

**SAT READING TEST CONTENT SPECIFICATIONS**

	Number	Percentage of Test
<b>Time Allotted</b>	<b>65 minutes</b>	
<b>Passage Word Count</b>	3,250 words total from 4 single passages and 1 pair; 500–750 words per passage or paired set	
<b>Total Questions</b>	52 questions	100%
Multiple Choice (4 options)		100%
Passage Based		100%
<b>Contribution of Items to Subscores and Scores</b>		
Words in Context (Across Reading and Writing and Language Tests)	10 questions (2 questions per passage/pair)	19%
Command of Evidence (Across Reading and Writing and Language Tests)	10 questions (2 questions per passage/pair)	19%
Analysis in History/Social Studies (Across Math, Reading, and Writing and Language Tests)	21 questions (all history/social studies questions)	40%
Analysis in Science (Across Math, Reading, and Writing and Language Tests)	21 questions (all science questions)	40%
<b>Passage Contents</b>		
U.S. and World Literature	1 passage; 10 questions	20%
History/Social Studies	2 passages, or 1 passage and 1 pair; 10–11 questions each	40%
Science	2 passages, or 1 passage and 1 pair; 10–11 questions each	40%
<b>Graphics</b>		
	1–2 graphics in 1 History/Social Studies passage and in 1 Science passage	
<b>Text and Graphical Complexity</b>		
Text Complexity	A specified range from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry across 4 passages and 1 pair	
Graphical Data Representations (tables, graphs, charts, etc.)	Somewhat challenging to challenging (moderate to moderately high data density, few to several variables, moderately challenging to moderately complex interactions)	

**General Instructional Strategies for Reading:**

- » Require students to practice reading and analyzing extended passages of text at varied lengths and levels of text complexity. The Reading Test passages span a range of difficulty from the early high school to early postsecondary (college-entry, credit bearing) levels of reading.

- » Use multiple reading passages to explore ideas in both fiction and nonfiction, giving students the opportunity to practice analysis and synthesis of texts.
- » Include graphs, tables, and charts in reading assignments. The Reading Test includes two passages accompanied by one or two related informational graphics. Students will be asked to interpret graphics and make connections between graphics and passages. (They will not need to use mathematical computation to answer the questions.)
- » Ask students to investigate the way authors use word choice, structure, and other techniques to create a desired effect in both fiction and nonfiction passages.
- » Direct students to analyze history and social studies passages from the U.S. Founding Documents and texts in the great global conversation. Reading selections from such texts helps prepare students for the rigors of making meaning from challenging passages on topics such as rights, duties, and freedoms. The goal here is not to prepare students for specific test passages—the Reading Test does not follow a prescribed list of texts—but instead to acquaint students with the nature and challenges of reading such works and to engage them in the “conversations” these texts inspire. All of the information needed to answer the associated Reading Test questions is found in the passages themselves—the test does not assume that students will have read these passages previously. When useful, a historical note will be provided to contextualize the reading for students.

SAT READING DOMAIN	
Content Dimension	Description
<b>Text Complexity</b>	The passages/pair on the SAT Reading Test represent a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry.
<b>Information and Ideas</b>	These questions focus on the informational content of text.
<b>Reading closely</b>	These question focus on the explicit and implicit meaning of text and on extrapolating beyond the information and ideas in a text.
Determining explicit meanings	The student will identify information and ideas explicitly stated in text.
Determining implicit meanings	The student will draw reasonable inferences and logical conclusions from text.
Using analogical reasoning	The student will extrapolate in a reasonable way from the information and ideas in a text or apply information and ideas in a text to a new, analogous situation.
<b>Citing textual evidence</b>	The student will cite the textual evidence that best supports a given claim or point.
<b>Determining central ideas and themes</b>	The student will identify explicitly stated central ideas or themes in text and determine implicit central ideas or themes from text.
<b>Summarizing</b>	The student will identify a reasonable summary of a text or of key information and ideas in text.
<b>Understanding relationships</b>	The student will identify explicitly stated relationships or determine implicit relationships between and among individuals, events, or ideas (e.g., cause-effect, comparison-contrast, sequence).
<b>Interpreting words and phrases in context</b>	The student will determine the meaning of words and phrases in context.
<b>Rhetoric</b>	These questions focus on the rhetorical analysis of text.
<b>Analyzing word choice</b>	The student will determine how the selection of specific words and phrases or the use of patterns of words and phrases shapes meaning and tone in text.
<b>Analyzing text structure</b>	These questions focus on the overall structure of a text and on the relationship between a particular part of a text and the whole text.
Analyzing overall text structure	The student will describe the overall structure of a text.
Analyzing part-whole relationships	The student will analyze the relationship between a particular part of a text (e.g., a sentence) and the whole text.
<b>Analyzing point of view</b>	The student will determine the point of view or perspective from which a text is related or the influence this point of view or perspective has on content and style.
<b>Analyzing purpose</b>	The student will determine the main or most likely purpose of a text or of a particular part of a text (typically, one or more paragraphs).

