The Reading Test

The CAAP Reading Test is a 36-item, 40-minute test that measures reading comprehension as a combination of skills that can be conceptualized in two broad categories: Referring Skills and Reasoning Skills.

- **Referring Skills.** Test items that focus on referring skills require the student to derive meaning from text by identifying and interpreting specific information that is explicitly stated. Typical items of this type require students to recognize main ideas of paragraphs and passages, to identify important factual information, and to identify relationships among different components of textual information.

- **Reasoning Skills.** Test items that focus on reasoning skills require students to determine implicit meanings and to go beyond the information that is explicitly presented. Typical items in this category assess students' ability to determine meaning from context, to infer main ideas and relationships, to generalize and apply information beyond the immediate context, to draw appropriate conclusions, and to make appropriate comparisons.

The Reading Test consists of four prose passages of about 900 words each that are representative of the level and kinds of writing commonly encountered in college curricula. The four reading passages come from the following four content areas, one passage from each area:

- **Prose Fiction**—Entire stories or excerpts from short stories or novels.
- **Humanities**—Art, music, philosophy, theater, architecture, or dance.
- **Social Studies**—History, political science, economics, anthropology, psychology, or sociology.
- **Natural Sciences**—Biology, chemistry, physics, or the physical sciences.

Each passage is accompanied by a set of nine multiple-choice test items that focus on the set of complementary and mutually supportive skills that readers must use in studying written materials across a range of subject areas.
Reading: Social Sciences Sample Passage and Items

If we are to understand the politics of a nation, we must understand the issues people care about and the underlying images of the good society and how to achieve it that shape their opinions. Citizens in different nations differ as to the importance they attach to various policy outcomes. In some societies private property is highly valued, in others communal possessions are the rule. Some goods are valued by nearly everyone, such as material welfare, but societies differ nevertheless: some emphasize equality and minimum standards for all, while others emphasize the opportunity to move up the economic ladder. Some cultures put more weight on welfare and security; others value liberty and procedural justice. Moreover, the combination of learned values, strategies, and social conditions will lead to quite different perceptions about how to achieve desired social outcomes. One study showed that 73 percent of the Italian Parliament strongly agreed that a government wanting to help the poor would have to take from the rich in order to do it. Only 12 percent of the British Parliament took the same strong position, and half disagreed with the idea that redistribution was laden with conflict. Similarly, citizens and leaders in preindustrial nations disagree about the mixture of government regulation and direct government investment in the economy necessary for economic growth.

Political cultures may be consensual or conflictual on issues of public policy and on their views of legitimate governmental and political arrangements. In a consensual political culture citizens tend to agree on the appropriate means of making decisions and tend to share views of what the major problems of the society are and how to solve these. In more conflictual cultures the citizens are sharply divided, often on both the legitimacy of the regime and solutions to major problems. In several recent studies of citizens' attitudes in industrial societies, respondents in different countries were asked to locate their political positions on a ten-point scale ranging from extreme left to extreme right.

**Figure 1**

Patterns of Left-Right Distributions of Opinion in Five Countries: Citizens' Self-Placement in the Mid-1970s

![Figure 1](image)

The differences and patterns can be seen in Figure 1. In the top part of the figure we see the United States, Britain, and Germany. In each of these countries the distribution is that of a normal curve. Most of the respondents are concentrated in the center and very few place themselves at the extreme right or extreme left. The United States has the most consensual of these distributions, with nearly half the respondents locating themselves at the center. At the bottom of the figure we see the distributions for France and Italy. Although the center is still the most common position, their political cultures are
more conflictual than those of the three countries above. Fewer citizens locate themselves at the center—only about one-third in France do so. And, as we might expect from the substantial strength of Communist parties in France and Italy, many citizens place themselves at the extreme left. These more conflictual distributions in the political culture both encourage and reflect the more intense political debates in these countries, and have been associated with dispute over the legitimacy of the regime as well as disagreements on political issues.

When a country like Italy or France is deeply divided in political attitudes and values we speak of the distinctive groups as political subcultures, which may share common national sentiments and loyalties, but disagree on basic issues, ideologies, and the like. The term political subculture may also be applied to groups less opposed to one another, as in Austria and the Netherlands. In the latter countries, such groups as Catholics, Protestants, liberals, and socialists have distinctive points of view on political matters, affiliate themselves with different political parties and interest groups, have separate newspapers, and even separate social clubs and sport groups. Nonetheless, relationships between these groups have been relatively amicable in recent years, unlike the intense and violent conflict between political subcultures in Northern Ireland.


Sample Items for Passage 1

1. The passage argues that the politics of a nation are determined by:
   A. the amount and kind of economic activity engaged in by a society.
   B. a consensus of national sentiments and loyalties.
   C. the degree to which the interests of a nation conflict with those of other nations.
   D. the opinions of citizens about what policies are best for their society.

