

## Kaplan SAT Score-Raising Book Club for Teens

When your students think SAT review, they probably think about thick review books with a lot of practice questions that are not easily adapted into the classroom. Kaplan now offers SAT review with a new twist—teen favorite fiction and nonfiction to help develop skills that will help students score higher on the Critical Reading and Writing sections of the SAT.

Each month Kaplan will post three new book club activities based on a popular book that you can download and introduce to your class or after school study group. This month's activity is based on *Waiting for Snow in Havana*.

If you're looking for other original ways to incorporate SAT prep into the classroom or an SAT study group, check out the following titles on [www.simonsays.com](http://www.simonsays.com):

- Frankenstein: An SAT Score-Raising Classic (074325578X, \$6.99)
- Wuthering Heights: An SAT Score-Raising Classic (0743261992, \$7.99)
- The Tales of Edgar Allan Poe: An SAT Score-Raising Classic (0743264681, \$6.99)
- Scarlet Letter: An SAT Score-Raising Classic (074326469X, \$7.99)
- Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: An SAT Score-Raising Classic (0743264703, \$4.99)
- Ring of McAllister: A Score-Raising Mystery (0743265777, \$13.00)
- SAT Score-Raising Dictionary (0743273028, \$5.50)
- SAT Vocabulary Flashcards Flip-O-Matic (0743264274, \$12.00)
- Extreme SAT Vocabulary Flashcards Flip-O-Matic (074325130X, \$12.00)

Happy studying--and don't forget to come back next month for an all-new SAT activity based on the classic tale, *Angela's Ashes*.

## Kaplan SAT Score-Raising Book Club

*Waiting for Snow in Havana*

### Writing Activity

On the Writing section of the SAT, you'll be asked to write an essay in response to a specific prompt. The prompt includes one or two quotes related to a general topic, a specific question for you to answer in an essay, and instructions for writing the essay.

One of the requirements of the essay is to develop your point of view with reasons and examples. This is where books like *Waiting for Snow in Havana* can help you out. You can use events, themes, and characters from the book to support your answer to the prompt's question. Try it out with the sample prompt below.

#### **Instructions:**

Take 25 minutes to read the following prompt and write an essay in response. Before you start to write, take a few minutes to plan out what you're going to say. Also, leave a minute or two at the end to proofread what you've written.

Consider carefully the following quotations and the assignment below.

Every sweet has its sour, every evil its good.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays*

A sufficient analysis will show that pleasure, in all cases, is but the contrast of pain.

Positive pleasure is a mere idea. To be happy at any one point we must have suffered at the same. Never to suffer would have been never to have been blessed.

Edgar Allan Poe, *Mesmeric Revelation*

#### **Assignment:**

In your opinion, do joy and sorrow, good and bad, go hand in hand, or are they separate and unrelated? Write an essay that conveys your point of view and supports your position. Use reasoning and examples from the arts, literature, science and technology, current events, or your own experience and observation.

## How the Essay Is Scored

Two trained readers will evaluate your essay, each giving it a score from 1 - 6, for a total of 1 - 12 points possible. The readers score the essay holistically, meaning that they read the essay quickly for an overall impression and assign it a score. They don't count the number of examples you have or the number of grammatical errors you made. However, scorers will consider the following four main factors:

- Does the essay address the assignment?
- Is there a clear introduction, middle, and end?
- Are the ideas developed sufficiently?
- Is the essay easy to read? Is it engaging?

You can use the rubric below to get a better understanding of how the essay is scored. You can also use it to score your own practice essays.

	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Writing</b>
<b>A 6 essay has...</b>	fully addressed the assignment	clear focus, apparent organization, and smooth transitions	outstanding reasoning and ideas that are amply supported with detailed and relevant examples	clear and engaging language, varied sentence structure, and few if any errors
<b>A 5 essay has...</b>	effectively addressed the assignment	focus, apparent organization, and effective transitions	effective reasoning and ideas that are supported with mostly detailed and relevant examples	clear language, variety in word choice and sentence structure, and few or no errors
<b>A 4 essay has...</b>	addressed the assignment	general organization and focus with some transitions	competent reasoning and ideas that are adequately supported with examples	generally effective word choice, some variety in sentence structure, and some errors
<b>A 3 essay has...</b>	somewhat addressed the assignment	limited organization and focus with few transitions	some reasoning and ideas that are somewhat supported with examples	occasionally effective word choice, little or no variety in sentence structure, and some errors that affect clarity
<b>A 2 essay has...</b>	partially addressed the assignment	poor organization and focus	weak reasoning and ideas that are insufficiently supported	limited word choice, problems with sentence structure, and errors that affect clarity
<b>A 1 essay has...</b>	failed to meaningfully address the assignment	little or no focus and organization	little or no reasoning and ideas with little or no support	serious errors in word choice, several problems with sentence structure, and multiple errors that seriously affect clarity

## Sample Essays and Scores

Read the sample essays and reader's scores below. Then score your own essay using the SAT reader's guidelines. If you have time, switch essays with a partner and score each other's essays. Don't worry if you feel like your essay isn't quite top-notch—now is the time to get feedback, practice, and improve before Test Day!

