Chapter 4

MCAT Verbal Reasoning Exercises

Passage 1

The ancestor of the modern horse lived just after the dinosaurs ruled the earth, and was not much bigger than a rabbit and lived in forests. Eohippus, or Dawn Horse, was the name given to this ancient horse because it lived at the beginning of the Age of the Mammals. Fossils of this primal horse have been found in England, Europe, and America.

The Dawn Horse had four toes on each front foot and three toes on each back foot. The modern horse has only one toe on its front and back legs and the hoof is actually the nail of that toe.

A number of different species of the Dawn Horse have been found. They vary in height from about ten to twenty inches at the shoulders. Scientists think they were shy. Many of them lived in the forests and used the trees and bushes for protection from their enemies.

Later, fossils found by scientists showed that the horse changed both in size and shape over time. By the end of the Dawn period, some species of horses had grown to be as large as a Great Dane dog. They looked very much like a tiny modern horse. While this species had toes, only the middle toe touched the ground. Its nail became the hoof for each foot.

Much later, the legs of the horse grew longer and the horse became bigger. Some species were as large as many of today’s ponies. At this time, the horse lived on the open plains rather than in forests. With the development of one toe on each foot, it could outrun most of its enemies. These horses also traveled widely, crossing from Alaska to Siberia and spreading all over Asia and Europe. Fossils have been found from China to western Europe.

It took about fifty-five million years of changes for the modern horse to develop. The history of the horse shows how evolution helps an animal better adapt to its world. Without these natural changes, there would be no horses today as we know them.

1. What is this story about?

A. Fossils of early horses.

B. The evolution of the horse. C. Ancient horses.

D. Different species of horses.

2. What does the word species mean in paragraph 4? A. A category of animals.

B. Money.

C. A mental image. D. A common name.

3. How were the horses at the end of the Dawn Period like modern horses?

A. Both had only one toe that touched the ground. B. The horse was about the same size as today

by the end of the Dawn Period.

C. The legs and size of the horse were about the same.

D. The body structure of both horses was the same.

1. Why is the ancestor of the horse named the Dawn Horse?

A. Fossils have been found in England and Europe.

B. It lived at the same time as the dinosaurs. C. It lived at the beginning of the Age of the

Mammals.

D. The Dawn Horse was born at the dawn of time.

5. Why were the ancestors of the horse able to live on the open plains?

A. Their legs grew longer and allowed them to run faster.

B. The horse became bigger and could run faster. C. The development of one toe allowed them to

outrun their enemies.

D. They traveled in groups and protected each

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|  | other from their enemies. |  |
|  | Passage 2 |  |
|  | It’s a USA art form, but jazz has generally been given |  |
|  | short shrift in our movies. And sure enough, in Round |  |
|  | Midnight, it is a Frenchman, director/writer Bertrand |  |
|  | Tavernier, who pays tender homage to the lives and music |  |
|  | of some fictional ‘50s jazzmen. |  |
|  | Tavernier has made the film breathe with authenticity by |  |
|  | hiring real musicians to play musicians. As Dale Turner, |  |
|  | a declining, alcoholic jazz legend working in Paris in |  |
|  | 1959, veteran tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon is full of |  |
|  | wit, dignity, poignancy, and style. With his great, |  |
|  | expressive face, laconically delivering lines in a voice |  |
|  | like rocks in a blender, Gordon is a revelation in his first |  |
|  | film. |  |
|  | Francois Cluzet is also winning as a French artist who |  |
|  | crouches in the rain outside Paris’ recreated Blue Note |  |
|  | club to hear his idol play; he later sacrifices money, |  |
|  | tears, even his own bed for Turner, in the friendship that |  |
|  | forms the basis of Round Midnight. |  |
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| Preparation for MCAT Verbal Reasoning |  |
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As fellow musicians, real-life jazzmen Herbie Hancock, Bobby Hutcherson and Wayne Shorter, among others, are also effective, and film maker Martin Scorsese has a cameo as Turner’s vile USA manager. Alexandre Trauner’s sets are uniformly outstanding.

