

• Reading Comprehension 2 Level 10

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

However, despite the beliefs of these 17-21 million people, there is no evidence that accidents are more likely to happen on Friday the 13th. On the contrary, some studies have shown there are actually fewer accidents on Friday the 13th. A recent report completed by a Dutch insurance company showed that there were fewer incidents of fires and theft on Fridays that fell on the 13th than on any other Fridays in the same year. It is highly probable that this reduction in accidents owes itself to the fear of Friday the 13th itself. If people are more cautious on Friday the 13th, then there are likely to be fewer accidents.

If, then, there is no significant evidence that Friday the 13th is any more dangerous than any other day of the year, why do friggatriskaidekaphobics remain convinced of its unluckiness? While the historical or folk traditions discussed earlier may have something to do with this belief, people may also use associational links to justify their superstitions. If a friggatriskaidekaphobic loses his wallet on Tuesday the 21st, for example, he would probably not assign any meaning to the date on which this event occurred. If the same individual lost his wallet on Friday the 13th, however, he might be likely to conclude that the inauspicious nature of Friday the 13th was at fault.

Questions

- 1) This passage is most likely an excerpt from
 - A. the case study of a patient suffering from friggatriskaidekaphobia
 - B. the introduction to an article about friggatriskaidekaphobia
 - C. the introduction to a study about the likelihood of accidents occurring on Friday the 13th
 - D. a longer work proving that superstitions are justified by real-world events
 - E. the conclusion of a longer work that analyzes evidence about the superstition of Friday the 13th

- 2) Based on information in the passage, it can be inferred that an earlier section of this passage likely
 - I. featured a personal anecdote about why the author no longer believes that Friday the 13th is unlucky
 - II. provided some explanations about why people might fear Friday the 13th
 - III. introduced the term “friggatriskaidekaphobia”
 - A. I only
 - B. II only
 - C. I and II only
 - D. II and III only
 - E. I, II, and III

- 3) Which of the following pieces of evidence, if true, would best support the author's argument in paragraph 1?
- A. In ancient Egypt, the number 13 was actually considered lucky by the pharaohs.
 - B. Major airlines report that there is no significant drop in the number of passengers who fly on Friday the 13th.
 - C. Studies performed in the United Kingdom reveal that significantly fewer people choose to drive their cars to work on Friday the 13th.
 - D. More traffic accidents occur on Fridays than on any other day of the week.
 - E. 50% fewer marriages occur on Friday the 13th than on other Fridays occurring in the same year.
- 4) According to the example presented in paragraph 2, which of the following logical fallacies is committed by the man who loses his wallet and blames Friday the 13th?
- A. *Post hoc*, characterized by the argument in which two sequential events are said to be causally related, but this is not actually the case; the arguer wrongly concludes that the earlier event cause the later. That is, correlation isn't the same thing as causation.
 - B. *Appeal to probability*, characterized by the assumption that because an event could happen, it is inevitable that it will happen.
 - C. *Appeal to ignorance*, characterized by the supposition that, due to a lack of conclusive evidence, the conclusion of an argument should be accepted.
 - D. *Hasty generalization*, characterized by making assumptions about a whole group or range of cases based on a sample that is inadequate (usually because it is atypical or too small).
 - E. *Weak analogy*, characterized by an argument that relies on an analogy between two or more objects, ideas, or situations which aren't really alike in the relevant respects.
- 5) As used in paragraph 2, which is the best antonym for **inauspicious**?
- A. predictable
 - B. pleasant
 - C. fortunate
 - D. successful
 - E. honest

Answers and Explanations

1) **E**

This passage begins *in medias res*, or “in the middle of things.” We know this because the first sentence is: “However, despite the beliefs of these 17-21 million people, there is no evidence that accidents are more likely to happen on Friday the 13th.” Both the word “however” and the phrase “these 17-21 million people” refer back to previous points. Furthermore, paragraph 2 begins, “If, then, there is no significant evidence that Friday the 13th is any more dangerous than any other day of the year, why do friggatriskaidekaphobics remain convinced of its unluckiness?” This sentence signals that the previous points identified “no significant evidence” that Friday the 13th was a particularly dangerous or unlucky day. Based on this information, the passage appears to come at the end of a longer work and seems to analyze evidence about Friday the 13th. This means that the passage is likely an excerpt from the conclusion of a longer work that analyzes evidence about the superstition of Friday the 13th. Therefore **(E)** is correct. If this passage were an excerpt from a case study, there would likely be mention of a specific individual’s experiences with friggatriskaidekaphobia. The fact that this passage does not feature this element means **(A)** is incorrect. If this passage were an excerpt from an introduction, it would likely anticipate future points rather than refer back to previous points. This makes **(B)** incorrect. If this passage were an excerpt from an introduction, it would likely anticipate future points rather than refer back to previous points. Moreover, this passage does not seem to be excerpted from a study about the likelihood of accidents occurring on Friday the 13th, since it cites such a study “by a Dutch insurance company.” This passage analyzes evidence rather than merely presenting evidence. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. The information provided in this excerpt does not indicate that the longer work proves that superstitions are justified by real-world events; rather, the author states, “There is no significant evidence that Friday the 13th is any more dangerous than any other day of the year,” leading us to infer that the longer work likely proves this particular superstition is unjustified. This means **(D)** is incorrect.

