

Passage 5

Botany, the study of plants, occupies a peculiar position in the history of human knowledge. For many thousands of years it was the one field of awareness about which humans had anything more than the vaguest of insights. It is impossible to know today just what our Stone Age ancestors knew about plants, but from what we can observe of pre-industrial societies that still exist, a detailed learning of plants and their properties must be extremely ancient. This is logical. Plants are the basis of the food pyramid for all living things, even for other plants. They have always been enormously important to the welfare of peoples, not only for food, but also for clothing, weapons, tools, dyes: medicines, shelter, and a great many other purposes. Tribes living today in the jungles of the Amazon recognize literally hundreds of plants and know many properties of each. To them botany, as such, has no name and is probably not even recognized as a special branch of "Knowledge at all.

Unfortunately, the more industrialized we become the farther away we move from direct contact with plants, and the less distinct our knowledge of botany grows. Yet everyone comes unconsciously on an amazing amount of botanical knowledge, and few people will fail to recognize a rose, an apple, or an orchid. When our Neolithic ancestors, living in the Middle East about 10,000 years ago, discovered that certain grasses could be harvested and their seeds planted for richer yields the next season, the first great step in a new association of plants and humans was taken. Grains were discovered and from them flowed the marvel of agriculture: cultivated crops. From then on, humans would increasingly take their living from the controlled production of a few plants, rather than getting a little here and a little there from many varieties that grew wild – and the accumulated knowledge of tens of thousands of years of experience and intimacy with plants in the wild would begin to fade away.

1. Which of the following assumptions about early humans is expressed in the passage?
 - (A) They probably had extensive knowledge of plants.
 - (B) They thought there was no need to cultivate crops.
 - (C) They did not enjoy the study of botany.
 - (D) They placed great importance on the ownership of property.
2. What does the comment "This is logical" in line 6 mean?
 - (A) There is no clear way to determine the extent of our ancestor's knowledge of plants.
 - (B) It is not surprising that early humans had a detailed knowledge of plants.
 - (C) It is reasonable to assume that our ancestors behaved very much like people in preindustrial societies.
 - (D) Human knowledge of plants is well organized and very detailed.
3. According to the passage, why has general knowledge of botany begun to fade?
 - (A) People no longer value plants as a useful resource.
 - (B) Botany is not recognized as a special branch of science.
 - (C) Research is unable to keep up with the increasing numbers of plants.
 - (D) Direct contact with a variety of plants has decreased.
4. In line 16, what is the author's purpose in mentioning "a rose, an apple, or an orchid"?
 - (A) To make the passage more poetic
 - (B) To cite examples of plants that are attractive
 - (C) To give botanical examples that all readers will recognize
 - (D) To illustrate the diversity of botanical life
5. According to the passage, what was the first great step toward the practice of agriculture?
 - (A) The invention of agricultural implements and machinery
 - (B) The development of a system of names for plants
 - (C) The discovery of grasses that could be harvested and replanted
 - (D) The changing diets of early humans

6. The relationship between botany and agriculture is similar to the relationship between zoology (the study of animals) and
- (A) deer hunting
 - (B) bird watching
 - (C) sheep raising
 - (D) horseback riding
7. In which lines in the passage does the author describe the beneficial properties that plants have for humans?
- (A) Lines 1-2
 - (B) Lines 7-9
 - (C) Lines 11-12
 - (D) Lines 14-16

PRACTICE TEST 57

Passage 1

Having no language, infants cannot be told what they need to learn. Yet by the age of three they will have mastered the basic structure of their native language and will be well on their way to communicative competence. Acquiring their language is a most impressive intellectual feat. Students of how children learn language generally agree that the most remarkable aspect of this feat is the rapid acquisition of grammar. Nevertheless, the ability of children to conform to grammatical rules is only slightly more wonderful than their ability to learn words. It has been reckoned that the average high school graduate in the United States has a reading vocabulary of 80,000 words, which includes idiomatic expressions and proper names of people and places. This vocabulary must have been learned over a period of 16 years. From the figures, it can be calculated that the average child learns at a rate of about 13 new words per day. Clearly a learning process of great complexity goes on at a rapid rate in children.

1. What is the main subject of the passage.
(A) Language acquisition in children
(B) Teaching languages to children
(C) How to memorize words
(D) Communicating with infants
2. The word "feat" in line 5 is closest in meaning to which of the following?
(A) Experiment
(B) Idea
(C) Activity
(D) Accomplishment
3. The word "reckoned" in line 7 is closest in meaning to which of the following?
(A) Suspected
(B) Estimated
(C) Proved
(D) Said
4. In line 8, the word "which" refers to
(A) their ability
(B) reading vocabulary
(C) idiomatic expression
(D) learning process
5. According to the passage, what is impressive about the way children learn vocabulary.
(A) They learn words before they learn grammar
(B) They learn even very long words.
(C) They learn words very quickly.
(D) They learn the most words in high school.