

PTE Academic Lesson Plan Ideas: Test Taking Strategies

Lesson 9 – Reading: Multiple-choice, choose multiple answers

Time allocated: 30 minutes

Step 1: Introduce the Item Type

This is a multiple-choice item type that assesses reading skills. It requires test takers to read, analyze, understand and assess a short text on an academic subject and choose more than one correct response.

Who Are Aborigines? Aborigines are Australia's indigenous people. Recent government statistics counted approximately 400,000 aboriginal people, or about 2% of Australia's total population.

Australian Aborigines migrated from somewhere in Asia at least 30,000 years ago. Though they comprise 500-600 distinct groups, aboriginal people possess some unifying links. Among these are strong spiritual beliefs that tie them to the land; a tribal culture of storytelling and art; and, like other indigenous populations, a difficult colonial history.

The Dreamtime: Aboriginal spirituality entails a close relationship between humans and the land. Aborigines call the beginning of the world the "Dreaming" or "Dreamtime". In the "Dreamtime", aboriginal "Ancestors" rose from below the earth to form various parts of nature including animal species, bodies of water, and the sky. Unlike other religions, however, aboriginal belief does not place the human species apart from or on a higher level than nature. Aborigines believe some of the Ancestors metamorphosed into nature (as in rock formations or rivers), where they remain spiritually alive.

Storytelling, Art, and the Didgeridoo: The oral tradition of storytelling informs aboriginals' vibrant cultural life. Songs illustrate the Dreamtime and other tales of the land, while dances and diagrams drawn in the sand accompany oral tales. In the Northern Territory, aboriginal art includes sculpture, bark and rock paintings, and baskets and beadwork. Rock carvings and paintings can be found in such places as Arnhem Land, Ubirr, and Nourlangie. Many aborigines earn a living through selling native artworks.

Aboriginal music is often recognizable for its most famous instrument, the didgeridoo. A wind instrument typically made from bamboo, it extends about five feet and produces a low, vibrating hum. Aborigines use didgeridoos in formal ceremonies at such events as sunsets, circumcisions, and funerals.

Read the text and answer the question by selecting all the correct responses. *More than one response is correct.*

Which of the following statements about Australian Aborigines can be supported from this text?

- ☐ It is estimated that the population of Australian Aborigines peaked at about 400,000 some 30,000 years before white settlement.
- ☐ Despite being recognised internationally, the Aboriginal musical instrument the didgeridoo, rarely plays a significant role in Aboriginal cultural ceremonies.
- ☐ Today Aborigines comprise approximately 2% of the Australian population.
- ☐ Aboriginal culture is based on a belief that people, animals, and the land are integrally linked.
- ☐ Unlike many other indigenous cultures, Australian Aborigines developed equitable relationships with colonial powers.

Step 2: Present the Item Type Strategies

Strategy 1

Decide whether or not it is appropriate to draw on your background knowledge of the topic to help you answer the question.

Strategy 2

Use the structure of the reading text, the section headings, sub-headings and paragraphing, etc. to help you locate information. Direct your reading according to the information you need to find. Identify the "focus" of both the question and response options, and redundant information that can be ignored.

Strategy 3

Identify keywords and clues in the response options, and look for words and phrases with similar meanings in the text to locate the information you need.

Step 3: Explain and Practice Each Strategy

Strategy 1

Explain to your students that although the test does not assume or need them to have background knowledge of any academic topic to be answered correctly, in some cases they may find it useful to draw on their knowledge of a topic to help them to respond to multiple-choice items, but in others this approach may not be appropriate. To help students decide which approach to use, they must first identify the focus of the question.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities:

- Show students the following sample questions. Have them work in pairs to decide whether drawing on background knowledge is an appropriate approach in each case and why or why not.
According to the text, how are online news sources making the news industry more competitive? (No; clue "According to the text...")
Which of these countries uses electronic voting machines? (Yes; background knowledge of the topic of voting and elections may be useful in helping students predict or select correct responses)
What does the writer believe is likely to happen in future? (No; clue "What does the writer believe...")
Which of the following can be inferred from the text? (No; clue "... can be inferred from the text...")
One present indicator of climate change is _____. (Yes; background knowledge of the topic of climate change may be useful in helping students predict or select correct responses)
- Have students share their thoughts and explain their reasons to the class.

