



CUNY ASSESSMENT TEST IN READING (CATR) Practice 2

“Desperate Measures”

Read the passage below and then answer the multiple choice questions which follow. Check your answers with the answer key.

The instinct for self-preservation is a strong one and can inspire some unusual behavior.

During the 14th century, the plague called the Black Death raged through Europe. Fear of contamination motivated people to try many strange things in order to save themselves.

In Germany, the panicked citizens believed the plague was a manifestation of the wrath of God. They tried to appease this anger by bringing money and riches to the churches. At one church, the monks, fearing contamination themselves, would not let people enter. So the crowd threw their gold and jewels over the walls only to have them tossed back by the cautious priests. The valuables were finally allowed to pile up, but they remained untouched for months.

During this epidemic, people tried every imaginable preventative remedy. Many people believed that sitting between two great fires might be keep them from getting the disease. There was an attempt to wipe out flocks of swallows, because it was widely believed that these birds transmitted the disease. Allowing birds to fly about the sickroom was also tried, on the theory that the birds would absorb the airborne poisons.

All kinds of unpleasant substances were used in the belief that they would help to prevent or cure the plague. These attempts ranged from smoking tobacco to placing dried toads or the insides of pigeons or newborn puppies over the blisters caused by the disease. Interestingly, smoking may actually have had some positive effect, but not because the tobacco cured the plague. Smoke drove away the plague-bearing flies.

1. The main idea of this passage is
 - a. The instinct for survival is very strong.
 - b. The desire to avoid the plague caused some unusual behavior.
 - c. Smoking may have helped to save some people from the plague.
 - d. People today have nothing to fear from the plague.
2. During the plague, some people brought birds to the sickroom because they believed they
 - a. were a sign of good luck.
 - b. carried the plague.
 - c. carried antibodies for the disease.
 - d. absorbed poisons in the air.
3. The second paragraph implies that
 - a. the instinct for survival is stronger than greed.
 - b. rich and powerful persons have special immunity to the disease.
 - c. people are overly cautious about contagious diseases.
 - d. the wrath of God brought on the plague.
4. A manifestation is
 - a. a procession.
 - b. a question.
 - c. a display.
 - d. an example.

ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS

1. **A** is incorrect because it is too broad and makes no mention of the specific topic of the passage, which is how people tried to survive the Black Death in particular.
B is correct.
C is incorrect because it is a detail, mentioned only in the last paragraph, and so it is too narrow to be the main idea of the passage.
D is incorrect because the passage does not mention anything about the current threat of the plague.
2. **A** is incorrect because no mention is made of birds being a sign of good luck.
B is incorrect because, although the passage does mention that swallows, a particular kind of bird, were thought to transmit the disease, there is no mention of this being the case with birds in general.
C is incorrect. There is no mention of antibodies in the passage.
D is correct.
3. **A** is correct.
B is incorrect because there is no mention that the rich were protected from the plague.
C is incorrect. The entire passage is about the many precautions that people took to avoid the plague, but despite these precautions, they were still infected.
D is incorrect. The passage mentions that people at that time *thought* that the wrath of God brought on the plague, but it does not state or imply that this assumption was correct.
4. **A** is incorrect; there is no mention of a parade, which is what a procession is.
B is incorrect, as it makes no sense to refer to the plague being a *question* of the wrath of God.
C is correct.
D is incorrect because the plague is an event. An event cannot be an *example* of a feeling.