SAT READING DOMAIN	
Content Dimension	Description
<b>Analyzing arguments</b>	These questions focus on analyzing arguments for their content and structure.
Analyzing claims and counterclaims	The student will identify claims and counterclaims explicitly stated in text or determine implicit claims and counterclaims from text.
Assessing reasoning	The student will assess an author’s reasoning for soundness.
Analyzing evidence	The student will assess how an author uses or fails to use evidence to support a claim or counterclaim.
<b>Synthesis</b>	These questions focus on synthesizing multiple sources of information.
<b>Analyzing multiple texts</b>	The student will synthesize information and ideas from paired texts. (Note: All of the skills listed above may be tested with either single or paired passages.)
<b>Analyzing quantitative information</b>	The student will analyze information presented quantitatively in such forms as graphs, tables, and charts and/or relate that information to information presented in text.

## Sample Items—Reading Test

### READING TEST SAMPLE PASSAGE

<b>CONTENT:</b> Science	<b>TEXT COMPLEXITY:</b> Medium
<b>PASSAGE:</b> Questions 1-5 are based on the following passages.	<b>FOCUS:</b> Students must read and understand a pair of passages on a life science topic.

Passage 1 is adapted from Susan Milius, “A Different Kind of Smart.” ©2013 by Science News. Passage 2 is adapted from Bernd Heinrich, *Mind of the Raven: Investigations and Adventures with Wolf-Birds*. ©2007 by Bernd Heinrich.

#### Passage 1

In 1894, British psychologist C. Lloyd Morgan published what’s called Morgan’s canon, the principle that suggestions of humanlike mental processes behind an animal’s behavior should be rejected if a simpler explanation will do.

Line 5 Still, people seem to maintain certain expectations, especially when it comes to birds and mammals. “We somehow want to prove they are as ‘smart’ as people,” zoologist Sara Shettleworth says. We want a bird that masters a vexing problem to be employing human-style insight.

10 New Caledonian crows face the high end of these expectations, as possibly the second-best toolmakers on the planet.

Their tools are hooked sticks or strips made from spike-edged leaves, and they use them in the wild to wrinkle grubs out of crevices. Researcher Russell Gray first saw the process on a cold morning in a mountain forest in New Caledonia, an island chain east of Australia. Over the course of 15 days, he and crow researcher Gavin Hunt had gotten wild crows used to finding meat tidbits in holes in a log. Once the birds were checking the log reliably, the researchers placed a spiky tropical pandanus plant beside the log and hid behind a blind.

A crow arrived. It hopped onto the pandanus plant, grabbed the spiked 20 edge of one of the long straplike leaves and began a series of ripping motions. Instead of just tearing away one long strip, the bird ripped and nipped in a sequence to create a slanting stair-step edge on a leaf segment with a narrow point and a wide base. The process took only seconds. Then the bird dipped the narrow end of its leaf strip into a hole in the log, fished 25 up the meat with the leaf-edge spikes, swallowed its prize and flew off.

“That was my ‘oh wow’ moment,” Gray says. After the crow had vanished, he picked up the tool the bird had left behind. “I had a go, and I couldn’t do it,” he recalls. Fishing the meat out was tricky. It turned out that Gray was moving the leaf shard too forcefully instead of gently stroking the 30 spines against the treat.

