

Kaplan SAT Score-Raising Book Club for Teens

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 *Angela's Ashes*.

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:

- *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 moving memoir, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*.

Kaplan SAT Score-Raising Book Club

Angela's Ashes

Writing Activity

On the Writing section of the SAT, you'll be asked to write an essay in response to a specific prompt. You'll be given 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 such as *Angela's Ashes* can help you out. You can use events, themes, and characters from the book to support your answer to the prompt's question.

Planning Your Essay

One of the most challenging aspects of the SAT Essay is organizing your thoughts before you start writing. Because you only have 25 minutes, you may be tempted to start writing as soon as you finish reading the prompt. This would be a mistake. The Essay scorers are looking for writing that is organized and focused on the issue in the prompt, so you'll need to have at least a loose idea of what you want your Essay to say before you start writing.

Give yourself two or three minutes—no more—to make a plan for your Essay. You can use a simple list, an outline, or a web. Don't worry about making a formal outline, as the scorers won't look at your notes when they evaluate your Essay.

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. Use *Angela's Ashes* as a source for examples to support your point of view. Also, leave a minute or two at the end to proofread what you've written.

Consider carefully the following quotation and the assignment below.

Wealth is the parent of luxury and indolence, and poverty of meanness and viciousness, and both of discontent.

Plato, *The Republic*

Assignment:

Can too much or too little money affect a person's happiness? Write an essay that conveys your opinion and supports your position. Use reasoning and examples from your own experience and observations, your studies, the arts, literature, and 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.

	Assignment	Organization	Detail	Writing
A 6 essay has...	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
A 5 essay has...	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
A 4 essay has...	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
A 3 essay has...	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
A 2 essay has...	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
A 1 essay has...	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

People like to think that money can get you happiness, but this just isn't true. Money can't make you happy or sad. It just doesn't have that power. What really happens is that people make their own happiness or misery.

In the book Angela's Ashes, the McCourt family was poor. But they weren't always unhappy when they didn't have money. They really had some good times together, even when things were rough. The father told funny stories and sang his children songs, showing them that he loved them no matter what. You can tell just by the way Frank McCourt writes about his father that he knows his father loved him. And he loved his father too, even though he could never hold down a job. McCourt has fond memories of the house they lived in Limerick, where they had to live upstairs during part of the year because the lane would flood. They called the upstairs Italy, I think. The whole family was together. So they were experiencing these miserable conditions. But they still loved each other and found many ways of enjoying the hard times.

So even in hard financial times people can be happy if they make up their minds to be. You don't have to have money to be happy.

Reader's Score: 2

Sample Essay #2

Too much or too little money can definitely effect the way a person feels about life. From what I've seen, being either wealthy or poor leads to unhappiness for everyone involved. It's like the old saying that goes "Money is the root of all evil."

We can see examples of what happens with a surplus of money every day. The multimillionaire athlete or actor who has a happy life is the odd exception. Instead of happy millionaires, the tabloid papers and magazines are filled with stories about celebrity divorces, drug addictions, and depression. Having it all turns out to be harmful for most people. Mike Tyson is a good example of this. He started out as a poor kid, sometimes living on the streets. You might think that his sudden

success in boxing, which made him a millionaire several times over, would have brought him happiness. That's not what happened at all. People acted as his friends in order to benefit financially, and Tyson became self-destructive and felt that he couldn't trust anyone. Imagine never being able to know if someone cared about you or if they just cared about getting your money. Tyson is just one example of many celebrities who did not find happiness with fame and money. Marilyn Monroe, who ended up killing herself, is another example.

On the other side of the equation is the unhappiness that comes from having too little money. Poverty is more than not having the things you want. Poverty is not having the things that you need. A memorable example of the disaster of poverty is in Frank McCourt's book Angela's Ashes. The McCourt family is desperately poor. The father rarely has a job, and when he does he usually ends up spending all of the money in bars. Because the family has no money they aren't able to eat well or afford health care. The infant twin brothers have to live on mostly sugar water in their bottles, and the young Francis has to resort to stealing fruits from the grocer to keep his brothers from crying. The fifth child, Margaret, is loved dearly by everyone in the family, but she dies at a very early age. It's not clear if her death was poverty related, but all the misery that follows was. The twins never had proper nourishment or even a warm and clean home. They had to sleep on a borrowed mattress that was infested with fleas. By the end of the year, both twin boys died of illnesses that could have completely been prevented with money for medicine. The poverty of the family caused the deaths, and those deaths led the family into an even worse emotional and financial decline.

