

English II Passages

Passage #1 – Writing (Questions 1-6)

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

Xavier recently read an interesting article about a famous cow. He has written this paper to share the story. Read Xavier's paper and think about the revisions he should make. When you finish reading, answer the questions that follow.

Grady the Famous Cow

(1) In the 1940s it wasn't unusual for a small-town newspaper to feature a story about a cow. (2) People were interested in reading about cows that grew a third horn, gave birth to triplets, or won a blue ribbon for producing especially creamy milk. (3) But it wasn't often that a news story about a cow was so remarkable that it made national headlines for a week and the problem-solving skills of people all over the country were engaged. (4) Ladies and gentlemen, meet Grady.

(5) Grady the cow started out as a dependable, ordinary cow owned by a farmer in Yukon, Oklahoma, named Bill Mach. (6) The six-year-old Hereford had lived a peaceful life on Mach's farm until one day in 1949 when Mach called in a local veterinarian to assist Grady during a difficult birth. (7) Afterward Grady became upset and ran toward the nearest source of light. (8) She probably thought it was an exit from the barn. (9) Unfortunately, it wasn't. (10) It was the opening to a grain silo. (11) Remarkably, the 1,200-pound cow squeezed through the tiny opening, which was as wide and tall as a newspaper page. (12) When they peered inside the silo, they saw Grady calmly looking out at them. (13) Sadly, they had no idea how to get her out.

(14) A local newspaper reporter, concerned for the cow, wrote of Grady's plight and asked readers to suggest ideas for freeing her. (15) Surprisingly, hundreds of suggestions came in from all over the United States and Canada. (16) Some people said that Mach should tunnel

into the silo. (17) Others thought he should tear down the silo or use a helicopter to airlift Grady out.

(18) Three days into Grady's ordeal, a *Denver Post* editor who specialized in articles on farming phoned Mach. (19) The editor, Ralph Partridge, announced that he was coming to Yukon to free Grady. (20) What was Partridge's foolproof plan? (21) He would smear Grady with grease and push her out the way she had come in. (22) First Partridge built a ramp inside the silo from the floor to the door. (23) Then he and an assistant climbed inside the silo and attached a thick leather strap, or halter, to Grady. (24) They covered the halter, Grady, and the opening to the silo with a thick coating of axle grease and attached ropes to the halter. (25) With a push from behind and a pull from the front, Grady popped right out. (26) Aside from some minor scrapes, she was just fine.

(27) Grady's hometown just happened to be on Route 66, a highway famous for its unusual tourist attractions. (28) Bill Mach decided to post a sign on the highway, declaring Yukon Grady's home. (29) In time Grady became a bit of a celebrity. (30) She was the subject of two children's books and was featured in *Time* magazine. (31) For many years people told the story of Grady the cow. (32) She was quite a cow, so people enjoyed telling her story.



A Grain Silo

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Passage #2 – Writing (Questions 7-11)

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

Brianna read about an increase of skin cancer among young people. She wrote the following paper to persuade readers to protect their skin. Read Brianna's paper and look for any revisions she should make. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Skin You're In

(1) Throughout childhood, kids are encouraged to take good care of their bodies by getting adequate rest, exercising regularly, eating healthful foods, and drinking plenty of water. (2) But recently a new directive has been added to that list. (3) Children and teenagers are now warned to protect their skin.

(4) Melanoma, an invasive cancer of the skin, is the second most common form of cancer for people ages 15 to 29. (5) Unfortunately, the risk of developing it has increased in recent years. (6) One of the most significant contributors to melanoma is ultraviolet (UV) radiation damage. (7) Scientists think that some of this damage is directly linked to the use of tanning beds. (8) Proponents of tanning beds claim that they are safe because the lightbulbs these beds use produce more UVA radiation than UVB radiation. (9) Early studies suggested that UVA rays weren't as harmful to the skin since they weren't as likely to produce sunburns. (10) Instead, scientists now know that both forms of radiation are dangerous. (11) According to the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the use of tanning beds before age 30 is associated with a 75-percent increase in melanoma risk. (12) The IARC has recently moved UV tanning beds to the highest cancer risk category, labeling them as "carcinogenic to humans." (13) They simply are not, as some enthusiasts suggest, a safe way to tan.

