



WEST–B: READING

Select any of the test objectives listed below to view

- a set of descriptive statements that further explain each objective, and
- one or more sample test question(s) aligned to each objective.

Test Field	WEST–B: Reading
Test Format	Multiple-choice questions
Number of Questions	60
Additional Materials	Glossary

For sample items that would appear as part of a cluster on the actual test, stimulus material is repeated for the purposes of this study guide.

Objectives:

0001 Understand the main idea and supporting details of a reading selection.

The following are examples of content that may be covered under this objective.

- Identify the explicit or implicit main idea, theme, or message of a reading selection.
- Recognize explicit and implicit information, facts, and details that support, illustrate, or elaborate on the main idea of a reading selection.
- Determine whether particular statements strengthen or weaken the main idea of a reading selection.

Sample Item(s):

1. Read the selection below; then answer the question that follows.

The Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s was one of the greatest tragedies in the history of U.S. agriculture. Its origins can be traced to the 1880s, when large numbers of settlers began growing wheat on the Great Plains. Life on the plains has never been easy. During this period, however, the region's fertile soils and adequate rainfall compensated for its cold winters, blizzards, tornadoes, and scorching summer heat. By century's end, land-hungry farmers had spread out across the plains, cutting the sod and tilling the soil on lands extending from North Dakota to the Texas Panhandle. Regional transformation accelerated during World War I, as the price of wheat skyrocketed and farmers bought tractors and combines to increase production. In a short period of time, the last of the drought-resistant prairie grasses that had once covered the Great Plains had been plowed under to make way for wheat.



As wheat output continued to increase during the 1920s, prices collapsed and farmers found it increasingly more difficult to make ends meet. Conditions deteriorated further with the onset of the Great Depression at decade's end. Worse, the region's unpredictable semi-arid climate added to the farmers' growing misery. The previous fifty years had been a period of above-average rainfall on the plains. To be sure, farmers had experienced some dry years, but they were nothing like the extended drought that began in the summer of 1932. Accompanying winds turned a bad situation into a social and ecological catastrophe. Stripped of the drought-resistant grasses that had held prairie soils in place, the plains could offer no resistance to the increasingly powerful gusts that blew across the region. The resulting dust storms darkened the skies, covered houses, buried equipment, and in some places removed up to three feet of soil. By the time adequate rains returned in the late 1930s, the storms had seriously impaired the region's agricultural potential and devastated the lives of thousands of farm families.

As part of its response to the crisis, the federal government formed the Soil Conservation Service. One of the agency's primary tasks was to introduce conservation practices that would help prevent farmland erosion. In the Great Plains, these measures included the creation of windbreaks to reduce wind velocity, the construction of irrigation systems, and the planting of winter cover crops that could be plowed under in the spring to enrich soils. Although wind erosion remains a problem, these and other conservation measures have significantly reduced the resulting soil loss. They are widely credited with helping to lessen the adverse effects of a serious drought that struck the plains during the 1950s. This does not mean, however, that another Dust Bowl is impossible. As farmers learned during the 1930s, once the soil begins to blow, there is not much that can be done to stop it.

Which statement best expresses the main idea of the third paragraph of the selection?

- A. Conservation measures have reduced, but not eliminated, the problems that caused the Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s.
- B. The Soil Conservation Service was formed to help Great Plains farmers deal with wind erosion.
- C. The creation of windbreaks was the most important of the various conservation measures introduced by the Soil Conservation Service.
- D. The drought of the 1950s caused considerably less damage than did the Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s.

Correct Response and Explanation

A. After describing how the introduction of various conservation measures has helped prevent farmland erosion, the writer cautions that despite these steps another Dust Bowl is still possible (Response A). While it mentions the formation of the Soil Conservation Service (Response B), this paragraph is primarily about what the Service did to alleviate the results of the Dust Bowl, and there is nothing in the



paragraph to suggest that the construction of windbreaks was more important or effective than other measures introduced by the Soil Conservation Service (Response C). The writer's observation concerning the drought of the 1950s (Response D) is a supporting detail intended to show the effectiveness of the conservation measures discussed in the preceding sentences of the paragraph, but it is not the main idea of the paragraph.

