-F.



Strategies for Critical Reading--Princeton Review



- Look for structural clues (trigger words), especially if they begin a paragraph.
- Remember that the questions are arranged chronologically.
- If you come to a question that seems specific but does not have a line number reference, skip that question until you've answered the rest of the questions and have a better understanding of the passage.
- For the vocabulary-in-context questions, remember that ETS often picks words that have more than one meaning.
Generally, the words are not being used in their primary sense.



Strategies for Critical Reading--Princeton Review

- If you are running short of time, answer the vocabulary-in-context questions first. They require the least amount of time and smallest amount of overall knowledge of the passage.

- On double passages, read the first passage and answer the questions on it first; then move on to the second passage. PR suggests that in the 30-question section, look at both reading passages and start with the one whose tone you like best.

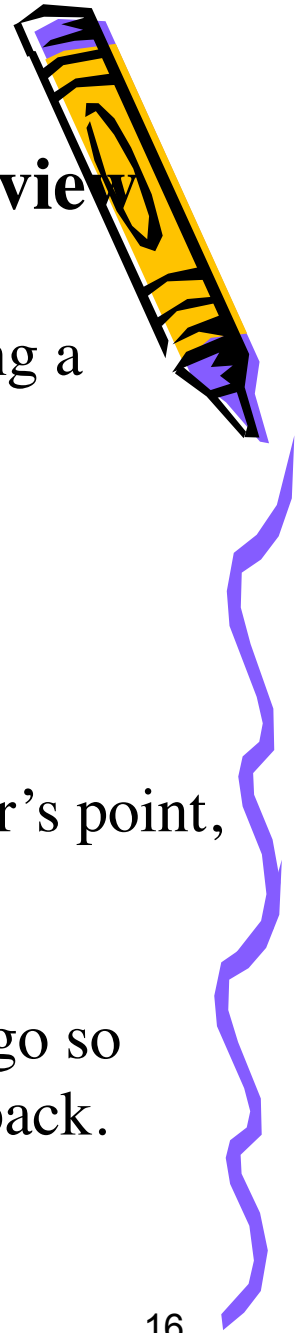
- Eliminate answer choices that could not possibly be correct.

- Take advantage of outside knowledge.



Strategies for Critical Reading--Princeton Review

- Make better use of your limited time by skipping a difficult passage.
- ETS is very pro-American, pro-justice system organization.
- Before you go to the questions, know the author's point, the author's tone, and the passage layout.
- It is imperative that you jot down notes as you go so that you can easily find the info you need when you go back.



Strategies for Critical Reading--Princeton Review

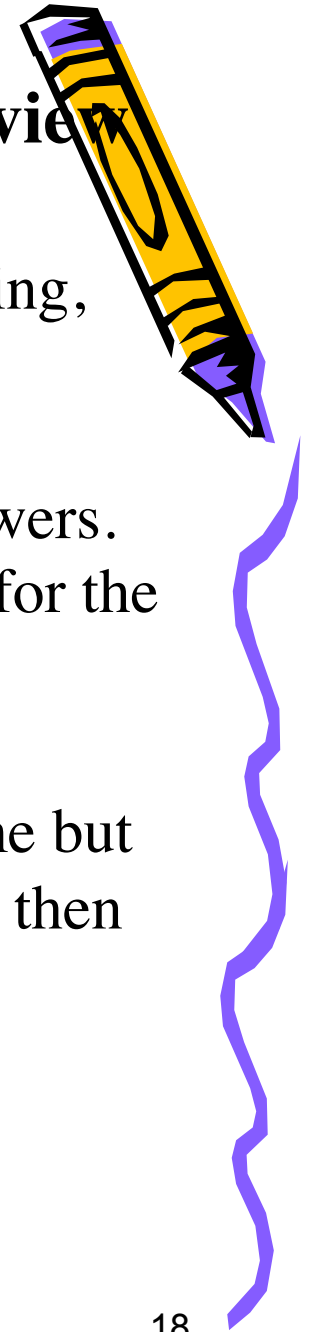
- When line references are given, read at least 5 lines above and 5 below to get the answer.
- Every question that does not have a line reference has lead words (words or phrases) that are also in the passage. That is where you will find the answer.
- Once you find the lead words, read 5 lines above and 5 below. Put the answer in your own words; then eliminate answer choices that don't match yours.



