

## SECTION 5

# SAMPLE TEST ITEMS FOR THE READING SUBTEST: READING COMPREHENSION AND ANALYSIS

This section of the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA) Study Guide provides sample multiple-choice test items and other information to assist you in preparing to take the VCLA Reading Subtest: Reading Comprehension and Analysis.

This section contains:

- test directions for the multiple-choice items;
- sample multiple-choice items; and
- an answer key for the multiple-choice items.

## Multiple-Choice Items

### Test Directions for the Reading Subtest Multiple-Choice Items

#### **DIRECTIONS FOR THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS OF THE READING SUBTEST**

The Reading subtest consists of eight reading selections. Each reading selection is followed by several multiple-choice items related to the selection. Read each question carefully and choose the ONE best answer based on the information contained in the selection you have just read. The order of information requested by the items does not necessarily correspond to the order of information in a given selection. You may refer back to the selection to answer the items.

There are a total of 40 multiple-choice items in the Reading subtest, numbered 1 to 40. Record your answer to each item **on Answer Sheet D** in the space that corresponds to the item number. Completely fill in the space having the same letter as the answer you have chosen.

Do NOT make any stray marks on your answer sheet. **You may use the margins of this test booklet for scratch paper, but only the answers that you record on your answer sheet will be scored.**

**USE  
ANSWER SHEET D**

## Sample Multiple-Choice Items

Use the passage below to answer the five questions that follow.

### The Awakening

- 1 As a commentator on Creole and Cajun culture in New Orleans, Kate Chopin labored for many years in relative anonymity, known only to a small group of regional readers. All that changed in 1899 when the publication of her novel *The Awakening* took the literary world by storm. One of the first "feminist" novels, the work illuminated the complex realities of gender relations at the end of the nineteenth century and encouraged women to seek personal, financial, and emotional freedom in their lives. Its open assault on Gilded Age social norms made it one of the most controversial literary works of the era.
- 2 As the title suggests, the novel is about a woman "waking" from a slumber that has kept her trapped and powerless. Its main character, Edna Pontellier, has come to realize that her identity is based entirely on her roles as wife and mother. Feeling that her life is incomplete, she becomes increasingly restless and rebellious. By the novel's climax, Edna believes that she will only find happiness if she can pursue her own needs and desires outside the restrictions imposed by family obligations. In the end, however, her journey is cut short by her tragic inability to surmount the conventions and prejudices that surround her.
- 3 Publication of *The Awakening* ignited a firestorm of controversy. Although not all reviews were negative, most commentators found much more to condemn than to praise. They accused Chopin of encouraging women to place their personal whims before their domestic responsibilities. That her compelling prose led readers to identify with Edna's emotional turmoil and to feel compassion for her only made the novel all the more dangerous. There was considerable irony here. Unwilling to admit that women might have anything to complain about, these critics provided unwitting support for Chopin's contention that society unnecessarily limited women's options in life.
- 4 More than one hundred years after its initial publication, *The Awakening* continues to stimulate discussion about the intersection of class, gender, and power in American society. Although Chopin was not the first person to write about women whose longing and desperation lead to tragedy—similar characters can be found in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847)—she demonstrated an unusual ability to illustrate the complex ways in which women understand and shape their world independently of men.
- 5 Rather than simply advocating women's rights, she asked readers to think critically about how social and cultural factors influenced the opportunities available to women. In so doing, she challenged popular assumptions and encouraged readers to take a fresh look at conventional notions about women's place in society. That not everyone chose to do so hardly detracts from her achievement, for *The Awakening* remains one of the most provocative and influential novels ever published in this country.