### Sample Essay 1

Happiness and sadness are opposite. If you feel happiness than you aren't feeling any sadness. And if your feeling sadness than your not feeling any happiness. These emotions are kinda related in that there on opposite ends.

Happiness and sadness are two big themes of Waiting for Snow in Havana, by Carlos Eire. Carlos grew up in Cuba before Castro came changed everything in his life. Carlos was a happy kid before Castro. His family was rich and powerful. He got to enjoy all of the beauty of the island. He loved playing with his friends. Everything was taken care of for him. That changed with Castro brought a lot of sadness to Carlos and his family. His cousin was thrown in prison and his uncle went nuts. His parents decided to send him and his brother away to America, that was awful. They had to live in an orphanage and work to many jobs to get by. Other boys call them really hurtful names. Worst is that they can never go back to Cuba until Castro is gone. He didn't even get to say goodbye to his father before he died.

The book shows the extreme ends of happiness and sadness and how different they are. Carlos had this great childhood that was ruined by Castro. But maybe that help Carlos see how great his early years really were because his teenage years were so awful.

**Reader's Score: 2**

### Sample Essay 2

Although it might seem like joy and sorrow are unrelated, they are actually connected. They are sides of the same coin. The connection between joy and sorrow can be found in many great works of literature. Two of these examples are The Prophet, by Kahlil Gibran, and Waiting for Snow in Havana, by Carlos Eire.

One of the most beautiful and memorable poems in The Prophet is called "On Joy and Sorrow." In the poem, Gibran explains that joy and sorrow are inseparable. We feel joy to the extent that we have experienced sorrow. In other words, the source of joy and sorrow are the same. We feel joyful when we are loved, and sorrowful when we are abandoned by a loved one. The more joyful we felt in that

person's love, the more sorrow we will feel when they're gone. That sorrow, though, will create a deeper ability for joy when we are loved again.

This same theme of the connectedness of joy and sorrow runs through Waiting for Snow in Havana. The book is Carlos Eire's memoir about growing up in Cuba and being sent into exile in America after the Revolution. As Eire describes his childhood, he shows the readers both sadness and happiness. In his early years he was rather pampered, always able to count on a servant to take care of his needs. Eire's life of toys, games, and lavish parties is contrasted with the images of tattered beggars and young men who dive into the depths to fetch coins thrown by passengers on the ferry. Eire simultaneously finds beauty and terror in many things, including explosions and lizards. Most importantly though, Eire's sorrow at being so long exiled from his homeland comes from the joy and beauty he experienced there.

Part of being human is feeling both pain and joy. However as writers like Gibran and Eire show us, these two emotions are connected. We appreciate a sunny spring day more when it follows a week of dreary rain. Similarly we are able to feel more joy when we have experienced sorrow.

**Reader's Score: 4**

### **Sample Essay 3**

Some people might believe that joy and sorrow are separate and unrelated, but this is merely wishful thinking. The people, events, and things that bring an individual joy are also the people, events, and things that may bring that individual sorrow. When Poe wrote that "Never to suffer would have been never to have been blessed," he meant that people can only suffer over something that they care about, something that has brought them pleasure. The emotions of joy and sorrow do not exist without each other. In fact, they stand in contrast, the absence of one defining the other.

The connection between pain and pleasure has been explored in countless books, poems, songs, and movies, but Carlos Eire's memoir Waiting for Snow in Havana depicts a particularly poignant picture of the relationship between these emotions. As a young boy, Carlos enjoyed the life of the privileged in pre-Castro Cuba; however, this life of privilege and pleasure is forever changed with the Revolution. Carlos eventually leaves behind nearly everything and everyone he knows and loves in order to flee to America. Indeed, to this day Carlos is unable to return to Cuba; he was not even able to attend his father's funeral. This exile causes Carlos a great deal of sorrow, but it also heightens his awareness of the joy and beauty he experienced as a child. Carlos' childhood remembrances are filled with conflicting emotions: he recalls a neighborhood fruit fight as an expression of both delight and outrage, he describes the lizards he had once feared and tormented as both dreadful and joyous, and in a telling moment he describes Havana as both

beautiful and awful. The sorrows Carlos experienced as an orphan immigrant—being called a “spic,” having to work menial jobs to exist, living below an elevated train—all serve to sharpen his vision of the beauty he experienced in his homeland. The sour of his early experiences in America help him to see and remember the sweet of his life in Cuba.

Though it might be easier to live a life without pain or the risk of sorrow, this would also mean enduring a life without joy and pleasure. In my own life, I have found that my greatest sources of joy can also be my greatest sources of sorrow. The friends who I hold dearest have the greatest power to hurt me with their anger or absence. However, it is much better to accept and embrace the presence of both joy and sorrow than it is to withdraw from emotions and remain indifferent.