2. The passage suggests that political subcultures exist in societies in which:
   I. there is a high degree of political consensus.
   II. citizens disagree violently on basic political issues.
   III. disagreement between political parties is generally amicable.
   A. I only
   B. II only
   C. III only
   D. I and III only
   E. II and III only

3. According to Figure 1, which nation reports the greatest number of citizens who consider their political orientation to be on the extreme right?
   A. France
   B. Italy
   C. United Kingdom
   D. United States

4. A nation in which two political parties publish newspapers which criticize each other's ideas for instituting reform in welfare programs can most likely be considered a:
   A. conflictual culture with harshly opposed political subcultures.
   B. conflictual culture with amicable political subcultures.
   C. consensual culture with amicable political subcultures.
   D. conflictual culture with limited freedom of the press.
On Union Boulevard, St. Louis, in the 1950's, there were women in their eighties who lived with the shades drawn, who hid like bats in the caves they claimed for home. Neighbors of my grandmother, they could be faintly heard through a ceiling or wall. A drawer opening. The slow thump of a shoe. Who they were and whom they were mourning (someone had always just died) intrigued me. Me, the child who knew where the cookies waited in Grandma's kitchen closet. Who lined five varieties up on the table and bit from each one in succession, knowing my mother would never let me do this at home. Who sold Girl Scout cookies door-to-door in annual tradition, who sold fifty boxes, who won The Prize. My grandmother told me which doors to knock on. Whispered secretly, "She'll take three boxes—wait and see."

Hand-in-hand we climbed the dark stairs, knocked on the doors. I shivered, held Grandma tighter, remember still the smell which was curiously fragrant, a sweet soup of talcum powder, folded curtains, roses pressed in a book. Was that what years smelled like? The door would miraculously open and a withered face framed there would peer oddly at me as if I had come from another world. Maybe I had. "Come in," it would say, or "Yes?" and I would mumble something about cookies, feeling foolish, feeling like the one who places a can of beans next to an altar marked For the Poor and then has to stare at it—the beans next to the cross—all through the worship. Feeling I should have brought more, as if I shouldn't be selling something to these women, but giving them a gift, some new breath, assurance that there was still a child's world out there, green grass, scabby knees, a playground where you could stretch your legs higher than your head. There were still Easter eggs lodged in the mouths of drainpipes and sleds on frozen hills, that joyous scream of flying toward yourself in the snow. Squirrels storing nuts, kittens being born with eyes closed; there was still everything tiny, unformed, flung wide open into the air!

But how did you carry such an assurance? In those hallways, standing before those thin gray wisps of women, with Grandma slinking back and pushing me forward to go in alone, I didn't know. There was something here which also smelled like life. But it was a life I hadn't learned yet. I had never outlived anything I knew of, except one yellow cat. I never had saved a photograph. For me life was a bounce, an unending burst of pleasures. Vaguely I imagined what a life of recollection could be, as already I was haunted by a sense of my own lost baby years, golden rings I slipped on and off my heart. Would I be one of those women?

Their rooms were shrines of upholstery and lace. Silent radios standing under stacks of magazines. Did they work? Could I turn the knobs? Questions I wouldn't ask here. Windows with shades pulled low, so the light peeping through took on a changed quality, as if it were brighter or dimmer than I remembered. And portraits, photographs, on walls, on tables, faces strangely familiar, as if I was destined to know them. I asked no questions and the women never questioned me. Never asked where the money went, had the price gone up since last year, were there any additional flavors. They bought what they remembered—if it was peanut-butter last year, peanut-butter this year would be fine. They brought the coins from jars, from pocketbooks without handles, counted them carefully before me, while I stared at their thin crops of knotted hair. A Sunday brooch pinned loosely to the shoulder of an everyday dress. What were these women thinking of?

And the door would close softly behind me, transaction complete, the closing click like a drawer sliding back, a world slid quietly out of sight, and I was free to return to my own universe, to Grandma standing with arms folded in the courtyard,
staring peacefully up at a bluejay or sprouting leaf. Suddenly I'd see Grandma in her dress of tiny flowers, curly gray permanent, tightly laced shoes, as one of them—but then she'd turn, laugh, "Did she buy?" and again belong to me.

Gray women in rooms with the shades drawn . . . weeks later the cookies would come. I would stack the boxes, make my delivery rounds to the sleeping doors. This time I would be businesslike, I would rap firmly, "Hello Ma'am, here are the cookies you ordered." And the face would peer up, uncertain . . . cookies? . . . as if for a moment we were floating in the space between us. What I did (carefully balancing boxes in both my arms, wondering who would eat the cookies—I was the only child ever seen in that building) or what she did (reaching out with floating hands to touch what she had bought) had little to do with who we were, had been, or ever would be.


Sample Items for Passage 2

1. Which of the following statements represents a justifiable interpretation of the meaning of the story?
   A. The girl's experience selling Girl Scout cookies influenced her choice of careers.
   B. The girl's experiences with elderly women made her aware of the prospect of aging.
   C. Because she spent so much time with her grandmother, the girl preferred the company of older people to that of other children.
   D. The whole experience of selling Girl Scout cookies was a dream or hallucination and had nothing to do with who the girl really was.

2. When she delivered the Girl Scout cookies, the girl most likely adopted a businesslike attitude because:
   A. she hoped that such an attitude would persuade the elderly women to buy more cookies.
   B. her grandmother had urged her to be more polite.
   C. she wanted to avoid recalling the thoughts she had during her previous visit.
   D. the elderly women really wanted little to do with her.

3. The girl was taken aback by the sight of her grandmother (5th paragraph) because:
   A. the grandmother has a look of disapproval on her face.
   B. it seems odd that her grandmother should be staring at a bluejay.
   C. the grandmother asks if the woman bought any cookies.
   D. it occurs to the girl that her grandmother is an old woman.

4. What conclusion can most justifiably be drawn about the adult woman who narrates the story?
   A. She understands her reaction to the elderly women better now than she did as a girl.
   B. She now looks down on elderly women and their way of living.
   C. She is concerned about living conditions for the poor.
   D. She believes she should never have tried to sell cookies to the women.

Answers: