

English I (2202111)
Reading Test 2 (20 points) Discussion
6 November 2018

Name: _____
Number: _____

Read the article below and answer the questions that follow.

Why the Innocent End Up in Prison

By JOHN GRISHAM, *Chicago Tribune*, 14 March 2018

(¶ 1) It's too easy to convict an innocent person.

(¶ 2) The rate of wrongful convictions in the United States is estimated to be somewhere between two percent and ____ percent. That may sound low, but, when applied to a total prison population of 2.3 million, the numbers become shockingly large. Can there really be 46,000 to 230,000 innocent people locked away? Those of us involved in **exoneration work** firmly believe so.

(¶ 3) Millions of defendants are processed through our courts each year. It's almost impossible to determine how many of them are actually innocent once they've been convicted. There are few resources for examining the cases and backgrounds of those claiming to be wrongfully convicted.

(¶ 4) Once an innocent person is convicted, it is almost impossible to get the individual out of prison. Over the past 25 years, the Innocence Project, whose board of directors I serve on, has secured the release of 349 innocent men and women by means of DNA testing. All told, there have been more than 2,000 exonerations in the U.S. during that same period. But we've only scratched the surface.

(¶ 5) Wrongful convictions happen for several reasons. In no particular order, these causes are:

(¶ 6) Bad police work. Most cops are honest, hard-working professionals. _____, some have been known to hide, alter, or fabricate evidence; lie in court; **coerce** false confessions; intimidate and threaten witnesses; and manipulate eyewitness identifications.

(¶ 7) False confessions. Most jurors simply can't believe suspects would confess to serious crimes they didn't commit. Yet the average citizen, if taken to a basement room and forced to endure ten hours of nonstop abusive interrogation by experienced cops, might be surprised at what **he** would say. Of the 330 people who were exonerated by DNA evidence between 1989 and 2015, about 25 percent gave **bogus** confessions after lengthy interrogations.

(¶ 8) Faulty eyewitness identification. More often than not, those who witness violent acts have trouble accurately recalling the facts and identifying those involved. Physical and photo lineups may make the problem even worse because police sometimes manipulate **them** to focus suspicion on favored suspects.

(¶ 9) Bad lawyering. Those accused of serious crimes rarely have money. So most are represented by public defenders appointed by the court. While some of these lawyers are good, many others are young and lack the experience to handle complex cases, putting their clients at a serious disadvantage. but too many get stuck with court-appointed lawyers with little or no experience. All too often, given the complexity of the cases, the defense lawyers are simply in over their heads.

(¶ 10) Biased judges. Judges are supposed to be **impartial** referees intent on ensuring fair trials. Unfortunately, they do not always do what they should. The reasons are many and varied, but the fact that many judges are elected doesn't help. They are conscious of upcoming re-elections and how the decisions they make might affect the results.

(¶ 11) Junk science. Over the past five decades, our courtrooms have been flooded by a *tsunami* of unreliable and even outright dishonest **“science.”** So-called experts with qualifications ranging from questionable to utterly fake have provided — for a fee, of course — all manner of damaging theories based on allegedly scientific analyses of hair, fibers, bite marks, boot prints, blood stains, bullet wounds, and so on. Of the 330 people whose names were cleared by DNA tests between 1989 and 2015, 71 percent were convicted based on forensic testimony, much of which was unreliable, exaggerated, or error-filled. Some was even completely fabricated, these “junk scientists” being only too happy to make up whatever lie prosecutors want to hear.

(¶ 12) Brandon L. Garrett, a professor of law at the University of Virginia, has studied nearly all of the trial transcripts from wrongful convictions that were later exposed by DNA-based exonerations. **“There is a national epidemic of shoddy forensic testimony,** with a steady stream of convictions being overturned as the poor quality of decades’ worth of physical evidence comes to light,” he wrote last year. “_____.”

