

• Reading Comprehension 7 Level 12

Directions: Read the passage. Then answer the questions below.

By the mid-nineteenth century, mass production of paper patterns, the emergence of the home sewing machine, and the convenience of mail order catalogs brought fashionable clothing into the American home. By the early twentieth century, home economists working in extension and outreach programs taught women how to use paper patterns to improve the fit and efficiency of new garments as well as how to update existing ones.

Teachers of home economics traditionally made home sewing a critical part of their curriculum, emphasizing self-sufficiency and resourcefulness for young women. However, with the increasing availability of mass-produced clothing in catalogs and department stores, more and more women preferred buying garments to making them. As a result, home economists shifted their attention to consumer education. Through field study, analysis, and research, they became experts on the purchase and preservation of ready-to-wear clothing for the family, offering budgeting instruction targeted at adolescent girls. Modern home sewing made it possible for American women to transcend their economic differences and geographic locations with clothing that was increasingly standardized. The democratization of fashion continued through the twentieth century as the ready-to-wear market expanded and home sewing became more of a pastime than a necessity.

Questions

- 1) According to the passage, the advent of mail order catalogs altered the role of home economists because
 - A. mass-produced clothing rendered their jobs obsolete
 - B. women ceased sewing so home economists had to teach other subjects
 - C. their focus shifted to instruction on budgeting and buying and preserving clothing
 - D. home economists had to compete with the ready-to-wear marketplace
 - E. the emphasis on field study and research increased for students in home economics courses

- 2) This passage focuses on the
 - A. historical shifts in home sewing from the mid-nineteenth century through the twentieth century
 - B. changing role of home economists as a result of changes in the world
 - C. impact of ready-to-wear and mass-produced fashion on home sewing
 - D. modernization of home sewing
 - E. effects of home economists on home sewing

- 3) As used in paragraph 2, which is the best definition for **democratization**?
 - A. transitioning to a more democratic political regime
 - B. altering or modifying in a beneficial way
 - C. becoming more affordable to the lower class
 - D. gradually becoming acceptable for an entire nation
 - E. becoming widely available to a populace

- 4) Based on information in the passage, it can be inferred that home sewing allowed American women to do all of the following except
- A. continue to wear clothing that had gone out of style in stores
 - B. copy fashions they had seen elsewhere
 - C. create less expensive versions of current styles
 - D. create garments for pleasure rather than necessity
 - E. become experts on budgeting and consumerism
- 5) According to the passage, which of the following led to a decline in home sewing?
- I. mail order catalogs
 - II. the availability of apparel in retail outlets
 - III. curriculum changes in home economics
- A. I only
 - B. II only
 - C. I and II only
 - D. II and III only
 - E. I, II, and III

Answers and Explanations

1) **C**

In paragraph 1, the author states that “the convenience of mail order catalogs brought fashionable clothing into the American home.” In paragraph 2, the author explains the effects of these mail order catalogs: “With the increasing availability of mass-produced clothing in catalogs and department stores, more and more women preferred buying garments to making them. As a result, home economists shifted their attention to consumer education.” This means that because mail order catalogs made mass-produced clothing readily available, home economists had to shift their focus from sewing to consumer education. The author further elaborates that this consumer education consisted of information about “the purchase and preservation of ready-to-wear clothing for the family,” and they also offered “budgeting instruction targeted at adolescent girls.” This means that the advent of mail order catalogs altered the role of home economists because their focus shifted to instruction on budgeting and buying and preserving clothing. Therefore **(C)** is correct. Although mass-produced clothing changed the focus of the curriculum of home economists, the passage does not suggest that it rendered their jobs obsolete, or completely useless. This means **(A)** is not the best choice. Though women stopped sewing as much, the passage does not suggest they ceased sewing entirely. Furthermore, home economists did not have to teach other subjects; they were still able to adapt their courses to the changing world by becoming “experts on the purchase and preservation of ready-to-wear clothing for the family, offering budgeting instruction targeted at adolescent girls.” This eliminates **(B)**. Home economists were not in direct competition with the ready-to-wear marketplace. Instead, they had to adapt to changes in the marketplace. This means **(D)** is incorrect. Although the passage states that home economists became experts on the new curriculum “through field study, analysis, and research,” this does not mean that the emphasis on field study and research increased for students in home economics courses. This eliminates **(E)**.

