

Improving Paragraphs

This part of the Writing Section of the SAT Exam calls on your skills in writing and revising. Rewriting and editing are a critical part of the process for any college papers you might have to write, so the SAT has included the Writing Section as a separate part of their revised test.

You are asked to read a very short, multi-paragraph essay. You are then asked questions that might deal with combining sentences and altering the paragraph in a number of ways. In other words, the questions ask you to understand how sentences and paragraphs work together to create a composition.

Here are some suggestions you can use when tackling the Improving Paragraph questions:

- Quickly read through the entire essay. Expect it to sound a bit rough; it's presented to you as a draft in need of help.
- Make sure that no matter what you are asked to consider, that you answer within the context of the overall meaning of the essay.
- Even if you are unsure of the correct response, eliminate any of the choices that you are sure are wrong.
- Avoid wordiness wherever possible; if a choice makes sense, do not disregard it because it is shorter or simpler than the other choices.
- Even if you think you have the correct response, don't sell yourself short: Consider *all* the answers before choosing. You might be surprised to find that another response is even better than the one you were going to choose.
- If you are asked to choose the best first sentence of a paragraph, chances are that is the topic sentence, so it must be broad enough to encompass the entire paragraph.
- Any concluding remark must cover the entire essay, not just one or two things mentioned within the essay.
- If you are asked to add material to an essay, remember it must fit within the context of the whole essay as well as the specific focus of the paragraph in which it appears.
- All the rules of grammar and punctuation apply—just as they have in the Identifying Sentence Errors as well as Improving Sentences sections.

As you can imagine, a myriad of errors can crop up in this section of the test. Just imagine you are reading an early draft of one of your papers, or better yet, someone else's paper. SAT has made things a bit easier by actually underlining the faulty bits. Nevertheless, it is your job to spiff up the essay, choosing from the options the test questions provide for you. Despite the fact that an essay can "go bad" in a number of ways, and that you might run across a wide variety of errors, the SAT Improving Paragraphs questions tend to be versions of the following:

- General organization of sentences
- Revising sentences
- Combining sentences
- Sentences in context
- Adding and/or subtracting sentences

General Organization of Sentences

Sometimes sentences in a paragraph will be out of order. They do not present a logical flow of information, and you might even find yourself scratching your head as you read one of these paragraphs, just trying to figure out why it is so jumbled. Your task, if faced with one of these questions, is to order the sentences correctly.

Revising Sentences

These questions are basically just like the Improving Sentence questions we just discussed. The question will identify a particular sentence within a paragraph and offer you choices to revise it. The question might say something like, “Considering the information in sentence 2, sentence 3 can best be revised. . . .” Another revision might be that the sentence contains a particular error, such as non-parallel information or incorrect pronoun or verb use. Just about any of the errors discussed under the Improving Sentences section could be present in these questions.

Combining Sentences

You’ve been doing sentence combining in your English classes probably since middle school, so these questions should be easy for you. The first thing, of course, is to select the option that makes the most sense, such as using appropriate transition words or conjunctions between sentences being combined. Then, of course, you must be sure that the choice you make also uses correct punctuation. Often these questions include the phrase “in context,” meaning you have to take the entire paragraph into consideration when you choose your answer.

Sentence in Context

Much like the Improving Sentences questions, these questions will focus upon a particular sentence. They might say something like “In context. . . .” which means you will have to pay attention to how this sentence relates to the rest of the paragraph. For instance, a pronoun may be used, and the question might ask you to identify the antecedent of the pronoun—that is, to what is the pronoun relating.

Adding or Subtracting Sentences

Usually, these questions do more adding than eliminating sentences. You might be asked which of the following might be the best to be inserted between two other sentences or following a particular sentence. Again, this means you have to look at the paragraph as a whole, not just that isolated sentences. Occasionally, a topic sentence is missing, and you might have to choose an appropriate topic sentence. Of course, you might also be asked to choose the most appropriate concluding sentence. Occasionally a paragraph might have an extraneous sentence that must be deleted. In view of the whole paragraph, you will be asked to eliminate the appropriate sentence.

Maybe right now all of this sounds a bit overwhelming—first you had to look at sentences that needed attention, then at words that were underlined, and *now* they want you to consider whole paragraphs! Do not panic. You will quickly discover that the Improving Paragraphs part of the Writing Section of the SAT Exam is no more difficult than any other section. Before you throw up your hands in frustration, take a deep breath, roll your head around a bit, and try the following Improving Paragraphs questions.