(14) Clearly, avoiding tanning beds is one way teens can protect their skin, but they must do more. (15) They need to protect themselves from too much sun exposure as well. (16) Doctors say that to avoid overexposure to the harmful rays of the sun, young people should stay indoors between 10 A.M. and 2 P.M., when the rays are the strongest. (17) This is especially true for those who live in the South or Southwest, since areas nearer to the equator are closer to the sun. (18) When

teens have to be outdoors during these peak hours, they should use a broad-spectrum sunscreen, one that provides maximum protection from both UVA and UVB rays.



(19) Prevention is the most effective weapon in the battle against melanoma, but paying close attention to the skin is also vital. (20) Melanoma often begins as a mole or a bump on the skin. (21) If it's caught before it spreads below the skin's surface, it's highly curable. (22) That's why teens should watch for new moles and note any unusual characteristics of or changes to existing moles. (23) If they see anything that looks suspicious, they should make an appointment with a dermatologist right away. (24) Although few moles actually develop into melanoma, by carefully examining cells from the suspicious mole, only an expert can determine under a microscope whether a person is at risk.

(25) Teens who continue to bake in the sun to achieve that perfect tan should realize the potential consequences of their behavior. (26) Is a sun-kissed look really worth the risk of melanoma? (27) It's not too late to change your habits and reduce your exposure to harmful UV rays. (28) Do something now.

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Passage #3 – Writing (Questions 12-16)

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

Natalia wrote the following essay in response to a history assignment. Read Natalia's paper and look for the corrections she should make. Then answer the questions that follow.



Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show

(1) With his flowing hair, thick mustache, and long goatee, the rider was an impressive man. (2) Sitting high in the saddle on a white stallion, he made a grand entrance. (3) The horse reared, and the man waved his Stetson hat to the audience. (4) What a sight he was in his tall, polished boots, beaded gloves, and fringed jacket! (5) As he dismounted and bowed, the crowd roared its approval. (6) The spectators were cheering for "Buffalo Bill" Cody the ultimate showman and the host of the renowned Wild West Show.

(7) An adventurous life led William Frederick Cody to the stage. (8) Born in the Iowa Territory in 1846, he grew up on the prairie. (9) At age 14 he noticed an ad for a pony express rider. (10) The ad stated that the rider must be willing to risk death daily. (11) Cody landed the job and joined a team of brave young men who carried packages and mail across dangerous western terrain. (12) When the

Civil War broke out, he rode as a Union scout and later in the cavalry. (13) At age 21 he hunted buffalo to provide meat for the Kansas Pacific Railroad construction crews. (14) In time, Cody was declared the most proficient buffalo hunter on the plains, eventually earning the nickname Buffalo Bill. (15) An author who wrote under the pen name Ned Buntline then made the character Buffalo Bill the hero of their novels.

(16) In 1883, Cody took his larger-than-life personality to the stage by putting together a spectacular show. (17) Part history lesson and part circus, the outdoor pageant reenacted scenes from America's frontier. (18) There were dramatizations of stagecoach robberies, frontier battles, and buffalo hunts. (19) Cody cast some of the West's most well-known figures. (20) For example, Sitting Bull, the famous Lakota Sioux chief, joined the show for a season. (21) Popular Texan cowboys Bill Pickett and Buck Taylor were also part of the troupe.

(22) Cody created some new stars, too. (23) In 1885 his extravaganza introduced a petite, young Ohio woman who was an expert sharpshooter. (24) Phoebe Ann Moses took the stage name Annie Oakley and soon became an audience favorite. (25) Oakley, who was nicknamed "Little Sure Shot," toured the world with the cast. (26) An advocate for women's rights, Buffalo Bill made sure that Oakley and the cast's other cowgirls earned wages comparable to those of the cowboys.