Strategy 2

Tell your students that in order to answer items of this type efficiently, it is important for them to quickly identify the type of reading text they have to work with, and to use the structure of the reading text, the section headings, sub-headings and paragraphing, etc. to help them locate the information they need.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities:

- Give out copies of Item 1. Give students a few seconds to read the question and skim the response options and text structure, e.g., the subheadings and topic sentences of each paragraph, etc., (but do not read the text), and think about the approach they would use to answer this item efficiently.
- Have students share their initial ideas.
- Then have your students quickly identify in which section the information for each response option is most likely to be found. Ask them not to read the text in detail, but just consider the overall structure.

Strategy 3

To quickly locate specific information, your students should first identify keywords and clues in the response options, and then scan the reading text for words and phrases that are either the same or have similar meanings.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Have students underline the keywords in each response option in Item 1 (e.g., Option 1: *population, peaked, 30,000 years before white settlement*; Option 2: *musical instrument, didgeridoo, cultural ceremonies*; Option 3: *comprise, 2%, population*; Option 4: *culture, people, animals, linked*; Option 5: *other indigenous cultures, equitable relationships, colonial powers*).
- Ask students to find and underline matching information in the text as quickly as possible.
- Ask students whether they can already eliminate or choose any of the options. Have them explain their decisions and reasons.
- Once students have discussed their decisions, show them the answers and explanations for Item 1 and discuss any queries.

Step 4: Respond to a (Reading) Multiple-Choice, Choose Multiple Answers Item

Explain to your students that they will now respond to a test item simulating test conditions. Remind them of the three strategies covered in this lesson and ask them to apply these strategies.

Give out copies of Item 2.

Step 5: Provide Feedback

Ask your students if they were able to use the strategies. Which one was the most difficult to apply? Which one do they think was the most useful? Ask students to compare and evaluate each other's responses in pairs or groups.

After they have done this, show the answers and explanations for Item 2 and discuss any queries.

Item 1

Read the text and answer the question by selecting all the correct responses. More than one response is correct.

Who Are Aborigines?

Aborigines are Australia's indigenous people. Recent government statistics counted approximately 400,000 aboriginal people, or about 2% of Australia's total population.

Australian Aborigines migrated from somewhere in Asia at least 30,000 years ago. Though they comprise 500-600 distinct groups, aboriginal people possess some unifying links. Among these are strong spiritual beliefs that tie them to the land; a tribal culture of storytelling and art; and, like other indigenous populations, a difficult colonial history.

The Dreamtime: Aboriginal spirituality entails a close relationship between humans and the land. Aborigines call the beginning of the world the "Dreaming" or "Dreamtime". In the "Dreamtime", aboriginal "Ancestors" rose from below the earth to form various parts of nature including animal species, bodies of water, and the sky. Unlike other religions, however, aboriginal belief does not place the human species apart from or on a higher level than nature. Aborigines believe some of the Ancestors metamorphosed into nature (as in rock formations or rivers), where they remain spiritually alive.

Storytelling, Art, and the Didgeridoo: The oral tradition of storytelling informs aboriginals' vibrant cultural life. Songs illustrate the Dreamtime and other tales of the land, while dances and diagrams drawn in the sand accompany oral tales. In the Northern Territory, aboriginal art includes sculpture, bark and rock paintings, and baskets and beadwork. Rock carvings and paintings can be found in such places as Arnhem Land, Ubirr, and Nourlangie. Many aborigines earn a living through selling native artworks.

Aboriginal music is often recognizable for its most famous instrument, the didgeridoo. A wind instrument typically made from bamboo, it extends about five feet and produces a low, vibrating hum. Aborigines use didgeridoos in formal ceremonies at such events as sunsets, circumcisions, and funerals.

Which of the following statements about Australian Aborigines can be supported from this text?