**Reader’s Score: 5**

## Kaplan SAT Score-Raising Book Club

*Waiting for Snow in Havana*

### Critical Reading Activity (Teacher's Notes)

1. Give students about 15 minutes to read the first passage and answer the accompanying questions.
2. Before handing out the answers and explanations, have students discuss their answers with a partner. Tell them to come to agreement about the best answer for each question. If they disagree about a particular question, they should go back to the passage and make a case for their opinions.
3. Hand the answers and explanations out to the student pairs. Explain that one valuable test-taking tool is being able to determine why some answers are incorrect. Have student pairs answer the wrong answer choice question that accompanies each answer explanation. Answers to these questions are given below.
4. For additional practice, have students try to think like the Test Maker. Hand out the second passage and ask students to write three test-like questions based on the excerpt. Students can then trade questions with their partners.

### Answers to Wrong Answer Choice Questions

1. The narrator's father, not the narrator, has an assigned seat.
2. The narrator's father is a judge who has to sit in the section assigned to all the judges, but the passage never suggests that everyone in the assigned section belongs to a privileged class.
3. Choice (A) gives a positive view of Castro, but Eire clearly has a negative attitude about the man who calls himself the "Maximum Leader." Choice (B) also suggests that Eire believed what Castro was saying; instead, he describes the experience at the Plaza as "one of the scariest moments in my life."
4. (E) is very positive, which contradicts Eire's negative opinion of Castro.
5. Both choices (A) and (B) refer to the most common definition of "bombing."
6. Choice (B) is a misused detail. Eire describes Castro's physical appearance in an earlier paragraph, but this has nothing to do with the "contradictions inherent in Castro's message." Choice (D) is another misused detail. The audience is described as a "sea of people" in the second paragraph, but this is not related to the question.

7. Nothing suggests that Eire knew his grandfather was dying, choice (B). Lines 46-48 refer to the grandfather's later death, but Eire has no foreknowledge of the loss of his grandfather.

8. Choice (E) contradicts Eire's assertion that he and his grandfather were "two drops who knew what was going on" (lines 48-50). He is intimidated by the crowd, but he is not helpless.

9. Although Eire does contrast Castro with the "giant stone exclamation point" (lines 34-36), this answer does not take into account the other references to Castro as a "tiny speck."

## Kaplan SAT Score-Raising Book Club

### *Waiting for Snow in Havana*

#### Critical Reading Activity

**Directions:** Use what is stated and implied in the passage and introductory material below to answer questions 1-19. For each question, circle the best answer from the given choices.

**Questions 1-9 refer to the following passage.**

*The following is excerpted from a memoir by a man who, at the age of eleven, was sent to America from Cuba after Fidel Castro seized power. In this excerpt, the writer shares his memories of going with his grandfather to see Castro, who is referred to as the Maximum Leader, speak to a large crowd.*

We walked in the hot sun to the Plaza of the Revolution, along with hundreds of other Cubans. We gathered in the vast space under the monument to the Cuban patriot José Martí, a poet who had died fighting for independence from Spain. The tower at the center of the plaza was about twenty stories high, and directly underneath there was a broad platform with a pulpit from which the Maximum Leader preached to the multitudes. The tower looked like a permanent exclamation point. Line  
5

It was a sea of people. I'd never seen so many bodies gathered in one spot. Tens of thousands, for sure. Some were curious, like me. Some were there because they were genuine believers in the Revolution. Some were like my father, who was there because it was required of him, in the section assigned to all the judges. There were thousands of Cubans in the same situation, in their own assigned sections. The guardians of the Revolution took attendance. If you didn't attend, there would be unpleasant repercussions: they reminded you constantly that it was their goal to make it tough for anyone who didn't show true Revolutionary spirit. 10

And Radio Havana proudly broadcast its programs announcing that Cuba was the only free nation in the Western hemisphere. 15

The crowd frightened me. It spoke in unison and seemed to think in unison, too. It roared and chanted slogans like *Cuba sí, Yanquis no!*<sup>1</sup> at the appropriate moments. Other slogans too. It was a lot like church, I thought. It was a ritual, a liturgy of correct thinking, punctuated by responses from the congregation. 20

And the high priest was the Maximum Leader.

I saw him. My grandfather saw him, too. He was a pinpoint, off in the distance. A tiny moving speck. Even from far away we could see his tiny little body bouncing up and down as he spoke. He couldn't talk without moving. He jumped and waved his arms as if he were a basketball player or a demoniac. We could hear him very clearly, of course, thanks to all the loudspeakers that dotted the vast space of the Plaza. 25

You couldn't get away from his voice. Even if you plugged up your ears with your fingers, the sound of his voice was loud enough to find its way to your brain. You could shut out the words, but you couldn't shut out the noise.

He was bombing us. 30

He was telling us what was good. Telling us how we should think. He was telling us what to choose and how to choose it. He was telling us we had no choice. And he was telling us we were free. Free at last.

That one tiny, insignificant, erasable smudge under the giant stone exclamation point, that speck of nothingness controlled everyone in that Plaza, and everyone on the island. That one little nothing that my cousin Fernando had planned to erase at that very spot, two years earlier. Being at that Plaza, that day, was one of the scariest moments of my life. Scariest than any nightmare I'd ever had. 35

“Let’s go, *abuelo*<sup>2</sup>, can we go now, please?”