Program Cover for One of Buffalo Bill's Shows

(27) Buffalo Bill became a symbol of the West, and his spectacular show became world famous. (28) It was a hit in Europe, in Canada, and across the United States. (29) In Texas alone, the show played in Abilene, Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, San Antonio, Waco, and 40 other cities and towns.

(30) When the Wild West Show disbanded just before World War I. (31) It was declared the most successful traveling show of all time. (32) Unfortunately, however, Cody had been a far better showman than businessman. (33) Before his death in 1917, he had lost almost all his money. (34) Although his fortune was gone, he continued to take great pride in his accomplishments. (35) It was reported that Buffalo Bill's final words were "Let my show go on!"

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Passage #4 – Writing (Questions 17-22)

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

In response to a class assignment, Alisha has written the following literary essay. Read Alisha's paper and look for any corrections she should make. When you finish reading, answer the questions that follow.

From Disappointment to Purpose

(1) I'm known for my determination. (2) If I want something, I go for it; I refuse to give up until I succeed. (3) Over the years this attitude has worked good for me and helped me achieve my goals. (4) For example, when I wanted to be on the dance team at school, I learned all the dances and practiced until I could barely move. (5) When I wanted to play an instrument, I borrowed my dad's guitar and sat for hours teaching myself the basic chords. (6) And when I wanted money for a new computer, I washed cars, babysat, and walked dogs for all my neighbors. (7) But this year everything changed, I had set my sights on a summer job that I was determined to get. (8) I could already see myself depositing my weekly checks and building up my savings. (9) Unfortunately, I wasn't offered the job. (10) But from that disappointment I learned a very valuable lesson.

(11) My friends and I had all planned to work at the Water Zone. (12) We had visited this park every summer for the past several years and had dreamed about working there together once we were old enough. (13) Park employees could go on the water rides after their shift and get free food at the snack bar. (14) It was the perfect job to have on hot summer days. (15) So just as I had attacked every goal in the past, I set out to land a job at the Water Zone. (16) I completed the application in my neatest handwriting, carefully prepared for my interview, and gathered a stack of recommendation letters. (17) I was certain that no obstacle could keep me from my dream job.

(18) Three days after my interview, the manager of the Water Zone calls. (19) He told me that there had been so many applicants that he could hire only those with experience in water safety. (20) I was devastated. (21) Apparently, while I had been busy washing cars, babysitting, and walking dogs, my friends had been earning their lifeguard certification and working at neighborhood pools.

(22) I would be the only one of us not working at the Water Zone. (23) I felt like a failure.

(24) With no dream job secured, I let my neighbors know that I would again be available for summer babysitting and other chores. (25) On the last weekend before school ended for the summer, my piano teacher, Mrs. Keller, called me. (26) She wondered whether I would be interested in an opening at her daughter's summer day camp. (27) I decided that I had nothing to lose, so I called the manager and scheduled an interview. (28) She was impressed by my babysitting experience and references and offered me a job on the spot. (29) In less than a week, I had completely forgotten about wanting to work at the water park. (30) Each time I comforted a little boy who missed his mother or a little girl who needed help tying her shoes, I felt I was doing something significant. (31) I realized that I had discovered my life's purpose: to work with children. (32) I now have a new goal. (33) I'm going to study to become an elementary school teacher.



(34) Sometimes in life we don't get exactly what we want. (35) Our dream guy or girl may not be interested in us. (36) The coach may not select us for the team. (37) A certain employer may not choose to hire us. (38) When something like this happens, it's natural to feel disappointed; I sure did. (39) But I also learned an important lesson. (40) Occasionally, when we don't get what we want, something even better is waiting for us around the corner!

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Passage #5A – Fiction (Questions 23-28)

Read the next two selections and answer the questions that follow.