To think that you can be broke but happy is naïve. You might be able to be poor and happy for awhile, but you need at least some money for emergencies. The other side is true too. A lot of money won't make you happy because it comes with its own unique problems. Maybe the path to happiness is in having just enough money.

Reader's Score: 4

Sample Essay #3

We've all heard the saying "You can have too much of a good thing." The obvious partner to this statement is "You can have too little of a good thing." In this case, money is the "good thing" in question. Most of us harbor secret fantasies about winning the lottery, hitting the jackpot, or being discovered by an agent and becoming the next megastar, but the truth is that very few people truly find happiness in riches. For good reason, people have fears about having too little money, about not being able to afford the necessities of food and shelter, much less the luxuries of life. The extreme ends of the money continuum—wealth and poverty—both contribute to a person's unhappiness.

When a person gains unusual wealth, either through their own work or good fortune, the person is forever changed. The person loses perspective on what is ethical and how their actions affect other people. A recent example of this kind of behavior is in the corporate world, where many company CEOs have been placed on trial for lying about earnings and such in order to make people think their companies have been profitable. These people have wanted so desperately to hold onto their power and wealth that they were willing to sacrifice what they knew was right. In many cases, their lies cost ordinary, middle class people their jobs and life savings. Money and power are addictive, and when you have too much of it you're willing to do or say anything to keep it.

Similarly, when a person experiences unusual poverty, either through their own faults or misfortune, the person is forever changed. Examples of the power of poverty to radically affect a person's happiness abound in the memoir Angela's Ashes. Frank McCourt, the author, experienced extreme poverty from the day he was born to the day he left Ireland as a young adult. Three of the five first children in McCourt's family die, one from unknown causes and two from easily treatable illnesses. In other words, they die of poverty. The parents are so grief stricken by these losses that they cannot recover and build a life for their remaining children. Angela McCourt is forced to beg for scraps of food, losing her dignity in an attempt to feed her children. And McCourt himself endures years of humiliation stemming from his poverty. He cannot become an altar boy because he is poor, and he cannot attend college because he is poor. Though McCourt and his brothers eventually pulled their way out of the Limerick slums to become successful individuals, so many of their classmates and neighbors were doomed to lives of misery, never having enough to get by and always teetering on the edge of not being able to hold things together.

As you can see, a certain amount of money is a necessity for a healthy and happy life, but an excess or lack of money almost inevitably contributes to a person's unhappiness. A person should have the goal of not having so much money that they're ruled by it, but at the same time to have enough money that their not held back by poverty.

Reader's Score: 5

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Angela's Ashes

Critical Reading Activity (Teacher's Notes)

1. Using the first three excerpts, lead a discussion on how to make reasonable inferences. Emphasize that students should always be able to point to something in the text that supports their answer. The correct answer to an Inference question on the SAT will *never* require a leap of logic.
2. After students have some practice with Inference questions, hand out the longer fourth passage. Give students seven or eight minutes to read the passage and answer the accompanying 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. If they disagree about a particular question, they should go back to the passage and make a case supporting their opinion of the best answer.
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 questions that accompany each answer explanation. Answers to these questions are given below.
5. For additional practice, have students try to think like the Test Maker. Ask students to write two additional Inference questions using the excerpts in this activity. Then have student pairs answer each other's questions.

Answers to Wrong Answer Choice Questions

1. Choices (A) and (C) are both too positive for the description in the referenced lines. Angela wouldn't be crying and sitting silently if she believed that something good was about to happen.
2. Choice (B) is too extreme. Although Grandma McCourt does not welcome her son and his family with open arms, there isn't enough evidence in the excerpt to draw the conclusion that she is *angry*.
3. Choice (D) is a misused detail. The first part of McCourt's confession—"I told a lie. I hit my brother. I took a penny from my mother's purse. I said a curse"—is the typical first confession. The question asks for the priest's response to the last portion of the confession.
4. Mrs. O'Connell, not the narrator's mother, thinks that a position in the post office would help Angela McCourt financially, choice (A). Frank and Uncle Pa Keating discuss the retirement pension offered through the post office, choice (B), but the passage does not mention Angela's thoughts on the pension.

5. Choice (B) and (D) may both be true, but there's nothing in the passage to support either answer.

6. (A) is an opposite wrong answer choice. The word *doubts* makes it incorrect; Pa Keating specifically says "Make up your own mind" (line 25-26).

7. (E) is a misused detail. McCourt doesn't get the job at Easons until *after* he decides not to take the exam.

8. Choice (E) is beyond the scope of the passage. No details about McCaffrey's earlier life are provided, so this conclusion about his past is unfounded.

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Angela's Ashes

Critical Reading Activity

Inference questions are one of the most common types of SAT Reading Comprehension questions. So what exactly is an inference?