“Yes, damn it, let’s go.” 40

We carefully wended our way out of the crowd that had gathered behind us. It wasn’t easy. People were still streaming in as we tried to leave. Some of the latecomers were in groups, and were being herded like sheep.

My grandfather spoke over the din: “Hold my hand. I don’t want you to get lost.” I was too old to hold hands, but I did it anyway. 45

Good thing I did, too, for it would be the last time I’d ever get the chance. I held my grandfather’s hand for the last time in my life, there, as Fidel’s words fell upon us like hail, or fire and brimstone. We were just two drops in a nearly boundless ocean. But we were two drops who knew what was going on, two drops struggling to free ourselves from the sea around us. An old man torn from his homeland by forbidden love years ago, a boy about to be torn from his by a Revolution. 50

Two specks moving in the wrong direction.

Two specks about to part from each other forever, thanks to one tiny speck.

One speck bathed in sunlight that day, just like everyone else.

One tiny speck. 55

Too bad.

<sup>1</sup> Cuba yes, Yankees no!

<sup>2</sup> grandfather

From *Waiting for Snow in Havana*, by Carlos Eire, 2003

1. The passage suggests that the narrator attends the speech at the Plaza of the Revolution because he
  - (A) was required to accompany his grandfather
  - (B) believed in the values of the Revolution
  - (C) had an assigned seat and his absence would have been noticed
  - (D) had heard the event advertised on the radio
  - (E) was curious to see Castro speak
  
2. In lines 10-14, the narrator suggests that some audience members attended the speech because they

- (A) hoped to become guardians of the Revolution
- (B) wanted to avoid punishment
- (C) were unable to listen to the speech on the radio
- (D) belonged to the privileged upper class
- (E) resented American influences

3. In lines 19-20, the primary effect of comparing the crowd to a church congregation is to

- (A) illustrate the spiritual nature of Castro's speech
- (B) suggest that the narrator is moved to participate in the crowd's responses
- (C) introduce the narrator's suspicion about the purpose of organized religion
- (D) emphasize the automatic nature of the crowd's responses
- (E) underscore the crowd's religious faith in Castro

4. Lines 27-29 suggest that audience members

- (A) could not escape the sound of Castro's voice
- (B) listened attentively to Castro's message
- (C) responded more to Castro's presence than to his voice
- (D) did not want to hear what Castro was saying
- (E) appreciated the amplification of Castro's voice

5. In line 30, "bombing" most nearly means

- (A) physically attacking
- (B) firing upon
- (C) overwhelming
- (D) failing
- (E) instructing

6. In lines 31-33, the narrator conveys the contradictions inherent in Castro's message by

- (A) presenting different listeners' interpretations of what Castro meant
- (B) comparing the effect of seeing Castro to the effect of hearing Castro
- (C) depicting the audience as a sea of people unwilling to voice their true opinions
- (D) contrasting the theory behind the speech to the reality of life in Cuba
- (E) juxtaposing sentences with opposing meanings

7. The narrator's action of holding hands with his grandfather (lines 44-51) suggests that the narrator

- (A) was frightened
- (B) knew that his grandfather was dying
- (C) felt the need to protect his grandfather
- (D) regretted the decision to leave Cuba
- (E) was emotionally moved by Castro's speech

8. The narrator's description of the crowd as a "nearly boundless ocean" (line 48) emphasizes the

- (A) volatility of the audience after hearing Castro's words
- (B) unfathomable nature of the motivations of Castro's listeners
- (C) sheer size of the crowd through which the narrator and his grandfather must move
- (D) anger of the crowd upon seeing the narrator and his grandfather attempt to depart
- (E) narrator's sense of helplessness when faced with the crowd

9. Throughout the passage, the narrator most likely refers to Castro as a "speck" (line 23, line 35, lines 53-55) in order to

- (A) highlight the odds against the long-term success of the Revolution
- (B) emphasize the injustice of one individual wielding so much power over other individuals
- (C) contrast the image of Castro to the presence of the towering monument to the patriot José Martí
- (D) suggest Castro's relative powerlessness to affect the lives of those in the crowd
- (E) convey Castro's human vulnerabilities

## Answers

**Directions:** Check your responses with the answers and explanations below. Being able to identify and eliminate wrong answer choices is an important test-taking skill, so each answer explanation also includes a question about wrong answer choices.

### 1. (E)

Here's one of the most important things to remember about answering SAT Passage-Based questions: The answer is in the passage. In the second paragraph, the narrator describes different motivations for attending the speech. Some people were "genuine believers," but "Some were curious, like me" (lines 8-9).

Notice how the wrong answer choices distort something from the passage or misuse a detail from the passage.

For example, who had an assigned seat, as in choice (C)? \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. (B)

When a passage on the SAT gives you a line reference, use it to quickly find the information you need. Don't rely on your memory of the passage to get to the right answer. The cited lines here explain that the "guardians of the Revolution took attendance" in the assigned sections and would "make it tough" for anyone who was absent. In other words, some of the audience members who had assigned seats attended only to avoid the "repercussions," or punishments, from the guardians of the Revolution.

