

Name _____
Date _____

Considering Cockroaches

I have had the pleasure of raising many different kinds of animals. In my 40 years of pet ownership, I have had rabbits, fish, lizards, dogs, cats, hamsters, and even a pot-bellied pig. As a longtime pet owner, I therefore must take issue with your recent article, "Dogs Make the Best Pets" (6/15/11). There is no doubt that dogs are playful, loyal, and smart. Dogs have been an extremely popular choice for pet owners for decades. But your article completely ignored the many benefits of a slightly less popular pet: cockroaches.



If dogs are such great pets, then why do dog owners have so few of them? How many dogs does the typical dog owner have? One? Two? Three? I have over four hundred cockroaches. This number is, of course, an estimate. I cannot really be certain exactly how many of those little beauties currently live under my roof. They are a little shy and like to hide when I turn the lights on, so it can be difficult to keep an exact count. But my point remains the same: if dogs really were the "best pets," as your article claims, people would have more of them.

Furthermore, while I understand all of your points about the benefits of dog ownership, your article does not address two very important negative factors: the expense and the labor. First, the expense: purebred dogs can cost thousands of dollars. Even if you adopt a dog from a shelter, you still have to pay some fees. Moreover, once you get the dog home, you have to pay for food, toys, and visits to the veterinarian. Second, the labor: dogs require a lot of work. You have to walk dogs. You have to train dogs not to jump on people. You have to teach dogs not to chew on furniture.

These problems with expense and labor do not apply to cockroaches. First and foremost, cockroaches are 100% free. You do not have to pay a breeder or a shelter to adopt a cockroach—they just walk right into your home! You also do not have to buy any sort of special food for cockroaches. They are happy to eat your crumbs, garbage, or even cardboard boxes. Try feeding a cardboard box to a dog! As far as labor goes, there is no pet easier to take care of than a cockroach. You never need to walk cockroaches, because they prefer to spend all day inside the house. Plus, cockroaches already know not to jump on people. In fact, they are more than happy just to scurry into a dark corner when strangers come into the room and turn on the lights.

I am not saying that dogs are all bad. I understand that different people enjoy different kinds of pets. But your article failed to consider every option for people interested in becoming pet owners. Cockroaches may not be right for everyone, but they are certainly the best pets that I have ever had. I hope that this letter helps other readers realize that they should give these tiny creatures a chance to become their new best friends.

- 1) This passage would most likely be found in
- A. the letters to the editor section of a newspaper
 - B. a brochure at a veterinarian's office about how to choose a pet
 - C. an encyclopedia article about cockroaches
 - D. an exotic pet owner's life story
- 2) In paragraph 1, the author most likely identifies him or herself as a "longtime pet owner" who has had many different types of pets in order to
- A. inform readers about the different kinds of pets available
 - B. make readers curious about the author's background
 - C. convince readers that exotic animals like lizards and pot-bellied pigs are more interesting than dogs and cats
 - D. establish that he or she is an authority on the subject of pets
- 3) The author apparently believes that cockroaches make the best pets. However, in paragraph 1, the author states that "dogs are playful, loyal, and smart" and then admits that "dogs have been an extremely popular choice for pet owners for decades." The author most likely makes these statements in order to
- I. show that he or she has considered other points of view before voicing an opinion
 - II. answer the question of why dog owners have so few dogs each
 - III. show that dogs are ultimately better pets than cockroaches
- A. I only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. II and III only
 - D. I, II, and III
- 4) As used in paragraph 2, which is the best synonym for **estimate**?
- A. exaggeration
 - B. guess
 - C. mistake
 - D. amount

