

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

## SECTION I

Time—1 hour

**Directions:** This part consists of selections from prose works and questions on their content, form, and style. After reading each passage, choose the best answer to each question and then place the letter of your choice in the corresponding box on the student answer sheet.

**Note:** Pay particular attention to the requirement of questions that contain the words NOT, LEAST, or EXCEPT.

**Questions 1-14. Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers.**

(The following passage is from a contemporary British book about the English language.)

Line  
5 Most people appear fascinated by word origins and the stories that lurk behind the structures in our language. Paradoxically, they may consider that change is fine as long as it's part of history—anything  
5 occurring now is calamitous. We've always been this way. In 1653 John Wallis railed against the use of the word *chicken* as a singular noun. In 1755 Samuel Johnson wanted to rid the language of 'licentious idioms' and 'colloquial barbarisms'. The sort of  
10 barbarisms he had in mind were words like *novel*, *capture* and *nowadays*. Others were fretting about shortened forms like *pants* for *pantaloons* and *mob* for *mobile vulgus*. More than five hundred years ago the printer Caxton also worried about the 'dyuersite  
15 & change of langage'. Even two thousand years ago Roman verbal hygienists were complaining about changes they saw happening in spoken Latin. Of course, this 'bad' Latin continued to deteriorate until it turned into French, Italian and Spanish.  
20 Take a straightforward example. English shows a handy flexibility in being able to convert words to other parts of speech without the addition of any sort of prefix or suffix. Such elasticity is an offshoot of the loss of inflection (endings added for grammatical  
25 purposes). Curiously, this is a feature of English that's not appreciated by all, and many speakers are quick to condemn usages such as *to impact (on)* and *a big ask*. New conversions often provoke hostility in this way. In the 1600s *to invoice* (created from the noun) was a  
30 horrid colloquialism. With time, such newcomers may come to sound as everyday as any venerable oldie, and the next generation of English speakers will be puzzling over what possible objections there could have been to them. By then, there'll be new weeds  
35 to eradicate. One such was reported to me by someone who overheard it in a Chinese restaurant. The waiter was praising a customer for having *chopsticked* so well. Will this verb catch on? Time will tell.  
40 So what's really going on when people object to

words and word usage in this way? Essentially, it's not a language matter we're dealing with here, but more a social issue. Words carry with them a lot of social baggage, and typically it's that which people  
45 are reacting to. Many rules of language usage like 'don't use "impact" as a verb' take their force from their cultural and social setting. People aren't objecting to *impact* as a verb as such. It's just that it sounds a bit like gobbledygook, either pretentious  
50 or uneducated, and maybe they don't want to be identified with the kind of people who use it. In the same way, fifty years ago people complained that the verb *to contact* was inflated jargon and they hated it.

Language often becomes the arena where social  
55 conflicts are played out. When Jonathan Swift complained about shortenings like *pozz* from *positive*, he blamed changes like these on the 'loose morals' of the day. But of course the social significance of many of these usages is lost to us today, and the objections  
60 to them now seem puzzling and trivial. American lexicographer Noah Webster wanted to rid his dictionary of English *-our* spellings like *honour* and also *-re* spellings like *theatre*. Why? Because they smacked of a smarmy deference to Britain. Compare  
65 the reactions of many Australians towards the current Americanization of their 'beloved Aussie lingo'. In truth, hostility towards 'American' *-or* spellings in place of English *-our*, or *-ize* in place of *-ise*, is not based on genuine linguistic concerns, but reflects  
70 deeper social judgements. It's a linguistic insecurity born of the inescapable dominance of America as a cultural, political and economic superpower. These spellings are symbols of this American hegemony and become easy targets for anti-American sentiment.

75 If Alfred the Great had had the chance to read the language of Chaucer, over five hundred years after Alfred's own time, he would have been shocked at the changes to English—changes that we now see, another six hundred years on, as part of the richness  
80 and versatility of the language. The only languages that don't change are ones that are well and truly dead. English, with 350 million first-language speakers and about the same number of second-language speakers, is alive and well. The future  
85 for English has never looked so good.