The crow’s deft physical manipulation was what inspired Gray and Auckland colleague Alex Taylor to test other wild crows to see if they employed the seemingly insightful string-pulling solutions that some ravens, kea parrots and other brainiac birds are known to employ. Three of 35 four crows passed that test on the first try.

#### KEY TO THE SAT:

On the redesigned SAT, reading passages are selected with both quantitative and qualitative measures of text complexity in mind and represent a range of difficulties consistent with effectively measuring students’ college and career readiness.

#### SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGY:

Students may be unaccustomed to the length and difficulty of Reading Test passages. Assign a range of reading passages that includes some longer and more difficult selections, and provide students with needed scaffolding and support so that they can develop the needed independence in reading such pieces.

**Passage 2**

For one month after they left the nest, I led my four young ravens at least once and sometimes several times a day on thirty-minute walks. During these walks, I wrote down everything in their environment they pecked at. In the first sessions, I tried to be teacher. I touched specific  
 40 objects—sticks, moss, rocks—and nothing that I touched remained untouched by them. They came to investigate what I had investigated, leading me to assume that young birds are aided in learning to identify food from the parents’ example. They also, however, contacted almost everything else that lay directly in their own paths. They soon became  
 45 more independent by taking their own routes near mine. Even while walking along on their own, they pulled at leaves, grass stems, flowers, bark, pine needles, seeds, cones, clods of earth, and other objects they encountered. I wrote all this down, converting it to numbers. After they were thoroughly familiar with the background objects in these woods and  
 50 started to ignore them, I seeded the path we would later walk together with objects they had never before encountered. Some of these were conspicuous food items: raspberries, dead meal worm beetles, and cooked corn kernels. Others were conspicuous and inedible: pebbles, glass chips, red winterberries. Still others were such highly cryptic foods as encased  
 55 caddisfly larvae and moth cocoons. The results were dramatic.

The four young birds on our daily walks contacted all new objects preferentially. They picked them out at a rate of up to tens of thousands of times greater than background or previously contacted objects. The main initial criterion for pecking or picking anything up was its novelty. In  
 60 subsequent trials, when the previously novel items were edible, they became preferred and the inedible objects became “background” items, just like the leaves, grass, and pebbles, even if they were highly conspicuous. These experiments showed that ravens’ curiosity ensures exposure to all or almost all items in the environment.

**SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGY**

To help students recognize how an author’s selection of words and phrases shapes meaning, style, and tone, ask them to select a particularly meaningful or powerful word or phrase from a reading selection and substitute for it another word or phrase of similar meaning. Discuss how it is uncommon for two words or phrases to have exactly the same impact, nuance, or connotation even when they have similar dictionary definitions.

1

Within Passage 1, the main purpose of the first two paragraphs (lines 1-8) is to

- A) offer historical background in order to question the uniqueness of two researchers' findings.
- B) offer interpretive context in order to frame the discussion of an experiment and its results.
- C) introduce a scientific principle in order to show how an experiment's outcomes validated that principle.
- D) present seemingly contradictory stances in order to show how they can be reconciled empirically.

<b>CONTENT:</b> Rhetoric	<b>OBJECTIVE:</b> Students must determine the main purpose of two paragraphs in relation to the passage as a whole.
<b>KEY:</b> B	

**Explanation:** **Choice B** is the best answer. Passage 1 opens with an explanation of Morgan's canon and continues with a discussion of people's expectations regarding animal intelligence. Taken together, the first two paragraphs indicate that despite cautions to the contrary, people still tend to look for humanlike levels of intelligence in many animals, including birds. These two paragraphs provide a framework in which to assess the work of Gray and Hunt, presented in the rest of the passage. The passage's characterization of the experiment Gray and Hunt conduct, in which they observe a crow's tool-making ability and to which Gray responds by trying and failing to mimic the bird's behavior ("I had a go, and I couldn't do it," lines 27-28), suggests that Shettleworth, quoted in the second paragraph, is at least partially correct in her assessment that "We somehow want to prove [birds] are as 'smart' as people" (lines 6-7).

