Reading Test: 40 minutes, 36 Questions

Literary Narrative: *Three Laws*

It's easy to imagine Mercer, but trickier to remember it. In my mind I reassemble the city from a stock of memories that grow a little more ghostly each time I summon them. The morning always appears first—the liquid shine of fresh-washed sheet glass, two veterans in Roosevelt Park asleep beneath the shadow of a bronzed anchor; stray dogs swallowing bits of soft pretzel scavenged from behind the fair grounds—these scenes I return to often, and they've become like old, handspun lace—intricate, diaphanous and fragile. I sometimes wonder, when at last that lone thread of true memory wears through, whether or not the whole reverie, like lace, will unravel.

Of course it's possible to approach Mercer from without; to finger it on the globe, or trace the serpentine belly of Highway 51 across the pages of a road atlas, right through the hills of Pennsylvania into town. But that's not the town that I remember. My memories begin in the center and radiate outward like a ripple, dying off as they collide with the hilltops that surround the valley.

The poet James Wright once wrote that no one would choose to die in Mercer. He might be right. But the people who inhabit Mercer when I remember it don't die. They don't have the energy to die. They say that, in the universe, energy can't be created or destroyed, but transferred, transformed—that's something I learned after I left for school. And all the energy must have left Mercer a long time before I did. I can imagine the last clay-red train sputtering out of Rodney Station—cargo load just half-full of ore—leaving Mercer and the ground beneath it hollow.

I suppose that's the trouble with a mining town. It thrives on the land like an unwary parasite, marveling at its own good fortune. But when the host gives out, it's hopeless. With every shard of anthracite picked clean from the river bed, I can see the kids who live outside of town, staggering home along the banks, galvanized buckets dangling empty from their hands. Maybe that's what bothered James Wright—not wanting to die on dead land. But when I remember Mercer, the people there live on arrested, unable to grow or die, and a few mad miners persist, still hollowing out the mountains from a mile underground.

Sometimes I try to imagine how the town has changed—which store windows on Market Street are empty, boarded up, or shattered, and whether the train yard is overgrown now in either rust or wildflowers. Left alone, the universe tends toward maximum chaos. That's another thing I learned at school. If that's true, then I guess Mercer must have fallen apart entirely, and suddenly I see the valley sinking, as the mountains stretch out and fold in overtop, like kneaded dough, burying the town, breaking it, and redistributing the pieces throughout the soil. Other times it seems more likely it's just my memories of Mercer that are being swallowed up. I guess eventually there will be two Mercers—the one I left in Pennsylvania, and the one that I return to, built up and founded entirely in my mind.

But tonight, at least, I'm remembering the Ferris wheel on the fair grounds, its girders lit by ten dozen lemon-yellow incandescent bulbs, writing huge, desolate zeroes in the late August night. Light in motion I remember clearly. I can see the white-hot glow of furnaces through a glass factory window; the probing gleam of headlights sliding across the ceiling as a car turns down my old street. There's an old trick used to prove that light travels as a wave—close up, light shining through a keyhole will just take the shape of a keyhole, but if the beam travels a greater distance, it refracts, and reveals the gaps and fissures of darkness hidden within. The lights of Mercer reach me in the far-field; blurred and fractured by the long journey they've taken. Like starlight, I can't even be sure the source is still extant. But if light is a wave lapping against us; an ocean oscillating through illumination and shadow, then time is the tide, and it pulls a sea of light onto the shore, engulfing and flooding it. Then light recedes, taking with it what was left too near waves, and leaves the rest, at last, in darkness.

1. Which of the following can we infer describes the narrator?

A. A traveler on a visit to the town of Mercer
B. A former resident of Mercer recollecting the town
C. A current townsperson residing in Mercer
D. A poet who says people wont choose to die in Mercer

2. Based on the circumstantial description in the passage as a whole, what substance can we infer is most likely being mined in the town of Mercer?

