MAIN IDEAS IN READING: Mastery Test 3

The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

1. A century ago, medical practice left much to be desired. In the late 1800s, surgeons still operated with bare hands, wearing the same clothes they had worn on the street. Their shoes carried into the surgery room the debris of the streets and hospital corridors. Spectators were often permitted to observe operations, gathering around the patient within touching distance of the incision. Surgeons used surgical dressings made from pressed sawdust, a waste product from the floors of sawmills. Surgical instruments were washed in soapy water, but not heat-sterilized or chemically disinfected. The mortality rate following operations in many hospitals was as high as 90 percent.

Sentences 2–7 give examples of how “medical practice left much to be desired”—the main idea expressed in sentence 1.

2. Many ancient cultures believed that garlic had magical healing qualities, and it was used for health purposes thousands of years ago in Egypt, Greece, and India. Modern scientists have found that eating garlic really does have several valuable health benefits. Allicin, the same substance that gives garlic its odor, kills bacteria, viruses, and funguses. Cloves of garlic also contain selenium, a nutrient that helps prevent the oxidation in cells which can lead to cancer. Garlic has also been shown to lower blood pressure. It can help reduce the chance of heart attack or stroke by thinning the blood, which prevents clots from forming. In addition, garlic can clear the sinuses and relieve cold symptoms; like commercial decongestants, it thins mucus so sinuses and lungs can flush themselves out more easily.

3. Police officers complain that many of the criminals they arrest end up very soon on the streets to commit crimes again. Judges argue that because of the technicalities of the law, they are forced to free many defendants, some of whom may be guilty as charged. Government officials lament that they don’t have the funds or space to build new prisons. And many citizens charge that the police, the judges, or the government officials are not doing their jobs well. Clearly, the way the huge problem of crime is being handled angers and frustrates many segments of our society.

The “many segments of our society” referred to in the main idea are cited in detail in sentences 1–4.
4. When we speak of a "close friend," we usually mean an intimate friend, not a friend who is standing close by. However, according to researchers who study human behavior, there are in fact four "distance zones" in human interaction. Intimate distance is the closest zone, eighteen inches or less. This is the zone of making love, for instance, and also of physical confrontations ("in your face!"). Second is personal distance, eighteen inches to four feet, which is used for everyday conversations with friends. Then there is social distance, four to seven feet, which we use for most interactions with strangers, such as buying something in a store. The fourth zone is public distance, twelve feet or more. A public speaker or a singer at a concert is usually at least twelve feet from the nearest audience members.

5. Have you ever wondered why products come in the colors they do? For instance, why is toothpaste often green or blue and shampoo often golden-yellow? Manufacturers pick the colors that are associated with qualities consumers value in certain products. For example, it's known that blue symbolizes purity to most people and that green is refreshing. These are both desirable qualities in toothpastes. Manufacturers also know that golden-yellow symbolizes richness (as in real gold or egg yolks), so they frequently choose this color for shampoos and cream rinses—products in which consumers value richness. Baby products, such as body lotion, are often tinted pink because that is a color commonly associated with softness and gentleness—the very qualities consumers want for a baby's care.

Sentences 1 and 2 are questions that introduce the topic of product color. Sentence 3 (the main idea) has the list words certain products. Sentences 4–7 give examples of those products.
The main idea may appear at any place within each of the five paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

1. One writer spent nine hundred hours over the course of eight years watching the action in singles bars and learning about male-female relationships. Although men may think of themselves as the aggressors, says this writer, it is really women who make the decisions when a courtship is beginning. He has observed that women are the ones who pick a potential mate out of the crowd. They position themselves near the man they've selected and, with a glance or a smile, invite him to make contact. Similarly, as conversation begins, the woman initiates each increasingly intimate stage. Her continuing eye contact, moving closer, and touching the man all signal her permission for him to make further advances. In most cases, the woman's signals are so subtle that the man is only subconsciously aware of them.