Remember that wrong answers can twist, or distort, details from the passage. What makes choice (D) incorrect? \_\_\_\_\_

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### 3. (D)

Some questions will deal with the function or effect of a specific part of the passage. To answer these questions, you'll need to make an inference. However, these questions are not asking for your opinion—the correct answer will always be supported by something in the passage. Earlier in the paragraph, Eire writes that the audience "spoke in unison and seemed to think in unison, too" (lines 17). Eire describes the audience as participating in "a liturgy of correct thinking" to emphasize that the crowd is making automatic, not spontaneous and genuine, responses.

Many incorrect answers to function or inference questions will contradict the tone or main idea of the passage. Which answer choices could you eliminate because they contradict the tone and main idea? \_\_\_\_\_

4. (A)

Some inference questions will be relatively simple; the correct answer will paraphrase information in the passage. This is why it's important to go back to the lines that are given in the question. Eire writes that audience members "couldn't get away" from Castro's voice (line 27). Choice (A) is an excellent paraphrase of this.

Do any answer choices contradict what is stated in the passage? \_\_\_\_\_

5. (C)

There will be a few Passage-Based questions that ask you the meaning of a word in context. The key to answering these questions is the context—the correct answer is usually a secondary definition of the word. If you're not sure of the definition after rereading the sentence, look to the sentence just before and after the cited line for additional clues. In this case, *bombing* describes the effect of Castro's voice. Lines 27-29 show that Castro's voice is overwhelming: "you couldn't shut out the noise."

Often, the most common definitions of a tested word are incorrect. Which common definitions of "bombing" could you eliminate here? \_\_\_\_\_

6. (E)

A good way to avoid being tempted by wrong answer choices is to make a prediction of the right answer *before* you look at the answer choices. First, though, take a look back at the cited lines: "He was telling us we had no choice. And he was telling us we were free." Having no choice and being free are contradictory. This is a great match for (E).

Do any of the wrong answer choices use details that appear in other unrelated parts of the passage? \_\_\_\_\_

7. (A)

You'll often need to move beyond the cited lines to find the right information to get to the answer. Before Eire asks his grandfather if they can leave, he describes the experience at the Plaza as "one of the scariest moments of my life" (lines 37-38). Then he and his grandfather face a "streaming" crowd of people entering the Plaza as they are trying to leave. These two details support the idea that the narrator was frightened.

Some wrong answer choices will go beyond the scope of the passage—they refer to something that isn't discussed in the passage. Do any of the wrong answer choices here go beyond the scope of the passage? \_\_\_\_\_

8. (C)

To get to the correct answer, check the context of this description. As Eire and his grandfather are attempting to leave the crowd at the Plaza, Eire reflects that they were “two drops struggling to free ourselves from the sea around us” (lines 48-49). The image of the crowd as an ocean emphasizes the almost overwhelming size of the crowd through which Eire and his grandfather must move, choice (C).

What makes choice (E) incorrect? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. (B)

This question asks about an image that is repeated throughout the passage, so keep the main idea of the passage in mind. Although Castro appears as “a tiny moving speck” (line 23), he has control over everyone in the crowd, including Eire and his grandfather. In the closing lines of the passage, Eire simply says “Too bad” in reference to the “One tiny speck” that is Castro. Choice (B) best reflects this.

What makes choice (C) incorrect? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Kaplan SAT Score-Raising Book Club

*Waiting for Snow in Havana*

### Vocabulary-Building Activity—Teacher’s Notes

1. Work through the Using Context, Knowing Prefixes, and Using Word Charge exercises as a group or with students working in pairs. Go over answers before students proceed to the test-like Sentence Completions questions.
2. Give students five to seven minutes to independently answer the twelve Sentence Completions questions.
3. Before handing out the answers and explanations, have students discuss their answers with a partner. Tell them to come to agreement about the best answer for each question.
4. Hand the answers and explanations out to the student pairs. Explain that one valuable test-taking tool is being able to determine why some answers are incorrect. Have student pairs answer the wrong answer choice question that accompanies each answer explanation. Answers to these questions are given below.
5. Lead a discussion about question 12, which refers to the title of the book. Ask students their opinions on why Eire chose this title.
6. For reference, give students the vocabulary list of words used in these exercises. For further work with these words, have students write a short review of *Waiting for Snow in Havana*, using at least 10 of the listed words.

### Answers to Test-Taking Skills Activities

1. Contrition means “sincere regret for doing something wrong.” Eire was not truly sorry, for he planned to shoplift again.
2. The two key words are “battle” and “contest.”
3. A good prediction could be battle, contest, or fight.
4. (C) skirmish is the best match. A skirmish is “a minor battle or conflict.”
5. Possible answers include malady, maladjusted, malignant, maligned, malnourished, malpractice, etc.
6. Possible answers include exit, excise, exclaim, excrete, exempt, exfoliate, exterminate, exhaust, exodus, etc.
7. Possible answers include incapable, incognito, incomplete, incompetent, inconvenient, incorrect, indecent, indefinite, indirect, ineligible, ineffective, infinite, etc.