Practice Questions

The following are early drafts of short essays. Some parts need to be revised. Read the passages, paragraph by paragraph, and choose the best answers for the questions that follow. In choosing answers, follow the rules of standard written English.

Draft A:

- 1) One major reason why *The Catcher in the Rye* was banned was because of the vulgar language that is used which the book shows many times.
- 2) The reason why this objectionable vocabulary is used in this book is to make a point.
- 3) The significance is that the main character is concerned that innocent children will see or hear such bad words, and he is determined not to let such a thing happen.

4) Also banned is for its sexual content was *The Catcher in the Rye*. 5) The main character goes to a hotel, and on his way up to his room, a bellboy asks him if he wants a prostitute. 6) He says “Okay” and when she arrives he realizes that it is wrong for him to do this and does not feel amorous any more so after talking to her for awhile he politely pays her and asks her to leave.

7) Perceptive readers realize that this character is far from being worthy of condemnation. 8) The entire story must be read, and the author’s intentions have to be evaluated.

9) No book should be judged by only a few words or one or two specific scenes. 10) In fact, it is actually his integrity and sense of moral correctness that dominates the plot of the story. 11) Before people take parts of this or any other book out of context, they owe it to themselves and to the reading public to read the questionable piece in its entirety and to reserve their judgment until after this is accomplished.

1. The following is the BEST revision of the opening sentence of this passage:

- A. As it is.
- B. *The Catcher in the Rye* shows many times one main reason why it was banned because of its vulgar language.
- C. The major reason why *The Catcher in the Rye* was banned, showing up many times in the book, is its vulgar language.
- D. One major reason why *The Catcher in the Rye* was banned was because of the vulgar language, which appears many times in the book.
- E. Vulgar language, which shows up many times in *The Catcher in the Rye*, is one major reason why it was banned.

2. Sentence three should be stated:

- A. As it is.
- B. The main character’s concern over little children—their seeing or hearing such words—is what it’s all about.
- C. Such objectionable vocabulary is what the main character wants to keep away from the little children.
- D. Determined to not let such objectionable vocabulary happen, the main character is trying to protect the children.
- E. Such vocabulary is worrisome in case children should see or hear it, therefore it is the goal of the main character to make sure that such a thing does not happen.

3. The BEST choice for a concluding sentence for the first paragraph is:

- A. No book should have objectionable vocabulary, no matter what the purpose.
- B. Nobody can expect to rid the world of all its vulgar language.
- C. A little objectionable language is not important; we hear it everywhere anyhow.
- D. Who expects to rid the world of all the bad that is in it?
- E. It is this goal that has prompted the main character to be the *catcher in the rye*, to catch the children before they are exposed to such things as bad language.

4. The opening sentence of the second paragraph, sentence 4, is best stated as:
- A. As it is.
 - B. Also banned was the sexual content of *The Catcher in the Rye*.
 - C. Sexual content is another reason for any book to be banned.
 - D. *The Catcher in the Rye* was also banned for its sexual content.
 - E. Banned also for sexual content is *The Catcher in the Rye*.
5. Sentence 6 should be written as:
- A. As it is.
 - B. “Okay” he says when he arrives, but when she arrives he realizes that he does not want to talk or feel amorous. He pays her politely and asks her to leave.
 - C. He responds positively to the bellboy. When she arrives, however, he realizes how wrong the situation is. After talking to her for awhile and explaining he is no longer feeling amorous, he politely pays her and asks her to leave.
 - D. Although he has amorously said “yes” to the bellboy, he is recognizing how wrong it is to do this. He talks politely to her and asks her to leave.
 - E. He amorously says “yes” to the bellboy. However, she is only talked to and asked politely to leave because it is wrong.
6. Asked to provide a concluding sentence for the second paragraph, your BEST choice would be:
- A. It’s never a good policy to judge any book by just one scene.
 - B. Needless to say, any criticism about a sex scene in this book is erroneous.
 - C. People should not ban books they have not even read.
 - D. Who is to say what books ought to be banned?
 - E. No one has the right to tell anyone else what he or she can read.
7. The last paragraph needs its sentences rearranged in the following manner:
- A. 11, 10, 9, 8, 7
 - B. 9, 10, 7, 8 11, 9
 - C. 7, 9, 11, 10, 8
 - D. 11, 8, 7, 10, 9
 - E. 7, 10, 8, 9, 11

