

Construct Meaning: Main idea

Read the following passages. Then choose the best answer to each question.

Passage 1: Early Plumbing

I.

From archeology we learn that various ancient civilizations began to develop plumbing. Ancient civilizations show us that plumbing is an old idea. For example, evidence has turned up of a primitive, yet effective, flushing water closet used by the fabled King Minos of Crete back around 1700 BC. Later, the Sea Kings were renowned for their extravagant bathrooms, running hot and cold water systems, and fountains constructed with fabulous jewels and workings of gold and silver.

II.

Recently, a colorful public latrine dating to the fourth century BC was unearthed on the Aegean island of Amorgos. The 7 by 5 ft. structure resembles a little Greek temple. Topped with a stone roof, the interior walls decorated in red, yellow, and green plaster, it served a gymnasium a short distance away. The building accommodated four people seated on two marble benches. Running water flushed the wastes away, probably along an open ditch at the users' feet.

III.

Ancient water supply and sewerage systems - along with various finds of luxury plumbing for the nobility - have been discovered in early centers of civilization such as Carthage, Athens and Jerusalem as well. But it was the Roman Empire of biblical times that reigns supreme, by historical standards, in cleanliness, sanitation, and water supply.

IV.

The Romans built huge aqueducts conveying millions of gallons of water daily, magnificent public baths, and remarkable sewer systems - one of which, the Cloaca Maxima, is still in use. Rome spread its plumbing technology throughout many of its far-flung territories as well. (Taken from *Plumbing and Mechanical*)

Now choose the best answer to each question.

1. Identify the main idea of Paragraph I:

- A. The Sea Kings had elaborate bathrooms.
- B. Ancient Crete boasted fairly advanced plumbing.
- C. King Minos had the first toilet.
- D. Gold and Silver were often used to decorate baths.

2. Identify the main idea of Paragraph II:

- A. Amorgos was the site of an early bathroom.
- B. Baths were fashioned after temples.
- C. Baths often served more than one person at a time.
- D. The bath at Amorgos had running hot and cold water.

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3. Identify the main idea of Paragraph III:

- A. Carthage, Athens and Jerusalem had advanced sanitary systems.
- B. Only the nobility could afford the luxury of advanced plumbing.
- C. The Roman Empire had, by far, the best water and sanitation during biblical times.
- D. The Roman Empire's nobility enjoyed sanitation while the lower classes did not.

4. Identify the main idea of Paragraph IV:

- A. Rome built impressive aqueducts, elaborate baths, and high quality sewer systems.
- B. The aqueduct, Cloaca Maxima, is still used today.
- C. Roman plumbing techniques have been used in other areas of the world.
- D. The Romans were great engineers.

Passage 2: Dentistry

I.

Diseases of the teeth and gums have troubled humans for thousands of years. Ancient Egyptian medical texts, dating back to 3500 BC, refer to toothaches. The earliest record of dental treatment also comes from Egypt, where gum swelling was treated with a concoction of cumin, incense, and onion. The earliest known dentist was Hesi-Re, an Egyptian "doctor of the tooth" who lived around 3000 BC. There is evidence that toothaches were treated with acupuncture in China as early as 2700 BC. By AD 659 the Chinese were filling cavities with a mixture of mercury, silver, and tin, nearly 1,000 years before amalgam was first used in Western countries. Some cultures, such as the Maya, did not treat dental disease but decorated their teeth with stone and metal inlays for ornamental purposes.

II.

Romans were known to be conscientious about their oral hygiene—it was common for dinner guests to be given gold picks to clean their teeth. As early as 450 BC Romans treated toothaches, filled cavities, and fashioned bridges to replace extracted teeth. In the 3rd century BC the Greek physician Diocles advised fellow citizens to rub teeth and gums with pulverized mint to remove particles of food. The Greek physician Galen, who settled in Rome during the 2nd century AD, advocated the use of a file to remove decayed portions of a tooth.

III.