*Choice A* is not the best answer because while the reference to Morgan's canon in the first paragraph offers a sort of historical background (given that the canon was published in 1894), the second paragraph describes people's continuing expectations regarding animal intelligence. Furthermore, the fact that Gray and Hunt may share with other people the tendency to look for humanlike intelligence in many animals does not by itself establish that the main purpose of the first two paragraphs is to question the uniqueness of Gray and Hunt's findings.

*Choice C* is not the best answer because while the reference to Morgan's canon in the first paragraph does introduce a scientific principle, the discussion in the second paragraph of people's expectations regarding animal intelligence, as well as the passage's characterization of Gray and Hunt's experiment and how the researchers interpret the results, primarily suggest that people tend to violate the canon by attributing humanlike levels of intelligence to many animals.

### SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGY

When reading literature passages, primary sources, or current event publications, ask students to use the SOAPSTone\* method to analyze the text. Ask students to identify the Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject, and Tone. Students can deepen their understanding of both content and meaning by comparing these elements across several documents focused on a similar theme or topic. See [Appendix B](#) for a graphic organizer.

\*AP® instructional strategy.

*Choice D* is not the best answer because although the first two paragraphs do present different perspectives, they are not seemingly or genuinely contradictory. The second paragraph, particularly the quotation from Shettleworth, serves mainly to qualify (not contradict) the position staked out in the first paragraph by suggesting that while Morgan's canon is probably a sound principle, people still tend to project humanlike levels of intelligence onto many animals. Moreover, the experiment depicted in the rest of the passage primarily bears out Shettleworth's claim that "We somehow want to prove [birds] are as 'smart' as people" (lines 6-7) and thus does not reconcile the perspectives found in the opening paragraphs.

2

According to the experiment described in Passage 2, whether the author's ravens continued to show interest in a formerly new object was dictated primarily by whether that object was

- A) edible.
- B) plentiful.
- C) conspicuous.
- D) natural.

**CONTENT:** Information and Ideas/  
Understanding relationships

**KEY:** A

**OBJECTIVE:** Students must  
identify an explicitly stated  
relationship between events.

**Explanation:** **Choice A** is the best answer. The last paragraph of Passage 2 presents the results of an experiment in which the author scattered unfamiliar objects in the path of some ravens. According to the passage, the birds initially "contacted all new objects preferentially" but in "subsequent trials" only preferred those "previously novel items" that "were edible" (line 56-60).

*Choice B* is not the best answer because the ravens studied by the author only preferred those "previously novel items" that "were edible," whereas "the inedible objects became 'background' items, just like the leaves, grass, and pebbles" (lines 60-62). In other words, plentiful items did not continue to interest the ravens unless the items were edible.

*Choice C* is not the best answer because the ravens studied by the author only preferred those "previously novel items" that "were edible," whereas "the inedible objects became 'background' items, just like the leaves, grass, and pebbles, even if they were highly conspicuous" (lines 60-62). In other words, conspicuous items did not continue to interest the ravens unless the items were edible.

### SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGY

Ask students to write questions that investigate understanding of a lesson or unit. Questions should be at various levels: literal, interpretive, and universal questions that prompt deeper thinking.\* Students will practice identifying meaningful and relevant information in order to create high quality questions for their peers to answer. When students answer their peers' questions, require them to provide the evidence that supports their selection.

\*AP® instructional strategy.



*Choice D* is not the best answer because the ravens studied by the author only preferred those “previously novel items” that “were edible,” whereas “the inedible objects became ‘background’ items, just like the leaves, grass, and pebbles” (lines 60-62). In other words, natural items did not continue to interest the ravens unless the items were edible.

3

The crows in Passage 1 and the ravens in Passage 2 shared which trait?

- A) They modified their behavior in response to changes in their environment.
- B) They formed a strong bond with the humans who were observing them.
- C) They manufactured useful tools for finding and accessing food.
- D) They mimicked the actions they saw performed around them.