2. Read the selection below; then answer the question that follows.

Mosaics are made by embedding colored fragments of material such as glass and marble in cement or plaster to form patterns or pictures. The intricate art of the mosaic has a long and varied history. The oldest surviving pictorial mosaics were produced by the ancient Greeks. Primarily black and white with pale green and red accents, they depicted various mythological subjects and scenes from the writings of Homer. The Romans later transformed mosaic from an exclusive art into a pedestrian decorative medium widely used in domestic architecture. By the time of the Roman Empire's collapse in A.D. 476, the main center of mosaic production had shifted to Byzantium, where artists created stunning pictorial works noted for their vivid colors and elaborate designs. Later artists rarely matched Byzantine achievements. Mosaic nevertheless remains a valued art form that today is most often used for architectural decoration.

Which sentence from the selection best expresses the main idea of the selection?

- A. "Mosaics are made by embedding colored fragments of material such as glass and marble in cement or plaster to form patterns or pictures."
- B. "The intricate art of the mosaic has a long and varied history."
- C. "By the time of the Roman Empire's collapse in A.D. 476, the main center of mosaic production had shifted to Byzantium, where artists created stunning pictorial works noted for their vivid colors and elaborate designs."
- D. "Mosaic nevertheless remains a valued art form that today is most often used for architectural decoration."

Correct Response and Explanation

B. Most of the selection is devoted to a discussion of Greek, Roman, and Byzantine contributions to the "long and varied history" of mosaics (Response B). After the opening sentence, the writer has little more to say about how mosaics are made or the materials used in their creation (Response A). The information provided concerning Roman mosaic production (Response C) is part of a broader discussion of the history of mosaics, and the writer does not elaborate on the ways in which mosaics are still used for architectural decoration (Response D).



0002 Analyze the relationships among ideas or information within one or more reading selections.

The following are examples of content that may be covered under this objective.

- Predict outcomes, make generalizations, and draw conclusions inductively or deductively from ideas or information presented within one or more reading selections.
- Identify similarities, differences, and implied relationships between or among ideas or information within one or more reading selections.
- Recognize implications of ideas or information presented within one or more reading selections.
- Identify the sequence of steps or events within a reading selection.
- Select solutions to problems based on ideas or information presented within one or more reading selections.

Sample Item(s):

1. Read the selection below; then answer the question that follows.

The Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s was one of the greatest tragedies in the history of U.S. agriculture. Its origins can be traced to the 1880s, when large numbers of settlers began growing wheat on the Great Plains. Life on the plains has never been easy. During this period, however, the region's fertile soils and adequate rainfall compensated for its cold winters, blizzards, tornadoes, and scorching summer heat. By century's end, land-hungry farmers had spread out across the plains, cutting the sod and tilling the soil on lands extending from North Dakota to the Texas Panhandle. Regional transformation accelerated during World War I, as the price of wheat skyrocketed and farmers bought tractors and combines to increase production. In a short period of time, the last of the drought-resistant prairie grasses that had once covered the Great Plains had been plowed under to make way for wheat.

As wheat output continued to increase during the 1920s, prices collapsed and farmers found it increasingly more difficult to make ends meet. Conditions deteriorated further with the onset of the Great Depression at decade's end. Worse, the region's unpredictable semi-arid climate added to the farmers' growing misery. The previous fifty years had been a period of above-average rainfall on the plains. To be sure, farmers had experienced some dry years, but they were nothing like the extended drought that began in the summer of 1932. Accompanying winds turned a bad situation into a social and ecological catastrophe. Stripped of the drought-resistant grasses that had held prairie soils in place, the plains could offer no resistance to the increasingly powerful gusts that blew across the region. The resulting dust storms darkened the skies, covered houses, buried equipment, and in some places removed up to three feet of soil. By the time adequate rains returned in the late 1930s, the storms had seriously impaired the region's agricultural potential and devastated the lives of thousands of farm families.



