WRITING SAMPLE SUBSECTION

DIRECTIONS FOR WRITING SAMPLE

This portion of the writing section of the test consists of one writing assignment. You are asked to prepare a MULTIPLE-PARAGRAPH writing sample of about 300–600 words on an assigned topic. The assignment can be found in your test booklet. You should use the time available to plan, write, review, and edit what you have written.

Find the assignment and read it carefully before you begin to write. Think about how you will organize what you plan to write. At the test, space for your writing sample is limited to the pages provided for that purpose in your test booklet and your answer document. Additional paper is not permitted. Your score will be based solely on the version of your writing sample written in the space provided in the answer document.

Your writing sample will be scored on the basis of how effectively it communicates a whole message to the specified audience for the stated purpose. You will be assessed on your ability to express, organize, and support opinions and ideas rather than the position you express. Pay particular attention to the seven characteristics listed below when preparing your writing sample. These seven characteristics will be used in scoring your writing sample.

- APPROPRIATENESS—the extent to which you address the topic and use language and style appropriate to the given audience, purpose, and occasion.
- UNITY AND FOCUS—the clarity with which you state and maintain your main idea or point of view.
- DEVELOPMENT—the amount, depth, and specificity of your supporting details.
- ORGANIZATION—the clarity of your writing and the logical sequence of your ideas.
- SENTENCE STRUCTURE—the effectiveness of your sentence structure and the extent to which your writing is free of errors in sentence structure.
- USAGE—the extent to which your writing is free of errors in usage and shows care and precision in word choice.
- MECHANICAL CONVENTIONS—your ability to spell common words and to use the conventions of capitalization and punctuation.

Be sure to write about the assigned topic and to use MULTIPLE PARAGRAPHS. Please write legibly. You may not use any reference materials during the test. Remember to save some time to review what you have written and make any changes you think will improve your writing sample.

The final version of the essay should conform to the conventions of edited American English.
Practice Test Explanations: Writing

1. Correct Response: A. In this letter, the writer uses the personal voice and informal, emotional language to persuade a campus community that its parking facilities are inadequate. The sentence presented in choice A is consistent with the letter's style because of the personal voice used (we), the use of the informal it's, and the sarcasm implied in the suggestion that some students have cars for trivial reasons. Of the other choices listed, the sentence in choice B is incorrect because it involves an inappropriate shift to formal language and the impersonal voice. Choice C is incorrect not only because of its irrelevance to the focus of the letter, but also because its use of the pronoun one and its appeal to statistical evidence give the sentence an apparent objectivity that is inconsistent with the writer's highly subjective approach. In choice D, even though the personal voice is used, the sentence's formal tone makes it inappropriate in this context.

2. Correct Response: D. This question assesses the ability to recognize the standard use of pronouns and comparatives. Choice D is the correct response because, since the pronoun is used as the object of the preposition for, it should be in the objective case (us) rather than the nominative case (we). Choice A is incorrect because the change from nearest, which suggests many buildings, to nearer, which suggests only two buildings, would be illogical in this context. Nor should the change described in choice B be made, because the expression it's correctly conveys the intended abbreviation of it is, while the possessive adjective its, meaning belonging to it, would not make sense here. In Part 9, our should not be changed (choice C) because it agrees in person and number with the subject of the sentence (we).

3. Correct Response: A. The main idea of the first paragraph is that the spread of public opinion polls is an unfortunate and unnecessary development, since such polls generally address insignificant questions. Part 3, however, states precisely the opposite point of view and should be deleted; thus, choice A is the correct response. Choice B is incorrect because the phrase "with a minimum of research" is a supportive detail in a sentence that effectively points out the ease with which trivial information can be collected and spread. Choice C is incorrect because changing the rhetorical question "Do we need to know such things . . . ?" into an assertion that "We need to know such things . . ." contradicts the main idea of the paragraph. Revising Part 7 from the plural to the singular (choice D) is incorrect because the resulting sentence would be an inappropriate reply to the rhetorical question in Part 6, which uses the pronoun we.