Tehuelche

by Gustavo Bondoni

- 1 "What's wrong with her?"
- 2 "We don't know."
- 3 Dr. Alejandro Benetti shook his head in frustration. Every time an economic opportunity convinced him to leave the capital, it was the same story. Small-town nurses were always extremely willing and helpful, but their training left a lot to be desired. The further one got from Buenos Aires, the worse it became, and when one reached small resort towns in Patagonia, it was necessary to keep a close eye on the staff, for the patients' sake.
- 4 "Is she showing any symptoms?"
- 5 "No, the people at the home brought her in because they say she wasn't looking well. I looked her over, and she seems to be healthy—but very, very old." Carlos Ramírez was one of the better nurses the doctor had encountered, but perhaps it was just his turn to show the gaps in his preparation.
- 6 "Did you ask her what was wrong?"
- 7 "Of course, but . . . She doesn't speak any Spanish."
- 8 "A foreigner?" It wouldn't have surprised Alejandro at all. During the winter months, Esquel filled up with Brazilians and Europeans, though why an old lady would come to ski or practice extreme sports was beyond him.
- 9 "No. She was born ten kilometers away. She's Tehuelche."
- 10 "Tehuelche?"
- 11 He shrugged. "The natives that used to live here. They're all gone now."
- 12 "Let me see her."
- 13 The old woman was just as advertised. Her dark face was lined with chasms and crevasses which deepened as she smiled. There seemed to be nothing outwardly amiss, yet the director of the nursing home had been adamant that there was something wrong with her.
- 14 Alejandro's examination brought no obvious problems to light, and his questions, asked out of habit, received incomprehensible replies or sad smiles. Out in the corridor again, he cornered Carlos and the director of the nursing home. "Is there anyone who speaks Tehuelche?"
- 15 The director, a fiftyish woman with platinum hair, replied. "No. We've never needed it before, since she was speaking Spanish perfectly until yesterday. We don't even know if what she's speaking is actually even Tehuelche or just gibberish."
- 16 Well, at least now Alejandro knew what had been disturbing the director so badly. When one of your patients suddenly forgets how to communicate with you, you look for an expert opinion.
- 17 "Well, does she have any family? Someone who might know how to talk to her?"
- 18 "She has one adult granddaughter who lives in Buenos Aires. We've gotten in touch with her and she's flying in tomorrow." The director hesitated. "We'd prefer it if she stayed in the clinic tonight."
- 19 Alejandro sighed. The nursing home was covering its bases—if the old woman died, they'd have nothing to do with it. Worse, there was no point in arguing, because the director probably knew someone on the city council who had a cousin on the hospital's board . . .
- 20 He just hoped the granddaughter could be of some use.
- ***
- 21 Designer clothes? Blue eyes? "You don't look much like your grandmother."
- 22 Jimena smiled. "A Welsh grandfather and an Italian mother will do that to you."
- 23 "Have they told you the situation?"
- 24 She nodded. "I don't think I can help much, but I want to be there for her."
- 25 "Do you speak Tehuelche?"
- 26 Jimena laughed, a tinkling, pleasant sound that cut through her concern and brightened her features. "You don't know much about the Tehuelche people, do you?"
- 27 "Well, I know what kills them, and how to keep that from happening. Everyone is pretty much the same on the inside, you know."
- 28 Her face spoke her disbelief, and she went on. "Tehuelche is a dying language. A few years ago, there were four native speakers, all very old. I haven't seen any new statistics lately, but it might be safe to assume that my grandmother is the last one alive. She's ninety-three, you know."
- 29 "I didn't know. The home said she was in her late eighties."
- 30 "Can I see her?"
- 31 "She's right there," Alejandro said, pointing towards the door to the only private room in the clinic. They hadn't wanted to put her in a ward, and there were hardly any other patients in residence. "She didn't touch her breakfast this morning." *And she looks a lot worse than she did yesterday*, he didn't say.
- 32 The woman nodded silently, the veil of concern down again. Impulsively, Alejandro followed her into the room and stood silently just inside the door as the woman spoke softly to the wrinkled woman on the bed. Jimena's words were in Spanish, but the replies were impossible to understand.
- 33 No recognition shone in the grandmother's eyes, and the smile was the same as the one she'd given the doctor. There was little time left to her, and nothing outwardly wrong that he could detect. Perhaps the bloodwork would show something, but it would be two days before that came back from Bariloche.
- 34 Then it hit him. The scratchy sounds the woman was making might represent the last time the Tehuelche language was spoken on the face of the Earth. How long had it lasted? A thousand years? Two thousand?
- 35 He wanted to take Jimena by the shoulders, shake her and tell her to appreciate the importance of the moment, to drink in every sound, to keep the woman talking as long as she could. But that would be inhuman: Jimena was losing her grandmother.
- 36 But what the world was losing was priceless. He was inured to death and illness, but had never been present at anything of this magnitude.
- 37 So Dr. Alejandro Benetti stood just inside the door in a tiny clinic, a thousand miles from Buenos Aires, and listened harder than he'd ever listened to anything in his life.