As part of its response to the crisis, the federal government formed the Soil Conservation Service. One of the agency's primary tasks was to introduce conservation practices that would help prevent farmland erosion. In the Great Plains, these measures included the creation of windbreaks to reduce wind velocity, the construction of irrigation systems, and the planting of winter cover crops that could be plowed under in the spring to enrich soils. Although wind erosion remains a problem, these and other conservation measures have significantly reduced the resulting soil loss. They are widely credited with helping to lessen the adverse effects of a serious drought that struck the plains during the 1950s. This does not mean, however, that another Dust Bowl is impossible. As farmers learned during the 1930s, once the soil begins to blow, there is not much that can be done to stop it.

Based on information presented in the selection, it is reasonable to infer that:

- A. the damage caused by the Dust Bowl crisis was most extensive in the summer of 1932.
- B. wheat prices continued to decline throughout the 1930s.
- C. the Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s was most serious in North Dakota and the Texas Panhandle.
- D. wheat production in the Great Plains declined during the 1930s.

Correct Response and Explanation

D. After noting that continued increases in wheat output during the 1920s contributed to collapsing wheat prices, the writer describes how adverse climatic conditions throughout much of the 1930s crippled farm operations on the Great Plains. It is therefore reasonable to infer that wheat production declined during that decade (Response D). According to the selection, the summer of 1932 witnessed the beginning of an extended drought, not the period of greatest damage (Response A). If anything, declining wheat production during the 1930s would have increased rather than reduced wheat prices, as less and less wheat was available for purchase (Response B). And there is no evidence in the selection showing that the Dust Bowl crisis was most serious in North Dakota and the Texas Panhandle (Response C).

0003 Use critical reasoning skills to evaluate a reading selection.

The following are examples of content that may be covered under this objective.

- Recognize stated or implied assumptions on which the validity of an argument depends.
- Determine the relevance of specific facts, examples, or graphic data to a writer's argument.
- Recognize fallacies in the logic of a writer's argument.
- Recognize qualifying language, and distinguish between fact and opinion in a reading selection.
- Assess the credibility, objectivity, or bias of the writer of a reading selection or of the writer's sources.



Sample Item(s):

1. Read the selection below; then answer the question that follows.

The Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s was one of the greatest tragedies in the history of U.S. agriculture. Its origins can be traced to the 1880s, when large numbers of settlers began growing wheat on the Great Plains. Life on the plains has never been easy. During this period, however, the region's fertile soils and adequate rainfall compensated for its cold winters, blizzards, tornadoes, and scorching summer heat. By century's end, land-hungry farmers had spread out across the plains, cutting the sod and tilling the soil on lands extending from North Dakota to the Texas Panhandle. Regional transformation accelerated during World War I, as the price of wheat skyrocketed and farmers bought tractors and combines to increase production. In a short period of time, the last of the drought-resistant prairie grasses that had once covered the Great Plains had been plowed under to make way for wheat.

As wheat output continued to increase during the 1920s, prices collapsed and farmers found it increasingly more difficult to make ends meet. Conditions deteriorated further with the onset of the Great Depression at decade's end. Worse, the region's unpredictable semi-arid climate added to the farmers' growing misery. The previous fifty years had been a period of above-average rainfall on the plains. To be sure, farmers had experienced some dry years, but they were nothing like the extended drought that began in the summer of 1932. Accompanying winds turned a bad situation into a social and ecological catastrophe. Stripped of the drought-resistant grasses that had held prairie soils in place, the plains could offer no resistance to the increasingly powerful gusts that blew across the region. The resulting dust storms darkened the skies, covered houses, buried equipment, and in some places removed up to three feet of soil. By the time adequate rains returned in the late 1930s, the storms had seriously impaired the region's agricultural potential and devastated the lives of thousands of farm families.