An inference is a conclusion that you can reasonably draw from what is stated in a text. For example, what inference could you make about the characters in this sentence?

Emily and Aaron walked down the street, holding hands and whispering occasionally to each other.

You could infer that Emily and Aaron are close friends or that they are dating. This information isn't directly stated, but the evidence of Emily and Aaron holding hands and whispering to each other supports both inferences.

On the SAT, the correct answer to an Inference question will always be supported by something that is directly stated in the passage. Think of it as one short logical step away from what is written on the page.

Try out your inference skills with this short excerpt from *Angela's Ashes*. At this point in the book, Angela and her sons are waiting for Malachy to come home with his first paycheck from a job at the cement factory.

We have to wait a long time for Dad to walk the miles from the cement factory. We can't have our tea till he's home and that's very hard because you smell the cooking of the other families in the lane. Mam says it's a good thing payday is Friday when you can't eat meat because the smell of bacon or sausages in other houses would drive her out of her mind. We can still have bread and cheese and a nice jam jar of tea with lashings of milk and sugar and what more do you want?

Line

5

The women are gone to the cinemas, the men are in the pubs, and still Dad isn't home. Mam says it's a long way to the cement factory even if he's a fast walker. She says that but her eyes are watery and she's not singing anymore. She's sitting by the fire smoking a Wild Woodbine she got on credit from Kathleen O'Connell.

10

1. The description of Mam in lines 8-10 suggests that Mam

- (A) is looking forward to going to the cinemas with the other women next week
- (B) does not believe that her husband will return home with his wages
- (C) believes that her family's situation will soon improve
- (D) thinks that the walk is too long for her husband to endure
- (E) is physically exhausted from her difficult week

Find the Support

The correct answer to an Inference question will have clear support in the passage. In fact, you should be able to point specifically to the details that lead you to the correct answer. With this next short excerpt, try underlining the evidence that helped you determine the correct answer.

In this excerpt, young Frank McCourt, his parents, and his brothers are just arriving at his paternal grandparents' farm in Ireland.

At the house my mother reaches for the gate latch. Dad says, No, no, not that way. Not the front gate. They use the front door only for visits from the priest or funerals.

Line

We make our way around the house to the kitchen door. Dad pushes in the door and there's Grandpa McCourt drinking tea from a big mug and Grandma McCourt frying something.

5

Och, says Grandpa, you're here.

Och, we are, says Dad. He points to my mother. This is Angela, he says. Grandpa says, Och, you must be worn out Angela. Grandma says nothing, she turns back to the frying pan. Grandpa leads us through the kitchen to a large room with a long table and chairs. He says, Sit down and have some tea.

10

2. Grandma McCourt's attitude about the arrival of her son and family could be best described as

- (A) welcoming
- (B) angry
- (C) curious
- (D) unfriendly
- (E) informal

Make a Prediction

Predicting the answer before you look at the answer choices can help you avoid being tempted by an incorrect answer. Try making a prediction for the Inference question below. The excerpt describes McCourt's first confession.

It's my turn. The confession box is dark and there's a big crucifix hanging over my head. I can hear a boy mumbling his confession on the other side. I wonder if there's any use trying to talk to the Angel on the Seventh Step. I know he's not supposed to be hanging around confession boxes but I feel the light in my head and the voice is telling me, Fear not.

Line

5

The panel slides back before my face and the priest says, Yes, my child?
Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. This is my First Confession.

Yes, my child, and what sins have you committed?
 I told a lie. I hit my brother. I took a penny from my mother's purse. I said a
 curse. 10

Yes, my child. Anything else?
 I, I listened to a story about Cuchulain and Emer.
 Surely that's not a sin, my child. After all we are assured by certain writers that
 Cuchulain turned Catholic in his last moments as did his King, Conor MacNessa. 15

'Tis about Emer, Father, and how she married him.
 How was that, my child?
 She won him in a pissing contest.
 There is heavy breathing. The priest has his hand over his mouth and he's making
 choking sounds and talking to himself, Mother o' God. 20

Who, who told you that story, my child?
 Mikey Molloy, Father.
 And where did he hear it?
 He read it in a book, Father.

Ah, a book. Books can be dangerous for children, my child. Turn your mind from
 those silly stories and think of the lives of the saints. Think of St. Joseph, the Little
 Flower, the sweet and gentle St. Francis of Assisi, who loved the birds of the air and the
 beasts of the field. 25

3. It can be inferred from the passage that the priest thinks the last portion of the narrator's confession is

- (A) disgraceful
- (B) humorous
- (C) disappointing
- (D) typical
- (E) false

Directions: Use what is stated and implied in the passage and introductory material below to answer questions 4-8. For each question, circle the best answer from the given choices.