Hancock also composed and arranged the music for Round Midnight, and it’s here that the film succeeds like none before it. Nightclub performances were recorded live, providing superb sound quality and a chance to hear superb jazz musicians play without the charade of syncing.

Round Midnight isn’t perfect. It’s a bit long (130 minutes), and a bit short on plot. But Tavernier has made a film with heart and charm—and you don’t have to be a jazz aficionado to dig it.

1. Which of the following best summarizes the review of Round Midnight?

A. With authentic jazz players and good music,

Round Midnight is a warm, enjoyable film.

B. The superb jazz music in Round Midnight was

composed and arranged by Herbie Hancock.

C. Round Midnight is the story of jazz musicians

who become good friends.

D. Frenchman Bernard Tavernier has made a

film about two jazz musicians in Paris.

2. According to the review, musician-actor Dexter Gordon is witty and dignified and has a voice that is A. smooth.

B. soft.

C. melodic. D. rough.

3. To which of the following types of audience would the author feel a viewer must belong in order to enjoy Round Midnight?

A. authentic musicians

B. French-speaking adults

C. fans of fast-moving action films D. music lovers

Passage 3

The Karate Kid was one of 1984’s smashes, grossing more than $100 million to date. That tale of the underdog overcoming tremendous odds was based on the relationship between the teenage Daniel (Ralph Macchio) and his personal martial arts mentor Mr. Miyagi (Noriyuki “Pat” Morita). With enough action to satisfy the popcorn gobblers, it was a complete summer movie.

Part II was born with an obvious predicament for director John Avildsen: how to reestablish yet broaden Macchio’s and Morita’s story without rehashing the original. It was a losing battle. In this sequel, Morita humbles his nemesis

from the original movie (Martin Kove), and six months later Macchio announces that his mother is moving and his girlfriend has left him. So when Morita receives a letter telling of his father’s illness, he heads for his native Okinawa, with Macchio in tow. They find that all is not as Morita left it 45 years before. For starters, his village is now part of a U.S. air base. Morita also has trouble with the local landlord (veteran character actor Danny Kamekona). Long ago, the landlord lost his honor when Morita stole his wife to be (Nobu McCarthy). “In Okinawa, honor has no time limit,” says Morita, explaining why his former friend still holds the grudge and intends to fight him to the death over it. Despite the inevitable confrontations— one of them matches Macchio against Kamekona’s nephew (Yuji Okumoto)—the fighting is again not at the film’s heart. Honor, custom, and tradition are its focus, and the decidedly slow pace and beautiful village scenes, shot in Hawaii, lend some integrity to the plot. Morita also returns to his first love (McCarthy), while Macchio finds a new one (Tamlyn Tomita). Morita brings the same charm to the role that won him an Oscar nomination, and Macchio and the rest of the cast are workmanlike. But the film is ultimately too predictable, even somewhat tiresome, and Karate Kid Part II goes down kicking.

1. How is Karate Kid Part II different from Part I ?

A. The two main actors are not the same in Part II.

B. Fighting is at the heart of the film in Part II.. C. One of the characters has a new love interest

in Part II.

D. It cost much more money to make Part II..

2. In the movie, why does the character played by Morita return to Okinawa?

A. A family member is ill. B. His mother is moving.

C. He is afraid the U.S. air base has changed his old home.

D. He wants to help Macchio forget his problems.

3. Which of the following movie themes does Karate Kid Part II have as one of its main themes?

A. Ambition

B. Love and romance

C. Vengeance

D. Honor

4. According to the author, which of the following problems is likely to occur with most movie sequels?

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| A. | Getting the same actors to play their original |  |
|  | roles |  |
| B. | Overcoming audience prejudice against |  |
|  | sequels |  |
| C. | Including enough action in the sequel |  |
| D. | Reestablishing the original story without |  |
|  | repeating it |  |
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Passage 4

A good layer of healthy topsoil is essential to productive agriculture. Yet the erosion of topsoil is one of our most serious problems, and a problem that is getting worse, not better.