2) **D**

The tone of this passage is informative and formal. The author does not use first-person pronouns (“I” or “we”). An anecdote is a short personal account of an incident or event. Although the author likely does not believe that Friday the 13th is unlucky, there is no evidence in this passage to suggest that the author provided personal information or used first-person pronouns earlier in the passage. There is also no indication that the author once believed that Friday the 13th is unlucky. This eliminates **option (I)**. In paragraph 2, the author refers to “historical or folk traditions discussed earlier” that “may have something to do with this belief.” This information suggests that a previous section of the passage featured some explanations about why people might fear Friday the 13th. This supports **option (II)**. In paragraph 2, the author uses the uncommon term “friggatriskaidekaphobia” without explaining or defining it. Although context helps readers understand what this term means, it is highly unlikely that the author would casually mention such a specific and unfamiliar word here for the very first time without having previously provided some explanation. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

3) **C**

In paragraph 1, the author writes that “some studies have shown there are actually fewer accidents on Friday the 13th.” The author attributes this phenomenon to the idea that “if people are more cautious on Friday the 13th, then there are likely to be fewer accidents.” Studies that reveal significantly fewer people choose to drive their cars to work on Friday the 13th would support the idea that people are more cautious on Friday the 13th. We can also infer that if fewer people drive on Friday the 13th, there are likely to be fewer traffic accidents. This supports the author’s argument that because people are more cautious on Friday the 13th, they may actually help prevent accidents on that day. Therefore **(C)** is correct. The author does not argue that the number 13 is lucky, only that it is not significantly unlucky. This makes **(A)** incorrect. If people do not avoid flying on Friday the 13th, this would contradict the author’s suggestion that people are more cautious on that day. This means **(B)** is incorrect. The rate of traffic accidents on Fridays in general is not relevant to this argument, since the author is only concerned with Fridays that fall on the 13th of the month. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect. A marriage is not generally considered to be an accident, so the fact that 50% fewer marriages occur on Friday the 13th than on other Fridays does not support the idea that people’s caution helps to prevent accidents on Friday the 13th. This means **(E)** is incorrect.

4) **A**

In the final paragraph, the author presents the example of a man who attributes the loss of his wallet to Friday the 13th. This man sees the date as the cause of his trouble, not simply a coincidental fact. However, if the man had lost his wallet on Tuesday the 21st, the author speculates that “he would probably not assign any meaning to the date on which this event occurred.” Since the man sees the date of Friday the 13th and the loss of his wallet as causally related when they may actually just be correlated, this is an example of the *Post hoc* fallacy. Therefore **(A)** is correct. There is no claim that because an event could happen, it is inevitable that it will happen. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. There is no claim that a conclusion should be accepted due to a lack of evidence. The man does not argue that Friday the 13th caused his wallet to be lost because there is no evidence to the contrary. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. There are no assumptions made about a large group based on an inadequate sample. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect. There is no analogy or comparison between two things. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

5) **C**

inauspicious (*adjective*): suggesting that the future is not very promising or that success is unlikely; unlucky or ominous. In paragraph 2, the author states that if a person who fears Friday the 13th experiences bad luck on Friday the 13th, “he might be likely to conclude that the inauspicious nature of Friday the 13th was at fault.” Throughout the passage, the author discusses the fact that many people are convinced of the “unluckiness” of Friday the 13th, so we can infer that *inauspicious* means unlucky. *Fortunate* is an antonym for unlucky. Therefore **(C)** is correct. The nature of Friday the 13th, according to the superstition as described in the passage, is not merely unpredictable, but unlucky. This means *predictable* is not an antonym for inauspicious, so **(A)** is incorrect. Although some people may consider Friday the 13th unpleasant, the superstition as describe in the passage is that the day is unlucky. This means *pleasant* is not an antonym for inauspicious, so **(B)** is incorrect. While people may fear a lack of success on Friday the 13th, this is because they believe the day has an unlucky nature, not specifically an unsuccessful nature. This means *successful* is not an antonym for inauspicious, so **(D)** is incorrect. The nature of Friday the 13th, according to the superstition as described in the passage, is not dishonest, but unlucky. This means *honest* is not an antonym for inauspicious, so **(E)** is incorrect.