Questions 4-8 refer to the following passage.

In the following excerpt from a memoir, a teenage Frank McCourt wrestles with decisions about the path his future should take.

Line

Some of the temporary telegram boys are taking the permanent exam in August. Mrs. O'Connell says, You should take that exam, Frank McCourt. You have a bit of a brain in your head and you'd pass it no bother. You'd be a postman in no time and a great help to your poor mother.

Mam says I should take it, too, become a postman, save up, go to America and be a postman over there and wouldn't that be a lovely life. 5

I'm delivering a telegram to South's pub on a Saturday and Uncle Pa Keating is sitting there, all black as usual. He says, Have a lemonade there, Frankie, or is it a pint you want now that you're near sixteen?

Lemonade, Uncle Pa, thanks. 10

You'll want your first pint the day you're sixteen, won't you?

I will but my father won't be here to get it for me.

Don't worry about that. I know 'tis not the same without your father but I'll get you the first pint. 'Tis what I'd do if I had a son. Come here the night before you're sixteen. 15

I will, Uncle Pa.

I hear you're taking that exam for the post office?

I am.

Why would you do a thing like that?

'Tis a good job and I'd be a postman in no time and it has the pension. 20

Ah, pension my arse. Sixteen years of age an' talking about the pension. Is it coddin' me you are? Do you hear what I said, Frankie? Pension my arse. If you pass the exam you'll stay in the post office nice and secure the rest of your life. You'll marry a Brigid and have five little Catholics and grow little roses in your garden. You'll be dead in your head before you're thirty and dried in your ballocks the year before. Make up your own bloody mind and to hell with the safeshots and the begrudgers. Do you hear me, Frankie McCourt? 25

I do, Uncle Pa. That's what Mr. O'Halloran said.

What did he say?

Make up your own mind. 30

True for Mr. O'Halloran. 'Tis your life, make your own decisions and to hell with the begrudgers, Frankie. In the heel o' the hunt you'll be going to America anyway, won't you?

I will, Uncle Pa.

The day of the exam I'm excused from work. There's a sign in an office window on O'Connell Street, SMART BOY WANTED, NEAT HANDWRITING, GOOD AT SUMS, APPLY HERE TO MANAGER, MR. MCCAFFREY, EASONS LTD. 35

I stand outside the place of the exam, the house of the Limerick Protestant Young Men's Association. There are boys from all over Limerick climbing the steps to take the exam and a man at the door is handing them sheets of paper and pencils and barking at them to hurry up, hurry up. I look at the man at the door, I think of Uncle Pa Keating and what he said, I think of the sign in Eason's office, SMART BOY WANTED. I don't want to go in that door and pass that exam for if I do I'll be a permanent telegram boy with a uniform, then a postman, then a clerk selling stamps for the rest of my life. I'll be in Limerick forever, growing roses with my head dead and my ballocks all dried up.

The man at the door says, You, are you coming in here or are you goin' to stand there with your face hanging out?

I want to say to the man, Kiss my arse, but I still have a few weeks left in the post office and he might report me. I shake my head and walk up the street where the smart boy is wanted.

The manager, Mr. McCaffrey, says, I would like to see a specimen of your handwriting, to see, in short, if you have a decent fist. Sit down there at that table. Write your name and address and write me a paragraph explaining why you came here for this job and how you propose to rise in the ranks of Eason and Son, Ltd., by dint of perseverance and assiduity where there is great opportunity in this company for a boy that will keep his eye on the guidon ahead and guard his flanks from the siren call of sin.

I write,

Frank McCourt,
4, Little Barrington Street,
Limerick City,
County Limerick,
Ireland

I am applying for this job so that I can rise to the highest ranks of Easons Ltd., by dint of perseverance and assadooty knowing that if I keep my eyes ahead and protect my flanks I'll be safe from all temptation and a credit to Easons and Ireland in general.

What's this? says Mr. McCaffrey. Do we have here a twisting of the truth?
I don't know, Mr. McCaffrey.
Little Barrington Street. That's a lane. Why are you calling it a street? You live in a lane, not a street.

They call it a street, Mr. McCaffrey.
Don't be getting above yourself, boy.
Oh, I wouldn't, Mr. McCaffrey.
You live in a lane and that means you have nowhere to go but up. Do you understand that, McCourt?

I do, sir.
You have to work your way out of the lane, McCourt.
I do, Mr. McCaffrey.
You have the cut and jib of a lane boy, McCourt.
Yes, Mr. McCaffrey.