**CONTENT:** Synthesis/Analyzing multiple texts

**KEY:** A

**OBJECTIVE:** Students must synthesize information and ideas from paired texts.

**Explanation:** **Choice A** is the best answer. Both bird species studied modified their behavior in response to changes in their environment. The researchers described in Passage 1 “had gotten wild crows used to finding meat tidbits in holes in a log” (lines 15-16). In other words, the researchers had repeatedly placed meat in the log—that is, changed the crows’ environment—and the birds had responded by modifying their behavior, a point reinforced in lines 16-17, which noted that the birds began “checking the log reliably.” The ravens in Passage 2 act in analogous fashion, responding to the introduction of new objects in their environment by “pick[ing] them out at a rate of up to tens of thousands of times greater than background or previously contacted objects” (lines 57-58).

*Choice B* is not the best answer because while there is some evidence that the ravens described in Passage 2 formed a bond with the author, going on walks with him and possibly viewing him as their “teacher,” there is no evidence that a similar bond formed between the researchers described in Passage 1 and the crows they studied. Indeed, these researchers “hid behind a blind” (line 18) in an effort to avoid contact with their subjects.

*Choice C* is not the best answer because while crows’ tool-making ability is the central focus of the experiment described in Passage 1, there is no evidence that the ravens in Passage 2 did anything similar. Passage 1 does mention that “some ravens” use “seemingly insightful string-pulling solutions” (lines 33-34), but nothing in Passage 2 suggests that the ravens in that particular study had or displayed tool-making abilities.

#### SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGY

Ask students to identify similarities and differences in multiple passages. Have them create a Venn diagram or develop their own graphic organizers to organize their thoughts and facilitate synthesis and analysis of multiple texts. Visual representations can also be used to trace other kinds of relationships, such as sequence and cause-effect. See [Appendix B](#) for a range of graphic organizers.

*Choice D* is not the best answer because while there is some evidence that the ravens described in Passage 2 mimicked human behavior, going on walks with the author and possibly viewing him as their “teacher,” there is no evidence that the crows in Passage 1 did any mimicking. Passage 1, in fact, suggests that the ability of the crow to produce the meat-fishing tool was innate rather than a skill it had acquired from either humans or other birds.

## 4

One difference between the experiments described in the two passages is that unlike the researchers discussed in Passage 1, the author of Passage 2

- A) presented the birds with a problem to solve.
- B) intentionally made the birds aware of his presence.
- C) consciously manipulated the birds’ surroundings.
- D) tested the birds’ tool-using abilities.

**CONTENT:** Synthesis/Analyzing multiple texts

**KEY:** B

**OBJECTIVE:** Students must synthesize information and ideas from paired texts.

**Explanation:** **Choice B** is the best answer. The researchers described in Passage 1 “hid behind a blind” (line 18) to avoid being seen by the crow. The author of Passage 2, on the other hand, made no attempt to conceal his presence; in fact, as he describes it, he “led” the ravens in his study on “walks” (lines 36-37), during which he “touched specific objects” (lines 39-40) and then watched to see whether the birds touched the same objects. The author of Passage 2 notes that the ravens “soon became more independent” (line 44-45), going their own way rather than continuing to follow the author. From this, it is clear that the author of Passage 2, unlike the researchers described in Passage 1, intentionally made the birds aware of his presence.

*Choice A* is not the best answer because while a case could be made that the author of Passage 2 gave the ravens a problem to solve (Which new objects are best to touch?), the researchers described in Passage 1 presented the crows with a problem as well: how to extract meat from a log. Thus, presenting birds with a problem to solve was not a difference between the experiments.

*Choice C* is not the best answer because both the researchers described in Passage 1 and the author of Passage 2 consciously manipulated the birds’ surroundings. The crow researchers placed meat pieces in a log and a pandanus plant behind the

**KEY TO THE SAT**

The redesigned SAT offers only four choices for each question, rather than five.

log (see lines 14-18). The author of Passage 2 put unfamiliar objects on a path for the ravens to find (see lines 50-51). Thus, conscious manipulation of the birds' surroundings was not a difference between the experiments.

*Choice D* is not the best answer because there is no evidence that the author of Passage 2 tested the ravens' tool-using abilities. The passage instead indicates that the author recorded observations about the birds' interactions with objects naturally occurring in and artificially introduced into the environment.