2. In everyday advertising, one observes many obvious attempts to package and sell products and ideas (toothpaste, aspirin, presidential candidates) through clever influence tactics. Many people claim that such blatant attempts at persuasion are so pitifully obvious that they are not much affected by them. Nevertheless, the sales of one cigarette brand increased seven times during a four-year period of heavy advertising. A toy company increased its sales twenty-four times after it began to advertise extensively on television. And one venerable but nearly forgotten cereal brand experienced a sudden 30 percent increase in sales when a well-known natural-foods enthusiast began plugging this rather bland cereal. There are many other advertising success stories as well. It appears that tremendous numbers of consumers are influenced by advertising, despite their claims to the contrary.

3. Pedal error occurs when the driver of an automobile mistakenly presses down on the accelerator instead of the brake pedal. This leads to unintended acceleration, which, in turn, can frequently result in an accident. It seems as though stepping on the wrong pedal would be an unlikely occurrence. However, an analysis of pedal error shows that this mistake is easier to make than you might think. A driver sometimes turns his upper body a little to the left at the same moment that he moves his right foot toward the brake pedal. The driver might turn his upper body to the right to look in the left side mirror or to reach for his seatbelt. Or, if he is in reverse, he might look...
over his left shoulder to make sure that it is safe to back up. This turning of the upper body could cause his right foot to move slightly to the right. As he unconsciously moves his foot to the right, he may end up hitting the accelerator rather than the brake. Instead of stopping and remaining stationary, the car in fact begins to accelerate. Believing that his foot is on the brake, the driver presses his foot down harder in an effort to stop the car.

Obviously, this action only makes the problem worse.

4. It appears that some pioneer women had more to fear from insects than from Indian attacks. One of the most terrifying assaults of nature involved grasshoppers. Swarms would appear suddenly, in huge clouds, and devour everything in sight. If a housewife tried covering her garden with gunny sacks, the bugs simply went under them, or ate their way through them. After they ate the crops, the grasshoppers moved into the barns and houses. They ate all the food and devoured clothing, window curtains, furniture, fence boards, and cabin sidings. In the summer, flies or gnats swarmed over everything.

In a desperate attempt to drive away mosquitoes, plainswomen burned buffalo chips—they could stand the smell better than the bugs could. In the Southwest, women were instructed to place their beds at least two feet away from the walls, lest they wake up covered with scorpions. Fleas were also a terrible problem, and some settlers burned their houses down when the fleas became too burdensome. But American settlers had a yen for permanence, and a sturdy house that lasted forever was also a permanent abode for vermin.

5. The American author Mark Twain is famous for the humor in his writing. His novels, stories, and essays have brought laughter to millions. However, Twain's own life in the sixteen years leading up to his death in 1910 was marked more by sorrow than humor, as he faced several personal tragedies. He had invested a significant amount of money in the development of a mechanical typesetting machine. In 1894 the project failed, and his investment was lost. In addition, a publishing company that he had begun ten years earlier went bankrupt. So at the age of 59, this once-rich man went on a two-year worldwide lecture tour in order to earn money. He took his wife with him on this tour but left his three daughters at home in Hartford, Connecticut. While he was gone, his favorite daughter, Susy, died of meningitis, an inflammation of the brain and spinal cord. Although his wife, Olivia, was ten years younger than he, she had a long history of health problems and died in 1904. In December 1909, just five months before Twain's own death, his daughter Jean died. Only one of his three daughters outlived him.
MAIN IDEAS IN READING: Mastery Test 5

A. The main idea may appear at any place within each of the three paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

1. Just as there are rules of the road for drivers of cars, trucks, and buses, there are “rules of the sidewalk” for pedestrians. The sociologist Erving Goffman points out that, for one thing, pedestrians on a sidewalk keep to their right, relative to an imaginary dividing line in the middle of the sidewalk. Thus people sort themselves into lanes going in opposite directions, as on a vehicular roadway. And people who are walking slowly often tend to stay closer to the buildings, while to their left, in a “passing lane,” are the people who are moving more quickly. Also, like drivers, pedestrians scan the route ahead so that they can swerve around obstacles—a puddle or a hole in the walkway—and so that they will not collide with anyone else. If a head-on collision seems possible, pedestrians will make eye contact and maneuver to keep out of each other’s way. Goffman notes one obvious difference, though: rules of the road are often codified in laws and regulations, whereas rules of the sidewalk are informal social customs.

