

Exercise 2 - Verbal Reasoning

Understanding the Test Writer

Imagine that you are an MCAT writer. As a generative exercise for creating the Verbal Reasoning section, read the passage below and review the questions which follow concerning the passage. Write one correct answer and one incorrect answer for each question. Try to make the incorrect answer a tricky one.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ISLAND OF NANTUCKET, WITH THE MANNERS, CUSTOMS, POLICY, AND TRADE OF THE INHABITANTS

The greatest compliment that can be paid to the best of kings, to the wisest ministers, or the most patriotic rulers is to think that the reformation of political abuses and the happiness of their people are the primary objects of their attention. But alas! How disagreeable must the work of reformation be, how dreaded the operation, for we hear of no amendment; on the contrary, the great number of European emigrants yearly coming over here informs us that the severity of taxes, the injustice of laws, the tyranny of the rich, and the oppressive avarice of the church are as intolerable as ever. Will these calamities have no end? Are not the great rulers of the earth afraid of losing, by degrees, their most useful subjects? This country, providentially intended for the general asylum of the world, will flourish by the oppression of other people; they will every day become better acquainted with the happiness we enjoy and seek for the means of transporting themselves here, in spite of all obstacles and laws. To what purpose, then, have so many useful books and divine maxims been transmitted to us from preceding ages? Are they all vain, all useless? Must human nature ever be the sport of the few, and its many wounds remain unhealed? How happy are we here in having fortunately escaped the miseries which attended our fathers; how thankful ought we to be that they reared us in a land where sobriety and industry never fail to meet with the most ample rewards!

You have, no doubt, read several histories of this continent, yet there are a thousand facts, a thousand explanations, overlooked. Authors will certainly convey to you a geographical knowledge of this country; they will acquaint you with the eras of the several settlements, the foundations of our towns, the spirit of our different characters, etc., yet they do not sufficiently disclose the genius of the people, their various customs, their modes of agriculture, the innumerable resources which the industrious have of raising themselves to a comfortable and easy situation. Few of these writers have resided here, and those who have, had not pervaded every part of the country nor carefully examined the nature and principles of our association. It would be a task worthy a speculative genius to enter intimately into the situation and characters of the people from Nova Scotia to West Florida; and surely history cannot possibly present any subject more pleasing to behold.

Sensible how unable I am to lead you through so vast a maze, let us look attentively for some small unnoticed corner; but where shall we go

in quest of such a one? Numberless settlements, each distinguished by some peculiarities, present themselves on every side; all seem to realize the most sanguine wishes that a good man could form for the happiness of his race. Here they live by fishing on the most plentiful large rivers for masts and lumber; here others convert innumerable logs into the best boards; there, again, others cultivate the land, rear cattle, and clear large fields. Yet I have a spot in my view, where none of these occupations are performed, which will, I hope, reward us for the trouble of inspection; but though it is barren in its soil, insignificant in its extent, inconvenient in its situation, deprived of materials for building, it seems to have been inhabited merely to prove what mankind can do when happily governed! Here I can point out to you exertions of the most successful industry, instances of native sagacity unassisted by science, the happy fruits of a well-directed perseverance. It is always a refreshing spectacle to me when in my review of the various component parts of this immense whole, I observe the labours of its inhabitants singularly rewarded by nature; when I see them emerged out of their first difficulties, living with decency and ease, and conveying to their posterity that plentiful subsistence which their fathers have so deservedly earned. But when their prosperity arises from the goodness of the climate and fertility of the soil, I partake of their happiness it is true, yet stay but a little while with them, as they exhibit nothing but what is natural and common. On the contrary, when I meet with barren spots fertilized, grass growing where none grew before, grain gathered from fields which had hitherto produced nothing better than brambles, dwellings raised where no building materials were to be found, wealth acquired by the most uncommon means--there I pause to dwell on the favourite object of my speculative inquiries. Willingly do I leave the former to enjoy the odoriferous furrow or their rich valleys, with anxiety repairing to the spot where so many difficulties have been overcome, where extraordinary exertions have produced extraordinary effects, and where every natural obstacle has been removed by a vigorous industry.

I want to record the annals of the island of Nantucket; its inhabitants have no annals, for they are not a race of warriors. My simple wish is to trace them throughout their progressive steps from their arrival here to this present hour; to inquire by what means they have raised themselves from the most humble, the most insignificant beginnings, to the ease and the wealth they now possess; and to give you some idea of their customs, religion, manners, policy, and mode of living...

from Letters from an American Farmer, J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur. (1770)



Review the following questions concerning the above passage. Write one best and one second best (incorrect) answer.

According to the author, the most effective way for the rulers of Europe to prevent emigration to the American colonies would be to . . .

The author implies that prior historians have overlooked many details of colonial life because . . .

Which of the following statements may be inferred from the passage about the natural fertility of the soil on Nantucket Island?

According to the passage, the author prefers Nantucket as an object of speculation because