- 5) The author argues that cockroaches are better than dogs for all of the following reasons EXCEPT
- A. You have to take dogs to the veterinarian.
 - B. Cockroaches are better behaved around strangers.
 - C. Cockroaches do not bark.
 - D. Dogs need to be taken for walks.
- 6) In paragraph 4, the author writes, “Try feeding a cardboard box to a dog!” The author most likely includes this sentence in order to
- A. give dog owners a suggestion for a cheap way to feed their pets
 - B. illustrate how much cheaper it is to feed a cockroach than it is to feed a dog
 - C. make fun of dog owners for their poor decision to get a dog
 - D. provide an example of someone who does not know how to take care of pets properly
- 7) The author’s main purpose in writing this passage is to
- A. criticize the newspaper for publishing the article “Dogs Make the Best Pets”
 - B. persuade dog owners to give up their dogs and adopt cockroaches instead
 - C. suggest that cockroaches as pets require the least effort from their owners
 - D. convince readers looking for a new pet to consider cockroaches
- 8) Think of another animal that is not usually considered to be a pet. Write a letter modeled after the one in the passage suggesting that this animal would make a good pet. Be sure to think of at least three different reasons.

Answers and Explanations

1) A

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

In the first and last paragraphs, the author mentions that he or she is replying to another article. In the paragraph 1, the author identifies the article as “Dogs Make the Best Pets” and says that it was published on 6/15/11. When someone reads an article in a newspaper and either disagrees with it or wants to comment on it, the person will write a letter to the editor explaining his or her position. Since this is what the author of this passage is doing, we can understand that **(A)** is correct.

Even if you do not know exactly what a letters to the editor section is, you can still arrive at the correct answer through process of elimination. We know that this passage is a response to another article, which makes it unlikely to be any of the other three choices. Furthermore, we know that it would not be found in a brochure at a veterinarian’s office, because the author merely offers an alternative to a dog as a pet. He or she does not give general advice about how to choose a pet.

This eliminates **(B)**.

This passage contains an opinion, so it is not appropriate for an encyclopedia article, which is supposed to be objective and unbiased. This eliminates **(C)**.

The purpose of this passage is to persuade rather than to reflect upon and describe the author’s own experiences. This eliminates **(D)**.

2) D

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

Many opinion pieces like this passage begin with the author establishing his or her authority on the subject. When an author informs readers about his or her background, the author’s points are more likely to seem credible. For example, a teacher or principal would seem like more of an authority on the problems with education in America than a veterinarian or a firefighter would. Because this letter deals with pets, the author begins by stating that he or she has been a pet owner for 40 years and has had many different kinds of pets. This information makes the author seem like an authority on pet ownership. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

The author did not include these details to tell readers about the different kinds of pets available, because the author wants to inform readers specifically about cockroaches. This makes **(A)** incorrect.

The fact that the author has owned many different pets may make the reader curious about the author’s background, but sparking curiosity would not benefit the author as much as establishing authority would. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect.

The author does not try to convince readers that lizards and pot-bellied pigs are more interesting than dogs and cats, so **(C)** is incorrect.

3) A

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

In general, including an opposing point of view can strengthen an author's argument because it shows the reader that the author has carefully considered both sides of the issue before coming to his or her own opinion. If the author of this piece wrote "Dogs are terrible pets. There is nothing good about dogs," readers would probably dismiss the author's arguments because it would seem that he or she had not considered both sides very thoughtfully. By admitting that there are some good things about dogs, the author comes across as more reasonable. This shows that he or she has considered other points of view before voicing an opinion. This supports **option (I)**

The author does ask the question, why do dog owners have so few dogs each? But the answer to this question would have to be negative factors (such as expense and labor), whereas these statements tell us positive things about owning dogs. This eliminates **option (II)**.

In the final paragraph, the author claims, "Cockroaches may not be right for everyone, but they are certainly the best pets that I have ever had." From this information we can understand that the author does not believe that dogs are better pets than cockroaches. This eliminates **option (III)**.

Therefore **(A)** is correct.

4) B

Core Standard: **Craft and Structure**

estimate (*noun*): an educated guess; an approximate calculation.

