

WRITING ABOUT TEXT

Identify a Writer's Arguments and Assumptions

On the Reasoning through Language Arts Test, you will be writing a response based on one or two passages. On page 86 you read that a written argument consists of the following:

- A statement, which is a **conclusion** about something
- The **evidence**, which is support that is given for the argument
- The **premises**, or the **assumptions**, behind the argument

- Your response to the writing assignment will be based on identifying a writer's argument.
- A writer's argument is a conclusion, which is supported by facts, details, and other evidence.
- While a writer may not directly state them, he or she has assumptions about the topic.

Read a short passage. Identify the writer's conclusion about the topic and the assumptions behind it.

Secondhand smoke is the smoke that comes either from the lighted end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar or from the exhalation of a smoker. Most people consider secondhand smoke to be less dangerous than the nicotine that a cigarette user intakes. However, the particles that come from the smoke of the lighted end of a cigarette, called sidestream smoke, contain higher concentrations of carcinogens, which are chemicals that cause cancer. These particles can be breathed in easily by people around smokers, especially in enclosed areas. Therefore, all restaurants should ban smoking inside.

1. What is the writer's topic?
(1) Secondhand smoke and its effects
(2) The most common carcinogens
2. What is the writer's conclusion about the topic?
(1) Sidestream smoke contains high concentrations of carcinogens.
(2) Smoking should be banned inside restaurants.
3. Which of the following is the writer's unstated assumption?
(1) Carcinogens only come from sidestream smoke.
(2) Restaurants should take steps to protect the health of their patrons.

In question 1, choice (1) is correct. The writer focuses on secondhand smoke throughout. In question 2, choice (2) is correct. The writer uses the information about secondhand smoke as support for the claim that smoking should be banned inside restaurants. In question 3, choice (2) is correct. The writer mentions that cancer-causing carcinogens can be breathed in easily in enclosed areas as the premise for how smoking indoors can be dangerous to others.

GED® TEST TIP

When you are reading the passages for the extended-response questions, ask yourself: What is the writer's conclusion?

PRACTICE 2

Directions: For each passage, answer the questions about topic, conclusions, and assumptions.

Passage 1

Some U.S. representatives advocate a bill requiring all young people to perform two years of military service by the age of 25. Proponents of the bill argue that this will not only prepare the U.S. military for any potential threat from other nations but will also build a greater spirit of patriotism among U.S. citizens. Citizens will be able to appreciate the service of the military and acquire a deeper respect toward honoring their country. However, making service a requirement for all citizens will have the opposite effect; people will feel burdened and resentful toward their government. Instead of focusing on increasing participation in the military, the government should more heavily promote volunteer programs to encourage citizens to help the poor or marginalized within their communities.

1. What is the writer's topic?
2. The writer's conclusion about the topic is
3. What is the writer's unstated assumption about the topic?

Answers and explanations start on page 654.

Passage 2

To best protect children from being subjected to portrayals of violence, we must reduce the amount of violence that is present in video games. Numerous studies done by various groups show a positive correlation between video game usage and violence.

Many people consider violence in video games a recent trend, but one of the earliest and most controversial video games was Death Race, released in 1976. In this game, the players controlled cars that ran over gremlins. The game was later pulled from stores due to public outcry. With the successful protest against Death Race as a model, we should be as proactive now to reduce or eliminate violence in video games.

4. What is the writer's topic?
5. What is the writer's conclusion about the topic?
6. What is the writer's unstated assumption about the topic?