2. When labor-management disputes are reported on news broadcasts, listeners sometimes think that mediation and arbitration are simply two interchangeable words for the same thing. But mediation and arbitration are very different processes, with different outcomes, though both involve the use of a neutral third party. In mediation, the third party (called a mediator) is brought in to assist in the negotiations so that the opponents will keep talking to each other. Mediators can only make suggestions about how to resolve a dispute; neither side is obliged to accept them. In arbitration, on the other hand, the third party—the arbitrator—is called in to settle the issue, and the arbitrator’s decision is final and binding on both sides.

3. A biological virus can attach itself to a human host cell and take charge, using the cell’s functions to make the substances needed to form new virus particles, which then leave that cell and spread, repeating the process in other cells. Biological viruses cause many diseases—some minor, like the common cold; but some life-threatening, like polio or AIDS. Biological viruses may kill the host cell or make the cell itself malignant, or the virus may set off a dangerously violent response in the immune system. Biological viruses reproduce and spread in various ways, and they may be very hard to
treat because they can take forms that the immune system cannot detect. Computer viruses are programs designed to attach themselves to ordinary software, take it over, and then reproduce and spread. A computer virus can do its damage by attacking the startup program, at which point antivirus devices cannot yet detect it; or by attacking the operating system; or by attacking applications such as databases. In any case, the virus can distort or kill computer memory. A computer virus, as the name implies, is very much like a biological virus.

B. (4.) The author has stated the central point of the following textbook selection in one sentence. Find that sentence, and write its number in the space provided.

Bug Protection

1. Almost all insects will flee if threatened. 2. Many insects, however, have more specialized means of defense. 3. Roaches and stinkbugs, for example, secrete foul-smelling chemicals that deter aggressors. 4. Bees, wasps, and some ants have poisonous stings that can kill smaller predators and cause pain for larger ones. 5. The larvae of some insects have hairs filled with poison. 6. If a predator eats one of these larvae, it may suffer a toxic reaction. 7. Insects that defend themselves by unpleasant or dangerous chemicals gain two advantages. 8. On one hand, they often deter a predator from eating them. 9. On the other hand, predators learn not to bother them in the first place.

10. Other insects gain protection by mimicry, or similarity of appearance. 11. In one kind of mimicry, insects with similar defense mechanisms look alike, and predators learn to avoid them all. 12. Bees and wasps mimic each other in this way. 13. In another kind of mimicry, insects with no defenses of their own mimic the appearance of stinging or bad-tasting insects. 14. Predators avoid the mimic as well as the insect with the unpleasant taste or sting. 15. For example, syrphid flies look like bees but do not sting.

16. Another kind of defense based on appearance is camouflage, or the ability to blend into surroundings. 17. Many kinds of insects and animals have distinctive color markings that make them difficult to see. 18. Predators have trouble locating prey that looks like its background. 19. An insect is more likely to survive and produce offspring if it is camouflaged than if it is not.

is the number of the sentence that states the central point.

Sentence 1 introduces the topic of insects' reaction to threats. The list words specialized means of defense and the word however signal the main idea in sentence 2. Sentences 3–19 describe three such means of defense—chemical, mimicry, and camouflage.
MAIN IDEAS IN READING: Mastery Test 6

A. The main idea may appear at any place within each of the three paragraphs that follow. Write the number of each main idea sentence in the space provided.