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Passage #5B – Expository (Questions 29-33)

Linguist on Mission to Save Inuit “Fossil Language” Disappearing with the Ice

by Mark Brown
The Guardian
August 12, 2010

- 1 Stephen Pax Leonard will soon swap the lawns, libraries and high tables of Cambridge University for three months of darkness, temperatures as low as -40°C and hunting seals for food with a spear.
- 2 But the academic researcher, who leaves Britain this weekend, has a mission: to take the last chance to document the language and traditions of an entire culture.
- 3 “I’m extremely excited but, yes, also apprehensive,” Leonard said as he made the final preparations for what is, by anyone’s standards, the trip of a lifetime.
- 4 Leonard, an anthropological linguist, is to spend a year living with the Inughuit people of northwest Greenland, a tiny community whose members manage to live a similar hunting and gathering life to their ancestors. They speak a language—the dialect is called Inuktitut—that has never fully been written down, and they pass down their stories and traditions orally.
- 5 “Climate change means they have around 10 or 15 years left,” said Leonard. “Then they’ll have to move south and in all probability move in to modern flats.” If that happens, an entire language and culture is likely to disappear.
- 6 There is no Inughuit written literature but a very strong and “distinctive, intangible cultural heritage,” according to Leonard. “If their language dies, their heritage and identity will die with it. The aim of this project is to record and describe it and then give it back to the communities themselves in a form that future generations can use and understand.”
- 7 The Inughuits thought they were the world’s only inhabitants until an expedition led by the Scottish explorer John Ross came across them in 1818.
- 8 Unlike other Inuit communities they were not significantly influenced by the arrival of Christianity in Greenland—so they retain elements of a much older, shamanic culture—and their life is not very different now to how it always has been. Many of the men spend weeks away from home hunting seals, narwhal, walruses, whales and other mammals. And while they have tents, they still build igloos when conditions get really bad.
- 9 Their language is regarded as something of a linguistic “fossil” and one of the oldest and most “pure” Inuit dialects.
- 10 Leonard was yesterday saying goodbye to family and friends in Eastbourne. On Sunday he flies to Copenhagen—it’s the only place you can buy a Greenlandic-Danish dictionary—and then it’s off to Greenland, taking two internal flights to get to the main Inughuit settlement in Qaanaaq on the northwest coast of Greenland, north of Baffin Bay.
- 11 There, Leonard expects to hone his linguistic skills and build contacts for seven or eight months before moving to the most traditional Inughuit outpost in Siorapaluk, the most northern permanently inhabited settlement in the world, where about 70 Inughuit live. It will be here that Leonard hopes to hear the storytelling that lies at the heart of the culture.
- 12 Leonard’s interest in the Inughuits began 10 years ago when he read Marie Herbert’s book *The Snow People*, an account of life with the Inughuits, but it is only recently that he learned how imminent the threat is to their way of life and their culture.
- 13 “I just hadn’t realized how endangered the community was and this whole culture could simply die, disappear. Normally languages die out because it is parents deciding they don’t want their children to speak it.”
- 14 Leonard, who is 36, will have to adapt to many things, not least the extreme temperatures. Although the average temperature is -25°C, it can plummet to -40° or soar to zero in the summer. Then there is the Arctic darkness, with the sun expected to go down on October 24 and not rise again until March 8. It is this time of year that elders talk and pass on their stories and poetry.
- 15 Nevertheless, Leonard admitted: “I don’t really know how I’m going to deal with it, to be honest.”
- 16 There appears to be a certain inevitability to the Inughuits being soon forced from their ancient homeland to southern Greenland, making Leonard’s mission all the more pressing. Climate change is already leading to a noticeable reduction in seal numbers and the ice will soon become so thin that it will be impossible to use dog sleds.
- 17 Leonard intends to record the Inughuits and, rather than writing a grammar or dictionary, produce an “ethnography of speaking” to show how their language and culture are interconnected. The recordings will be digitized and archived and returned to the community in their own language.
- 18 “These communities, which could be just years from fragmentation, want their cultural plight to be known to the rest of the world,” he said.
- 19 Although the climate change catastrophe facing the Arctic is well documented and the Inughuits are visited frequently, Leonard hopes his visit will be more meaningful than others.
- 20 “One thing I have been told is that they are tired of journalists popping in and reporting how awful it is that the icebergs are melting and then that’s it, so they are keen that someone comes and lives with them and reports back.”