F. Diamonds
G. Lead
H. Bronze
J. Coal

3. The recollections of the narrator are best described as which of the following?

A. Clear
B. Absent
C. Hazy
D. Imaginary

4. Which of the following can we infer that the narrator would most likely believe about the nature of existence?

F. Mental processes alone are not real; there must be physical reality
G. Mental processes alone can be real; the physical reality needs no longer to exist
H. Mental events are the only reality
J. Physical events are the only reality

5. The metaphorical comparison between light and the tide in lines 74-79 is best paraphrased as which of the following?

A. Just as the light of memories fades over time, so the tide will eventually return waters to the sea
B. Just as the light fades throughout the day, so the tide will provide new life at night
C. Just as light disappears over time, so the tide will disappear when it hits the land
D. Just as the light of memories can clearly be seen, so too is the ocean clear when the tide comes in

6. In line 62, to what do the words "desolate zeroes" refer?

F. Numbers in the night sky
G. The glow of the rotating Ferris wheel
H. The shapes of the incandescent bulbs
J. The white-hot glow of furnaces

7. How might we infer that the "starlight" referred to in lines 73-74 most like the narrator's memory of Mercer?

A. It can still be perceived although it is not there
B. It is extremely far away in both time and distance
C. The initial source of the light and memory is extremely beautiful
D. Perception of both is easiest at night time

8. Throughout the passage, scientific analogies to which of the following scientific fields are most prevalent?

F. Chemistry
G. Biology
H. Physics
J. Geology

9. As it is used in line 42, what does the word "mad" most nearly mean?

A. Angry
B. Psychotic
C. Annoyed
D. Irrational

Informational: ***Status and Statistics***

In the scholarly debate of gender and class in Renaissance Italy, the writings of historian Samuel K. Cohn Jr. maintain that Italian women—especially those of the lower classes—experienced a palpable decline in status from the late fourteenth century until the Counter-Reformation visitations of the 1570s. Cohn's essays are distinct from his contemporaries in that they bespeak a darker and rarely mentioned side of the Renaissance. In particular, the broadly encompassing scope of his essays is an attempt to investigate populations as a whole, rather than focusing solely on elites, which, according to Cohn, "has been, with few exceptions, the tendency of women's Renaissance history since the 1970s."

Cohn, of course, was not the first historian to investigate the change in women's status during this period. He takes Joan Kelly's famous article "Did Women have a Renaissance?" as a jumping-off point for his own research. However, while Kelly's article draws evidence largely from literature, and pertains primarily to the status of aristocratic women, Cohn's methods of research emphasize the value of statistical data, particularly those derived from the surviving court records, wills, and donation records of Italian city-states. At the time his essays were composed, individual case studies drawn from legal briefs or well-told stories were fast acquiring greater credibility with historical audiences than wages series or ratios of criminal indictment. In the words of one critic, "Measurement was out, and representation was in." Cohn views these popular case-study sources—dubbed "microhistories"—as possessing, by nature, irreconcilable social biases, and feels they provide only a limited glimpse at life in a given society. To construct more accurately a portrayal of life in Renaissance Italy for women, the full breadth of society must be examined comprehensively.

Using statistical data, Cohn identifies the fall of the number of women participating in criminal tribunals as an indication of women's decline in status both in the court, and on the street. According to Florentine records between the end of the fourteenth century and the middle of the fifteenth, the number of women participating in these tribunals dropped by 84 percent. The implications of this backslide are significant. By 1450, the power of women to defend themselves in court had suffered a significant blow. And while weakness in the courtroom may not have significantly impacted the elite women of the upper classes, its effects were undoubtedly felt by working women of the lower classes, who were, by the late 1460s, more or less at the mercy of their accusers.

However, not everyone in Cohn's audience is convinced. Historiographer Jacob Burkhardt, pointing to conventional case-study evidence, such as the salons of the upper classes, believes that the Italian Renaissance was a unique time when women were on equal social footing with men, and that this equality was brought sharply to an end only by the onset of the Counter-Reformation. Cohn's detractors have also pointed out instances in which his statistical data appears to be misrepresented in order to bolster his thesis. In particular, as evidence toward worsening gender divisions, Cohn describes instances in which women were accused of infanticide, highlighting that the "majority"—approximately 65 percent—of the victims in such cases were male. Not only is 65 percent a statistically insignificant distribution, Cohn's reasoning seems to make a somewhat irrational leap in this case. Had the number of male victims of infanticide risen to 90 percent, it still would not constitute sound evidence of a decline in women's social status.

