

MAIN IDEAS: Test C

The following selections have main ideas that may appear at any place within the paragraph. Identify the main idea of each paragraph by filling in the correct sentence number in the space provided.

- ___ 1. ¹For many years, there has been a section in *Reader's Digest* magazine called "Laughter, the Best Medicine." ²The name is not an exaggeration—medical studies show that laughter is good for one's physical and emotional health. ³A hearty laugh exercises the internal organs, including the heart and lungs. ⁴The deep breathing that accompanies laughter supplies your body with extra oxygen. ⁵Many diseases deplete the body's supply of oxygen, so getting extra oxygen is important. ⁶Laughter may also stimulate the body's production of endorphins, which act as painkillers and antidepressants.
- ___ 2. ¹Scientists predict that textbooks of the future will be computerized and will thus offer many of the special benefits unique to computers. ²First of all, they say that the books will take the form of small plastic cards that can be inserted into screens the size of paperback novels. ³Viewers will be able to select the size and style of print and automatic page turning, or they may choose to listen to an audio version and just watch the pictures. ⁴They will be able to zoom in for close-ups of illustrations, which will then fill the screen and rotate for a three-dimensional view, so that medical students, for example, can see all sides of a muscle and how it moves. ⁵Finally, viewers will be able to interact with materials by typing in critical comments, updating information, and even changing the outcome of a story.
- ___ 3. ¹A major study of firstborn children reveals that they tend to be super-achievers who strive very hard to make their families proud. ²It was discovered that of the country's first twenty-three astronauts, an amazing twenty-one were firstborn in their families. ³Also, slightly more than half—52 percent—of our presidents were firstborn children. ⁴Less positive is the fact that firstborns are under a lot of pressure to succeed, because their families often pin their hopes and dreams on them. ⁵Also, as the eldest, they are expected to "set an example" for their younger brothers and sisters. ⁶Furthermore, these firstborns sometimes have trouble with personal relationships because they learned to be very independent and to enjoy doing things on their own—since they were the only children in their families until their younger brothers and sisters were born. ⁷The conclusion of the study is that being a firstborn child is a mixed blessing, having positive as well as some negative aspects.

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___ 4. ¹Unlike many lower animals that use their noses to detect mates, predators, and prey, humans do not depend on their sense of smell for survival. ²Nevertheless, the sense of smell in humans is incredibly sensitive. ³Only a few molecules of a substance reaching the smell receptors are necessary to cause humans to perceive an odor. ⁴Certain substances can be detected in especially small amounts. ⁵Decayed cabbage, lemons, and rotten eggs are examples. ⁶So too is mercaptan, a foul-smelling substance added to natural gas that we can smell in concentrations as small as one part per fifty billion parts of air. ⁷According to one estimate, the sense of smell is about ten thousand times more sensitive than that of taste.

___ 5. ¹At the outset of the nineteenth century, there was a lack of reliable, comfortable travel. ²The stagecoach was the major form of transportation. ³Twelve passengers, crowded along with their bags and parcels, traveled at just four miles an hour. ⁴Wretched roads plagued travelers. ⁵Larger towns had roads paved with cobblestones; potholes in major highways were filled with stones. ⁶Most roads were simply dirt paths. ⁷Rain left these roads muddy and rutted. ⁸The presence of tree stumps in the middle of many roads posed a serious obstacle to carriages.