Did You Know?

Language defines a culture. The rate of language disappearance has accelerated dramatically in recent years.



- A language dies every 14 days.
- There are more than 7,000 languages spoken on Earth, many of which are not recorded.
- By 2100, more than half of all existing languages may disappear.
- A language often disappears because a more powerful group’s language renders it obsolete.
- Some geographic areas—in particular Siberia and Northern Australia—are under a severe threat of language disappearance.
- Studying language helps us understand how people communicate and store information. A lost language means a lost opportunity to learn how our brains work.

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Passages #5A – Fiction and #5B – Expository (Questions 34-37)

Refer to Passage #5A and Passage #5B above.

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Passage #6 – Poetry (Questions 38-44)

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

Trust

by Susan Kinsolving

Trust that there is a tiger, muscular
Tasmanian,¹ and sly, which has never been
seen and never will be seen by any human
eye. Trust that thirty thousand sword-
5 fish will never near a ship, that far
from cameras or cars elephant herds live
long elephant lives. Believe that bees
by the billions find unidentified flowers
on unmapped marshes and mountains. Safe
10 in caves of contentment, bears sleep.
Through vast canyons, horses run while slowly
snakes stretch beyond their skins in the sun.
I must trust all this to be true, though
the few birds at my feeder watch the window
15 with small flutters of fear, so like my own.

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English II Passages

Passage #7 – Persuasive (Questions 45-50)

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

Is *Criticism* a Four-Letter Word?