In paragraph 2, the author writes, "I have over four hundred cockroaches. This number is, of course, an estimate. I cannot really be certain exactly how many of those little beauties currently live under my roof." The author admits that he or she cannot be certain exactly how many cockroaches there are in the house. Because the cockroaches are "shy" and "like to hide," it is hard for the author to count them. The author therefore has to make an "estimate," or an educated guess. Therefore **(B)** is the best choice.

It would not make sense for the author to say the number of cockroaches in her house is an exaggeration, because then the readers would find him or her less trustworthy. If the author is not telling the truth about the number of cockroaches he or she owns, what else is the author exaggerating? This means **(A)** is incorrect.

Likewise, it would not make sense for the author to admit that this number is a mistake. It may only be a guess and therefore not exact, but the author wants the readers to believe him or her. Therefore it makes sense for the author to try to provide a correct number. This means **(C)** is incorrect.

Amount is another word for number, so the sentence would read, "This number is, of course, a number." That is nonsensical, so **(D)** is incorrect.

5) C

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

The easiest way to arrive at the correct answer for this question is to use process of elimination. In paragraphs 3 and 4, the author describes the disadvantages of having dogs and the advantages of having cockroaches. In paragraph 3, the author writes, "once you get the dog home, you have to pay for food, toys, and visits to the veterinarian." This lets us know that the author argues that dogs require a lot of money and labor to own.

Therefore **(A)** is incorrect.

In paragraph 3, the author also argues that dogs must be trained not to jump on strangers. Cockroaches, on the other hand, "already know not to jump on people" and will just run to a dark corner if a stranger comes over and turns on the lights. From this information we can infer that the author believes cockroaches are better behaved around strangers than dogs. This eliminates **(B)**.

In paragraph 3, the author states dogs need to go on walks, so **(D)** is incorrect.

Although cockroaches do not bark, and it is true this could be an advantage over dogs, the author never mentions this fact in the passage. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

6) B

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

In paragraph 4, the author gives several reasons why cockroaches make better pets than dogs. The author states that cockroaches are easier to take care of and cheaper to own. While you have to buy food for dogs, cockroaches are "happy to eat your crumbs, garbage, or even cardboard boxes." Next, the author writes, "Try feeding a cardboard box to a dog!" This statement illustrates that cockroaches will eat things that you do not need to buy—like cardboard boxes—but dogs require you to buy food. This point shows it is cheaper to feed a cockroach than a dog.

Therefore **(B)** is correct.

The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)**, **(C)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

7) D

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

In the final paragraph, the author writes that the article about dogs “failed to consider every option for people interested in becoming pet owners.” This lets us know that the author is particularly concerned with people who are interested in becoming pet owners. The author then continues, “I hope that this letter helps other readers realize that they should give these tiny creatures a chance to become their new best friends.” From this information, we can understand that the author would like others looking for a new pet to consider cockroaches. This means **(D)** is correct.

Although the author does not agree with the article about dogs, he or she is not criticizing the newspaper for publishing it. After all, if the article were not published in the first place, the author would not have had the chance to voice his or her own opinion. This eliminates **(A)**.

In paragraph 1, the author says that “dogs are playful, loyal, and smart” and then admits that “dogs have been an extremely popular choice for pet owners for decades.” Then, in the last paragraph, the author expands on this idea, stating, “I am not saying that dogs are all bad. I understand that different people enjoy different kinds of pets.” This lets us know that the author believes that dogs have some benefits and that cockroaches may not be right for everyone. This eliminates **(B)**.

The author states a number of reasons why cockroaches require little effort from their owners. They don’t require walking, feeding, or trips to the veterinarian. All of these pet requirements can be considered “effort.” However, he also makes numerous additional points about their value as pets, such as being inexpensive, and the fact that one can own so many of them. The fact that cockroaches require little effort on the part of their owners is not the main purpose in writing this passage. This eliminates **(C)**.