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1. In the passage as a whole, a major shift in the development of the argument occurs at which of the following points?
  - (A) "More than five hundred years ago" (line 13)
  - (B) "Take a straightforward example" (line 20)
  - (C) "So what's really going on" (line 40)
  - (D) "Language often becomes" (line 54)
  - (E) "Compare the reactions of many Australians" (lines 64-65)
  
2. The author presents John Wallis (line 6), Samuel Johnson (lines 7-8), and Jonathan Swift (line 55) as hostile to
  - (A) faulty studies of word origins
  - (B) tedious debates about grammar
  - (C) local misunderstandings of historical events
  - (D) snobbish rejections of modern vocabulary
  - (E) unnecessary changes in word usage in their eras
  
3. The chief effect of the word "hygienists" (line 16) is to
  - (A) lend a tone of mocking humor to the discussion
  - (B) expand the argument to a subject other than language
  - (C) establish a deferential attitude about the subject
  - (D) provide an objective approach to the argument
  - (E) set up a contrast between Roman and modern English standards of usage
  
4. What the author refers to as "weeds" (line 34) are
  - (A) usage changes
  - (B) obsolete terms
  - (C) diction errors
  - (D) clichés
  - (E) metaphors
  
5. The word "*chopsticked*" (line 38) is used as an example of
  - (A) a new usage that is unlikely to persist
  - (B) a verb form created from a noun
  - (C) a verb in the past tense used as an adjective
  - (D) fashionable slang used by international travelers
  - (E) foreign-language words becoming part of English
  
6. Paragraph three (lines 40-53) implies that those who would strictly follow rules of the English language feel
  - (A) timid whenever they must correct others' linguistic errors
  - (B) admiring of others' linguistic creativity
  - (C) free to break rules of social etiquette
  - (D) satisfied that the flexibility of the English language is superior to that of all others
  - (E) anxious about how their use of language affects others' perceptions of them
  
7. In paragraphs three and four (lines 40-74), the author's discussion of reaction to changes in language develops by
  - (A) accumulating evidence of changes in language that occur unintentionally and changes that are intended to manipulate situations
  - (B) broadening from people's immediate circle of contacts to their own larger society and then to an international perspective
  - (C) intensifying as it moves from spelling variations that annoy to word choices that express bias to larger communications that antagonize
  - (D) contrasting examples of changes that reflect social concord and examples of changes that reflect social discord
  - (E) drawing a parallel between examples from the world of business and examples from the world of international relations
  
8. Examples in paragraph 4 (lines 54-74) provide evidence that
  - (A) language usage can survive political turmoil
  - (B) nationalism influences reactions to linguistic changes
  - (C) generalizations about language usage are usually inaccurate
  - (D) linguistic changes occur more frequently now than in the past
  - (E) dominant nations undergo more linguistic changes than less powerful nations

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9. The example of Alfred the Great (lines 75-80) serves to
- (A) build on the point made in lines 1-5
  - (B) underscore the example of Australians' reaction to American spelling (lines 64-72)
  - (C) contrast views of past leaders with those of contemporary leaders
  - (D) document the earliest changes to the English language
  - (E) point out a parallel with the views of Noah Webster (lines 60-64)
10. The author indicates that international reactions to Americanized spellings of words can reflect
- (A) a desire to return to simpler times
  - (B) anxiety about pleasing American tourists
  - (C) contempt for inaccuracies in American usage
  - (D) resentment of America's cultural and economic status
  - (E) confidence that local usage will ultimately prevail
11. The attitude of the author toward the English language is one of
- (A) high regard for the early scholars of English grammar
  - (B) acceptance of changes in English despite a strong sense of loss
  - (C) disdain for those condoning the linguistic flexibility of English
  - (D) interest in the past of and optimism for the future of English
  - (E) preoccupation with the accuracy of expression of English
12. The tone in the passage is best described as
- (A) dramatic
  - (B) confidential
  - (C) impressionistic
  - (D) thoughtful yet playful
  - (E) moralistic and rigid
13. The author employs which of the following in developing the arguments in the passage?
- I. Rhetorical questions
  - II. References to grammatical terms
  - III. Quotations from famous writers
  - IV. Examples from diverse eras
- (A) III only
  - (B) I and II only
  - (C) II and IV only
  - (D) I, III, and IV only
  - (E) I, II, III, and IV
14. The author's relation to the reader is best described as that of
- (A) an informed commentator
  - (B) a sympathetic ally
  - (C) an angry critic
  - (D) an amused colleague
  - (E) an aloof judge

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