4. Correct Response: C. This question requires the ability to identify the standard sentence structure, in this case, standard subject-verb agreement. The subject of Part 4 is percentage, which is a singular noun and therefore requires a singular verb, i.e., thinks. Americans does not affect the number of the verb. Therefore choice C is correct. Choice A is incorrect because thinking, the present participle of the verb to think, requires the helping verb is, which is missing here, to make sense. Choice B is incorrect because, although the substitution of the future tense will think would produce a grammatically correct sentence, it would be illogical here: the polls do not report what people will think but what they do think. Choice D is incorrect for similar reasons: the substitution of should think would be logically incorrect.
5. **Correct Response: B.** This question requires the ability to organize the sentences of a paragraph in such a way that the paragraph is cohesive and presents an effective sequence of ideas. Part 8 introduces the main idea of the second paragraph by asking, "what should the media be doing?" The sentence that follows Part 9 is not a logical next sentence for two reasons: it does not address the question in any way, and it contains a demonstrative pronoun *(this)* that does not have a clear antecedent. Choice B, placing Part 9 after Part 11, would solve both problems. Moving Part 10 to follow Part 8 would provide an answer to the question; and putting Part 9 after Parts 10 and 11 would provide *this* with a clear antecedent: the writer's suggestion for what the media should be doing. The other revisions suggested would impair, rather than clarify, the sequence of ideas in the paragraph.

6. **Correct Response: B.** This question assesses the ability to recognize effective organization in writing. The first paragraph of the selection is organized by cause and effect. It makes the point that, as a result of recent research findings regarding language use, current approaches to foreign language teaching often include a new topic, called *pragmatics*, in addition to vocabulary and grammar. The most appropriate addition to this paragraph is the sentence presented in choice B. The transitional adverb *consequently* is a signal that the next statement is a logical result of previous assertions. In fact, the sentence in choice B draws a clear causal connection between the findings of research and their application in the classroom. Choice A is incorrect because it digresses from the topic at hand: it elaborates on the uselessness of silence in human communication in general, without any specific connection to foreign language teaching. Choices C and D are incorrect because neither develops the main idea of the paragraph: choice C introduces a new topic, and choice D interrupts the flow of development by minimizing the importance of pragmatics before the concept has been fully explained.

7. **Correct Response: D.** This question assesses the ability to recognize ineffective repetition and inefficiency in sentence construction. Only Part 10 (choice D) requires revision to reduce needless repetition. This sentence, which gives examples of factors that may determine the proper greeting between speakers, is confusing because of wordy and repetitive references to "the speakers." This repetition is unnecessary since the grammatical and logical context makes it clear that the factors listed are related to the speakers. It would be clearer and therefore more effective if the factors were simply listed as "the speakers' gender, status, type of relationship, and relative age."

8. **Correct Response: D.** This question requires an understanding of the standard formation of pronouns and modifiers. Choice D is the correct response because *it's* is a contraction of *it is*, which does not make sense in this context. Instead, the phrase "every culture has . . ." requires the possessive pronoun *its*, indicating that the rules *belong* to the culture. Choice A is an incorrect response because Part 6 appropriately uses the possessive adjective *their* to refer to the relationship between *individuals* and *turn*; *they're* is the contraction of *they are*, words that do not fit this context. The revision suggested in choice B is also inappropriate; since *specifically* is an adverb, it should not be used to modify a noun. In Part 8, the adjective *proper* is used correctly to modify the noun *way* and should not be changed to its adverbial form (choice C).

9. **Correct Response: B.** This question requires the ability to recognize a sentence fragment. The correct response is choice B because Part 3 is a subordinate clause, introduced by the subordinating conjunction "when"; its meaning depends on a main, or independent, clause, which is missing. None of the parts identified in choices A, C, and D are nonstandard sentences. Parts 1 and 4 are both simple sentences, and Part 5 is a complex sentence.
10. **Correct Response: D.** This question requires the ability to recognize writing that is appropriate for a given purpose and audience. The sentence presented in choice D has several features that make it appropriate for insertion into the second paragraph. For example, its beginning phrase, *You are comforted,* echoes the phrasing of Part 7: *you are delighted and comforted.* In addition, the sentence as a whole elaborates on the main idea that a good book is like a good friend. Choice A would not fit into the paragraph because it states an idea that is precisely the opposite of the writer's opinion, and, in addition, introduces a sudden and inappropriate change in point of view. Choice B is incorrect because the formal, highly abstract language of this sentence is inconsistent with the relatively personal and intimate tone of the passage. Finally, choice C is incorrect because it would interject an inappropriate and irrelevant comment—the passage is about good books in general and does not make any judgment about where good books can or cannot be found.