The questions about a passage are in chronological order.

Strategies for Critical Reading--Princeton Review

- If you read a question that sounds time-consuming, save it for later.
- Questions that use except have four correct answers. You still get one raw point for getting it correct. Save it for the end.
- A I, II, III (triple false) question takes much time but gives credit for one question. Examine I; if it is not true, then you can eliminate all answers that contain it.



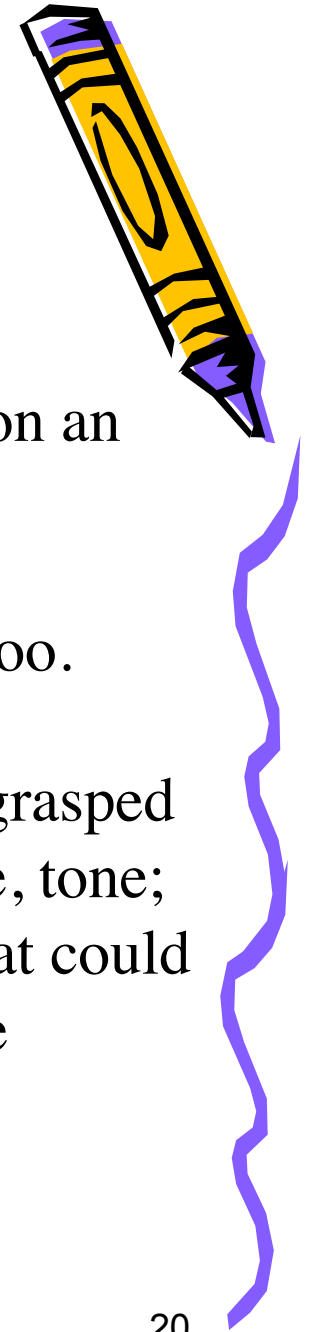
Strategies for Critical Reading--Princeton Review

- An answer that uses extreme language or expresses information that could be argued with are not going to be ETS's answer. They try to make answers that are impossible to argue with.

- When you have your selection down to two choices, select the one that is less specific. The answer that is more vague is usually correct.

- To read what you need for a narrative passage, do a trigger word search. Circle the trigger words and look for important information around the trigger words.

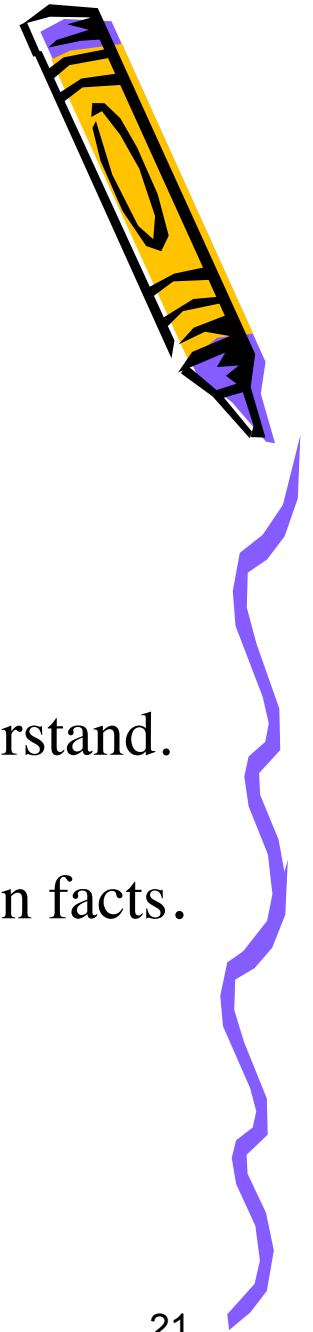




Strategies for Critical Reading--Peterson's

- The passages come from the physical and social sciences. One selection is usually fiction, another focuses on an ethnic group or minority.
- Key words are important in the reading passages too.
- The questions will determine whether or not you grasped the main point or central theme; the author's intent, attitude, tone; the basic facts; what could logically have preceded and what could have followed this sample in both tone and content; and the implications of the material.