As part of its response to the crisis, the federal government formed the Soil Conservation Service. One of the agency's primary tasks was to introduce conservation practices that would help prevent farmland erosion. In the Great Plains, these measures included the creation of windbreaks to reduce wind velocity, the construction of irrigation systems, and the planting of winter cover crops that could be plowed under in the spring to enrich soils. Although wind erosion remains a problem, these and other conservation measures have significantly reduced the resulting soil loss. They are widely credited with helping to lessen the adverse effects of a serious drought that struck the plains during the 1950s. This does not mean, however, that another Dust Bowl is impossible. As farmers learned during the 1930s, once the soil begins to blow, there is not much that can be done to stop it.



Which illustration would be most relevant to the writer's argument in the second paragraph of the selection?

- A. a table showing changes in wheat prices during the 1920s and 1930s
- B. a topographical map of the Great Plains
- C. a table showing changes in rainfall for the Great Plains from 1880 to 1940
- D. a natural resources map of the Great Plains

Correct Response and Explanation

C. A table showing changes in rainfall for the Great Plains between 1880 and 1940 would effectively complement the writer's discussion in the second paragraph of the region's abnormally severe drought conditions during the 1930s (Response C). A table providing information on wheat prices (Response A) or maps showing the topography (Response B) or natural resources of the Great Plains (Response D) would add little to the central discussion of the second paragraph—the changing climatological conditions on the Great Plains.

2. Read the selection below; then answer the question that follows.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the most important civil rights measure ever passed by the U.S. Congress. Its main provision outlawed racial, religious, and sexual discrimination in both the workplace and public facilities. Other provisions authorized the government to cut off federal funding to organizations for programs administered on a discriminatory basis and to bring suit against segregated schools and public facilities. The bill not only set new standards but contained sanctions that could be used to compel compliance with those standards. The fact that it had teeth in it meant that the legislation would quickly make itself felt in a serious way. The era of real reform had finally begun.

Which sentence from the selection expresses an opinion rather than a fact?

- A. "The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the most important civil rights measure ever passed by the U.S. Congress."
- B. "Its main provision outlawed racial, religious, and sexual discrimination in both the workplace and public facilities."
- C. "Other provisions authorized the government to cut off federal funding to organizations for programs administered on a discriminatory basis and to bring suit against segregated schools and public facilities."
- D. "The bill not only set new standards but contained sanctions that could be used to compel compliance with those standards."



Correct Response and Explanation

A. Response A is an expression of opinion because the statement does not represent an absolute certainty; it could be argued that other civil rights measures were at least as important as the Civil Rights Act of 1964. By contrast, responses B, C, and D all are verifiable statements of factual information without expressions of opinion.

0004 Analyze the writer's purpose, intent, and point of view in a reading selection.

The following are examples of content that may be covered under this objective.

- Recognize the writer's stated or implied purpose for writing (e.g., to persuade, to describe) in a reading selection.
- Determine the appropriateness of a writer's choice of words or language for various purposes or audiences.
- Identify the attitude, opinion, or point of view expressed by the writer of a reading selection.

Sample Item(s):

1. Read the selection below; then answer the question that follows.

The Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s was one of the greatest tragedies in the history of U.S. agriculture. Its origins can be traced to the 1880s, when large numbers of settlers began growing wheat on the Great Plains. Life on the plains has never been easy. During this period, however, the region's fertile soils and adequate rainfall compensated for its cold winters, blizzards, tornadoes, and scorching summer heat. By century's end, land-hungry farmers had spread out across the plains, cutting the sod and tilling the soil on lands extending from North Dakota to the Texas Panhandle. Regional transformation accelerated during World War I, as the price of wheat skyrocketed and farmers bought tractors and combines to increase production. In a short period of time, the last of the drought-resistant prairie grasses that had once covered the Great Plains had been plowed under to make way for wheat.



As wheat output continued to increase during the 1920s, prices collapsed and farmers found it increasingly more difficult to make ends meet. Conditions deteriorated further with the onset of the Great Depression at decade's end. Worse, the region's unpredictable semi-arid climate added to the farmers' growing misery. The previous fifty years had been a period of above-average rainfall on the plains. To be sure, farmers had experienced some dry years, but they were nothing like the extended drought that began in the summer of 1932. Accompanying winds turned a bad situation into a social and ecological catastrophe. Stripped of the drought-resistant grasses that had held prairie soils in place, the plains could offer no resistance to the increasingly powerful gusts that blew across the region. The resulting dust storms darkened the skies, covered houses, buried equipment, and in some places removed up to three feet of soil. By the time adequate rains returned in the late 1930s, the storms had seriously impaired the region's agricultural potential and devastated the lives of thousands of farm families.

