

GMAT VERBAL READING COMPREHENSION

PRACTICE QUESTIONS & ANSWER KEY (SET 2)

Passage

Two recent publications offer different assessments of the career of the famous British nurse Florence Nightingale. A book by Anne Summers seeks to debunk the idealizations and present a reality at odds with Nightingale's heroic reputation. According to Summers, Nightingale's importance during the Crimean War has been exaggerated: not until near the war's end did she become supervisor of the female nurses. Additionally, Summers writes that the contribution of the nurses to the relief of the wounded was at best marginal. The prevailing problems of military medicine were caused by army organizational practices, and the addition of a few nurses to the medical staff could be no more than symbolic. Nightingale's place in the national pantheon, Summers asserts, is largely due to the propagandistic efforts of contemporary newspaper reporters.

By contrast, the editors of a new volume of Nightingale's letters view Nightingale as a person who significantly influenced not only her own age but also subsequent generations. They highlight her ongoing efforts to reform sanitary conditions after the war. For example, when she learned that peacetime living conditions in British barracks were so horrible that the death rate of enlisted men far exceeded that of neighboring civilian populations, she succeeded in persuading the government to establish a Royal Commission on the Health of the Army. She used sums raised through public contributions to found a nurses' training hospital in London. Even in administrative matters, the editors assert, her practical intelligence was formidable: as recently as 1947 the British Army's medical services were still using the cost-accounting system she had devised in the 1860's.

I believe that the evidence of her letters supports continued respect for Nightingale's brilliance and creativity. When counseling a village schoolmaster to encourage children to use their faculties of observation, she sounds like a modern educator. Her insistence on classifying the problems of the needy in order to devise appropriate treatments is similar to the approach of modern social workers. In sum, although Nightingale may not have achieved all of her goals during the Crimean War, her breadth of vision and ability to realize ambitious projects have earned her an eminent place among the ranks of social pioneers.

Q 1

With which of the following statements regarding the differing interpretations of Nightingale's importance would the author most likely agree?

- Summers misunderstood both the importance of Nightingale's achievements during the Crimean War and her subsequent influence on British policy.

- The editors of Nightingale's letters made some valid points about her practical achievements, but they still exaggerated her influence on subsequent generations.
- Although Summers' account of Nightingale's role in the Crimean War may be accurate, she ignored evidence of Nightingale's subsequent achievement that suggests that her reputation as an eminent social reformer is well deserved.
- The editors of Nightingale's letters mistakenly propagated the outdated idealization of Nightingale that only impedes attempts to arrive at a balanced assessment of her true role.
- The evidence of Nightingale's letters supports Summers' conclusions both about Nightingale's activities and about her influence.

Answer 1

Answer with Explanation

With which of the following statements regarding the differing interpretations of Nightingale's importance would the author most likely agree?

- (A) Summers misunderstood both the importance of Nightingale's achievements during the Crimean War and her subsequent influence on British policy.
- (B) The editors of Nightingale's letters made some valid points about her practical achievements, but they still exaggerated her influence on subsequent generations.
- (C) Although Summers' account of Nightingale's role in the Crimean War may be accurate, she ignored evidence of Nightingale's subsequent achievement that suggests that her reputation as an eminent social reformer is well deserved.
- (D) The editors of Nightingale's letters mistakenly propagated the outdated idealization of Nightingale that only impedes attempts to arrive at a balanced assessment of her true role.
- (E) The evidence of Nightingale's letters supports Summers' conclusions both about Nightingale's activities and about her influence.

Application

Examine the final paragraph; the author's opinion of both accounts of Nightingale's work appears there. Summers' work claims that Nightingale's importance during the Crimean War was exaggerated, and the author concedes in the final sentence of the passage that Nightingale may not have achieved all her goals during the Crimean War. However, the author believes that Nightingale's breadth of vision and her accomplishment of ambitious projects earn her an eminent place among the ranks of social pioneers.

- A) The author at least partly concedes Summers' point about Nightingale's achievements during the Crimean War, but does not discuss Summers' treatment of Nightingale after the war.
- B) The author believes the letters should establish continued respect for Nightingale's brilliance and creativity.

C) Correct. The author acknowledges the point Summers makes about Nightingale's contribution during the war but finds evidence in the letters and in Nightingale's accomplishments after the war to support a highly favorable view of her work. It is reasonable to infer that the author would agree that Summers ignored this important evidence.

D) The author believes that the letters illustrate Nightingale's brilliance and creativity and that Nightingale herself has earned an eminent place among social pioneers. These positions are not consistent with agreeing that the editors idealized Nightingale and prevented a just assessment of her work.

E) The evidence of the letters supports just the reverse, brilliance and creativity.

The correct answer is C.

Q 2

In the last paragraph, the author is primarily concerned with

- ○ summarizing the arguments about Nightingale presented in the first two paragraphs
- ○ refuting the view of Nightingale's career presented in the preceding paragraph
- ○ analyzing the weaknesses of the evidence presented elsewhere in the passage
- ○ citing evidence to support a view of Nightingale's career
- ○ correcting a factual error occurring in one of the works under review

Answer 2

Answer with Explanation

In the last paragraph, the author is primarily concerned with

- (A) summarizing the arguments about Nightingale presented in the first two paragraphs
- (B) refuting the view of Nightingale's career presented in the preceding paragraph
- (C) analyzing the weaknesses of the evidence presented elsewhere in the passage
- (D) citing evidence to support a view of Nightingale's career
- (E) correcting a factual error occurring in one of the works under review

Main idea

The author begins the last paragraph in the first person, *I believe*, in order to take a position on Nightingale's historical significance. With one concession to Summers' work, the author uses the letters as evidence of Nightingale's extraordinary abilities. The author believes that Nightingale's work has earned her a respected place in history.