You have the look of the lane all over you. All over you from poll to toe cap. Don't try to fool the populace, McCourt. You'd have to rise early in the morning to fool the likes of me.

Oh, I wouldn't, Mr. McCaffrey.

Then there's the eyes. Very sore eyes you have there. Can you see?

I can, Mr. McCaffrey.

You can read and write but can you do addition and subtraction?

I can, Mr. McCaffrey.

Well, I don't know what the policy is on sore eyes. I would have to ring Dublin and see where they stand on sore eyes. But your writing is clear, McCourt. A good fist. We'll take you on pending the decision of the sore eyes. Monday morning. Half six at the railway station.

90

95

4. The passage suggests that the narrator's mother wants him to take the exam because

- (A) it will put an end to her own financial hardships
- (B) a career in the post office would guarantee the narrator a retirement pension
- (C) she doubts that he will have other job opportunities
- (D) she believes that becoming a postman will help her son achieve happiness
- (E) she doesn't want her son to be influenced by Uncle Pa Keating

5. From Pa Keating's statement in lines 13-14, it is most reasonable to conclude that Pa Keating

- (A) cares for the narrator
- (B) resents the departure of the narrator's father
- (C) is anxious for the narrator to become an adult
- (D) has a severe drinking problem
- (E) hopes to replace the narrator's father

6. Pa Keating's advice to the narrator in lines 21-27 indicates that Pa Keating

- (A) doubts the narrator's ability to make a decision for himself
- (B) values education and stability
- (C) believes that taking a risk can be more valuable than following a safe path
- (D) thinks that the narrator should focus on doing what's best for his family
- (E) regrets the decisions he has made in his own life

7. In lines 48-50, the narrator decides not to take the exam because

- (A) he doesn't believe he will pass the test
- (B) he wants to be different from the other boys
- (C) the testing official intimidates him
- (D) he doesn't want his future to be in Limerick
- (E) he has secured another job

8. Mr. McCaffrey's statement that "You have to work your way out of the lane" in line 82 suggests that

- (A) he knows that the narrator comes from a poor neighborhood
- (B) people from the lane are unqualified for the job opening
- (C) he has high hopes for the narrator's future
- (D) he is displeased with the narrator's writing sample
- (E) he once lived in a lane himself

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. (B)

In the first paragraph, Angela and her children wait for Malachy McCourt to return from his job. In the second paragraph, though, Angela has largely given up on the belief that her husband will come home with his paycheck intact. What evidence supports this conclusion? All of the other men in the neighborhood have already been home and are now “in the pubs.” More importantly, Angela cries as she’s making an excuse for her husband. She also stops singing, another sure sign that her hope has been lost.

Sometimes incorrect answer choices refer to a detail used elsewhere in the passage but do not match the tone of the cited lines. Which answer choices can you eliminate for not matching the tone of the cited lines? _____

2. (D)

Although the passage does not say anything directly about the grandmother’s attitude, the passage does provide a description of her actions: “Grandma says nothing, she turns back to the frying pan.” Failing to greet her son and his family is most reasonably called *unfriendly*, choice (D).

Some wrong answer choices are too extreme—they require too much of a leap from what is stated in the passage to what you can infer. Which wrong answer choice is too extreme? _____

3. (B)

The priest’s response is indicated in lines 18-19. He “has his hand over his mouth and he’s making choking sounds and talking to himself, Mother o’ God.” He also refers to the tales of Cuchulain and Emer as “silly stories” (line 25). In other words, the priest is trying not to laugh out loud at McCourt’s confession.

Several wrong answer choices distort or misuse a detail from earlier in the passage. Which wrong answer choice here misuses a detail? _____

4. (D)

The SAT poses questions in the same order of details and events in the passage, so the first question in a set refers to something early in the passage. Knowing this can help you locate details when a question does not include a line reference. Here, the relevant lines are 5-6: “Mam says I should take it, too, become a postman, save up, go to America and be a postman over there and wouldn’t that be a lovely life.” A good way to paraphrase

this is to say that the narrator's mother thinks that becoming a postman will help her son have a happy life, choice (D).

Which wrong answers are details from the passage that are misused or distorted? _____

5. (A)

Uncle Pa treats the narrator kindly, buying him a lemonade and giving him friendly advice. By saying "Tis what I'd do if I had a son" (line 14), Uncle Pa reveals that he is fond of the narrator and thinks of him as something like a son. (A) is correct.