8. Possible answers include incarcerate, include, incoming, incubate, infiltrate, inflate, etc.

9. *menacing* = negative charge

*reverent* = positive charge

*annihilate* = negative charge

*contrition* = positive charge

10. The words “priest” and “graceful” both have positive charges, so the missing word should also have a positive charge.

11. Only (B) reverent has the necessary positive charge.

### **Answers to Sentence Completions**

1. Eliminate (D) loathsome and (E) malevolent for their negative charges. It wouldn't make sense to describe the prayers as something negative.

2. Eliminate (A) reverent, which has a very positive charge.

3. Eliminate (B) pristine, which means “pure.”

4. Choice (A) uses the correct prefix *in-*, but incision means “a cut into something.”

5. Both (A) absolve and (D) revere have positive word charges, so they could be eliminated.

6. Vanquished means “defeated”; Lola wouldn't think of the frog as an enemy if it was “defeated.”

7. I've forgotten everything that happened in the store after my dad put his hand on my shoulder.

8. Consecrated means “sacred,” so it has a very positive charge. Pure and pristine also have very positive charges, and the context of the sentence compares something pure and pristine to something that is consecrated.

9. (D) obliterated and (E) annihilated both mean “destroyed.”

10. Although a “blade” could be associated with a skirmish, or battle, a “scalpel” is a surgical instrument that isn't connected to warfare.

11. The key words are “deep” and “dark.”

12. Answers will vary here. Point students back to the fourth full paragraph on page 222. Why does Eire long for snow in Havana?

## Kaplan SAT Score-Raising Book Club

### *Waiting for Snow in Havana*

#### Vocabulary-Building Activity

On the SAT, Sentence Completion questions in the Reading section directly test your vocabulary. Paying attention to challenging words in books like *Waiting for Snow in Havana* will help you build your vocabulary and prepare for the SAT. The exercises and test questions in this activity use short excerpts and some tough vocabulary from Carlos Eire's memoir.

First, take a look at some test-taking skills that can help you prepare for the vocabulary questions on the SAT.

#### Using Context

It's a good idea to look up words that you don't know, but it's also important to work on deciphering the meaning of a word based on the context of a sentence or paragraph.

For example, what's your best guess for the meaning of *deluded* in the sentences below?

Contrary to what my brother Tony liked to say as he administered shock treatments to them, the lizards were not *deluded* in the least. They knew exactly what they were and always would be.

The second sentence says that the lizards "knew exactly what they were." It's a good guess, then, that *deluded* means something like "not knowing exactly what you are."

Now try guessing the definition of *contrition* in the following excerpt.

"I'm sorry." Sheepish look on my face, with no genuine inner contrition. I knew I'd do it again as soon as I had the chance.

1. Contrition means \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sentence Completions on the SAT are formatted a bit differently than the two samples you just worked with. Sentence completions are one sentence with one or two missing words. You'll need to pick the missing word or words from five options. Take a look at this sample:

I realize now that the battle between December 25 and January 6 was not just a(n) ----- between American cultural imperialism and Spanish tradition, but also a contest between Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI.

2. Which two key words give you a clue about the meaning of the missing word? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

It's a good idea to make a prediction of the missing word before you look at the answer choices.

3. Based on those two key words, what does the missing word mean? \_\_\_\_\_

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Now take a look at the sentence with the five answer choices.

I realize now that the battle between December 25 and January 6 was not just a(n) ----- between American cultural imperialism and Spanish tradition, but also a contest between Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI.

- (A) abyss                      (B) incision                      (C) skirmish  
(D) exclusion                      (E) oblivion

4. Which choice is the best match for your prediction? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Knowing Prefixes**

Using context to determine the correct word is an essential skill for correctly answering Sentence Completions, but there are some other tools you can use to give yourself an edge. One of those tools is knowing the meanings of common prefixes.

For example, the prefix *mal-* means “bad, badly, or wrongly.” Therefore, any word that begins with *mal-* probably means something pretty negative. Take a look at the *mal-* words below:

- malevolent* = having ill will, wishing harm upon others  
*malice* = spite, the desire to see others suffer  
*malfeasant* = one who has done something wrong or illegal

5. Can you think of any other negative words that begin with the prefix *mal-*? \_\_\_\_\_

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Another common prefix is *ex-*, which means “removal out of or from.” Here are some common words that begin with the prefix *ex-*:

- exclusion* = the act of omitting or leaving something out  
*expelled* = forced out

6. What are some other words that use the prefix *ex-* to mean “removal out of or from”? \_\_\_\_\_

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A third common prefix is *in-*. This can have two meanings: either “not, lacking, or without,” or “in, into, or within.” Notice that the second definition is the opposite of the prefix *ex-*.

7. What are some words that use the prefix *in-* to mean “not, lacking, or without”? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. What are some words that use the prefix *in-* to mean “in, into, or within”? \_\_\_\_\_

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Sometimes just knowing the meaning of a prefix can help you select the correct word. Here’s an example:

They looked sad and angry and dirty, and they eyed me with -----, or so I thought.