11. **Correct Response: B.** This question requires the ability to recognize appropriate language for a given purpose and audience. The passage seeks to describe to its intended audience of college students some of the major differences between a Hamiltonian and a Jeffersonian political viewpoint. The sentence presented in choice B would be most consistent with the writer's purpose and audience because it provides information relevant to the topic and uses language that is objective and impersonal, yet is neither very formal nor particularly informal. The sentence in choice A would not fit well within the context of this passage because its "folksy" tone and vivid imagery differ from the more restrained tone of the passage. Choice C would be inappropriate because the purpose of the suggested sentence is to argue and persuade in a personalized voice, functions that would be inconsistent with the passage. Even though the sentence in choice D would support the writer's argument, its highly abstract and difficult language does not match the language used throughout the rest of the passage.

12. **Correct Response: B.** This question calls for the ability to recognize imprecise and inappropriate word choice. The expression *long, long ago* (choice B) should be replaced both because it is imprecise (why not identify the specific years during which Jefferson and Hamilton carried on this debate?) and because it conjures up associations with fairy tales rather than with a historical account. None of the words listed for the other answer choices need to be replaced; they are all precise and appropriate in their context. The *proper role* (choice A) of government is exactly the topic of ongoing discussion, and *high tariffs* (choice D) were, in fact, one of the means by which Hamilton sought to promote *economic growth* (choice C).

13. **Correct Response: D.** This question requires the ability to recognize edited American English usage. The first paragraph contains no examples of nonstandard usage except for the one described in choice D. A comma is needed after the clause "Hamilton believed," because nonessential, or nonrestrictive, clauses, of which this is an example, should be set off by commas. This clause is nonessential because the basic meaning of the sentence would not change if it were deleted. As for choice A, it would be inappropriate to insert a colon after the word *by* in Part 2 because *by* is not followed by an example, a series, an explanation, or any other material that should be grouped as a separate unit. The revisions suggested in choices B and C are unnecessary because they would not change the meaning or improve the clarity of Parts 3 and 4.
14. **Correct Response:** D. This question requires the ability to recognize effective organization in writing. The sequence of ideas in the first paragraph is clear and effective, except in Parts 4 and 5, which should be reversed (choice D). Part 1 states the main idea; Part 2 provides an example to elaborate on the main idea; and Part 3 presents specific illustrations to explain Part 2. If the order of Parts 4 and 5 is reversed, the two sentences then do just what Parts 2 and 3 do: provide an example of the main idea and then give illustrations of this example. Therefore, none of the revisions suggested in answer choices A, B, and C would improve the paragraph.

15. **Correct Response:** C. This question requires the ability to recognize unity and focus in writing. Both the first and the second paragraph of the passage draw comparisons and contrasts between lawyers and historians at a very general level. The introduction of a single specific example drawn from history breaks the flow of ideas; therefore, Part 10 should be deleted, choice C. On the other hand, Part 8 should be neither deleted (choice A) nor moved (choice B) because this sentence provides both an effective transition between the two paragraphs and an introduction to the second paragraph. The revision suggested in choice D would also be inappropriate because the addition of such detailed information would draw the focus away from the main idea.

16. **Correct Response:** D. This question requires the ability to recognize an example of nonstandard usage, in this case the use of inappropriate verb tense in a sentence. Choice D is the best response because the use of *led* in the first clause of Part 12 introduces an inappropriate change from the present tense to the past tense: *led* should be replaced by the present tense *leads*. Between (choice A) is used correctly in Part 8 because two distinct groups, lawyers and historians, are being compared. The substitution of *when* for *where* in Part 9 (choice B) would result in an illogical sentence, because the word *where* is used here to mean *whereas* rather than to designate a place or a time. The revision described in choice C would inappropriately replace the comparative form *less* with the superlative form *least*, resulting in nonstandard usage.