While Cohn's occasional manipulation of data must be taken into account with respect to his own thesis, his fundamental methods—namely, research and analysis of the numerical data surviving from a given society—will continue to be of great value in scholarly debates. In order to reconstruct the most complete image of a historical period, it is necessary to address the changing conditions in all areas of the social strata. This would involve a synthesis of the preferred, highly detailed case-study sources, as well as statistical interpretations of legal, economic and governmental records, such as those examined by Cohn. Together, the case-study can produce vivid, historical textures existing within one pocket of society, while concurrent statistical data can help to provide us with the broader social context surrounding and encompassing that texture.

10. We can infer that one of Cohn's contemporaries, as discussed in the passage, would likely NOT have written an article by which of the following titles?

F. *The Mona Lisa – the story of the world's most famous painting*
G. *Michelangelo – A brief biography of the quintessential Renaissance artist*
H. *King Francis I – an analysis of the decisions of France's first Renaissance King*
J. *The Underclass – who were the poor in Renaissance London?*

11. The tone of the passage can best be described as which of the following?

A. formal and condescending
B. serious and subjective
C. objective and balanced
D. ironic and pedantic

12. In Paragraph 2 (lines 14-36) what does the author suggest is the clearest relationship between researchers Cohn and Kelly?

F. Kelly inspired Cohn, yet Cohn disagrees with Kelly's approach
G. Kelly taught Cohn, and Cohn is one of Kelly's strongest adherents
H. Kelly disagrees with Cohn on the type of historical topics worth investigating
J. Cohn agrees with Kelly on the historical topics of interest, and continues her approach with his research

13. Assuming that all the choices are true, which of the following makes Cohn's approach to historical research in his area of interest more challenging?

A. The lack of reliable quantitative data from the Renaissance Era
B. The lack of accurate primary source personal accounts of historical episodes
C. The lack of precise military statistics from Renaissance battles
D. The lack of female historians in society during the Renaissance Era

14. What is the author's purpose in mentioning "wages series or ratios of criminal indictment" in lines 27-28?

F. To provide examples of the type of information that historians found less credible
G. To provide examples of the types of stories that readers found uninteresting
H. To contrast historical and economic research
J. To give instances of biased historical primary sources

15. The author of the passage would most likely advocate an approach to history that was:

A. Quantitative and focused
B. Personal and interpretive
C. Comprehensive and balanced
D. Qualitative and contemporary

16. Based on lines 68-70, why might we infer that the author considers statistics about male infanticide (i.e. the killing of young male babies) to be of little help in drawing conclusions about the social status of women?

F. Percentages of infanticide victims who were male gives us no information about the percentage who were female.
G. This information gives us little idea of how adult-age women were treated in society, which is the primary objective of the researcher.
H. A 90% trend is clearly just as statistically insignificant as a 65% trend, according to the passage.
J. Much like all of Cohn's historical research, this information is based on his irrationality.

17. Based on information in the passage, what type of historical source would someone writing a microhistory most prefer?

A. A small painting of a Noble
B. A collection of correspondence
C. A statistical summary of deaths from the Plague
D. A summary of legal theories in the Renaissance

18. What is the main idea of the last paragraph (lines 71-86)?

F. That statistical and case-study approaches should be comprehensively synthesized to make for the best possible historical analyses
G. That both statistics and case-study approaches are fundamentally flawed, and a better understanding of social context should be attained
H. That while Cohn's approach has its merits, the case study approach with its more balanced analysis is a more rigorous option
J. Historians will be unable to improve upon the works of Cohn and his contemporaries due to the lack of reliable historical information