Draft B:

- 1) A recent movie, “The Aviator,” a story about the trouble billionaire Howard Hughes, raising much interest in Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). 2) Although Hughes had billions of dollars, the debilitating mental illness, known as OCD, drove him into total seclusion for the last 20 years of his life. 3) Just what is this unusual malady?
- 4) OCD is a malfunction in the circuitry of the brain that causes intrusive, unwanted thoughts that a patient finds nearly impossible to stop. 5) Often compulsions lead these thoughts from a person’s life. 6) In Howard Hughes’ case, for instance, he was much more interested in germs than in his millions. 7) Unlike many other brain illnesses, OCD patients usually have insight into their behaviors. 8) Awareness of their unordinary behavior intensifies their discomfort and guilt.
- 9) This, in turn, exacerbates their problems.

10) Therefore, OCD rarely is life-threatening; it does, however, cause intense anxiety and immeasurable loss of enjoyment and involvement in life. 11) Basically, the brain becomes imprisoned by bizarre concerns and sometimes obsessive thoughts. 12) As sufferers seek escape from the disturbing thoughts prompted by the disease, they often turn to incessant behaviors such as cleaning, organizing, or to repeatedly lock doors and windows, and constant checking of ovens, electrical switches and outlets.

13) Hopefully, the depiction of Howard Hughes' life in "The Aviator" will encourage more people to learn about this tragic disease, and perhaps it will trigger a public outcry for further information and more research. 14) The most dangerous thing about OCD, as well as other mental illnesses, is public's ignorance.

8. The first sentence of this passage can BEST be stated as:

- A. As it is.
- B. The story about "The Aviator" the troubled billionaire Howard Hughes raises much interest in Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).
- C. The Howard Hughes recent movie, "The Aviator" raises much interest in Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).
- D. A recent movie, "The Aviator," a story about the troubled billionaire Howard Hughes, has raised much interest in Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).
- E. "The Aviator" about the troubled billionaire Howard Hughes, is a movie that has raised much interest in Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

9. Sentence 5 can BEST be stated as:

- A. As it is.
- B. These thoughts often lead to compulsions that can overtake a person's life.
- C. Compulsions that can overtake a person's life often lead to thoughts.
- D. Often leading to compulsions, these thoughts can often overtake a person's life.
- E. Often leading to compulsions, a person's thoughts can often overtake a person's life.

10. The most logical transition word for paragraph three is:

- A. Therefore
- B. Nevertheless
- C. Also
- D. Although
- E. In contrast

11. The phrase "or to repeatedly lock doors" in sentence 12 should be stated:

- A. As it is.
- B. Or repeatingly locking doors
- C. Or to the repeated locking of doors
- D. Locking doors with repetition
- E. Repeatedly locking of doors

12. The word “it” in sentence 13 is a reference to:

- A. Howard Hughes
- B. The movie “The Aviator”
- C. Howard Hughes’ life
- D. The essay
- E. OCD

13. The most appropriate title for this essay might be:

- A. “Howard Hughes”
- B. “The Story behind OCD”
- C. “Introduction to an Unusual Mental Illness”
- D. “The Aviator”
- E. “The Danger of Public Ignorance”

Draft C:

1) I’ve had a great many embarrassing moments in my life. 2) Some of the most embarrassing occurred while I was attending high school. 3) One of these moments happened during my junior year. 4) I remember it well because it concerned an activity that I had deeply feared for a long time: dancing. 5) Not that I was poor dancer. 6) Nothing of the sort, it was just that I had to dance with girls. 7) Later in life, I found out that if I had to dance, doing it with girls had its advantages. 8) But that’s another story.

9) The scene was the high school gym. 10) The red-faced moment occurred during Sadie Hawkin’s Day school dance. 11) There was a particular girl attending my school who was very ugly. 12) She was so ugly, in fact, that we—my school buddies and I—used the word “ooglay” to refer to her: a word that connotes outright, without-a-doubt nastiness in the looks department. 13) Anyway lucky me old “parrot-beak” as we sometimes called her with a great deal of fanfare and flourish picked me as the lucky slob she wanted to dance with. 14) She plunked down good money to confirm her choice. 15) Embarrassed isn’t really the word I want here. 16) Mortified is more like it. 17) I was mortified, horrified, embarrassed, and downright shocked at the prospect of dancing with the “Beast of Babcock High.”