17. **Correct Response:** C. This question requires the ability to recognize distracting details that impair the development of the main idea in a paragraph. The first paragraph of the passage clearly develops the idea that Minoan civilization had reached admirable levels before its sudden disappearance. The flow of this development is disrupted by irrelevant details about Sicily, presented in Part 3; therefore, choice C is the correct response. Part 1 (choice A) is an effective topic sentence for the entire passage. Parts 2 and 4 (choices B and D) provide details that effectively support the main idea of the paragraph.

18. **Correct Response:** A. This question requires the ability to organize sentences to present an effective sequence of ideas. The second paragraph describes the volcanic eruption that obliterated Minoan civilization. Of the four sentences given, choice A would best fit the structure of this paragraph, because it furnishes additional, relevant facts about the historic eruption. Choice B would be inappropriate here because it introduces an entirely different topic from the one addressed in this paragraph. Choice C is too general a statement to fit well within this factual account of a specific volcanic eruption. While choice D is related to the overall topic of the passage, it is not relevant to the main idea of the second paragraph.
19. **Correct Response: D.** This passage is written for an audience of college students. Its purpose is to assess the merits of a balanced budget amendment. Choice D is the best response because it adds relevant detail to the writer's analysis and is written with the appropriate tone and level of formality. As for the other responses provided, the introduction of a rhetorical question addressed directly to the reader (choice A) and use of slang as well as the first person singular (choice C) represent inappropriate shifts in tone. Although choice B adds relevant detail to the passage, it contains overly technical language that is not in keeping with the level of vocabulary used elsewhere in the selection.

20. **Correct Response: B.** This question assesses the ability to recognize distracting details that impair the development of the main idea in a piece of writing. The main idea of the first paragraph is that increasing numbers of people believe a balanced budget amendment is needed to bring federal spending under control. Choice B draws attention away from the main idea because it deals with constitutional history rather than the economic concerns that are the primary focus of the paragraph. As for the other choices provided, Part 1 (choice A) expresses the main ideas of the paragraph, and Parts 3 (choice C) and 4 (choice D) contain information that the writer uses to develop the main idea.

21. **Correct Response: D.** This question requires an understanding of standard American English word usage. Choice D is the best response because *seriously* is an adverb, not an adjective. Adverbs are used to modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs rather than nouns. It is therefore correct to change the adverb *seriously* in Part 10 to the adjective *serious*, which can be employed to modify the noun *concerns*. Of the other choices provided, the conjunction *than* is used properly in Part 5 (choice A) and *soon* should not be changed to its comparative form in Part 6 (choice B). The change suggested in choice C is inappropriate because replacing *Although* (which means *in spite of*) with *Because* (which means *on account of*) would suggest a causal relationship between the first clause and the rest of the sentence that does not make sense.

22. **Correct Response: C.** This question assesses the ability to use transitional words to develop text structure. Choice C is the best response because the first blank calls for a word that emphasizes the discontinuity between the trend discussed in Part 7 and that examined in the preceding paragraph. Of the responses provided for the first blank, *however* is the only word that indicates such a change has occurred. By contrast, choices A (as a result) and D (in conclusion) suggest that no new information is presented in Part 7, and choice B (for example) indicates a degree of continuity that would be inappropriate in this context. Similarly, choice C presents the only appropriate transitional word to replace the second blank because *consequently* signals a logical conclusion based on previously presented evidence, and Part 9 presents such a conclusion. None of the transitional words listed second in the other choices suggests this connection between Part 9 and the ideas presented earlier.

23. **Correct Response: D.** This question assesses the ability to identify standard placement of modifiers. Choice D is the best response because the participial phrase "far exceeding the number of people who died each year" does not modify any noun or pronoun in Part 6. As a result, the sentence is difficult to understand. To restore meaning to Part 6, the phrase needs to be deleted. The placement of all modifiers used in choices A, B, and C complies with standard American English usage.
24. **Correct Response: C.** This passage is written for an audience of first-year college students. The writer's main purpose in the first paragraph is to expose the inadequate manner in which many composition textbooks deal with the topic of paragraph length. Choice C is the best response because its content supports the paragraph's main purpose, and it is written with the appropriate tone and level of formality. Of the other responses provided, choices A and D adopt a harsh, dismissive stance that is at variance with the writer's more restrained approach. Although the tone of choice B is similar to that used in the passage, it is incorrect because it contradicts the main purpose of the paragraph by commending rather than criticizing composition textbooks.