Wind and water have always carried topsoil into the world’s rivers and oceans. But human use of the land seems to have considerably speeded up the process. One geologist estimates that topsoil erosion-has nearly tripled since the introduction of human agriculture and grazing.

And the problem is the same in both industrial and underdeveloped nations. In the Third World, where populations are high and land scarce, farmers use steeply sloping land, which is easily eroded by water. Or they move into semi-arid regions where the plowed earth is vulnerable to erosion by wind. Even in the western provinces, many farmers have stopped the ecologically sound practice of long-term crop rotation in favor of summer fallowing, which leaves the land exposed.

Erosion has, basically, two effects on farmers’ ability to grow food. When topsoil is lost or damaged, productivity decreases. Productivity may be increased by the use of fertilizer or through irrigation, but this is expensive. So farmers who lose topsoil will experience either lower crop yields or higher costs.

1. Topsoil erosion by wind and water has been speeded up by

A. fertilizers and irrigation. B. excessive crop rotation.

C. industrialization in the Third World. D. human agriculture and grazing.

2. In an area where winds blow away topsoil, a farmer might conserve that soil by

A. planting new crops. B. planting trees.

C. using fertilizer.

D. summer fallowing.

3. What is the most likely effect topsoil loss would have on food prices?

A. Prices will go up because less food can be grown.

B. Prices will come down because more food can be grown.

C. Prices will stay the same because production can be maintained by the use of fertilizer and irrigation.

D. Retail prices will increase, but wholesale prices will not.

4. Which of the following is not supported in the article? A. Farmers who lose topsoil will experience

lower crop yields or higher costs.

B. Hydroponics is an alternative to conventional farming.

C. In the Third World farmers use steeply sloping land, which is easily eroded by water.

D. When topsoil is lost or damaged, production decreases.

5. Based on the information in the article, which of the following would be the most practical, long-term way to help Third World farmers?

A. Train farmers to do industrial and technological jobs.

B. Invest in fertilizer and irrigation to increase production.

C. Teach them soil conservation methods, such as terracing and crop rotation.

D. Make available low-interest loans so farmers can buy more land.

Passage 5

Most North Americans know better but they smoke, drink, shun seat belts, and don’t use smoke detectors, a government survey indicates. The study, developed by the government’s National Center for Health Statistics in consultation with other agencies, concluded that most North Americans know a lot about how to keep their health but many of them break the rules. Among the specific findings:

80 percent understand that smoking, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diets high in animal fat will increase chances of heart disease, the leading cause of death in North America.

About one-third of the adults responding to the survey said they smoke.

8 percent were heavy drinkers, 21 percent moderate drinkers and 24 percent lighter drinkers. Twelve percent said they had driven while intoxicated at least once in the past year.

Less than one-half of the adult population exercise on a regular basis and only one quarter have done so for five or more years.

40 percent said their homes did not have a working smoke detector.

Only one-third of adults wore seat belts most of the time; another third never used seat belts.

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1. According to the article, how many people in the study did not know what factors contribute to heart disease?

A. 20 percent B. 80 percent C. 40 percent

D. about one-third

2. A committee formed to improve North Americans’ health would probably conclude from the information in the article that North Americans do not need

A. a national seat belt law.

B. tougher drunk driving laws.

C. higher taxes on tobacco products.

D. more education about how to stay healthy.

3. Which of the following is supported by data in the article?

A. People who don’t smoke or drink will live longer.

B. One-third of all North Americans think that seat belts are too uncomfortable.

C. Most North Americans do not have working smoke detectors in their homes.

D. Slightly more than 50 percent of those in the study said that they drink.

4. The article suggests that North Americans break the rules of good health

A. for economic reasons B. for unknown reasons

C. because they don’t understand the rules D. because they enjoy taking risks

Passage 6

Television is at its best when it is capturing the best things in American life. We tend to take television so much for granted that we seldom realize its power. That came home to me one day when I was on my way to address the National Association of Broadcasters in Washington, D.C. My train stopped in Baltimore and I was looking at all those red brick houses, each one abutting the next, with everything spick-and-span. Then I noticed that every one of those houses had an antenna on top, reaching up and symbolically saying, “Come into my house.” When I got down to Washington, I told the convention broadcasters about this forest of antennas in Baltimore, and said, “You people right here today have got more influence in determining the future of the U.S. than anybody, because you are constantly pouring culture and ideas and images down all those antennas and into the minds of American youth.”