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The writer's main purpose in the selection is to:

- A. describe the causes and consequences of the Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s.
- B. analyze the effect of the Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s on wheat production in the Great Plains.
- C. evaluate the government response to the Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s.
- D. raise questions about the plight of farm families hurt by the Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s.



Correct Response and Explanation

A. The first two paragraphs are devoted largely to a description of the causes of the Dust Bowl crisis, while the final paragraph describes an important consequence: the conservation measures introduced to deal with the crisis (Response A). Although the writer does suggest that wheat production declined as a result of the Dust Bowl crisis (Response B), this is clearly a secondary theme of the selection. Similarly, the assessment of the government's response in the third paragraph (Response C) forms only one element of the larger story presented in the selection. Given the brief mention of the Dust Bowl's effect on farm families in the second paragraph, it does not appear that raising questions about their plight (Response D) was the writer's major aim.

0005 Determine the meaning of words and phrases in context.

The following are examples of content that may be covered under this objective.

- Determine the meaning of words using context clues, syntax, and/or structural analysis.
- Recognize the correct use of commonly misused words (e.g., to/too/two, their/they're/there, your/you're) in a reading selection.
- Determine the meaning of figurative or colloquial language in a reading selection.
- Identify appropriate synonyms or antonyms for words in a reading selection.

Sample Item(s):

1. Read the selection below; then answer the question that follows.

Mosaics are made by embedding colored fragments of material such as glass and marble in cement or plaster to form patterns or pictures. The intricate art of the mosaic has a long and varied history. The oldest surviving pictorial mosaics were produced by the ancient Greeks. Primarily black and white with pale green and red accents, they depicted various mythological subjects and scenes from the writings of Homer. The Romans later transformed mosaic from an exclusive art into a pedestrian decorative medium widely used in domestic architecture. By the time of the Roman Empire's collapse in A.D. 476, the main center of mosaic production had shifted to Byzantium, where artists created stunning pictorial works noted for their vivid colors and elaborate designs. Later artists rarely matched Byzantine achievements. Mosaic nevertheless remains a valued art form that today is most often used for architectural decoration.



Which word best defines the word pedestrian as it is used in the selection?

- A. ordinary
- B. creative
- C. valuable
- D. crude

Correct Response and Explanation

A. The word *pedestrian* as it is used in the selection to modify *mosaics* means "ordinary", something that was "widely used" and no longer the "exclusive art" of an earlier period. The writer's observation that Roman mosaics were commonplace would be at odds with the idea that they were "creative" (Response B) or "valuable" (Response C). On the other hand, a "decorative medium widely used in domestic architecture" is unlikely to have been "crude" (Response D).

2. Read the selection below; then answer the question that follows.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the most important civil rights measure ever passed by the U.S. Congress. Its main provision outlawed racial, religious, and sexual discrimination in both the workplace and public facilities. Other provisions authorized the government to cut off federal funding to organizations for programs administered on a discriminatory basis and to bring suit against segregated schools and public facilities. The bill not only set new standards but contained sanctions that could be used to compel compliance with those standards. The fact that it had teeth in it meant that the legislation would quickly make itself felt in a serious way. The era of real reform had finally begun.

In the context of the selection, the phrase had teeth in it is used to communicate the fact that the legislation:

- A. addressed important issues.
- B. had an effective means of enforcement.
- C. was well funded.
- D. had widespread support from the public.



Correct Response and Explanation

B. In the context of the preceding sentence, which talks about "sanctions that could be used to compel compliance with [the bill's] standards," the phrase *had teeth in it* is used to convey the idea that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 contained an effective means of enforcement (Response B). Neither response A, nor C, nor D makes sense in the context of the last three sentences of the selection.