Section 5: Sample Test Items for the Reading Subtest: Reading Comprehension and Analysis

1. Which of the following is the best **synonym** for the word unwitting as it is used in the third paragraph of the passage?
  - A. unwanted
  - B. uninformed
  - C. unofficial
  - D. unintended
  
2. Which of the following statements best expresses the main idea of the passage?
  - A. In *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin's main character, Edna Pontellier, is a discontented woman who is seeking ways to establish an identity that extends beyond her roles as wife and mother.
  - B. After writing numerous books about New Orleans, Kate Chopin finally achieved widespread recognition of her literary skills with the publication of *The Awakening*.
  - C. Kate Chopin's exploration of gender relations in *The Awakening* prompted readers to think critically about women's role in society and encouraged women to seek greater freedom in their lives.
  - D. Although most reviewers considered *The Awakening* a dangerous work that encouraged women to abandon their family obligations, some found much to praise in Kate Chopin's novel.
  
3. According to information presented in the passage, criticism of *The Awakening* centered on which of the following?
  - A. the choices that Chopin wanted for women
  - B. the role of women writers in American society
  - C. the literary devices Chopin used in the novel
  - D. the tragic fate of the novel's main character
  
4. Which of the following statements from the passage best expresses an opinion rather than a fact?
  - A. As a commentator on Creole and Cajun culture in New Orleans, Kate Chopin labored for many years in relative anonymity, known only to a small group of regional readers.
  - B. As the title suggests, the novel is about a woman "waking" from a slumber that has kept her trapped and powerless.
  - C. Reviewers accused Chopin of encouraging women to place their personal whims before their domestic responsibilities.
  - D. *The Awakening* remains one of the most provocative and influential novels ever published in this country.

5. Which of the following best represents the organization of the main topics addressed in the passage?
- A.
    - Traditional portrayal of women in American fiction
    - Kate Chopin's depiction of Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening*
    - Reviewer criticism of *The Awakening*
  - B.
    - Kate Chopin and the development of the "feminist" novel
    - Character and plot of *The Awakening*
    - Comparison of Chopin and the Brontë sisters
  - C.
    - Kate Chopin's creation of a new type of literary heroine in *The Awakening*
    - Reviewer criticism of Chopin's portrayal of women in *The Awakening*
    - Reasons why *The Awakening* continues to stimulate discussion
  - D.
    - Kate Chopin's early writings about Creole and Cajun culture
    - Explanation of the title of *The Awakening*
    - Chopin's views of women's rights and their place in society

## Answer Key

### Item 1, Objective 1, Correct Response D

To provide unwitting support to an idea is to reinforce that idea without being aware that you are doing so. Thus, of the choices available, the word "unintended" is the best synonym for the word unwitting as it appears in the selection.

### Item 2, Objective 2, Correct Response C

Throughout the selection, the author seeks to show how Chopin's treatment of the social and cultural factors shaping women's social existence forced readers to reexamine conventional notions about women's place in society. Her success in doing so, the author argues, was a major reason that the work proved to be so controversial. Thus, of the choices available, response C best expresses the main idea of the selection.

### Item 3, Objective 3, Correct Response A

According to the author, many critics of *The Awakening* believed the book encouraged women to subordinate their domestic duties to their personal fulfillment. This was the main reason that so many commentators condemned the novel. Thus, of the choices available, response A best explains the main focus of the criticism leveled at Chopin.

### Item 4, Objective 4, Correct Response D

Unlike the statements made in responses A, B, and C, all of which can be verified, there is no reliable way of determining whether *The Awakening* is still one of the most provocative and influential novels ever published in this country. Although the author makes a strong case for this assertion, the statement remains an opinion. Thus, of the choices available, response D is the only one that expresses an opinion rather than a fact.

### Item 5, Objective 5, Correct Response C

After describing how *The Awakening* introduced a new literary heroine who felt she could only achieve happiness by pursuing her own needs and desires, the author of the passage examines the negative response of most reviewers to Chopin's creation. In the last two paragraphs of the selection, the author discusses reasons why the work continues to prompt discussion of the interaction of class, gender, and power in U.S. society. Thus, of the choices available, response C best organizes the main topics addressed in the passage.