As we proceed into the future, I think the medium’s usefulness will be greatly entranced if broadcasters become more knowledgeable about the people they serve.

Television must become humanized; it must speak to all our needs, not just our entertainment needs.

1. As used in the passage, what does the phrase “came home to me” mean?

A. appeared on a local television station B. was given to me

C. was realized by me D. returned to my house

2. On TV, the author would probably welcome an increase of

A. cartoon shows.

B. situation comedies. C. documentaries.

D. westerns.

3. According to the passage, what influence do broadcasters have on the future of the United States? A. They try to show what the future should be

like.

B. They determine our entertainment needs. C. They reach homes all over the nation.

D. They provide young people with ideas and images.

4. Why did the author compare the TV antennas he saw from the train to a forest?

A. Both antennas and trees are useful to people. B. Both antennas and trees attract lightning.

C. The antennas were surrounded by trees.

D. There were so many antennas, and they rose up like trees in a forest.

5. Which of the following is a fact stated in the passage? A. Every one of the houses that the author saw

in Baltimore had a TV antenna.

B. Television is at its best when it shows the best of American life.

C. Television must become humanized.

D. Broadcasters should learn more about the people they serve.

6. This passage was most likely taken from A. an autobiography.

B. an article for the general public. C. a novel.

D. a textbook on TV communications.

Passage 7

The Cuban missile crisis began October 22, 1962, following intelligence reports that the U.S.S.R. had missiles in Cuba capable of hitting U.S. and Canadian targets. U.S. President Kennedy decided to surround Cuba with a naval blockade to halt approaching Soviet ships. Kennedy believed the ships were carrying the

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| Preparation for MCAT Verbal Reasoning |  |
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means to complete the missile base. The U.S. President requested that Canada move its troops to an alert status. Canada quietly did so, but formal authorization was delayed while the Canadian Cabinet debated the situation. The entire world waited and watched as Soviet ships steamed toward Cuba, and as a huge American invasion force gathered in Florida. Then, to the great relief of everyone involved, the Soviet ships turned around. The crisis finally ended when the Soviets agreed to dismantle the missiles already in place in Cuba. In return the United States agreed not to invade the island.

1. Why was the Cuban missile crisis particularly upsetting to the United States?

A. Americans were opposed to stationing troops in Florida.

B. Hostile weapons were positioned close to U.S. borders.

C. Soviet missiles in Cuba caused the Cold War (an intense rivalry between nations such as the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.).

D. Cuban planes were flying over Florida.

2. In deciding to turn his ships around, Soviet Premier Krushchev must have believed that

A. There was too great a risk of all-out war between the United States and the U.S.S.R.

B. The United States would not invade Cuba. C. Canada would fight on the side of the

U.S.S.R.

D. The United States would not attack Soviet ships and risk war.

3. Why do you think the Canadian Cabinet was hesitant about responding to Kennedy’s request?

A. Canada agreed with the position of the U.S.S.R.

B. Members of the Canadian Cabinet wanted to preserve the independence of Canadian foreign policy.

C. The missiles in Cuba would not hit Canada in any case.

D. The Canadian Cabinet was informed about the blockade only hours prior to it going into effect.

Passage 8

Modern English is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. Language becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts, and so on indefinitely. Below are various means by which the work of good prose construction is habitually dodged.

Dying metaphors are used because they save people the trouble of inventing phrases for themselves. However, they have lost all evocative power. Examples are “toe the line” and “ride roughshod over.” Many of these are used without knowledge of their meaning, and incompatible metaphors are frequently mixed. Some metaphors have been twisted out of their original meaning without those who use them even being aware of the fact.