25. **Correct Response: A.** This question assesses the ability to recognize revisions that improve the focus of a piece of writing. The main idea of the second paragraph is that there are two general principles that writers should use as guidelines for determining the appropriate length of paragraphs. Part 7 (choice A) therefore contradicts the paragraph's main idea and makes it difficult to understand exactly what the writer is trying to say. As for the other responses provided, combining Parts 8 and 9 would not help concentrate attention on the main idea (choice B), and implementing choice C would weaken rather than strengthen the paragraph's focus. Given the paragraph's main idea, Part 11 is an appropriate concluding sentence and should not be deleted (choice D).

26. **Correct Response: D.** This question requires an understanding of the standard use of verb forms. Choice D is the best response because in Part 10 *is broke* is a nonstandard formation of the present tense: the present tense of the verb *to be* (*is*) should never be used in combination with the simple past tense of another verb. To correct the error, *is broke* should be replaced by the verb phrase *is broken*. Of the other responses provided, the verb forms used in choices A, B, and C all comply with standard American English usage.

27. **Correct Response: A.** This passage is written for an audience of college students. The writer's main purpose in the first paragraph is to describe a common type of informal fallacy. Choice A is the best response because it clearly relates to the writer's purpose and is written with the appropriate tone, person, and level of usage. Of the other responses provided, choices B and D depart from the paragraph's main purpose and are written in the first person rather than the third person. In addition to being stated in less formal diction than that used in the passage, choice C also diverts attention from the writer's main purpose, which is to provide readers with an understanding of informal fallacies rather than to criticize those who employ such rhetorical tricks.

28. **Correct Response: B.** This question assesses the ability to recognize examples of well-developed writing. The main idea of the second paragraph is that speakers should avoid the use of informal fallacies. Choice B is the best response because it supports the main idea by helping to demonstrate why it is unfair to use informal fallacies as a means of argumentation. Of the other responses provided, choices A and D represent statements that are unrelated to the paragraph's main idea, and choice C shifts the focus of the paragraph from an argument against the use of informal fallacies to an analysis of the social implications of their increased use.
29. **Correct Response: A.** This question requires an understanding of effective paragraph organization. The second paragraph of the passage is developed through specific details. Its main purpose is to describe the operation of the two sides of the brain. Choice A is the best response because it supports the main purpose of the paragraph by providing relevant details about the right side of the brain. The information presented in choices B, C, and D is unrelated to the writer’s purpose. Using any of these statements in place of Part 6 would weaken the organization of the paragraph.

30. **Correct Response: B.** This question assesses the ability to recognize nonstandard sentence structure. Choice B is the best response because Part 2 is a run-on sentence: two sentences written as though they were one. To correct the error, the comma after *halves* should be changed to a period, and the first letter in each should be capitalized to show that it is the first word of a separate sentence. As for the other responses provided, Parts 1 (choice A), 4 (choice C), and 8 (choice D) are all complete, effective sentences.

31. **Correct Response: C.** This passage is written for an audience composed of individuals who are interested in woodworking but have no formal training in the craft. The writer’s main purpose in the first paragraph is to persuade readers that woodworking is not as difficult as it appears. Choice C is the best response because it is written with the appropriate level of formality, and its reassuring tone clearly supports the main purpose of the paragraph. Choice A is overly informal and is written in the first person rather than the second or third person that is used elsewhere in the passage; choice B shifts attention from the main purpose of the first paragraph; and choice D introduces technical terms that are more likely to intimidate than reassure the intended audience.

32. **Correct Response: D.** This question assesses the ability to recognize examples of well-developed writing. The main idea of the second paragraph is that successful woodworking projects require careful planning. Choice D is the best response because it offers readers useful advice on how to begin making such plans. As for the other responses provided, choice A diverts attention from the paragraph’s main idea by comparing woodworking with metalworking, as do choices B and C by presenting information unrelated to the needs of the novice woodworkers that the writer is trying to reach.

