

Preparing for Standardized Tests: Critical Reading

Use the section from the text, “Individualism and Religion” on pages 4–5 to answer the following questions.

“The passages [below] are followed by questions based on their content. . . . Answer the questions on the basis of what is *stated* or *implied* in the passage . . .”

1. The primary purpose of this passage is to
 - A. illustrate the impact of individualism on religiosity
 - B. condemn individualism because it destroys the Church
 - C. prove that belonging to a church is not vital
 - D. judge Sara for taking her ball home after a questionable call
 - E. encourage people to embrace common commitments
2. In the first and second paragraphs, the author emphasizes that God loves
 - A. us more than sparrows
 - B. each hair on our heads
 - C. us because we are dignified
 - D. each of us, even aliens
 - E. each of us as distinct persons
3. In the third paragraph, the author writes that leaving community can cause a person to create his or her own definition of self and of the world. This is true because this person
 - A. drives people away
 - B. does not like anyone else to define her world
 - C. may no longer be willing to listen to or dialogue with others
 - D. does not like anyone else to define her
 - E. refuses to use a dictionary
4. In the final paragraph on page 4, the author makes the point that individualism
 - A. causes people to ignore the police
 - B. is always a problem
 - C. is a problem when it drives people apart from one another
 - D. is romantic because the media celebrates it
 - E. prevents people from becoming stifled
5. In the first paragraph on page 5, the author makes the point that in our society,
 - A. no one wants to serve on juries
 - B. people will fight for their own freedom but are less willing to embrace common commitments
 - C. people do not value community at all
 - D. people value personal freedom above all else
 - E. people will fight for rights that benefit the whole community but are less willing to fight for freedom

Name _____ Date _____

Handout 1-A

Being American

Read this hypothetical conversation and see if you can find any parallels to the perspective of people who claim to be “spiritual but not religious.”

Nathan: Hey Keith, you want to come with us? We are going to put flags on the graves of soldiers for Memorial Day.

Keith: No thanks. I don’t celebrate Memorial Day, Fourth of July, that sort of thing.

Nathan: Aren’t you a US citizen? How can you not celebrate any national holidays?

Keith: I am American in my own way. I don’t need to celebrate holidays in order to be American.

Nathan: Aren’t there things that you need to do to be American?

Keith: Like what?

Nathan: Like say the Pledge of Allegiance, pay taxes, be drafted, obey the laws, learn about the history and government of our country, vote, be involved in the community. You know, that kind of thing.

Keith: I try to earn money under the table and follow laws when I am in danger of being caught. I sometimes vote but only when there is an issue that interests me. I find history and government to be boring.

Nathan: Wait a minute. Even though there might not be an “official” definition for being American, yours does not sound like it. You can’t just make up your own idea of being American and think it is just as good as anyone else’s.

Keith: I thought that this was a free country, or are you going to call the FBI?

Nathan: Yeah, right. I just think that you are not taking on the responsibilities as well as the rights of being in a free country.

Keith: What do you mean? I am freely choosing to be American in my own way.

Nathan: It is true that you can choose to just take the perks of being American without bothering with the responsibilities, as much as you can get away with, as you said, but I don’t consider you to be a true American citizen. I mean people died for you to have this freedom. The least you can do is put flags on their graves to honor their sacrifices. Honoring the people who built and defended our country is part of being American.

By not involving yourself in the community, you are losing out and other people are losing out too. You are a great tech guy. Don’t you think some of our volunteer organizations could use your help once in a while? What about the need to vote responsibly for yourself AND others? As for the draft, will you sneak away to Canada? People need you. Other Americans need you. You have the opportunity to participate in the best of what this country offers and take advantage of its benefits. Come over for the Fourth of July—we have a great time.

Keith: Wow. You have really thought about this a lot.

Nathan: We discussed this in government. It not just about “me” and my rights but about “us” and “our rights and responsibilities.” And, I find history and government boring sometimes but I know that the information is important to know. It helps us understand who we are.

Keith: Well, I don’t think I’ll help with the flags, but I will try to come over for the Fourth.

Two Articles about Abortion

Selective Reduction

When a woman undergoes in vitro fertilization (IVF), the doctor often implants more than one embryo in her uterus. Women who receive artificial insemination also often deliver twins, for example.

Increasingly, women choose what are called “two-minus-one” pregnancies, where women abort a second and/or third embryo implanted within the uterus because they only want one baby. Another term for this type of choice is *selective reduction*. Dr. Anthony Caruso, who used to perform IVF procedures, says that pregnancy “has become a commodity. As such, you can do with it as you will, to make sure you have the ‘best’ outcome you can. Selective reduction is one of those options.” (Mann)

For many years, doctors and patients chose selective reduction when women had conceived triplets or more because of the pregnancy risks. They would never consider doing this for twins because there was no medical reason to, but “what was once unthinkable has become increasingly popular.” (Mann) Some patients threaten to terminate the whole pregnancy if they are not allowed to kill one baby. The attitude becomes “Because we want ‘a baby,’ we’ll do whatever it takes to have a baby. And if we happen to overdo it, and wind up with more than one baby, we’ll just kill it.” (Mann) Parents see children as a commodity rather than a gift of marriage.

The War on Baby Girls

In some parts of the world, a male fetus is much safer in the womb than a female fetus because the family desires him more. Over the last several decades over 160 million baby girls have been “selectively” aborted in places such as China, India, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. In China, for example, as many as 120 baby boys are born for every 100 baby girls.