Verbal false limbs save the trouble of picking out appropriate verbs and nouns. Characteristic phrases are “render inoperative” and “militate against.” In addition, noun constructions are used instead of gerunds (e.g. “by examination of” instead of “by examining”).

Pretentious diction is used to dress up a simple statement and give an air of scientific impartiality to biased judgements. Foreign words and expressions such as “mutatis mutandis,” “status quo,” and “weltanschauung” are used to give an air of culture and elegance. There is no real need for any of the hundreds of foreign phrases now current in the English language. The result, in general, is an increase in slovenliness and vagueness.

Meaningless words abound. The word “Fascism” has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies “something not desirable.” The words “democracy,” “freedom,” and “justice” have each of them several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another. In the case of a word like “democracy,” not only is there no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides. It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it. Consequently the defenders of every kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using that word if it were tied down to any one meaning. Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. The person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different.

In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible. Political language consists largely of euphemism, question-begging, and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air: this is called pacification. Millions of peasants are sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called transfer of population or rectification of frontiers. People are imprisoned for years without trial: this is called elimination of unreliable elements. Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them.

Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. One cannot change this all in a

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| Preparation for MCAT Verbal Reasoning |  |
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moment, but one can at least change one’s own habits. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step toward political regeneration.

1. A suitable title for this passage might be

A. “The English Language and Politics.”

B. “The Evolution of the English Language.”

C. “Political Degeneration.”

D. “Foolish Thoughts.”

2. The author’s tone is

A. ebullient.

B. mournful.

C. persuasive.

D. mendacious.

3. According to the author,

1. careless thinking can be caused by the inaccurate use of language.
2. inaccurate use of language can be caused by careless thinking.

the latter option and moved to the Prairie provinces, Ontario, and Quebec. The government’s attempt to deport 10,000 people was frustrated by massive public support of the Japanese Canadians.

The controversy over the legality and justice of the internment of the Japanese Canadians continues today. The RCMP argued that the Japanese Canadians had never posed a threat to security. Later, the government claimed it removed Japanese Canadians to protect them from mobs in British Columbia, despite the fact that only 150 letters and anti-Japanese resolutions were received. Many Canadians feel that Japanese Canadians are owed some type of apology or retribution.

1. During World War II, many Japanese Canadians were interned because they were

A. seen as a threat to Canada’s security. B. needed as farm laborers.

C. causing financial ruin on the Pacific Coast. D. collaborating with the enemy.

1. the educational system is partly to 2. Which of the following was not a result of the

blame for the degradation of the English language.

The correct choices are A. I is correct

B. II is correct

C. I and II are correct

D. I, II, and III are correct

4. If language were used clearly, honestly, and accurately,

A. politicians would find it more difficult to deceive.

B. there would be world peace.

C. dying metaphors would be saved.

D. we would not have to think as much.

Passage 9

At the outbreak of World War II, thousands of Japanese Canadians resided in Vancouver and Victoria and along the Pacific coast. After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941, the government regarded Japanese Canadians as a threat to Canada’s security. Under authority of the War Measures Act, more than 20,000 Japanese Canadians were removed to hastily built camps in the British Columbia interior. The government then sold the farms, homes, businesses, and personal property of the Japanese internees.

Although the loyalty of most was soon established, they were not allowed to return to their homes. Instead they were given the choice between deportation to Japan or being moved east to other parts of Canada. Many chose

relocation?

A. Many Japanese Canadians suffered financial ruin.

B. Some were moved to the interior of British Columbia.

C. Some moved to Ontario.

D. Most were quickly returned to their homes on the Pacific coast.

3. Which of the following is opinion not fact?

A. At the outbreak of World War II, thousands of Japanese Canadians resided in Vancouver and Victoria and along the Pacific Coast.