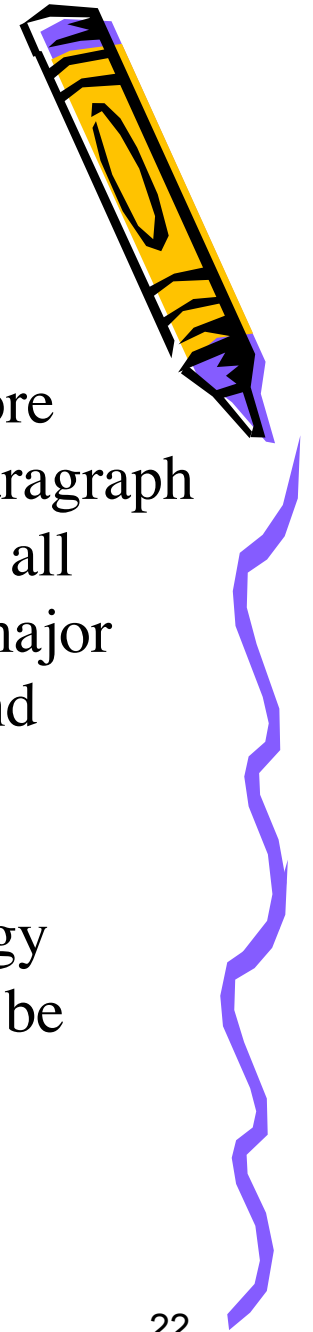




Strategies for Critical Reading--Peterson's

- Do any easy passages before the tough ones.
- Questions are NOT arranged in order of difficulty.
- Always read the passage that concerns women or an ethnic group; it will be upbeat in tone and easier to understand.
- Any answer choice is wrong if it contradicts known facts.





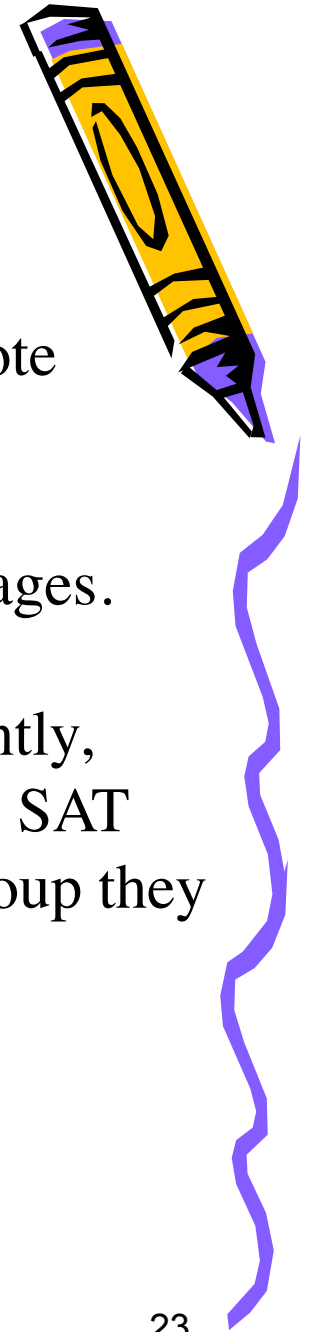
Strategies for Critical Reading--Peterson's

- To read for the main point, skim all questions before you read the passage. Look for the main idea in the first paragraph or perhaps summarized near the end. Underline or asterisk all sentences that sound as if they're expressing a main idea, major conclusion or focal point. Work through other questions and then the major focus will become clearer.
- Watch out for answers that repeat exact phraseology from the passage; the answer may be too narrow/limited to be the main idea.