18) My embarrassment today, however, stems from the realization that never was I so cruel and heartless as I was at that Sadie Hawkins dance some thirty years ago. 19) Looking back at this event with an aged eye, an eye steeped in a broth of maturity and experience, I find that I am still embarrassed. 20) Often do I wonder how that girl must have felt as the jeers and catcalls of an undisciplined mob cascaded around her. 21) I fervently hope that I shall never meet this girl face to face in the present.

- 14.** In this essay, the author does all of the following EXCEPT:
- A. describe a particular occurrence.
 - B. feel chagrined at a particular memory.
 - C. analyze a time that he prefers to forget.
 - D. criticize his friends for their behavior.
 - E. explain the importance of a particular incident.
- 15.** Sentences 2 and 3 can best be combined as:
- A. One of the most embarrassing moments occurred in high school while I was being a junior.
 - B. My junior year was an embarrassing time during my high school years.
 - C. Some of the most embarrassing occurred while I was attending high school; one in particular happened in my junior year.
 - D. Some of moments in which I was embarrassed were in high school one being my junior year.
 - E. Attending high school was an embarrassment for me, especially during my junior year.
- 16.** If you had to shorten the second paragraph to fit into a column of the paper, what two sentences could you eliminate without changing the basic paragraph?
- A. None—all are essential
 - B. 9 and 11
 - C. 11 and 13
 - D. 16 and 17
 - E. 15 and 16
- 17.** The author is considering eliminating sentence 8. If he did this how would it affect the story?
- A. It would have no effect; go ahead and eliminate it.
 - B. It would lose a sense of mystery if eliminated.
 - C. It is confusing and should be eliminated.
 - D. It adds to the writer’s voice and his style; don’t eliminate it.
 - E. Don’t eliminate it; the paragraph will be too short.
- 18.** Sentence 19 should be placed:
- A. where it is now.
 - B. as the last sentence in the paragraph.
 - C. after sentence 20.
 - D. Eliminate sentence 19; it is not needed.
 - E. as the first sentence in the paragraph.
- 19.** The author wants to add one last sentence to this essay, which of the following would work best in view of the story?
- A. “That would truly be my most embarrassing moment.”
 - B. “Perhaps she’d surprise me by being stunningly beautiful.”
 - C. “What if she were still as ugly as we thought she was?”
 - D. “She’d probably want to get even with me for our cruelty.”
 - E. “I wouldn’t know what to say to her after all this time.”

20. Sentence 13 can best be corrected as:
- A. No correction needed.
 - B. Anyway, lucky me, old “parrot beak” (as we sometimes called her) with a great deal of fanfare and flourish, picked me as the lucky slob she wanted to dance with.
 - C. Anyway, lucky me, old “parrot beak,” as we sometimes called her, with a great deal of fanfare and flourish, picked me as the lucky slob she wanted to dance with.
 - D. Anyway, lucky me, old parrot beak as we sometimes called her with a great deal of fanfare and flourish, picked me as the lucky slob she wanted to dance with.
 - E. Anyway lucky me, old “parrot beak” as we sometimes called her with a great deal of fanfare, and flourish; picked me as the lucky slob she wanted to dance with.