33. **Correct Response: D.** This question assesses the ability to recognize ineffective sentence construction. Choice D is the best response because Part 11 is needlessly repetitive. Part 11 should be made more concise; it could, for example, be revised to read: "Once your planning is complete, you can begin the final construction phase." As for the other responses provided, Parts 1 (choice A), 6 (choice B), and 7 (choice C) are all efficiently constructed and should not be revised.

34. **Correct Response: B.** This question assesses the ability to use transitional words to develop text structure. Choice B is the best response because the blanks in Parts 9, 10, and 11 call for transitional words that link the three sentences with Part 8 in a unified developmental sequence. Of the responses provided, *in addition, First,* and *Next* are the only links that convey an appropriate combination of unity and progression. By contrast, the first words in choices A (*Nevertheless*) and D (*By contrast*) indicate discontinuity between Parts 8 and 9. Choice C is incorrect because *Eventually* does not fit the context of Part 9. Similarly, the second and third transitional words listed in choices A, C, and D do not link the paragraph’s ideas in a unified, logical manner.
35. **Correct Response: C.** This question assesses the ability to identify standard sentence structure, in this case, standard subject-verb agreement. Choice C (is) is the best response because the subject *clutch of eggs* is singular in number and agrees with the present tense used throughout the paragraph. As for the other responses provided, choice A (were) is a plural verb in the past tense, choice B (will be) is in the future tense, and choice D (was) is in the past tense.

36. **Correct Response: A.** This question requires an understanding of standard American English word usage. Choice A is the best response because the superlative adverb *most* should not be used before one-syllable modifiers, such as *old*, that form their superlative degree by adding the suffix *-est*. As for the other responses provided, changing *yet to although* would change an independent clause to a dependent clause, making Part 2 a sentence fragment (choice B). In Part 4, the adverb *commonly* is used correctly to modify the verb *eaten* (choice C). Putting quotation marks around the clause "they must come ashore to lay their eggs" in Part 5 (choice D) would convey the inaccurate impression that the clause is a direct quotation from another source.

37. **Correct Response: C.** This question assesses the ability to reorganize sentences to improve the sequence of ideas in a passage. Reversing the order of parts 5 and 6 (choice C) is the best response because Part 6, which tells readers why Graham left the Denishawn dance company, directly continues a topic that is introduced in Part 4. Also, the writer's observation in the first clause of Part 8 is a logical extension of information presented in Part 5. As for the other responses provided, implementing the changes suggested in choices A and B would make it difficult to follow the writer's line of reasoning, and deleting Part 7 (choice D) would remove information that is related to the main idea of the passage.

38. **Correct Response: B.** This question requires an understanding of standard punctuation. Choice B is the best response because, when there are three or more items in a series, commas should be used to separate the items. Therefore, a comma should be placed after *athletic*, the first in a series of three adjectives. Placing a comma after *choreography* in Part 1 (choice A) would make the sentence difficult to understand by needlessly separating its subject and predicate, and semicolons should not be used to connect a subordinate clause (*Although Graham . . .*) with another clause (choice C). In Part 9, replacing *recognized* with the participle *recognizing* (choice D) would distort the meaning of the sentence.

39. **Correct Response: C.** This passage is written for college students. Its main purpose is to describe some aspects of the human memory. Choice C is the best response because it provides specific examples of the use of short-term memory and is written with the appropriate tone and level of formality. None of the other responses provides supporting detail. In addition, the language of choice A is overly formal, choice B represents an inappropriate shift to the first person singular, and choice D contains slang *(kind of neat)* and a shift in point of view that do not fit the context of the passage.

40. **Correct Response: D.** This question assesses the ability to recognize revisions that improve the focus of a piece of writing. The main idea of the passage is that the way people use a piece of information determines which type of memory will be used to store it. Part 11, however, introduces an irrelevant fact about how computer memory is sometimes stored; choice D *("Delete Part 11")* is therefore the best response. As for the other responses provided, adding the names of particular psychologists (choice A) would divert attention from the passage's main idea, the revision suggested in choice B does not change the meaning of Part 5, and reversing the positions of Parts 4 and 5 (choice C) would not make sense logically.