Strategies for Critical Reading--Peterson's

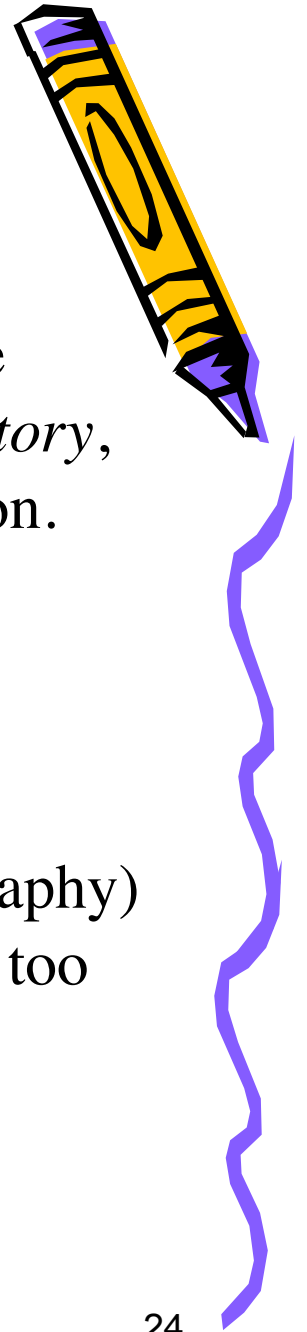
- Authors reveal attitude by their word choice. Note words that reveal the author's attitude as you read.
- Tone and mood rarely apply to informative passages.
- Avoid answers that are strongly negative. Violently, critical material is not going to appear on the test. On the SAT authors may disapprove but never loathe the person or group they are writing about.



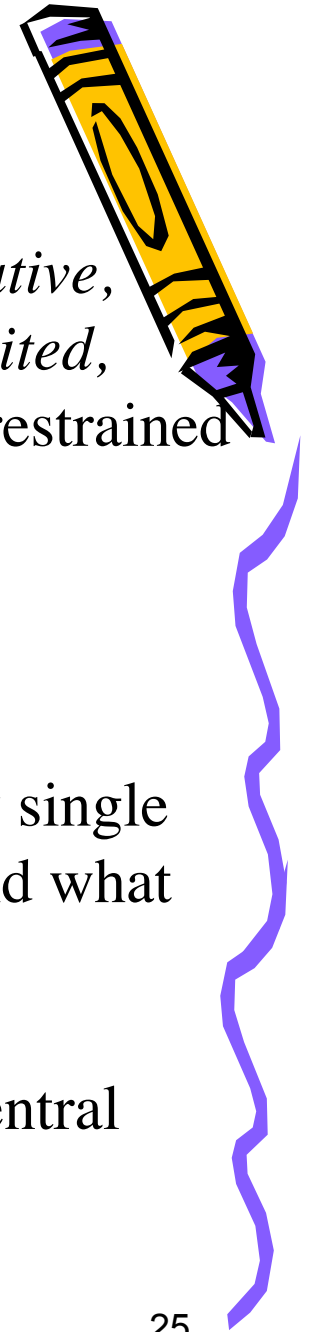
Strategies for Critical Reading--Peterson's

- If the passage is fiction, the author's tone may be *satirical*, but it will never be *dogmatic*, *pedantic*, *explanatory*, or *informative*, because those are not appropriate for fiction. Avoid answers like *ambivalent*, *condescending*, *vitriolic*, *pompous*, *apathetic*, *skeptical* (or *suspicious*) and *apologetic* because they are too negative.

- In the serious passages (history, chemistry, biography) you should avoid answers that are too strongly worded or too emotional.



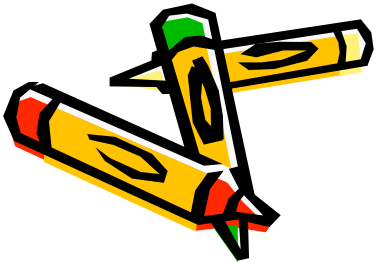
Strategies for Critical Reading--Peterson's



- Answers that have been wrong include *argumentative, apologetic, passionately, harsh, hazy, defensive, wildly excited, opinionated, capricious, vengeful*. Words that were more restrained were correct answers: *impersonal, objective, analytical, informative or explanatory, lucid, pragmatic or practical, dissatisfaction*.