Answers and Explanations

1. **E.** The opening sentence, as it stands now, is too wordy and awkward. It needs tweaking. Choices **B** and **D** are no better than the original. They are awkward and wordy. Choice **C** starts out okay, but then it, too, becomes cumbersome. Therefore, Choice **E** is the best and most succinct choice for opening this essay.
2. **A.** At first glance sentence three may seem okay to you, albeit a bit long. This is a compound sentence: it contains two separate independent clauses. Is it punctuated correctly? You must look to the punctuation guidelines for help on this one. Your choices with two independents are to separate them into two independent sentences, combine them with a semi-colon, or to choose an appropriate coordinate conjunction (BOY FANS) with a comma. Since the sentence has the coordinate conjunction *and*, preceded by a comma, the sentence actually is correct as it stands, making Choice **A** the correct response.
3. **E.** Remember, if you are being asked about a final sentence in a paragraph, usually it needs to reflect what has been already stated or anticipate more development. In this case, you have an extension and explanation of sentence 3 if you add a final sentence to this paragraph. Choice **A**, **B**, **C**, and **D** are, unfortunately, not uncommon reactions that students have to this particular topic. However no one of them is of much value to this paragraph. Choice **E**, is an explanatory extension of the third sentence, and it adds a bit of intrigue to the remainder of the essay. This is the correct response.
4. **D.** When you are asked about beginning sentences of paragraphs, especially body paragraphs, these are usually topic sentences. A topic sentence introduces the idea to be discussed in the paragraph. In this paragraph, the topic is a sexual scene as objectionable. The idea is introduced, but it is done so in passive voice, with little life and not much energy and awkward word arrangement. Choices **B** and **E** are not much better. Choice **C** is too general; it opens up an entirely different argument. The only option with any possibility is Choice **D**. Although this sentence is also passive (the book was banned, being acted upon), the word arrangement is more positive and at least provides a bit of spark to the introduction of the topic to be discussed in this paragraph.
5. **C.** This is one of those questions that requires a bit of time to answer. Each choice needs to be investigated. You cannot just leave the sentence as is, for it desperately needs some punctuation. Choice **B** is confusing with its vague pronouns and odd use of *amorous*. Choices **D** and **E** make you wonder about the main character’s *amorous* feelings, and their verb structures are odd. All but Choice **C** has some oddity to it, making it the best bet.
6. **B.** This is another final sentence question as in question 3. You are being asked to choose the BEST option. Not unlike question 3, some of the options are also classic knee jerk responses to the idea of censorship. However, a bit of thought about the paragraph itself, which explains how not sexy the so-called sex scene was, will lead you to the correct choice, **B**.
7. **E.** Occasionally, you will be presented with a paragraph whose parts need to be put in order. One of the best things to do with a question like this is to look at the first and last sentence options given by the responses. Remember the characteristics of a sentence that opens a paragraph and the one that closes a paragraph that were just discussed. You have two responses, **A** and **D**, with 11 as the first sentence, and a quick read of that sentence makes it an unlikely choice as an opening sentence. Sentence 7 sounds like a better opener, doesn’t it? Before you decide your response is either Choice **C** or **E**, you need to eliminate Choice **B**. In fact, sentence 9 as an opener followed by 10 might even work, but when you follow the sequence of all the sentences, response **B** doesn’t make

the cut. Go back to Choices **C** and **E**. Now look at the last sentence each of these responses offers. Choice **C** offers sentence 8 as its last sentence. Choice **E** offers sentence 11. Choice **E** looks better, and a quick check of the other sentences in the sequence verify that **E** is indeed the correct response.

This sentence sequencing may seem like a cumbersome operation, but it can go quickly. Look first at first sentences and then at last sentences. It's especially helpful when some are duplicated among the responses. Double-check the remainder of the sentence sequence, and *voilà*—you will find your answer.

