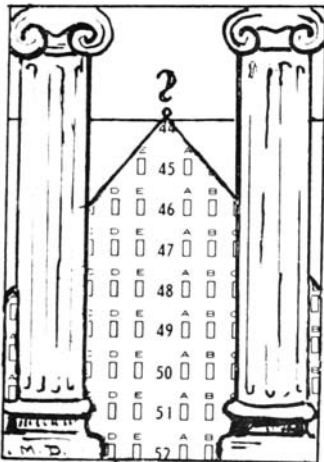


States of the Union

SO YOU WANT TO GO TO COLLEGE

BY RICHARD J. MARGOLIS



BOYS AND GIRLS, may I have your attention please? Let's all settle down now. Homer, you will please put away your book. This is not a time for reading. School has begun.

Today we start an exciting new unit: How to Pass Your Scholastic Aptitude Tests with Flying Colors. What are Scholastic Aptitude Tests? Well, they are commonly called SATs, and they consist of multiple-

choice questions which measure your ability to do college work. If you get a high grade, you are likely to get into a good college.

What is a good college? Dear me, aren't we full of questions today! A good college is an institution of higher learning that caters to students who have gotten good grades on their Scholastic Aptitude Tests.

Quiet! This is no laughing matter.

Our text for this unit is Barron's 538-page volume, *How to Prepare for College Entrance Examinations*, Fourth Edition. The people at Barron's have made up thousands of simulated SAT questions, which they say are just like the real ones. We're going to practice some of the "Verbal" questions today. Remember, these questions are designed to test your ability to *reason with words*. So put on your thinking caps, boys and girls.

Ready? Fill in the blank with the proper word:

The present expansion of the military strength of our neighboring country must fill us with_____.

1. awe 2. amazement 3. admiration 4. apprehension 5. anger

Does anyone know the correct answer? No, Homer, the correct response is not "admiration." We would most assuredly not be filled with admiration if our neighboring country expanded its military strength.

I don't care if we *are* sending millions of dollars worth of arms to Mexico. That's not a "Verbal" problem; that's Social Studies.

Yes, Debbie, the correct answer is "apprehension." Anyone who fancies himself to be college material should know that one of the feelings people are filled with these days is apprehension.

Here is the next question:

The work, published_____, revived our interest in the author who had just died.

1. posthumously 2. anonymously 3. privately 4. prominently 5. synthetically

Oh, I see so many eager hands. Tell us the answer, Julia. "Posthumously!" Good for you, Julia.

Why do you say "posthumously" is bad English, Homer? Redundant?

Homer, we are not learning how to write good English; we are learning how to get good grades.

Now prepare yourselves for a really hard one; it has two blanks:

At the church the visitors _____ with the _____ parents of the children drowned in the lake.

1. mingled-grieving 2. chatted-ensconced 3. commiserated-bereaved 4. lamented-wailing 5. spoke-sorrowing

No, Anthony, there is never more than one right answer. That's official policy.

No, Julia, the children did not drown posthumously. Try to pay attention.

Yes, Debbie, the visitors "commiserated" with the "bereaved" parents. You are very smart to have known that. I see—it's talked about every week in your church bulletin.

Homer, if some of your relatives wailed at your grandfather's funeral, perhaps it's because they are immigrants. Their children will know how to behave at an American funeral; Americans always commiserate with the bereaved.

Homer, that's a terrible thing to say. I assure you I have only the highest respect for Greeks and other foreigners. That's official school policy.

Perhaps we had better go back to a one-blank question. Here's an easy one:

The seriousness of the drought could only be understood by those who had seen the _____ crops in the field.

1. copious 2. blighted 3. meager 4. verdant 5. crippled

"Blighted" is correct, Debbie. "Crops" and "blighted" go together like "fire" and "raging," "brook" and "burbling," "link" and "missing."

What is it this time, Homer? "Crippled crops" is a fresh alliteration, while "blighted crops" is stale? It's not a question of fresh or stale, Homer. It's a question of right or wrong.

Homer, even if Disraeli did say, "A blight seems to have fallen over our fortunes," that doesn't prove anything. Let's try another:

Dr. Johnson with his _____ of _____ could be found at the tavern every evening.

1. coterie-friends 2. bevy-accomplices 3. group-cronies 4. dictionary-language 5. paroxysms-joy

Anthony, if you wish to speak, raise your hand and wait your turn. Don't be silly, Julia. Dr. Johnson *couldn't* have written his dictionary posthumously. Peter, I'm afraid you're wrong. Dr. Johnson was not the sort of gentleman who would have had cronies.

That's right, Debbie. Dr. Johnson was with his "coterie" of "friends."

WHY are you raising your hand again, Homer? You feel he could be found in the tavern every evening with his "paroxysms" of "joy." Don't shout; I'm not deaf. But, Homer, if Dr. Johnson actually said that—"I live in the crowd of jollity, not so much to enjoy company as to shun myself"—he certainly never mentioned paroxysms.

I'm not going to call on you again, Homer. It wouldn't be fair to the rest of the class. What do you mean you agree with Disraeli and Johnson? Disraeli said, "I hate defi-

nitions," and Johnson said, "All definitions are hazardous"? And what do you say? That will be one hour of detention for you, Homer. And don't look so surprised.

I believe we have time for one or two analogy questions. Now these are very tricky, so pay careful attention. You boys will like this first one; it's all about sports:

strike:baseball :: 1. fault:tennis 2. kick:swimming 3. birdie:golf 4. off-side:football 5. finesse:bridge

Anthony, we have no way of knowing whether it was a swinging strike or a called strike.

Well, I'm surprised at all you sports buffs. The correct answer is: strike is to baseball as "fault" is to "tennis."

Homer, do you really think it matters whether we identify with the pitcher or the batter? What I hear you saying is that if the pitcher throws a strike it is like a tennis player serving an ace; but if he pitches one high and outside, it is like a tennis player serving a fault. Well, I'm sure the people at Barron's have an explanation.

Here is another analogy:
mongrel:thoroughbred :: 1. man:god 2. man:angel 3. alloy:metal 4. anger:piety 5. variegated:motley

Good, Debbie. Mongrel is to thoroughbred as "alloy" is to "metal."

Now what, Homer? Eleanor Wylie called man a "mongrel beast"? Well, I fail to see how that . . . And Alexander Pope said "Men would be Angels, Angels would be Gods"? Therefore, if we are to believe Pope and Wylie (both of whom fill you with apprehension), mongrel is to thoroughbred as "man" is to "angel."

That happens to be the wrong answer. Do you realize, Homer, that you have missed every single practice question? You, who have such a fine mind, if you'd only apply yourself! I'm talking to you as a friend, Homer, not as a teacher: If you want to go to college, shape up.

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