Informational: ***Who's got the Blues?***

From Louisiana to the Midwest and everywhere in between, there's perhaps no musical genre more quintessentially American than the blues. Like barbecue and blue jeans, the blues has acquired an iconic status in American popular culture, and bearing the names of the regions in which they flourished, the branches of blues music exist in as many permutations. But from the delta blues, to the Chicago blues, to the more recent Texas blues, American blues music demonstrates a remarkable conservation of structure and motif across all its divergent incarnations. Dig a little deeper and you'll find the influence of the blues not only interwoven throughout the whole evolution of rock 'n roll, but still firmly embedded in popular music today. However, for all its intimate history with American culture, it is important to realize that a stunning majority of what makes the blues "bluesy" originated not in Texas, Chicago or even on the Mississippi delta, but arrived in America with the slaves captured from West Africa.

Unlike its close relative, jazz, which has undergone unprecedented structural reinvention and heterogenesis in its lifetime, blues music has managed in spite of its similarly considerable longevity to retain several pervasive musical hallmarks. This, perhaps more than anything else, divides jazz and blues on the issue of ancestry. For while artistic mutation has obscured the early history of jazz, and caused the list of its suggested precursors to include not only African American spirituals but also Spanish flamenco and Provencal folk music, the comparatively well-preserved precepts of blues music are unequivocal evidence of a West African origin.

Among the most significant offspring of these musical forerunners are the distinctive scales used in blues. A blues scale—like many folk music scales—follows a pentatonic progression, but includes several unique, flattened notes; specifically the third, fifth and seventh. The inclusion of these flattened notes in the scale is, in itself, so iconic and exemplary of blues music that they are often referred to as "the blue notes". In effect, the blue notes impart a minor key tonality to a major key tune. In the Western musical tradition, such an arrangement is described as "dissonance", and seldom appears in European folk music. However, blue notes were and continue to be used extensively in traditional singing throughout regions of West and Central Africa, and are particularly prevalent in the Jola tribe's playing of "Akontings"—a stringed West African folk-instrument which, incidentally, is also thought to be a forebear of the American banjo.

Another remnant of the blues' African heritage survives in the structure of its vocal and lyrical components. Traditionally, a single verse of blues lyrics consists of one line repeated twice over mutually inverse chord changes, followed by a third, rhyming line that resolves the frame. Although this form cannot be said to have been extracted directly from traditional African music, its lineage is consistently traced back to the "work songs" used by African laborers. According to popular music expert Dr. Reebee Garofalo, these early predecessors to the blues were not so much music for the sake of music as they were a "functional expression, rendered in a call-and-response style without accompaniment or harmony and unbounded by the formality of any particular musical structure". The transformation of the amorphous and irregular African work songs into the more tightly regulated blues form we know today is thought, perhaps, to have occurred due to the intermixing of Western folk music with the songs of African American slaves. Indeed, by the first half of the twentieth century the blues had become so fixed in lyrical anatomy that one might recognize the structure of several lines from a Billie Holiday song, "My man don't love me, treats me awful mean / Oh, he's the lowest man I've ever seen," as iambic pentameter.

The incubation of blues music began with the first arrival of West African slaves in America, and through the revolution and the emergence of the United States, to the abolition of slavery and onward, the blues continued to evolve and proliferate, taking on new forms, instrumentations and significance. And although today the blues may seem as American as apple pie, we mustn't forget the creative debt this most American of musical genres owes to its West African ancestors.

19. What likely assumption on the part of his readers is the author attempting to overcome in the passage as a whole?

A. That blues are not high quality music
B. That the blues are as American as apple pie
C. That Blues are purely American in origin
D. That the blues are a key part of American popular culture

20. In line 71, the word "fixed" most nearly means:

F. established
G. repaired
H. supplied
j. prearranged

21. Which of the following situations is most similar to the relationship between the "Akotings" mentioned in line 48 and a banjo?

A. The American-invented telephone that was later adapted to the cellular phone thanks to later American inventors
B. The German-invented Frankfurter that was later adapted to the Hot Dog by American culture thanks to German immigrants
C. The German invention of calculus that was simultaneously invented by English mathematicians
D. The Japanese manufacture of electronic devices that were adapted from American inventions in the post-World War II environment

22. According to the passage, the culture of which of these geographical regions made the most significant contributions to the creation of blues music?