5

Is the main conclusion presented by the author of Passage 2 consistent with Morgan's canon, as described in Passage 1?

- A) Yes, because the conclusion proposes that the ravens' behavior is a product of environmental factors.
- B) Yes, because the conclusion offers a satisfyingly simple explanation of the ravens' behavior.
- C) No, because the conclusion suggests that the ravens exhibit complex behavior patterns.
- D) No, because the conclusion implies that a humanlike quality motivates the ravens' behavior.

**CONTENT:** Synthesis/Analyzing Multiple Texts

**KEY:** D

**OBJECTIVE:** Students must synthesize information and ideas from paired texts.

**Explanation:** **Choice D** is the best answer. According to Passage 1, Morgan's canon is "the principle that suggestions of humanlike mental processes behind an animal's behavior should be rejected if a simpler explanation will do" (lines 2-4). The main conclusion drawn by the author of Passage 2 is that "ravens' curiosity ensures exposure to all or almost all items in the environment" (lines 63-64). In referring to the ravens' behavior as reflecting "curiosity," a human trait, the author of Passage 2 would seem to be ascribing a humanlike mental process to an animal's behavior without explicitly considering alternate explanations.

*Choice A* is not the best answer because the main conclusion drawn by the author of Passage 2 is that "ravens' curiosity ensures exposure to all or almost all items in the environment" (lines 63-64). In referring to the ravens' behavior as reflecting "curiosity," a human trait, the author of Passage 2 would seem to be ascribing a humanlike mental process to an animal's behavior without explicitly considering alternate explanations.

#### SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGY

Ask students to locate and present additional texts that support an author's conclusion and to defend their choices by citing textual evidence (e.g., quotations) from the additional texts. This allows students to practice both synthesizing and supporting their ideas with evidence.

Morgan's canon holds that such suggestions should be rejected unless a "simpler explanation" cannot be found (lines 3-4); therefore, the conclusion the author of Passage 2 reaches is not consistent with Morgan's canon. Moreover, by ascribing the ravens' behavior to "curiosity," the author of Passage 2 seems to reject environmental factors as the cause.

*Choice B* is not the best answer because the main conclusion drawn by the author of Passage 2 is that "ravens' curiosity ensures exposure to all or almost all items in the environment" (lines 63-64). In referring to the ravens' behavior as reflecting "curiosity," a human trait, the author of Passage 2 would seem to be ascribing a humanlike mental process to an animal's behavior without explicitly considering alternate explanations. Morgan's canon holds that such suggestions should be rejected unless a "simpler explanation" cannot be found (lines 3-4); therefore, the conclusion the author of Passage 2 reaches cannot be the type of "simpler explanation" Morgan was alluding to.

*Choice C* is not the best answer because while the main conclusion drawn by the author of Passage 2 is not consistent with Morgan's canon (see explanation for choice D), nothing about how the canon is described in Passage 1 precludes the possibility that animals can exhibit complex behavior patterns. The canon merely rejects the idea that humanlike mental processes should quickly or easily be attributed to animals.

## Writing and Language Test

The overall aim of the redesigned SAT Writing and Language Test is to determine whether students can demonstrate college and career readiness proficiency in revising and editing a range of texts in a variety of content areas. The Writing and Language Test does not require students to provide written responses; rather, students will engage in analysis of writing, effective language use, conformity to the conventions of standard written English grammar, usage, and punctuation. Students may elect to take the optional Essay, which does require that they complete a direct-writing task (see page 40 for more information).

The test will comprise a series of passages and associated multiple-choice questions. Some passages and/or questions will be accompanied by one or more graphical representations of data—tables, charts, graphs, etc.—and certain questions will require students to make revising and editing decisions to passages in light of information and ideas conveyed graphically. Mathematical computation will not be required to answer these questions.

