

FUNCTION QUESTIONS

FUNCTION questions ask the reader to assess the understanding, purpose, or role of a particular element (such as a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph) within the given passage or text. Function questions ask the reader to identify the specific purpose or function of the highlighted element in the larger context of the passage. Example:

"What is the function of the word 'exemplify' in the third paragraph of the passage?"

A) introduce a new idea B) provide a counterargument C) clarify a complex concept D) illustrate a point

In order to choose the correct answer to the above question, test-takers must infer the author's intent and understand the relationships between different elements within the passage. The reader must understand the main idea and central argument of the text before answering a function question.

However, a **main idea question** is very **different** than a **function question**.

Function Question

- **Purpose:** to assess the reader's ability to identify the specific purpose or role of a particular element (e.g., word, phrase, sentence, paragraph) within the given passage.
- **Focus:** It focuses on understanding the function of a specific part of the text rather than the overall theme or message.
- **Structure:** The answer choices typically start with verbs to express the various roles or functions the highlighted element may have served. (Note above answer choices – *introduce, provide, clarify, illustrate*)

Main Idea Question

- **Purpose:** to test the reader's comprehension of the central claim and main point of a passage
- **Focus:** It requires understanding the overall theme, argument, or message conveyed by the author in the passage.
- **Structure:** The answer choices usually present broad statements that capture the central idea of the passage.

The following words/phrases within a question indicate a function question:

- What is the purpose
- How does ____ serve to
- Why does the author use
- The function of _____
- What is the effect of _____

Keys!

- Answers are not directly stated in the passage
- Understanding the TONE of the passage will help narrow answer choices. (If a passage is POSITIVE then choices that begin with *criticize, condemn, oppose* will probably be incorrect.)
- Must keep in mind the MAIN IDEA in answering these questions
- Important to note TRANSITIONS and WEIRD PUNCTUATION (dashes/colons/question marks) within the passage.