During the Middle Ages, from the 5th to the 15th century AD, dentistry in Europe was practiced by barber-surgeons. These professionals served the townspeople by performing a wide variety of services including cutting hair, extracting teeth, and applying leeches to let blood, a practice once believed to cure a variety of ailments. In the late 14th and early 15th centuries a number of rapid-fire developments dramatically improved the quality of dental care. For example, during this time surgeons and anatomists in France, Belgium, Italy, and Germany developed an improved understanding of tooth anatomy, introduced the use of gold for fillings, and commonly used materials, such as wood, to replace extracted teeth. (Taken from Encarta Encyclopedia)

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5. Identify the main idea of Paragraph I:

- A. The ancient Egyptians practiced dentistry
- B. Fillings have been used for many years to treat disease and for decoration.
- C. History is full of struggles against diseases of the mouth.
- D. The Chinese invented fillings.

6. Identify the main idea of Paragraph II:

- A. The Romans were concerned with how their teeth appeared to others
- B. Care of the teeth began early in history.
- C. Early dental tools and their uses.
- D. Diocles and Galen are among the first dentists.

7. Identify the main idea of Paragraph III:

- A. Dental history in Europe is full of innovations.
- B. Dentistry started in Europe with barber-surgeons.
- C. False teeth were first used in Europe.
- D. The 14th and 15th centuries marked a time of great improvement in dental care.

Passage 3: The Abacus

I.

The abacus is an instrument used in performing arithmetic calculations. It consists essentially of a tablet or frame bearing parallel wires or grooves on which counters or beads are moved. A modern abacus consists of a wooden frame with beads on parallel wires, and a crossbar oriented perpendicular to the wires that divide the beads into two groups. Each column—that is, each wire—represents one place in the decimal system. The column farthest to the right is the ones column; the next column to the left is the tens column; and so on. In each column, there are five beads below the crossbar, each of which represent one unit, and two beads above the crossbar, each of which represent five units. For example, in the tens column, each of the group of five beads represents ten, and each of the group of two beads represents fifty. Beads that are to be counted as part of a number are placed against the crossbar.

II.

Many early civilizations used the abacus. In ancient Roman culture it was a sand-covered wax tablet, marked table, or grooved table or tablet. A simplified form of abacus was used in medieval England. It consisted of a tablet ruled into spaces representing the positions of the counters; coins, buttons, stones, or other small objects were moved to make the calculations. The checkered tablecloth, from which the name Exchequer is derived, was originally a calculating device like the ruled tablet. The abacus is still used in China and Japan. (Taken from Encarta Encyclopedia)

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8. Identify the main idea of Paragraph I:

- A. The abacus is no longer used.
- B. The abacus is usually made with beads and wire.
- C. The abacus helps with counting.
- D. The design of the abacus allows for multiplication.

9. Identify the main idea of Paragraph II:

- A. The abacus is used primarily in China and Japan.
- B. The abacus has been widely used throughout history.
- C. Coins, buttons or stones have been used to make calculations.
- D. The name Exchequer comes from a medieval abacus.

Passage 4: Nursing

Nursing is, in general, the process of caring for or nurturing another individual. More specifically, nursing refers to the functions and duties carried out by persons who have had formal education and training in the art and science of nursing. Formal nursing education in the United States had its antecedents in Europe and England.

One of the first formal training programs for nurses was begun in 1836 in Kaiserswerth, Germany, by Pastor Theodor Fliedner for the Order of Deaconesses. Other religious orders were also providing formalized training for nurses in Europe at that time, but Fliedner's school is noteworthy for having given the British nursing reformer Florence Nightingale her formal training. Her experience at Kaiserswerth gave her the impetus to organize nursing care on the battlefields of the Crimean War and, later, to establish a nursing training program at Saint Thomas's Hospital in London.

In the late 1800s training schools patterned after this model were established in the United States. Originally, nurses received little or no classroom preparation. Most of the training was based on apprenticeship, with older students teaching the younger ones how to care for patients. All programs were directed by hospitals, and nursing students provided low-cost service to the institutions; upon graduation, most of them worked as private-duty nurses in patients' homes. (Taken from Encarta Encyclopedia)

Now choose the best answer for question 10.

10. Identify the main idea of the entire passage:

- A. Nursing is defined as the caring for or nurturing of another individual.
- B. Florence Nightingale was trained in Germany.
- C. Nursing education in Europe and the United States is quite similar.
- D. The religious history of nursing is interesting.

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Answer Key

1. B
2. A
3. C
4. A
5. C
6. B
7. A
8. B
9. B
10. C