Some wrong answers to Inference questions may seem reasonable but aren't directly supported by the passage. Remember, if you have to stretch to explain why an answer could be right, that answer probably isn't correct. Which wrong answers are too much of a stretch? _____

6. (C)

Uncle Pa uses a negative tone to describe the "nice and secure" life that McCourt would have working in the post office. He advises McCourt to "Make up your own bloody mind and to hell with the safeshots" (lines 25-26). This suggestion to forget about the "safeshot" of the post office job indicates that Uncle Pa believes risk taking can be valuable, choice (C).

Some wrong answer choices are directly opposite of the correct answer. They can be tempting because only one word makes them incorrect. Which choice here is an opposite wrong answer choice? _____

7. (D)

McCourt specifically writes that he didn't "want to go in that door and pass that exam," so it is unlikely that he feared he couldn't pass the test, choice (A). In lines 44-45, McCourt says he'll "be in Limerick forever" if he passes the exam. Based on this, choice (D) is the most reasonable answer.

Wrong answer choices are often misused details—an event or information from the text that is unrelated to the question at hand. Which wrong answer choice is a misused detail? _____

8. (A)

Sometimes the information you need to answer a question comes right before or right after the lines cited in the question. Here, line 86 points you to the answer: McCaffrey tells McCourt "You have the look of the lane all over you." In the context of this discussion, a *lane* is a poor neighborhood. (A) is correct.

Wrong answer choices that go beyond the scope of the passage make an inference that is not connected to the focus of the passage. Which wrong answer choice here is beyond the scope of the passage? _____

Kaplan SAT Score-Raising Book Club

Angela's Ashes

Vocabulary-Building Activity (Teacher's Notes)

1. As a class, discuss the common errors that appear on the Writing section of the SAT. Work through the first eight Improving Sentences questions together, making sure that students understand each error.
2. Hand out the second set of practice questions, and give students five minutes to independently work through the sentences.
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.
5. To give students additional practice with the types of errors they examined today, ask them to write a short paragraph about their response to *Angela's Ashes*. Tell them to include at least one error in each of the following categories: verb tense, pronouns, run-ons and fragments, and style. Then have students exchange paragraphs with a partner and correct each other's errors.

Kaplan SAT Score-Raising Book Club

Angela's Ashes

Vocabulary-Building Activity

Improving Sentences on the SAT

In the Writing section of the SAT, Improving Sentences questions will ask you to choose the best way to revise an underlined portion of a sentence.

Here's an example of an Improving Sentences question:

Before Frank McCourt writes *Angela's Ashes*, he was a high school teacher in New York.

- (A) writes
- (B) has written
- (C) wrote
- (D) will write
- (E) will have written

This Improving Sentences question has an error in verb tense—the present tense *writes* doesn't make sense with the past tense *was* later in the sentence. To correct the error, use the simple past tense *wrote* in choice (C).

Verb Tense

Because errors in verb tense are common on the SAT, you should keep these two guidelines in mind:

- Use the simplest tense available for the sentence to make sense.
- Don't switch tenses unless the context of the sentence requires it.

Try your hand at dealing with verb tense errors in these Improving Sentences questions. Choice (A) always repeats the underlined portion as it appears in the sentence. Circle the best revision for each sentence.

1. Though he is born in America and spent his early years in Brooklyn, Frank McCourt felt like an immigrant when he returned to New York City as a young man.

- (A) is born
- (B) will have been born
- (C) had been born
- (D) would have been born
- (E) would be born

2. The story of Frank McCourt's life will be continuing in *'Tis*, the sequel to *Angela's Ashes*.

- (A) will be continuing
- (B) had been continued
- (C) was continuing
- (D) continues
- (E) would be continued

Pronouns

Another common type of error tested on the SAT is the misuse of pronouns. A pronoun is a word that is used in place of another noun. For example, the pronoun *he* replaces the noun *Frank McCourt* in the following sentence:

Frank McCourt left for America because he didn't want a future in Limerick.

The noun that a pronoun refers to is called an **antecedent**. So in the sentence above, *Frank McCourt* is the antecedent for the pronoun *he*.

When it comes to pronouns on the SAT, there are two simple rules to remember:

- A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number, person, and gender.
- A pronoun should have a clear antecedent.

These next questions include pronoun errors. Circle the best choice for each sentence.

3. Lack of adequate shelter, nourishment and health care were serious problems for many families in the Limerick of Frank McCourt's childhood; it contributed to the premature deaths of many people.

- (A) it contributed
- (B) its contribution
- (C) they contributed
- (D) their contribution
- (E) contributed by them

4. Frank McCourt, the popular Irish-American writer that they know for his ability to combine humor and sorrow, spent most of his adult life as a high school English teacher.

- (A) that they know
- (B) whom they know
- (C) that had been known for
- (D) to be known
- (E) known

Run-ons and Fragments

Some sentences on the Writing section of the SAT aren't actually sentences—they are run-ons and fragments.