0006 Apply study skills to aid in understanding reading selections, graphs, tables, and charts.

The following are examples of content that may be covered under this objective.

- Identify an accurate summary, outline, or graphic representation of a reading selection.
- Interpret information presented in charts, graphs, or tables.
- Identify where to find specified information using a table of contents, section headings, or an index.

Sample Item(s):

1. Use the chart below to answer the question that follows.

Level of Education Attained (Percentage)				
State	Not a High School Graduate	High School Graduate or More	Bachelor's Degree or More	Advanced Degree
Vermont	19.2	80.8	15.4	8.9
Virginia	24.8	75.2	15.4	9.1
Washington	16.2	83.8	15.4	7.0
West Virginia	34.0	66.0	7.5	4.8
Wisconsin	21.4	78.6	12.1	5.6
Wyoming	17.0	83.0	13.1	5.7



According to the information in the chart above, residents of Washington State were more likely than residents of the other states listed to have:

- A. dropped out of high school before graduation.
- B. graduated from high school.
- C. received a bachelor's degree.
- D. received an advanced degree.

Correct Response and Explanation

B. Figures in the column titled "High School Graduate or More" show that a greater percentage of Washington residents, 83.8 percent, graduated from high school than did residents of other states listed in the table (Response B). The first column of the table also shows that Washington residents are less, not more, likely to drop out of high school before graduation than residents of other states (Response A); that Vermont, Virginia, and Washington all have the same percentage of residents who have attained a bachelor's degree (Response C); and that a larger percentage of Vermont and Virginia residents than Washington residents have received advanced degrees (Response D).

2. Read the selection below; then answer the question that follows.

The Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s was one of the greatest tragedies in the history of U.S. agriculture. Its origins can be traced to the 1880s, when large numbers of settlers began growing wheat on the Great Plains. Life on the plains has never been easy. During this period, however, the region's fertile soils and adequate rainfall compensated for its cold winters, blizzards, tornadoes, and scorching summer heat. By century's end, land-hungry farmers had spread out across the plains, cutting the sod and tilling the soil on lands extending from North Dakota to the Texas Panhandle. Regional transformation accelerated during World War I, as the price of wheat skyrocketed and farmers bought tractors and combines to increase production. In a short period of time, the last of the drought-resistant prairie grasses that had once covered the Great Plains had been plowed under to make way for wheat.



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Which outline best organizes the main topics addressed in the selection?

- A.
- weather conditions in the Great Plains
 - the semi-arid climate of the plains
 - constructing irrigation systems on the plains
- B.
- expansion of farming on the Great Plains, 1880–1920
 - the Dust Bowl crisis of the 1930s
 - conservation measures to prevent a recurrence of the Dust Bowl crisis
- C.
- reasons that farmers moved to the Great Plains
 - the Great Plains drought of 1932
 - the Great Plains drought of the 1950s
- D.
- effect of World War I on Great Plains agriculture
 - wheat prices during the 1920s and 1930s
 - formation of the Soil Conservation Service

Correct Response and Explanation

B. In the first paragraph, the writer discusses how farmers brought ever-larger areas of the Great Plains under cultivation between 1880 and World War I. Paragraph two describes conditions created by the Dust Bowl crisis, while paragraph three focuses on the conservation measures later introduced to avert another such crisis (Response B). Sentences concerning weather and climatic conditions on the Great Plains and the construction of irrigation systems in the region (Response A) are introduced as supporting details; these topics do not form major themes of the selection. Although the selection devotes some attention to the drought of the 1930s, the writer says little about the reasons that farmers moved to the Great Plains and makes only passing mention of the drought of the 1950s (Response C). Similarly, although the discussion of the effect of World War I on Great Plains agriculture is an important element of the first paragraph, information about wheat prices during the 1920s is no more than a supporting detail in the second paragraph, no direct mention is made of wheat prices during the 1930s, and the third paragraph focuses much more on what the Soil Conservation Service did in response to the crisis than on how it came into existence (Response D).