- (A) contrition            (B) inclusion            (C) exclusion  
(D) malice                (E) oblivion

The key phrase “sad and angry and dirty” tells you that the missing word has a negative meaning. If you know that the prefix *mal-* means “bad, badly, or wrongly,” then it’s simple to pick (D) as the correct answer.

### **Using Word Charge**

You know the exact definitions of many words, but you *kind of know* the definitions of many, many more words. For example, you might not know exactly what *loathsome* means, but you probably can guess that it has a pretty negative meaning.

To use word charge, think of words in three groups—those that have positive meanings, those that have neutral meanings, and those that have negative meanings. For example, *malfeasant* has a negative charge, *family* has a neutral charge, and *pristine* has a positive charge.

9. You may not know the exact definitions of the following words, but see if you can determine whether they have positive or negative charges.

*menacing* \_\_\_\_\_  
*reverent* \_\_\_\_\_  
*annihilate* \_\_\_\_\_  
*contrition* \_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes just knowing the charge of a missing word is enough to get the correct answer.

10. What is the charge of the missing word here?

He is as ----- as a priest at the altar, and even more graceful.

Can you find the correct answer using word charge? Eliminate choices with negative charges.

He is as ----- as a priest at the altar, and even more graceful.

- (A) loathsome            (B) reverent            (C) inaudible  
(D) menacing            (E) deluded

11. Which choice is correct? \_\_\_\_\_

## Sentence Completions

Circle the missing word that would correctly complete each Sentence Completion question below.

1. The grown-ups just sat, or stood, in silence. My mother's prayers had become -----.

- (A) deluded                      (B) inaudible                      (C) pristine  
(D) loathsome                      (E) malevolent

2. And at night, the light was replaced by a ----- gloom, thick with bats, mosquitoes, prostitutes, and flying cockroaches.

- (A) reverent                      (B) vanquished                      (C) deluded  
(D) banished                      (E) menacing

3. Nothing frightened me more than the sight of that black water, except maybe for the sharks swimming silently beneath, and the ----- magic of the *brujeros*, the voodoo sorcerers, who always did their dirty work at night.

- (A) malevolent                      (B) pristine                      (C) inaudible  
(D) vanquished                      (E) receded

4. Birthday parties were rites of ----- and exclusion. Always for a select number, never for all.

- (A) incision                      (B) inclusion                      (C) expulsion  
(D) oblivion                      (E) contrition

5. I felt as if I were in the presence of a malevolent force that wanted to ----- me.

- (A) absolve                      (B) delude                      (C) recede  
(D) revere                      (E) annihilate

6. And one sunny day, as Lola sat on the porch, a giant, ----- frog jumped on her lap. She was so horrified, so shaken to the core by this surprise encounter with the enemy, that she retreated indoors for the rest of her life.

- (A) deluded                      (B) vanquished                      (C) loathsome  
(D) reverent                      (E) inaudible

7. Everything that happened in the store after my dad put his hand on my shoulder is now in my vault of ----- . No details left.

- (A) oblivion            (B) inclusion            (C) malice  
(D) contrition            (E) reverence

8. Your soul can be made -----, scrubbed white, as pure white as a consecrated host.

- (A) fervent            (B) pristine            (C) inaudible  
(D) annihilated            (E) menaced

9. More than once, friends were ----- from our house and barred from re-entering it for a long time.

- (A) absolved            (B) revered            (C) expelled  
(D) obliterated            (E) annihilated

10. The blade of Fidel's scalpel had attempted the first -----, the first step towards the gradual head transplant.

- (A) inclusion            (B) exclusion            (C) incision  
(D) expulsion            (E) skirmish

11. If I told you anyway, all you'd see is a deep, dark ----- in which there are no parrot fish.

- (A) inclusion            (B) abyss            (C) malfeasant  
(D) contrition            (E) incision

12. Snow was grace itself, falling from heaven; it didn't simply hide evil, but ----- it.

- (A) vanquished            (B) receded            (C) deluded  
(D) revered            (E) regressed

## Answers

**Directions:** Check your responses with the answers and explanations below. Each answer explanation includes a question about wrong answer choices that you could eliminate.

1. **(B)**

The first sentence contains a clue—the grown-ups were “in silence.” Eire’s mother’s prayers were *inaudible*, which means that they could not be heard. Remember, the prefix *in-* means *not* or *without*.

Which two choices with negative word charges could you eliminate? \_\_\_\_\_

2. **(E)**

You can use word charge to answer this question. Some words in the sentence, such as “gloom,” “thick with bats,” and “flying cockroaches,” indicate that the missing word should have be very negative. (E) *menacing*, or threatening, fits that charge.

Which answer choice with a positive charge could you eliminate? \_\_\_\_\_

3. **(A)**

With the key phrase “dirty work,” you can guess that the missing word has a negative charge. You know that the prefix *mal-* means “bad, badly, or wrongly,” so (A) has a negative charge. *Malevolent*, which means “having ill will, wishing harm upon others,” is correct.