A sentence needs to express at least one complete thought. **Sentence fragments** are missing either a subject or main verb.

If a sentence expresses more than one idea, then those ideas must be correctly connected. A **run-on** is a sentence with a subject and main verb but with ideas that are not correctly connected.

Circle the best revisions for the run-on and fragment below.

5. Read all over the world and translated into more than 20 different languages, telling a timeless story of family and suffering.

- (A) telling a
- (B) also telling a
- (C) it tells a
- (D) *Angela's Ashes* tells a
- (E) *Angela's Ashes'*

6. Ten years after her oldest son made America his home, Angela McCourt returned to New York, she lived there as a young wife and mother.

- (A) New York, she lived there
- (B) New York, she had lived there
- (C) New York, she had been living there
- (D) New York having lived there
- (E) New York, where she had lived

Style

Although many of the sentences in the Writing section contain outright errors, some grammatically correct sentences still need to be improved. These sentences with errors of style may be unnecessarily wordy or may use the passive voice, which expresses an action done to a subject (i.e.: the ball was kicked).

Here are two guidelines for sentences with style errors:

- When possible, eliminate any repetitive words or phrases that do not add meaning to the sentence.
- When possible, use the active voice instead of the passive voice.

Keep these rules in mind as you answer the questions below.

7. To earn a living as a young man in New York, several odd jobs were held by Frank McCourt, one of which was the position of working as the bird keeper in an upscale hotel.

- (A) several odd jobs were held by Frank McCourt, one of which was the position of working as the bird keeper in an upscale hotel
- (B) Frank McCourt held several odd jobs, including a position as the bird keeper in an upscale hotel
- (C) Frank McCourt was holding several odd jobs, working as an upscale hotel's bird keeper was one of them
- (D) several odd jobs, such as working as the bird keeper in an upscale hotel, were held by Frank McCourt
- (E) several odd jobs, including the position as bird keeper in an upscale hotel, were what Frank McCourt held

8. Over the span of several years, Frank McCourt's three younger brothers all moved to the United States to seek the better life that their oldest brother had found away from the desperate poverty of their early childhood lives in Limerick.

- (A) to seek the better life that their oldest brother had found away from the desperate poverty of their early childhood lives in Limerick
- (B) to pursue an improved lifestyle such as the one found by their brother far from the desperate poverty of their early lives in Limerick
- (C) to seek the better life that their brother had found away from the desperate poverty of their childhoods in Limerick
- (D) to follow their older brother in finding better lives in a place far removed and apart from the desperate poverty of their youthful lives in Limerick
- (F) in order to pursue a better life in the same manner as their brother, who moved away from the desperate poverty of their early years in Limerick to a more promising situation

Improving Sentences Practice

Circle the choice that presents the best version of the underlined text for each of the following Improving Sentences questions.

9. In 1171, King Henry II invaded Ireland, which had begun centuries of England's rule over its neighboring island.

- (A) which had begun
- (B) which began
- (C) began
- (D) thus the beginning of
- (E) which begins

10. British control over Ireland was relatively accepted until the 1500s, when King Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church and moved England to Protestantism.

- (A) 1500s, when King
- (B) 1500s; when King
- (C) 1500s and King
- (D) 1500s, so King
- (E) 1500s King

11. During the 1500s and 1600s, land in northern Ireland was given to many loyal Scottish and English Protestants by English kings, displacing many native Irish Catholics.

- (A) land in northern Ireland was given to many loyal Scottish and English Protestants by English kings
- (B) many loyal Scottish and English Protestants received land in northern Ireland which was given to them by English kings
- (B) land in northern Ireland given by the English kings was received by many loyal Scottish and English Protestants
- (C) English kings gave land in northern Ireland to many loyal Scottish and English Protestants
- (D) northern Ireland had land that was given to many loyal Scottish and English Protestants by English kings

12. Though Irish Catholics were legally discriminated against because of their refusal to convert to Protestantism.

- (A) Though Irish Catholics were legally discriminated against because of their refusal to convert to Protestantism
- (B) Because of their refusal to convert to Protestantism, Irish Catholics were legally discriminated against
- (C) Legally discriminated against, though Irish Catholics refused to convert to Protestantism
- (D) Refusing to convert to Protestantism, though Irish Catholics were legally discriminated against though
- (E) Legally discriminated against because they refused to convert to Protestantism, though Irish Catholics.

13. As a succession of famines devastated its native land, poorer Irish Catholics with few financial resources immigrated to America in increasing numbers.