8. **D.** As the opening sentence stands, it is not a sentence at all. It does not have a verb. Although Choice **B** offers us a verb, the sentence is a run on. If you read it aloud, you can hear that it all runs together. Choice **C** has changed the meaning, and Choice **E** resorts to passive voice. That leaves us with **D**, the best sentence to open this short essay.
9. **B.** Sentence 5 is a bit confusing, isn't it? Although we think we know what it means, it sure doesn't say it very well. If you look over your choices, Choices **C** and **D** aren't much of an improvement. Choice **E** seems to have possibility, but like question 8, it is in the passive voice. This leads us back to the correct response, Choice **B**.
10. **D.** This question will take you a bit more time to figure out. You actually have to read both paragraph 2 and paragraph 3 to figure out which transition word is the best. The point of paragraph 2 is that patients with OCD know they have unordinary behavior, which raises their anxiety and therefore intensifies their disease. Then paragraph 3 tells us OCD is not life threatening, but is severely mind threatening. Although gives us the best "contrast" transition word—*although* OCD does not do this; it does cause this.
11. **C.** This is a revising sentence type of question. In the essay, this sentence lacks parallel structure. When you use a series, all the parts must be presented in a similar format. In this case, we have a series of -ing words (officially known as gerunds, the ing form of a verb used as a noun) so it should be cleaning, organizing, and locking, making Choice **C** the best format; the other choices are just too jumbled.
12. **B.** This is one of the correcting sentences type of question. In order to figure out what noun the pronoun "it" refers to, we need to skim the entire paragraph. Just reading the sentence might not be enough. Although you might be tempted to answer Choice **C**, Howard Hughes' life, it really isn't his life that will stir the public, but their seeing the depiction of it—that is, the movie about him. Therefore, Choice **B**, the movie, is the most accurate response.
13. **C.** Actually, we didn't mention the need to add a title anywhere in the types of questions that might be asked. It is, however, sort of like adding a sentence. What you want a title to do is to encompass the idea presented without being too general nor too specific. At a first glance, you might think that any of those titles would work. However, the most accurate, based on these four paragraphs is Choice **C**—just an introduction. It is not really about Hughes *per se*, Choice **A**. It is too cursory to be Choice **B**, and it isn't really a movie review, Choice **D**. Although you might be tempted to choose the abstract response **E**, the essay doesn't really talk about the danger of public ignorance.
14. **D.** This is an overview question. It requires you to read the entire essay in order to answer it. It's more challenging than a main idea question since it is asking you to affirm that all but one of the statements is correct. As you read through the passage, and then the choices you may notice a couple things. Choice **B** requires you to know the meaning of the word chagrined, which is a combination of embarrassment and shame. He does describe an occurrence, Choice **A**, and he certainly wishes he could forget it, Choice **C**, but it is important to him as well, Choice **E**. You might be tempted to answer **D**, but notice that although his friends and their behavior is mentioned, and we may not think too highly of them, he does not criticize them directly. That makes Choice **D** the best choice.
15. **C.** Sentence combining is a good skill to master. When you write, you need to use a variety of syntax. Not all your sentences should be simple, nor should they necessarily be inordinately long. When asked to combine sentences on the SAT exam, be sure that you choose the answer that best keeps the integrity of the original meaning. With that in mind, Choice **C** does that most successfully.
16. **E.** Occasionally, you have to shorten a paragraph. Usually, it's because what you've written has little or no bearing upon the meaning or purpose of what you are writing. Occasionally, however, word count is important, especially if you have to fill a particular column in a newspaper. If that were the case, the only sentences that can be eliminated in this paragraph are sentences 15 and 16. They are effective within the paragraph. They add emphasis for a very bad moment in the narrator's life. However, since their sentiments are then repeated in sentence 17, they can be deleted without losing the essential meaning of the paragraph.

- 17. D.** You probably are wondering by now whether writers really agonize on every sentence the way the SAT test seems to. Well, most of the best ones do. Sometimes, every word is a painful decision. Just imagine if Edgar Allen Poe had written “Quoth the blue bird, ‘Nevermore.’” It loses something, doesn’t it? Style, voice, and tone are also important to writers. The sentence “But that’s another story.” reveals several things about the writer. It shows him to be a clever story writer, teasing his reader/listener with a chance to hear other stories at a later date. It also adds a bit of flippancy to the piece, a definite characteristic of this writer. It also keeps us focused on the “main event” that he is about to share with us. It would not be advisable for him to eliminate this sentence.
- 18. E.** This is an organizing sentences question. The key to this is the phrase “Looking back.” That is a phrase that announces that things are drawing to a close, but there are just a couple of final remarks. Choices **A–C** don’t make a lot of sense if you try each of them out. It’s too significant to eliminate altogether. That makes Choice **E** the best choice.
- 19. A.** Last sentences can be tricky. Sometimes they can be surprise zingers, and sometimes they can be let downs. This question, like the first one asked about this passage, really requires you to consider the passage as a whole. With that in mind, and the underlying sense of chagrin this writer is feeling not just his for his embarrassment, but more so for his wretched behavior towards the unattractive classmate, makes the first choice the best. This is a retrospective piece. He is looking back with a mature and more critical eye. He’s critical not of her, but of himself and his lack of maturity and sensitivity toward a fellow classmate.
- 20. B.** Sentence 13 is a long sentence. Misplaced punctuation could actually alter the information that is being given. Parentheses are used almost as an aside—something that adds meaning but the author wants to keep somewhat separate from the rest of the sequence of facts. The parenthetical (as we sometimes called her) is just an aside. The phrase “with a great deal of fanfare and flourish” describes the girls, not the unkind boys. That is the problem with Choices **C–D**—none of them are particularly clear. Choice **B** makes the most sense.