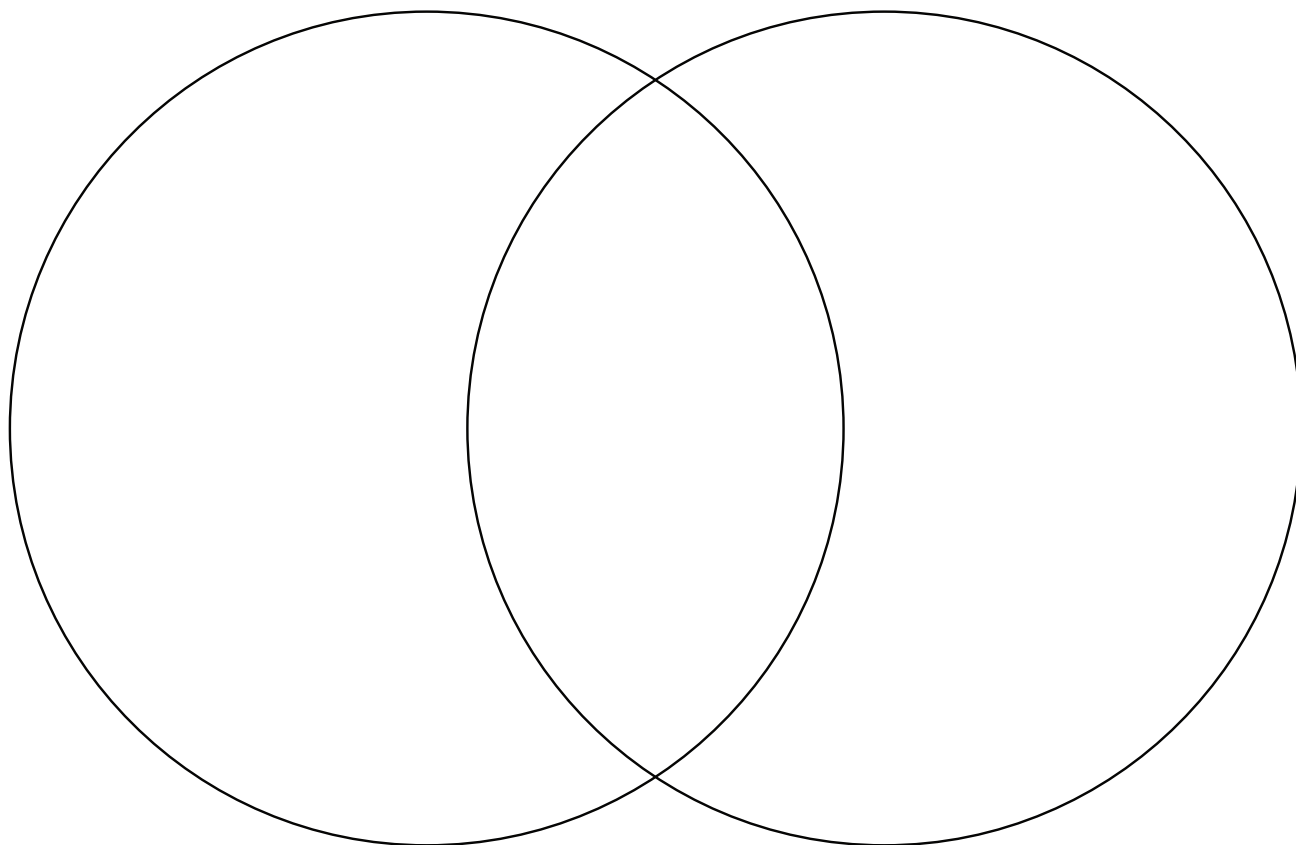
## APPENDIX B:

# Graphic Organizers

SOAPSTone	Analysis	Textual Support
<b>Speaker:</b> What does the reader know about the writer?		
<b>Occasion:</b> What are the circumstances surrounding this text?		
<b>Audience:</b> Who is the target audience?		
<b>Purpose:</b> Why did the author write this text?		
<b>Subject:</b> What is the topic?		
<b>Tone:</b> What is the author's tone or attitude?		

\* SpringBoard® English Language Arts Teacher Edition

## Venn Diagram



## OPTIC

### O – Overview

Write **Overview** notes about the informational graphic.

### P – Parts

Zoom in on the **Parts** of the visual and describe important details.