Which word could be eliminated because it means the opposite of “dirty”? \_\_\_\_\_

4. **(B)**

Some people are excluded, or left out of, the birthday parties, and some are *included*, or invited. (B) is correct.

Which answer choice is a potential trap? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

5. **(E)**

A “malevolent force” wants to do others harm, which makes *annihilate*, or “destroy completely,” a perfect match. (E) is the answer.

Which choices with positive charges could you eliminate? \_\_\_\_\_

6. (C)

Key words like “horrified” and “enemy” tell you that the missing word must be very negative. (C) loathsome, which means “repulsive, disgusting,” fits the bill.

Remember that the correct word must make sense in context. If you’re not sure, read it back into the sentence to see if everything makes sense. Why doesn’t (B) vanquished make sense? \_\_\_\_\_

7. (A)

(A) oblivion means “the state of being forgotten, forgetfulness,” which is a perfect match for the phrase “No details left.”

How could you paraphrase the first sentence? \_\_\_\_\_

8. (B)

(B) pristine is a synonym for “pure,” making it the correct choice.

Does “consecrated” have a positive or negative charge? What clues helped you guess? \_\_\_\_\_

9. (C)

When someone is barred from returning to a place, they have been forced out, or expelled, choice (C).

When two choices have the same meaning, you can eliminate them both. After all, they can’t both be the correct answer. Which two words here have the same meaning? \_\_\_\_\_

10. (C)

The blade of a scalpel is used to make an incision, or cut. (C) is correct.

Why is (E) skirmish incorrect? \_\_\_\_\_

11. (B)

An *abyss* is a “bottomless pit” or “immeasurable depth.” (B) is correct.

Which key words in the sentence are clues that *abyss* is the missing word? \_\_\_\_\_

12. (A)

The snow can go beyond hiding evil; it can overcome or beat evil. In other words, the snow can vanquish evil. (A) is correct.

Why do you think Carlos Eire titled his book *Waiting for Snow in Havana*? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Vocabulary List for *Waiting for Snow in Havana*

*abyss*—bottomless pit, unfathomable depth

*annihilate*—to destroy completely

*banished*—forced to leave, exiled

*contrition*—sincere regret for doing something wrong

*deluded*—deceived or misled

*exclusion*—the act of omitting or leaving something out

*expelled*—forced out

*inaudible*—not able to be heard

*incision*—a cut into something, a cut made in surgery

*inclusion*—the act of including something

*loathsome*—repulsive, disgusting

*malevolent*—having ill will, wishing harm upon others

*malfeasant*—one who has done something wrong or illegal

*malice*—spite, the desire to see others suffer

*menacing*—threatening

*oblivion*—the state of being forgotten, forgetfulness

*pristine*—pure, uncorrupted

*reverent*—feeling or displaying awe or great respect

*skirmish*—a minor battle or conflict

*vanquished*—defeated or overcome

## Think Like the Test Maker

One of the best ways to prepare for the SAT is to practice thinking like the makers of the test. Now that you've answered some test-like questions about a passage from *Waiting for Snow in Havana*, try your hand at actually writing a few questions and answer choices.

Read the passage below, and then write three questions—one that deals with vocabulary, one that asks about a straightforward detail in the passage, and one that requires an inference. Write the one correct answer choice and four wrong answer choices for each of your questions. Then trade with a partner to see how well you can answer the questions from another “Test Maker.”

*The following is excerpted from a memoir by a man who, at the age of eleven, was sent to America from Cuba after Fidel Castro seized power. In this excerpt, the writer reflects upon his parents' decision to send him to America.*

Some kind of indescribable terror possessed me totally, smothering the life out of me. I now know it was fear of death. In so many ways, I was about to die, and I knew it, at least at night. Marie Antoinette had decided that she had to get us out of Cuba as quickly as possible. My father didn't agree with her, but somehow he was persuaded to agree with her plan. We were to be sent to the United States on our own.

Line

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It was the only way to get us out quickly. Children didn't need security clearances to enter the States and were given visa waivers. The parents had to wait many months for their visas, sometimes a year or more.

Thousands of families were doing this. By the time Fidel and John Kennedy put a stop to it in October 1962, fourteen thousand children had been sent to the States all alone. So it wasn't too weird, as far as these things go. But, of course, when a world falls apart, everything is so strange that nothing is strange. So two pampered boys who have never spent a night away from home can be sent to live in another country, where they don't know a soul.

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I was ten years old, but I had just learned how to tie my own shoelaces, and I had never cut my own steak or buttered my own toast. I'd never lifted a finger to do anything around the house. No chores. No responsibilities. No clue about what it took to survive.

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All of my friends were in the same fix, and all of them were being shipped off too. *Niños bitongos*, Fidel called us. A bunch of pampered boys. He loved to make fun of us in his speeches. Manuel and Rafael, Eugenio, Gerardito, my new friend Ciro and his sisters, my other new friend Daniel, Jorge, and Julio. Each and every one of us, *niños bitongos* on our way to the United States, to enroll in the school of hard knocks.

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