B. The government used the War Measures Act to move all Japanese Canadians to the interior of British Columbia.

C. Japanese Canadians are owed some type of apology or retribution.

D. The government sold the farms, homes, businesses, and other property of the Japanese Canadians.

4. Some Canadians believe the treatment of Japanese Canadians during World War II was unjustified. With which of the following statements would those Canadians most likely agree?

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| A. | The civil liberties of Canadian citizens might |  |
|  | be suspended during wartime emergencies. |  |
| B. | Since the Japanese Canadians never posed a |  |
|  | threat to Canada’s security, their civil liberties |  |
|  | should not have been suspended. |  |
| C. | Japanese Canadians should have been |  |
|  | deported. |  |
| D. | There is no situation in which the War |  |
|  | Measures Act should be enacted. |  |
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Passage 10

Autograph seekers besiege him (Charles Wysocki) and students flood him with mail. As fast as his acrylic originals leave his studio in the San Bernardino mountains (about once every six weeks), they’re sold to collectors for as much as $30,000 a piece. An American Celebration: The Art of Charles Wysocki sold out within three months of publication, and Wysocki’s annual Americana Calendar. . . and posters are best-sellers as well. All this activity has added up to $7.25 million in sales since 1979.

Wysocki’s only beef is never having had his work reviewed by art critics, a complaint that makes William Wilson of the Los Angeles Times testy. Says Wilson: “If they’re inside the art system, they don’t get ignored.” That verdict doesn’t keep other painters from following in Wysocki’s brush strokes. “There are probably a half dozen artists all trying to do what Chuck does,” says Dave Usher, who publishes Wysocki’s work. “But none can touch him.”

Wysocki began painting his rural scenes 22 years ago, after discovering the San Fernando countryside and the pristine timelessness of New England. His work evokes not only the stylized sentimentality of Norman Rockwell but also the simplicity of Grandma Moses, and yet manages to defy categorizing. “I’m too citified to be folk and too trained to be primitive,” says Wysocki. The results are paeans to the past: colloquial scenes of neat clapboard houses and industrious apple-checked families working and frolicking under wind-stiff star spangled banners. Into these scenes Wysocki inserts familiar details—window boxes, doorsteps and lanterns, a cat on a sill, a vase on a table, tiny children’s drawings in the panes of a schoolhouse window....

He prefers to think that his work is a vision of America as he’d like it to be. “In my paintings you don’t see empty bottles or rags lying on the road,” he says. “I don’t think nostalgia has to be grubby. Maybe secretly I’m an environmentalist and would like to clean up America.”

Born and reared in a working-class neighborhood of Detroit, Wysocki remembers that “walking down the street on holidays was like walking through a tunnel of red, white, and blue. As I started painting, these memories came through the brush and into the painting. That’s one of the reasons I feel very patriotic. It’s a reversion to my youth.”

1. What does the author mean by stating, “The results are paeans to the past”?

A. Wysocki’s popularity is largely among older people.

B. Wysocki’s style has been copied from past artists.

C. Wysocki’s artwork praises the life of long ago. D. Wysocki developed his personal style long

ago.

2. How would Wysocki describe his paintings? A. highly realistic

B. plain and without detail C. a personal dream

D. very similar to Norman Rockwell’s paintings

3. What does William Wilson suggest about Wysocki? A. Wysocki is so good that others try to imitate

him.

B. Wysocki is very temperamental.

C. Art critics give Wysocki’s paintings good reviews.

D. Wysocki is not really a part of the art system.

4. Which of the following would you think Wysocki painted?

A. Summer in San Diego

B. Independence Day: Enterprising Immigrants C. Bunker Hill: Soldiers in Battle

D. City Factories

5. Which of the following devices used by the author is least helpful to the reader in visualizing Wysocki’s paintings?

A. having Wysocki describe his work B. describing Wysocki’s popularity

C. comparing Wysocki to Norman Rockwell D. describing Wysocki’s painting of a

schoolhouse

6. What kind of mood does Wysocki create for the viewer?

A. sentimental B. industrious C. sad

D. humorous