1. An old saying has it that "Many hands make light the work." Thus we might expect that three individuals can pull three times as much as one person and that eight can pull eight times as much. Research reveals that persons individually average 130 pounds of pressure when tugging on a rope. However, in groups of three, they average 351 pounds (only 2.5 times the solo rate); and in groups of eight, only 546 pounds (less than 4 times the solo rate). One explanation is that faulty coordination produces group inefficiency. However, when subjects are blindfolded and believe they are pulling with others, they also slacken their effort. Apparently when we work in groups, we cut down on our efforts, a process termed social loafing.

2. Criminal and civil cases, the two types of court cases, differ in significant ways. Criminal cases involve the enforcement of criminal laws, that is, laws against acts such as murder and robbery. The case is brought by a government—a state or the federal government—against someone who is charged with committing a crime. The government, then, is the prosecutor, and the accused is the defendant. The defendant will be found "guilty" or "not guilty," usually by a jury. A civil case involves a legal dispute between individuals and organizations, such as businesses. One party to the case, the plaintiff, has filed a complaint against the other party, the defendant. Civil lawsuits arise, for example, over personal injuries (as in automobile accidents), disagreements about contracts, and—more and more often these days—medical malpractice. There is no verdict of "guilty" or "not guilty" in a civil case; instead, a jury, a judge, or a panel of judges will decide in favor of the plaintiff or the defendant.

3. In one tribe in New Guinea, aggression is encouraged in boys from early infancy. The child cannot obtain nourishment from his mother without carrying on a continuous battle with her. Unless he grasps the nipple firmly and sucks vigorously, his mother will withdraw it and stop the feeding. In his frantic effort to get food, the child frequently choke—an annoyance to both himself and his mother. Thus the feeding situation itself is "characterized by anger and struggle rather than by affection and reassurance" (Mead, 1939). The people of another New Guinea tribe are extremely peaceful and do
everything possible to discourage aggression. \( ^7 \) They regard all instances of aggression as abnormal. \( ^8 \) A similar tribe—the T'aday of the Philippines—has been discovered. \( ^9 \) These people are extremely friendly and gentle. \( ^{10} \) They possess no weapons for fighting or food-gathering; in fact, they are strict vegetarians who live off the land. \( ^{11} \) Evidence of this sort suggests that, rather than being basically aggressive animals, human beings are peaceful or aggressive depending upon their early childhood training.

B. (4.) The author has stated the central point of the following textbook selection in one sentence. Find that sentence, and write its number in the space provided.

1. Those who are fortunate enough not to live in poverty may equate "being poor" with "not having enough money to buy the things I'd like."
2. Certainly, being poor does mean doing without many of life's material pleasures. \( ^3 \) But the impact of poverty goes far beyond the inability to buy goods.
4. One fundamental effect of poverty is that the poor often live in sub-standard housing. \( ^5 \) They rent from landlords who may neglect the property, even to a criminal extent. \( ^6 \) The houses are often unsafe, with dangerous electrical wiring, non-functioning plumbing, and inadequate heat.
7. Poverty also profoundly affects people's ability to receive an education. \( ^8 \) Public schools in poor areas are under-funded, poorly staffed, and supplied with outdated textbooks and sparse supplies. \( ^9 \) Classrooms are crowded and often chaotic; the schools function more as warehouses than as places of education. \( ^{10} \) Children coming out of these schools are inadequately prepared for college, so they rarely advance beyond high school.
11. A third way in which poverty profoundly affects people's lives is in the area of employment. \( ^{11} \) Without the career preparation that quality education provides, poor people are often qualified only for jobs with no future, no benefits, and a high chance of being laid off. \( ^{12} \) When the poor do lose their jobs, they must deal with the tangled mess of unemployment insurance and welfare, adding stress and the increasing sense of failure to their lives.

is the number of the sentence that states the central point.