- ☐ It is estimated that the population of Australian Aborigines peaked at about 400,000 some 30,000 years before white settlement.
- ☐ Despite being recognised internationally, the Aboriginal musical instrument the didgeridoo, rarely plays a significant role in Aboriginal cultural ceremonies.
- ☐ Today Aborigines comprise approximately 2% of the Australian population.
- ☐ Aboriginal culture is based on a belief that people, animals, and the land are integrally linked.
- ☐ Unlike many other indigenous cultures, Australian Aborigines developed equitable relationships with colonial powers.

Item 1: Answer Key and Explanations

Which of the following statements about Australian Aborigines can be supported from this text?

Incorrect: It is estimated that the population of Australian Aborigines peaked at about 400,000 some 30,000 years before white settlement.

Explanation: This response is incorrect. 400,000 is the current estimated Australian Aborigine population.

Incorrect: Despite being recognised internationally, the Aboriginal musical instrument the didgeridoo, rarely plays a significant role in Aboriginal cultural ceremonies.

Explanation: This response is incorrect. The passage says that the didgeridoo is used “in formal ceremonies at such events as sunsets, circumcisions, and funerals.” These are significant events in Aboriginal culture.

Correct Answer: Today Aborigines comprise approximately 2% of the Australian population.

Explanation: This response is correct because it accurately conveys information from the second sentence in the passage: “Recent government statistics counted approximately 400,000 aboriginal people, or about 2% of Australia’s total population.”

Correct Answer: Aboriginal culture is based on a belief that people, animals, and the land are integrally linked.

Explanation: This response is correct. The “Dreamtime” paragraph says that aborigines believe that the people, animals and land share a common ancestry.

Incorrect: Unlike many other indigenous cultures, Australian Aborigines developed equitable relationships with colonial powers.

Explanation: This response is incorrect because the passage does not describe Australian Aborigines’ relationships with colonial powers as being different from those of other indigenous cultures. Rather, the passage says that Australian Aborigines had “like other indigenous populations, a difficult colonial history.”

Item 2

Read the text and answer the question by selecting all the correct responses. More than one response is correct.

Adaptations enable living organisms to cope with environmental stresses and pressures. Adaptation can be structural or behavioral. Structural adaptations are special body parts of an organism that help it to survive in its natural habitat (e.g., skin color, shape, body covering). Behavioral adaptations are the ways a particular organism behaves to survive in its natural habitat. Physiological adaptations are systems present in an organism that allow it to perform certain biochemical reactions (e.g. making venom, secreting slime, being able to keep a constant body temperature). Adaptations are traits that have been selected for by natural selection. The underlying genetic basis for the adaptive trait did not arise as a consequence of the environment; the genetic variant pre-existed and was subsequently selected because it provided the bearer of that variant some advantage.

Which of the following are true statements about adaptations?

- ☐ They can be structural, behavioral, or physiological adaptations.
- ☐ They mostly occur in physical appearances of special body parts of an organism.
- ☐ They are new genes created to increase an organism's chance of survival.
- ☐ They are genes selected due to the benefits they offer in a particular environment.
- ☐ They are created by the environment to help an organism survive in its habitat.

Item 2: Answer Key and Explanations

Which of the following are true statements about adaptations?

Correct Answer: They can be structural, behavioral, or physiological adaptations.

Explanation: This response is correct. The passage describes different types of structural, behavioral and physiological adaptations.

Incorrect: They mostly occur in physical appearances of special body parts of an organism.

Explanation: This response is incorrect because it makes a statement that was not made in the text. The passage says that there are structural and behavioral adaptations but does not say which occur more often or what proportions of each are present in an organism.

Incorrect: They are new genes created to increase an organism's chance of survival.

Explanation: This response is incorrect. The passage says the “genetic variant pre-existed” but does not discuss the creation of new genes.

Correct Answer: They are genes selected due to the benefits they offer in a particular environment.

Explanation: This response is correct. The passage says that the “genetic basis for the adaptive trait” was selected because it gave an advantage to the organism that possessed it.

Incorrect: They are created by the environment to help an organism survive in its habitat.

Explanation: This response is incorrect because it conflicts with information given in the passage. The text says that the genes for the adaptation “did not arise as a consequence of the environment.”