F. Texas
G. Chicago
H. Mississippi Delta
J. West Africa

23. What is the author's purpose in mentioning Dr. Reebee Garofalo in line 60?

A. To provide the backing of an authority to justify his argument in the fourth paragraph
B. To appeal to a scholar who has clearly stated how he agrees with the thesis of the passage as a whole
C. To give the testimony of a person who has had to perform African work songs as a laborer
D. To show how a modern-day musician continues to be influenced by West-African cultural contributions

24. Which of the following would most likely be an example of "music for the sake of music" at the term is used in lines 61-62?

F. A national anthem
G. A school fight song
H. A modern symphony
J. A love song duet

25. According to the second paragraph (lines 20-32), what is the major difference between jazz and the blues?

A. The longevity they have had in America
B. The consistency of their styles over time
C. Whether they had any foreign influence
D. Their popularity in modern-day society

26. The term "iambic pentameter" in lines 75 is used by the author to illustrate:

F. The structure of blues music across history
G. The incubation of blues music in West Africa
H. The impact of Western culture on the blues
J. An example of an amorphous work song

27. Which the following best describes the tone of the passage as a whole?

A. Reasoned persuasion
B. Impassioned argument
C. Scholarly detachment
D. Impersonal indifference

Informational: ***GMO Foods***

Passage A:

Over the past several decades, scientists have made vast strides in the field of genetic engineering. As a result, topics such as the cloning of multi-cellular organisms and directed mutagenesis that were once considered mere science fiction have become a focus of rigorous scientific experimentation and study. Still, many areas of genetic engineering probably seem a bit remote to the average person—after all, how many of us are dealing with cloned sheep and cultures of E. Coli on a day-to-day basis? However, whether we realize it or not, there is one branch of genetic engineering that many of us have already encountered, and that is the genetic modification of food.

Genetically modified foods—or GMOs, for "genetically modified organisms"—refer to the food and food products produced from crops whose genetic makeup, or "genome", has been synthetically altered in some way. In general, these changes are intended to increase either the durability or nutritional value of the crops. For instance, one popular GM strain of maize has been altered to produce its own insecticide. This insecticide, derived from a protein produced by the Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) bacterium, has proven safe for human consumption, but toxic to pests that impede maize production, such as the European Corn Borer. Prior to its implementation in GMOs, the Bt-toxin was already in common use on crops as a topical insecticide. However, by planting seeds that express their own Bt proteins internally, farmers can significantly reduce the amount of insecticide they spray on their field. This results not only in a larger and more efficient crop yield, but also in a reduced impact to the surrounding environment, as topical chemicals tend to find their way into stream run-offs and pollute local water sources.

The process by which scientists are able to modify a plant's genome is, in some ways, similar to the incorporation of viral DNA into that of the host cell's. Once the gene coding for a desired trait is identified (such as the one coding for the Bt protein), it must be isolated and linked to several other DNA sequences in a circular structure called a "plasmid". These plasmids, which are also derived from bacteria, can reproduce themselves millions of times independently of chromosomal DNA. Once enough copies have been made, the plasmids are introduced to a plant cell's nucleus by means of an injection, or else they're "smuggled" into the cell using special compounds called "vectors". Once inside, a scientist must rely on luck for a plasmid to become inserted in the plant's chromosomal DNA in such a way that the transgene is appropriately expressed in future progeny, and that the point of insertion does not interfere with any of the cells' vital processes.

The immediate economic benefits to farmers and food developers have made genetically modified foods exceedingly popular in the United States. In fact, in the year 2000, 68% of all the world's GM crops were grown by farmers in the US, and the number of GM crops available for cultivation increases every year.