2) **B**

The main idea of a passage is its key concept or argument. Throughout the passage, the author describes the changing role of home economists. In paragraph 1, he or she identifies the role of home economists in the early twentieth century: “Home economists working in extension and outreach programs taught women how to use paper patterns to improve the fit and efficiency of new garments as well as how to update existing ones.” In paragraph 2, the author writes: “Teachers of home economics traditionally made home sewing a critical part of their curriculum, emphasizing self-sufficiency and resourcefulness for young women,” but that as a result of the mass-production of clothing, their role changed. Specifically, the author writes that “home economists shifted their attention to consumer education. Through field study, analysis, and research, they became experts on the purchase and preservation of ready-to-wear clothing for the family, offering budgeting instruction targeted at adolescent girls.” From this information, we can understand that the passage focuses on the changing role of home economists as a result of the changing world. Therefore **(B)** is correct. While the passage does provide information about the ideas listed in choices **(A)**, **(C)**, and **(D)**, they do not mention the role of home economists in home sewing, which is the more specific focus throughout the passage. Because they are too general, they are incorrect. The passage does discuss home economists and home sewing, but it considers the effects of a changing world on the role of home economists and on home sewing rather than the effects of home economists themselves on home sewing. This eliminates **(E)**.

3) **E**

democratization (*noun*): the act or process of making something more accessible to everyone.

In paragraph 2, the author writes: “The democratization of fashion continued through the twentieth century as the ready-to-wear market expanded and home sewing became more of a pastime than a necessity.” To infer the meaning of *democratization*, however, we must look at the preceding sentence: “Modern home sewing made it possible for American women to transcend their economic differences and geographic locations with clothing that was increasingly standardized.” This tells us that the “democratization of fashion” refers to the fact that modern home sewing meant that American women with different amounts of money and in different locations could all more or less make similar clothing. In other words, the democratization of fashion refers to the fact that fashion became widely available to many different people. This means that *becoming widely available to a populace* is a good definition for democratization in this context. Therefore **(E)** is correct. The passage does not discuss politics at all, so *transitioning to a more democratic political regime* is not a good definition in this context. This means **(A)** is incorrect. Although some may consider the democratization of fashion to be beneficial, the context does not imply that democratization necessarily means *altering or modifying in a beneficial way*. It only implies that something becomes more widespread. This eliminates **(B)**. While the passage suggests that the democratization of fashion included fashion *becoming more affordable to the lower class*, it also included women in different places being able to acquire the same fashions. This means **(C)** is incorrect. Democratization does not necessarily mean *gradually becoming acceptable for an entire nation*, as we do not know whether the fashions were acceptable for the entire nation. We do know, however, that they became widely available. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

4) **E**

Paragraph 2 states that once mass-produced clothing became widely available, “home economists shifted their attention to consumer education” and “became experts on the purchase and preservation of ready-to-wear clothing for the family, offering budgeting instruction targeted at adolescent girls.” Home sewing did not allow American women to become experts on budgeting and consumerism. Instead, the changing world caused home economists to become experts on budgeting and consumerism. Therefore **(E)** is correct. Based on information in the passage, it can be inferred that home sewing allowed American women to have more control over the cost and type of clothing they created, so choices **(A)**, **(B)**, **(C)**, and **(D)** are incorrect.

5) **C**

In paragraph 2, the author writes: “With the increasing availability of mass-produced clothing in catalogs and department stores, more and more women preferred buying garments rather than making them.” This means that both mail order catalogs and the availability of apparel in retail outlets led to a decline in home sewing. This supports **option (I)** and **option (II)**. The passage states that home economics teachers had to change their curriculum because most women preferred to buy their clothing rather than make it. The change in curriculum did not affect home sewing; instead, the change in home sewing affected the curriculum. This eliminates **option (III)**. Therefore **(C)** is correct.