Mara Hvistendahl notes that additional human rights abuses flourish in the countries that practice sex-based abortion, and she forecasts additional problems for the future. There are many women being bought and sold in these same countries, trafficked for prostitution or marriage. In addition, Hvistendahl predicts that down the road, the gender imbalance will become a significant social problem.

Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt cites three major factors that have led to the current crisis imbalance. First, some cultures have a “ruthless” preference for sons. Second, population control efforts such as China’s one-child policy has made many parents more eager to have a son as their one child. Unconditional abortion policies and gender screening through ultrasound make up the third factor.

While Eberstadt believes that international agencies should speak out against these practices, Dr. Susan Fink Yoshishara, vice-president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, says that there is a more profound issue: “But an even deeper problem that needs to be addressed,” observed Yoshihara, “is the underlying human tendency towards selfishness.”

Name _____ Date _____

Handout 1-C

The Church—Assembly Required

Have you ever received a gift that came labeled “Assembly Required”? Before you could really appreciate and enjoy the gift, you had to put it together.

The Church is a gift, a gift that requires assembly. The word *church* means *assembly*—a convocation of people who believe in Jesus, his Father, and the Spirit. To appreciate and enjoy who we are, we join together. We assemble. When it comes to being a Church, assembly is always required.

From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus assembled people. After Jesus died, was raised from the dead, and returned to God, Jesus’ friends assembled. In their assemblies they prayed, remembered Jesus, and broke bread as he taught them.

At every Eucharist the Church assembles. We come together from every walk of life, every culture, and every race. Rich and poor, young and old, healthy and sick, we all come together as one family to give glory to God, to make present God’s saving deeds fulfilled in Jesus, and to promise to treat all others like family.

At Eucharist we assemble to express, renew, and deepen our Faith in Jesus and in one another. In our assembly, we see ourselves as people who continue Jesus’ mission of bringing God’s love to others, the Church gets re-created, and we become what we celebrate. We become the Body of Christ, called to draw others to our assembly.

Find out more about your Church assembly.

1. Where did you assemble for worship on Sunday? (place and time)

2. Who led the assembly in prayer?

3. Who led the assembly in song?

4. Who sat behind you?

5. Who read from the Old Testament?

6. Who proclaimed the Gospel?

7. Who brought the bread and wine to the altar table?

8. Besides your family, whom did you greet during the Sign of Peace at Mass?

Name _____ Date _____

Handout 1-D

The Senses and Church

As your teacher reminds you of different senses used in Church, write down what you associate with each different item or gesture. Then, if you learn something new about the item or action, write it down.

Example

Quiet: Church is not used for loud events but can only be “loud” during Mass and other liturgies. The quiet makes me reflective and reminds me that I can talk to God here.

The height of the ceiling

Use of holy water

Procession holding the lectionary high

Genuflecting

Bowing

Candles

Music

Bells

Incense

The tabernacle

The baptismal font

Name _____ Date _____

Handout 1-E

Apostles and Disciples

Jesus has selected you to be among the Apostles and disciples he will send out to renew his Church. Please follow these instructions and write your responses on a separate sheet of paper.

Preparation:

Who else will you pick to be Apostles with you? (These real-life people should be under age thirty.)

Imagine that the rest of the students in your class (all sophomores, for example) will be the disciples but that you, as one of the Twelve Apostles, will be leading in the renewal group.

- What are three questions that you would want to ask Jesus prior to beginning your mission?
- How would you prepare yourself for this mission? (Identify four to six ways that you would prepare as a group of Apostles.)
- How would use the resources or talents of your disciples? Envision how the Apostles you chose could use their talents to build the church.

Describe your renewal plan. (This plan should reflect your sense of where the Church needs renewal, effective ways of renewing the Church, and your anticipated results.)

Name _____ Date _____

Handout 1-F

The Christian Story: Rachel Beckwith

Rachel Beckwith grew up in Bellevue, Washington, outside of Seattle. At an early age, she demonstrated an interest in giving back. When she learned about the program “Locks of Love,” an organization that takes hair donations to make wigs for kids suffering from cancer, she had her hair cut off to send in. She then re-grew her hair and got it taken off again.

At church, Rachel had learned about an organization called Charity: Water, an organization that builds wells in Africa in places where there is no clean water. She was horrified that other kids did not have clean water to drink. For her ninth birthday, she asked her friends to donate nine dollars each to this organization via a webpage on the charity: water website. She hoped to raise \$300 but only raised \$220.

Only a month later, Rachel and her family were involved in a serious accident on Interstate 90 and she was badly injured. People from her parish, friends, and family decided to donate to her birthday page as a sign of support. Prior to being taken off life support, Rachel had raised more than Justin Bieber had raised (\$47,544) for the same charity. Her family donated her hair to Locks of Love and her organs to other children.

Contributions continued to pour in—many in nine-dollar increments—from all over the world. The total donations soon topped \$300,000, then one-half million dollars. In the three weeks after Rachel’s death, over \$1.1 million had come in for these wells. The wells will benefit over 50,000 people.

Rachel inspired others by her thoughtfulness and generosity toward others. Though she died a physical death, her spirit lived and enlivened the hearts of so many people who then followed her generosity. In death, she will bring real hope to thousands of children.

(Nicholas D. Kristof, “Rachel’s Last Fund-Raiser,” *The New York Times*, August 10, 2011.)