by Steven Frank


- 1 The movie was *E.T.* The moment we stepped out of the theater, my older brother asked the dreaded question: "What did you think of the film?"
- 2 Whatever opinion I held of the "film" was about to be shredded.
- 3 "I'll tell you as soon as I go to the bathroom."
- 4 He followed me in.
- 5 Turning away for maximum privacy, I confessed that I had liked the movie. It had moved me.
- 6 "Well," my brother said, "I found it maudlin and manipulative. 'E.T. phone home.' Honestly, Steve."
- 7 I spent the rest of my childhood keeping my opinions of books and movies to myself.
- 8 Since then, I've spent a lot of time wondering whether *criticism* is a four-letter word. Of course, I can count nine letters there, but is the spirit of the word offensive? I decided to ask my students what they thought, so I wrote *criticism* on the board, and we played the first-word-that-comes-to-mind game.
- 9 *Judgmental, mean, nasty, and hurtful* were the top four responses.
- 10 "Is all criticism negative?" I asked.
- 11 The consensus was yes.
- 12 I tried a different word: *review*.
- 13 *Opinion, evaluation, advice, and guide*, they responded.
- 14 It may be a question of semantics. People don't like the word *criticize* because it's what they think their parents always do: *Your room could double for the city dump.*
- 15 Is it any wonder that parents often hear their anguished teens shouting, "Why do you always criticize me?"
- 16 Suppose we swapped words—and attitudes. "Mom, I'd like you to review my room, please."
- 17 "Review it?"
- 18 "Yes. Evaluate it. Constructively. Sensibly."
- 19 Then a conversation might take place. "Well, honey, I've noticed some specific hazards there. The DVDs on the floor, for instance, are slippery, and if you step on one in the middle of the night, you might fall. Further, that turkey sandwich you forgot to throw away is starting to grow mold. And if you wanted to invite a friend over, it might help if you cleared a space on your chair for him to sit down."
- 20 Notice that in this scenario, the parent is supporting her opinion with concrete evidence. The criticism feels less, well, *critical*, because it makes sense. And that's what a good piece of criticism ought to do.
- 21 Suppose you're asked to write a critical evaluation of a book. Don't just trash it. You should take an honest look at what works about it and what doesn't. Start with an opinion, but be sure to back up that opinion by answering a few key questions: Are the characters credible? Do they think, feel, and act like human beings (even if they're aliens)? The poet Marianne Moore once described what readers want in literature as "imaginary gardens with real toads." The setting of a book can be as outrageous as a strange world down a rabbit hole, but the characters that live there must seem believable.
- 22 They should also be well rounded. Look for characters that seem real, not stereotypical. Good heroes have flaws; good villains have fans. Take Satan, for example, in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He's so charming, he's hard to hate.
- 23 Also ask whether the main character evolves. Harry Potter gains confidence. Hamlet finds his voice (a little late). Alice learns how to read strangers in Wonderland. In a good book, the protagonist grows.
- 24 A book's plot should be believable too. Do the turning points lead the reader to the next in a credible, even inevitable, chain of events? A plot with too many coincidences is contrived. Most action movies have contrived plots—the hero walks through a swarm of bullets and is never hit, then turns and fires a single shot to defeat his enemy. (Stories like that can be great fun; they're just not great literature.)
- 25 A well-crafted plot surprises you with believable twists. I'm still thrilled every time I find out that Charlie inherits the chocolate factory, because everything leading up to that outcome has been quietly pointing the way.
- 26 The best critics don't just spew their opinions; they help you form and deepen yours by examining an experience so carefully as to see it inside out.
- 27 In school, you're probably most often assigned book reviews or movie reviews, but don't let your critical eye glaze over on those familiar genres.

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Passage #7 – Persuasive Continued (Questions 45-50)

Try writing a restaurant review (it's a great excuse to go out to dinner). Review a video game, a blog, or a new album. Review a building that just went up downtown or a date you went on. And if your parents are being hypercritical, ask them if they wouldn't mind a little constructive evaluation in the form of a parent review.

How to Offer Constructive Criticism



Whether in our personal or professional lives, we sometimes find the need to address problems or conflicts with friends, family members, or colleagues. Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when delivering constructive criticism.

- Focus on facts, not feelings. Just state the problem and keep emotion out of it.
- Be specific. Explain what your criticism relates to, in detail.
- Be timely. Discuss a situation as soon as your emotions cool.
- Be direct but tactful. Make sure that you use the words that you actually mean, instead of searching for a softer word that doesn't really make your point.
- Give feedback in private. You don't need to embarrass someone in front of an audience. Take the person aside and speak with him or her one-on-one.
- Know what you want to say. You may even want to write down key points so that you don't forget anything or get sidetracked.
- Listen to what the other person has to say. After you speak your mind, listen to the other side of the story. You may not be aware of some circumstances. Keep an open mind, listen, and be sure to communicate regularly.

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- 28 It's taken me 30 years to learn something critical about criticism. Criticism isn't just an attack; it's a defense. If I had been trained to think critically, I could have defended my opinion of *E.T.* I could have countered my brother's dismissive "maudlin and manipulative" by saying, "Well, I think the movie is convincing. What lonely boy doesn't need a friend, especially a friend with magic powers to heal wounds and make bicycles fly? And if you got lost a few billion miles from your family, wouldn't *you* want to phone home too?"
- 29 Why write criticism? Because if you write your opinions—and support them with good, logical thinking—you'll be something that I wish I'd been as a teen.
- 30 Confident.
- 31 And that's another nine-letter word.

By Steven Frank