

The Critical Reading Section – SAT

The critical reading section tests a student’s ability to understand what they have read, quickly. Like the math section, it is 70 minutes in length. Two different question types can be found in this section, the sentence completion and the passage-based reading. There will be 19 sentence completion questions on the test. To answer these questions, students will have to choose which one or two words best complete the sentence blanks. Their vocabulary skills and their ability to understand how sentence parts fit together will be tested. There are also 48 passage-based reading questions in this section. These are composed of short passages followed by questions that deal with them.

Read the following passage, which was written in 2004 as a response to a scholarly essay about a recent film, and answer the questions below based on what you read.

In her essay “Possessing Jane Austen: Fidelity, authorship, and Patricia Rozema’s *Mansfield Park*,” Mireia Aragay asserts that a film adaptation isn’t meant to represent the entirety of a novel, but rather to portray one particular reading. While Aragay successfully argues that Rozema’s film represents a reading of *Mansfield Park* as a novel critical of slavery and of the character of Sir Thomas, she is too quick to accept Rozema’s reading as complete and to dismiss the changes the film makes as necessary and acceptable. The changes in Fanny’s character simplify the film and support Rozema’s reading, but they also eliminate an important aspect of Austen’s novel.

Rozema chooses to merge Fanny with the novel’s narrator, despite their differing personalities and opinions, creating a spunky and immediately likeable protagonist who not only serves as an excellent vehicle for the film’s message, but is also very appealing to modern audiences. While the character of the narrator is necessary to the novel, especially to the anti-slavery message Rozema’s film highlights, Fanny’s character is so different from the narrator’s that she cannot assume this role without undergoing a complete transformation. The voice of the novel’s narrator is presumed to represent the voice of the author, and Fanny takes on many of the characteristics of Jane Austen in the film. Fanny Price assumes Jane Austen’s voice for the film, as well as many elements of her life, including the fabricated scene in which Fanny accepts then later rejects Henry Crawford’s proposal.

The substitution of Jane Austen for Fanny Price solves the problem of the narration, but it also creates the problem of the novel missing its heroine. By making this substitution, Rozema is asserting that the novel is better off without its protagonist and that Fanny’s character stands for nothing in particular. All the things that a quiet, shy, and obedient Fanny brings to the novel are lost through the substitution of a witty and assertive Fanny. Lost is Austen’s critique of Fanny’s complacency, which mirrors the beliefs of many women during Austen’s time, seemingly sacrificed upon the viewer-attracting altar of “girl power.”

Such an accomplished novelist as Austen obviously chose her protagonist for a reason, which is made more obvious by Fanny’s stark departure from the character of

the typical Austen heroine (for example, the far more film-friendly protagonist of *Pride and Prejudice*). To state that Fanny Price is not only unnecessary, but detrimental to Austen's message in *Mansfield Park*, Rozema and Aragay make a difficult assertion to accept.

1. Which statement best summarizes the author of the passage's opinion of Aragay's essay?
 - a. The author agrees completely with Aragay's argument.
 - b. The author agrees with part of Aragay's argument and disagrees with part of it.
 - c. The author disagrees completely with Aragay's argument.
 - d. The author likes this essay less than others Aragay has written.
 - e. The author believes Aragay has made important contributions to the understanding of film adaptations of Jane Austen's novels.

2. Based on statements made in the second and fourth paragraphs of the essay, which statement most closely describes something the author believes about characters in Jane Austen's novels?
 - a. Fanny Price, as portrayed in the novel, is a typical Jane Austen protagonist.
 - b. Jane Austen's typical protagonists are exact replicas of Jane Austen.
 - c. Modern movie-going audiences tend to consider typical Jane Austen protagonists likeable.
 - d. Jane Austen liked to write very feminist and progressive characters.
 - e. Jane Austen's characters avoided political issues and controversy.

3. Which of the following terms would best describe the character of Fanny Price in the novel *Mansfield Park*, based on the information provided in this passage?
 - a. capricious
 - b. bombastic
 - c. diffident
 - d. indomitable
 - e. fickle

For the questions below, choose the word or set of words that best completes the sentence.

4. Despite his friends' _____, John still considered prom too _____ for his revolutionary tastes.
 - a. cajoling...bourgeois
 - b. belligerence...incompatible
 - c. advocacy...avant-garde
 - d. rejection...nefarious
 - e. propensity...ornate

5. Though modern technology has rendered early automobile designs _____, collectors still admire what they consider the _____ beauty of these vehicles.
- a. unusual...conspicuous
 - b. fashionable...opulent
 - c. irrelevant...scathing
 - d. obsolete...matchless
 - e. historic...commonplace

Answers:

- 1. B
- 2. C
- 3. C
- 4. A
- 5. D