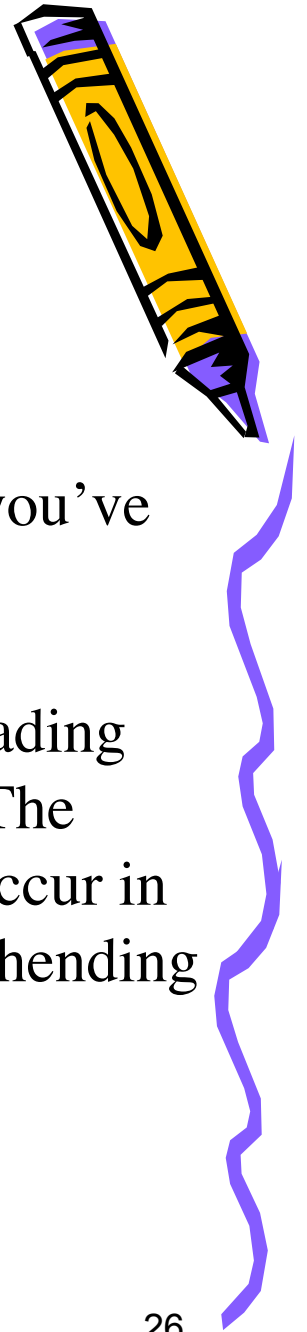
- Watch for the word *implied*. You must read every single word in a passage to tell you what preceded the passage and what could logically follow it.

- Use the first paragraph to form your idea of its central theme and main point.



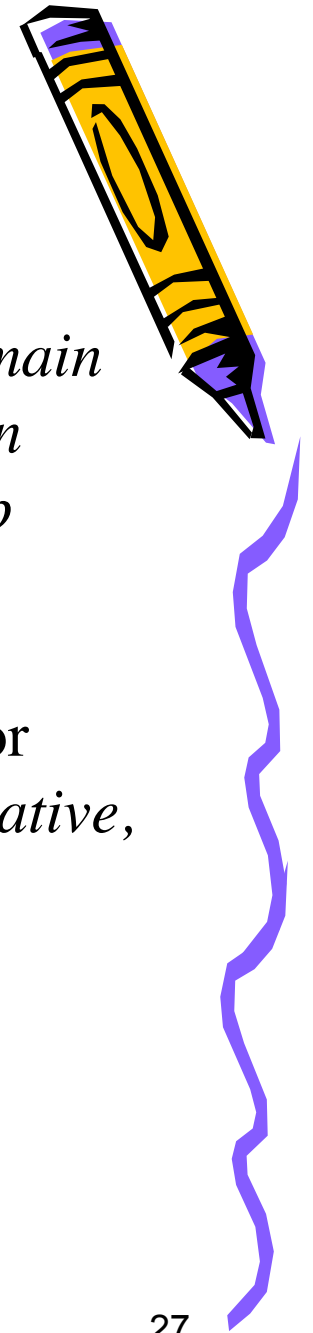
Strategies for Critical Reading--Barron's

- Make use of the introductions to acquaint yourself with the text.
- Use the line references in the questions to be sure you've gone back to the correct spot in the passage.
- First read the passage; then read the questions. Reading the questions first will cost you time and will distract you. The questions could lead you to try to spot the places that they occur in the passage; then you'll be unable to concentrate on comprehending the passage as a whole.



Strategies for Critical Reading--Barron's

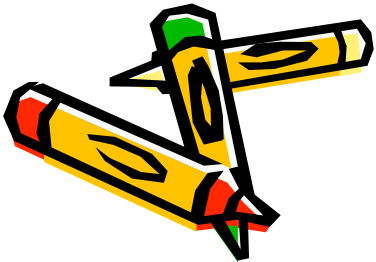
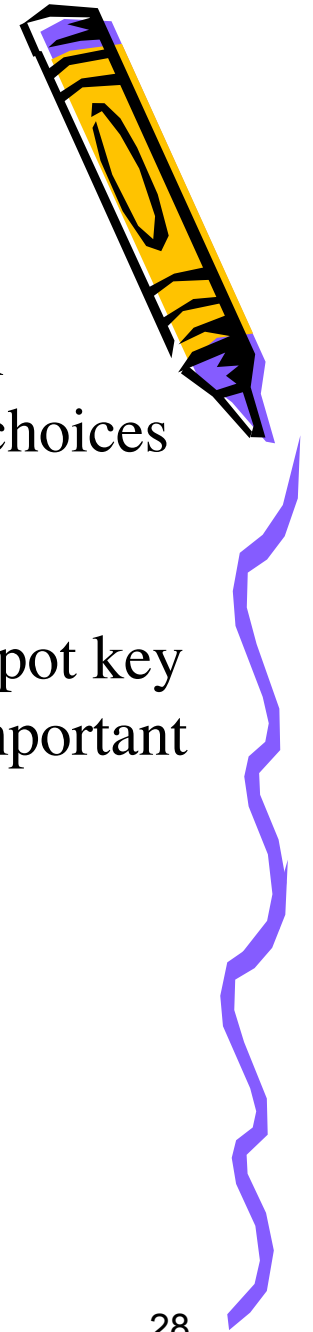
- Learn to spot the major reading questions types—*main idea, specific details, inferences, tone/attitude, vocabulary in context, and technique (method of organization, relationship between paragraphs)*.
- Know important words in questions on technique or style (organization): *abstract, analogy, antithesis, argumentative, assertion, cite, concrete, evidence, explanatory, expository, generalization, narrative, persuasive, rhetorical, thesis*.