- A) Beginning with *I believe* shows that the author intends to do more than simply summarize.
- B) The author largely supports the view of Nightingale presented in the second paragraph.
- C) The last paragraph does analyze weak evidence, but its purpose is to state a position.

D) Correct. The author cites evidence in Nightingale's letters and actions that support a highly favorable view of her career.

E) No such correction appears in the final paragraph.

The correct answer is D.

Q 3

The passage suggests which of the following about Nightingale's relationship with the British public of her day?

- She was highly respected, her projects receiving popular and governmental support.
- She encountered resistance both from the army establishment and the general public.
- She was supported by the working classes and opposed by the wealthier classes.
- She was supported by the military establishment but had to fight the governmental bureaucracy.
- After initially being received with enthusiasm, she was quickly forgotten.

Answer 3

Answer with Explanation

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- (D) She was supported by the military establishment but had to fight the governmental bureaucracy.
- (E) After initially being received with enthusiasm, she was quickly forgotten.

Inference

An inference is drawn from stated information. This question asks the reader to gather the hints appearing throughout the passage about Nightingale's relationship with her public. Nightingale was idealized and had a *heroic reputation* (second sentence of the first paragraph); she occupied a *place in the national pantheon* (final sentence of the first paragraph). Moreover her projects were successful: she persuaded the government to establish a health commission and the public to fund a nurses' training hospital. The logical inference from the information given is that Nightingale was respected by the British public.

A) **Correct.** Her *heroic reputation* implies that she was widely respected. Her success with both the government and the public allowed her projects to be realized.

B) The passage shows no evidence of resistance either from the army or from the public; indeed, the public contributed to her causes.

C) The passage does not divide her supporters from her detractors along class lines.

D) The passage does not mention either military support or government resistance.

E) She was not quickly forgotten, since the author refers to her as *the famous British nurse* who has earned *an eminent place among the ranks of social pioneers*.

The correct answer is A.

Q 4

According to the passage, the editors of Nightingale's letters credit her with contributing to which of the following?

- Improvement of the survival rate for soldiers in British Army hospitals during the Crimean War
- The development of a nurses' training curriculum that was far in advance of its day
- The increase in the number of women doctors practicing in British Army hospitals
- Establishment of the first facility for training nurses at a major British university
- The creation of an organization for monitoring the peacetime living conditions of British soldiers

Answer 4

Answer with Explanation

According to the passage, the editors of Nightingale's letters credit her with contributing to which of the following?

(A) Improvement of the survival rate for soldiers in British Army hospitals during the Crimean War

(B) The development of a nurses' training curriculum that was far in advance of its day

(C) The increase in the number of women doctors practicing in British Army hospitals

(D) Establishment of the first facility for training nurses at a major British university

(E) The creation of an organization for monitoring the peacetime living conditions of British soldiers

Supporting ideas

This question asks the reader to find specific information that is explicitly stated. In the second paragraph, the author lists the achievements the editors of Nightingale's letters attribute to her. Among them is her work to improve sanitary conditions. When she learned how bad *the peacetime living conditions* of British soldiers were, she persuaded the government *to establish a Royal Commission on the Health of the Army*.

- A) The passage discusses Nightingale's work after the war, but the survival rate during the war is not mentioned.
- B) Nightingale founded a nurses' training hospital (mentioned in the next-to-last sentence of the second paragraph), but its curriculum is not examined.
- C) No information is given about women doctors.
- D) The passage does not discuss whether the nurses' training hospital that Nightingale founded was the first of its kind or whether it was at a major British university.
- E) Correct.** Nightingale persuaded the government to create a commission overseeing British soldiers' living conditions.

The correct answer is E.

Q 5

The passage is primarily concerned with evaluating

- the importance of Florence Nightingale's innovations in the field of nursing
- contrasting approaches to the writing of historical biography
- contradictory accounts of Florence Nightingale's historical significance
- the quality of health care in nineteenth century England
- the effect of the Crimean War on developments in the field of health care

Answer 5

Answer with Explanation

The passage is primarily concerned with evaluating

- (A) the importance of Florence Nightingale's innovations in the field of nursing
- (B) contrasting approaches to the writing of historical biography
- (C) contradictory accounts of Florence Nightingale's historical significance
- (D) the quality of health care in nineteenth century England
- (E) the effect of the Crimean War on developments in the field of health care

Main idea

Consider the passage as a whole to answer this question. The author begins by announcing that two recent works about Florence Nightingale offer *different assessments* of her career and then summarizes those accounts. One book *seeks to debunk* her reputation and historical significance, while the other promotes her significance to *not only her own age but also subsequent generations*. In the final paragraph, the author takes a position synthesizing the two views.

- A) Nightingale's involvement in nursing is discussed, but not her nursing innovations.
- B) The passage concerns two books about an historical figure, not the writing of historical biography.
- C) Correct. The passage focuses on two books with *different assessments* of Nightingale's significance.
- D) The passage refers to some specific health care problems during and after the Crimean War, but it does not evaluate the general quality of health care over the course of the nineteenth century.
- E) No such effects are discussed in the passage.

The correct answer is C.