### T – Title

Record the **Title**.

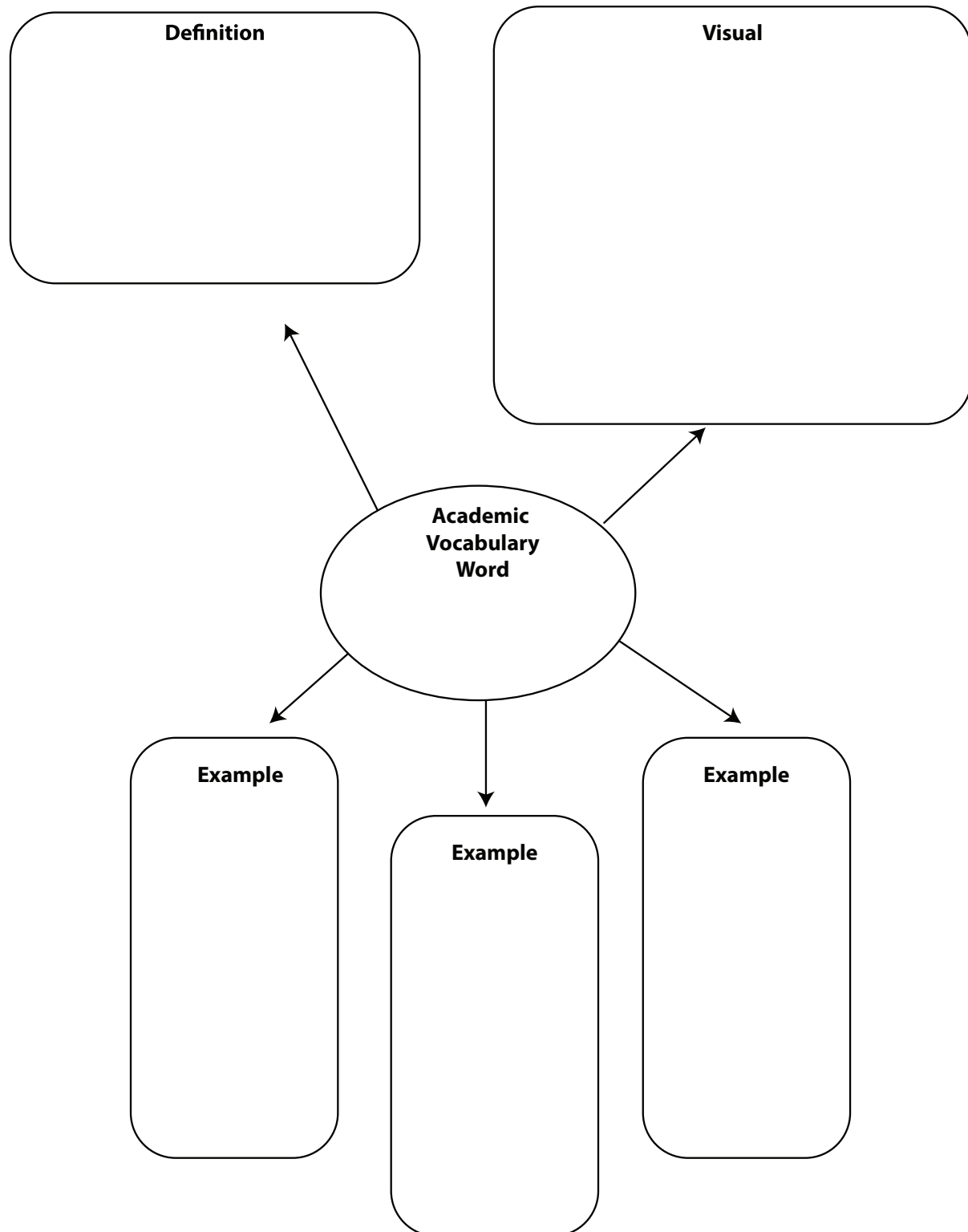
### I – Interrelationships

Identify **Interrelationships** among elements of the graphic.

### C – Conclusions

Draw **Conclusions** about the graphic as a whole.

## Word Map





## Web Organizer