Passage B:

The introduction of genetically modified foods to Americans has been met with many questions, and sometimes with staunch opposition. Opponents to the genetic modification of foods include a skeptical public, who in the late 1990s tagged GMOs with the infamous moniker "Frankenfoods," as well as many scientists and medical professionals, many of whom are concerned with the potential long-term consequences of these modifications. Among the greatest of these medical concerns is the possibility that the expression of novel proteins by GMOs may introduce a new allergen into the food supply. And while the advocates of genetic modification have claimed that their procedure amounts, essentially, to selective breeding—which is an agricultural tactic long-employed by farmers to cultivate heartier and more productive plant strains—at the molecular level, its challengers point out that selective breeding has never involved the exchange of proteins among separate species.

In response to concerns for public safety, the USDA and FDA have laid out a tangle of regulations on the development, use and marketing of GMOs, and particularly on those intended for human consumption. One such regulation provides that any food or food product composed of 1% or more GM ingredients must be labeled as such. However, due to cross-contamination, and to the sudden and pervasive utilization of GM crops in the US, larger quantities of GM material began appearing in all sorts of food sold at supermarkets all throughout the United States as early as 1999, and particularly in those that undergo a large degree of processing.

As a result of their widespread use, whether you believe that GMOs are a "Frankenfood", or that they're just another step in the evolution of agriculture, there's a good chance that you're consuming a little bit of science fiction come to life nearly every time you eat.

28. The author's purpose in writing "—after all, how many . . . basis?" (lines 8-10) is to suggest that readers:

F. May understand the passage more clearly by relating it to familiar items, such as sheep.
G. May see the issues investigated by the passage as quite removed from their daily lives.
H. May look to the passage as answering questions that bother them on a day-to-day basis.
J. May see genetic engineering as fantastic science fiction with no relevance to their lives.

29. As it is used in line 48, the word "smuggled" most nearly means:

A. camouflaged
B. placed
C. attached
D. obscured

30. What is the function of the third paragraph (lines 36-54) in passage A as a whole?

F. To explain the mechanism through which GMOs are created.
G. To present several of the scientific negatives with GMOs.
H. To clarify the impact that GMOs have on the environment.
J. To describe the function of plasmids in creating GMOs.

31. What is the meaning of the word "moniker" as it is used in the passage (line 67)?

A. Nickname
B. Monster
C. Ticket
D. Villain

32. Based on the author's discussion of cross-contamination in lines 82-94, we can infer that the dilemma faced by a consumer who wished to avoid any food with GMOs would be most like which of the following?

F. A computer buyer who would accept any type of computer, so long as it was priced well.
G. A clothes shopper who would pay top dollar for the nicest fashions.
H. A book buyer who would buy anything at the top of the best-seller list.
J. A car buyer who wanted a purely American-made automobile.

33. Based on the author's discussion about American GMO farming in lines 90-94, we can infer that the number of plants available in the year 2010 for use as GMOs is most likely:

A. Greater than it was in the year 2000.
B. Less than it was in the year 2000.
C. The same as it was in the year 2000.
D. There is insufficient information in the passage to answer this question.

34. Which of the following best describes the approach taken by the USDA and FDA with respect to their regulation of the public use of GMOs?

F. Prohibition
G. Caution
H. Exploitation
J. Indecision

35. The tones of both passages can most nearly be described as:

A. Skeptical and morose
B. Casual and uninterested
C. Formal and academic
D. Anxious and confused

36. Which of the following would be the most effective argument that the author of Passage A would likely use to address the concerns of the author of Passage B?

F. GMOs are sometimes created through the use of injection into the nucleus, thereby modifying the DNA of the plant.
G. People are fearful of GMOs because they confuse them with "frankenfoods," which are merely science fiction.
H. GMOs are in essence no different from the selective breeding that has been practiced by farmers for centuries.
J. Use of GMOs can result in a decrease in chemical insecticides, which will decrease water pollution in nearby streams, thereby benefitting public safety.

Reading Test Key

1. B 2. J 3. C 4. G 5. A 6. G 7. A 8. H 9. D	10. J 11. C 12. F 13. A 14. F 15. C 16. G 17. B 18. F	19. C 20. F 21. B 22. J 23. A 24. H 25. B 26. H 27. A	28. G 29. B 30. F 31. A 32. J 33. A 34. G 35. C 36. J