- (A) devastated its native land, poorer Irish Catholics with few financial resources
- (B) devastated the native land, poorer Irish Catholics with limited financial resources
- (C) devastated their native land, Irish Catholics with few financial resources
- (D) devastated that native land, Irish Catholics who had limited financial resources
- (E) devastated the native land, financially limited Irish Catholics

14. The Irish Free State, which later became the Republic of Ireland, was established in 1922; however, the six counties that would be making up modern Northern Ireland remained under British control.

- (A) that would be making up
- (B) that make up
- (C) which have made up
- (D) which having been
- (E) that are being

15. Modern Ireland is a financially stable country with expanding industries and service it has been called the “Celtic Tiger” because of its economic comeback.

- (A) with expanding industries and service it has been called the “Celtic Tiger”
- (B) with expanding industries and service; it has been called the “Celtic Tiger”
- (C) that has been called the “Celtic Tiger” because of its expanding industries and service and
- (D) called the “Celtic Tiger,” with expanding industries and services
- (E) called the “Celtic Tiger,” it has expanding industries and services

16. Limerick is known throughout Ireland and Europe for their rugby heritage.

- (A) for their
- (B) by their
- (C) because of there
- (D) for its
- (E) by it's

Answers

1. (C)

Use the past perfect tense when one past event occurred before another past event. Here, McCourt *had been born* before he *felt like an immigrant* and *returned to New York City*.

2. (D)

Choose the simplest tense that makes sense in the context of the sentence. The simple present tense *continues* corrects the error.

3. (C)

The underlined pronoun replaces *Lack of adequate shelter, nourishment and health care*, so it must be a plural pronoun. Choice (C) is correct, as (D) and (E) create errors in sentence structure.

4. (E)

In this sentence, the pronoun *they* doesn't have a clear antecedent. There is no noun that *they* replaces. (E) corrects the pronoun error without introducing a new verb tense error.

5. (D)

As it is written, this sentence doesn't express a complete thought. It is missing a subject—the *thing* that has been read and translated. (D) provides the missing subject *Angela's Ashes*. (C) creates a complete sentence but uses the pronoun *it* without a clear antecedent.

6. (E)

As it is written, this sentence contains two complete thoughts. There are several ways to connect complete thoughts in one sentence. For example, you can join the thoughts with a semicolon or with a comma and a coordinating conjunction. Another option is to make one thought dependent on the other. Choice (E) does this, turning the second half of the sentence into a description of New York.

7. (B)

The original sentence has two style errors—it is unnecessarily wordy and it is written in the passive voice. The subject of the sentence should be *Frank McCourt*, not the *several odd jobs* that he held. Choice (B) switches the subject and eliminates the repetition of *the position of working as*. Choice (C) corrects the passive voice but creates a run-on sentence.

8. (C)

When wordiness is an issue, the shortest answer is often correct. Choice (C) removes the repetitive *oldest* and *early lives*, making the sentence more concise. All of the other choices are unnecessarily wordy or repetitive.

9. (B)

For this sentence to make sense, the underlined verb needs to be in the simple past tense. (A) uses the past perfect, suggesting that England's rule began before King Henry's invasion. (B) and (D) create errors in sentence structure. (E) incorrectly uses the present tense for a past event.

10. (A)

This sentence is correct as written. (B) uses a semicolon, but the clause that begins *when King Henry VIII* is not a complete thought. (C) and (E) create run-on sentences, and (D) uses a conjunction that does not make sense in the context of the sentence.

11. (D)

Of the five choices, only (D) uses the active voice instead of the passive voice. This is also the most concise version of the underlined portion of the sentence.

12. (B)

Only (B) states a complete thought and creates a sentence with a subject and a complete verb. The other choices all create sentence fragments.

13. (C)

As it is written, this sentence has one grammatical error and one style error. The pronoun *its* does not have an antecedent. It should be changed to the plural *their* to correspond with *the Irish Catholics*. Also, it is repetitive to use both *poorer* and *few financial resources*. Choice (C) corrects both problems.

14. (B)

When it comes to verb tense, remember to keep it as simple as you can without changing the meaning of the sentence. The word *modern* tells you that verb should be in the present tense, as in choice (B).

15. (B)

As it is written, this is a run-on sentence. The two complete thoughts in the run-on can be joined with semicolon, making choice (B) correct. Choice (C) is unnecessarily repetitive, and choice (D) changes the meaning of the sentence. Choice (E) uses a comma without the necessary coordinating conjunction, so the run-on is not corrected.

16. (D)

This question deals with pronouns. The singular *Limerick* takes the singular possessive pronoun *its*, not the plural *their*. Choice (E) uses *it's*, which is the contraction for *it is*. Choice (D) is correct.