Strategies for Critical Reading--Barron's

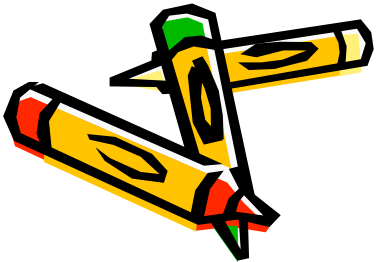
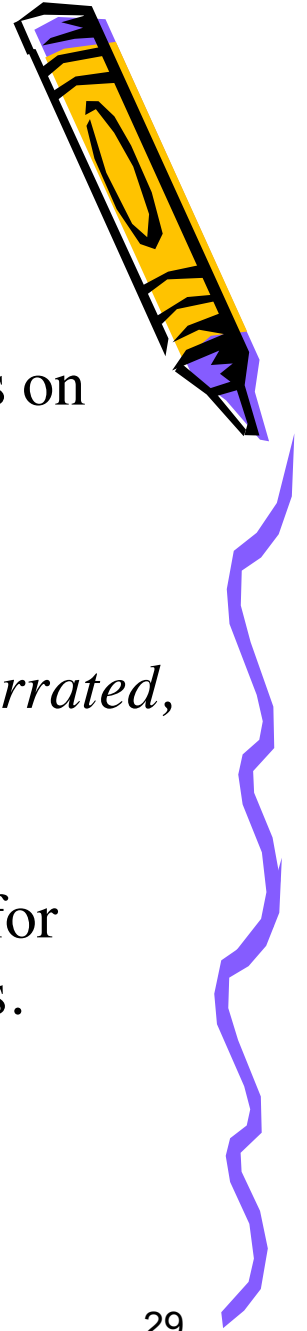
- Check the opening and summary sentences of each paragraph when asked to find the main idea. Watch out for choices that are too specific or too broad.

- When asked about specific details in the passage, spot key words in the question and scan the passage to find them. Important words in questions on specific details: *aesthetic, allusion, assumption, attribute, divergent, fluctuate, hypothetical, incompatible, indicative, inherent, innate, innovative, misconception, phenomenon, preclude.*



Strategies for Critical Reading--Barron's

- When asked to make inferences, base your answers on what the passage implies, not what it states directly.
- Know the important words in inference questions:
criterion, derive, excerpt, implication, imply, likelihood, overrated, plausible, suggestive, tentative.
- When asked about an attitude, mood, or tone, look for words that convey emotion, express values, or paint pictures.



Strategies for Critical Reading--Barron's

- The SAT-makers are very aware of the diversity of the test-takers, and they don't want to upset them. The tests try to present noncontroversial material.

- Know important words in questions on attitude and tone: *aloof, ambivalent, brusque, cautionary, compassionate, condescension, cynical, defensive, detachment, didactic, disdain, disparaging, dispassionate, esteem, flippant, grudging, hypocritical, indifference, ironic, judicious, naïve, nostalgia, objective, optimism, pedantic, pessimism, pomposity, prosaic, resigned, sarcasm, satirical, skeptical, trite, whimsical.*



Strategies for Critical Reading--Barron's

- Know the important words in questions on specific detail: *aesthetic, allusion, assumption, attribute, divergent, fluctuate, hypothetical, incompatible, indicative, inherent, innate, innovative, misconception, phenomenon, preclude.*