(¶ 13) An excellent new book by Radley Balko and Tucker Carrington, *The Cadaver King and the Country Dentist*, chronicles the story of two of the most shameless experts ever allowed in a courtroom. Steven Hayne was a controversial forensic pathologist who once boasted of performing more than 2,000 autopsies in a single year. His sidekick, Michael West, was a small-town dentist who claimed to be an expert in many other fields. Together they appeared at hundreds of rape and murder trials in Mississippi and Louisiana, acquiring an impressive number of convictions. Several of these improper convictions have already been overturned; some are currently under appeal. Many others, however, are destined to stand.

(¶ 14) It’s a sad critique of America’s flawed criminal justice system, in which prosecutors allow or even encourage flawed forensic testimony because it promotes their theories of guilt. Over two decades, elected judges permitted these two professional testifiers to convince ill-informed jurors that science was on the side of the state.

(¶ 15) **The atrocities** that occurred in Mississippi and Louisiana aren’t specific to one time and place. The medical examiners, police officers, prosecutors, judges, and others in charge of our country’s criminal justice system have largely failed to deliver justice. We must do better.

QUESTIONS

1. (1 point) What is the author’s purpose?

- a. To convince readers that all the innocent people in prison prove that the American justice system is broken beyond repair.
- b. To persuade readers to join the Innocence Project to reduce the rate of wrongful convictions.
- c. To inform readers about the causes of the shockingly high rate of wrongful convictions and flawed court cases in the US.
- d. To instruct readers on how justice workers succeed in getting innocent people released from prison.

2. (0.5 point) Which number best fits the blank in ¶ 2?

a. 1

b. 3

c. 10

d. 30

Cf. article:

¶ 2: when applied to a total prison population of 2.3 million, the numbers become shockingly

large. Can there really be 46,000 to 230,000 innocent people locked away?

→ 230,000 is 10 percent of 2.3 million

3. (1 point) Judging from ¶ 2 through ¶ 4, what is “exoneration work”?

Efforts to get wrongfully convicted people released from prison

Cf. article:

- ¶ 2: Can there really be 46,000 to 230,000 innocent people locked away? Those of us involved in exoneration work firmly believe so.
- ¶ 4: Once an innocent person is convicted, it is almost impossible to get the individual out of prison. [...] the Innocence Project [...] has secured the release of 349 innocent men and women by means of DNA testing. All told, there have been more than 2,000 exonerations in the U.S. during that same period.

4. (1 point) Which transition best fits the blank in ¶ 6?

a. Additionally

b. Because

c. However

d. Therefore

5. (1 point) In addition to criminal suspects, what other group have police been known to bully?

Witnesses

Cf. article:

- ¶ 6 Most cops are honest, hard-working professionals. However, some have been known to intimidate and threaten witnesses

6. (1 point) What is one reason why innocent people make false confessions?

They are tired after lengthy nonstop abusive interrogations by experienced cops.
worn down...
fed up...

They want the lengthy abusive interrogation to stop.

Cf. article:

- ¶ 7 the average citizen, if taken to a basement room and forced to endure ten hours of nonstop abusive interrogation by experienced cops, might be surprised at what he would say. Of the 330 people who were exonerated by DNA evidence between 1989 and 2015, about 25 percent gave bogus confessions after lengthy interrogations.

7. (1 point) In your own words, what can lead elected judges to be biased?

An approaching election in which these judges will be a candidate and where voter response will be influenced by how the judges decide on a case

When these elected judges will be running in a future election and the outcome of the case will influence whether or not people will vote for him or her

Cf. article:

- ¶ 10: the fact that many judges are elected doesn't help. They are conscious of upcoming re-elections and how the decisions they make might affect the results.

8. (1 point) Why is “science” in quotation marks in ¶ 11?

The quotation marks indicate that the science is not rigorously or professionally done. It is called science but may not be truly scientific.

To convey that this is unreliable science.

To say that this science is | dishonest.
| junk.
| unscientific.

Cf. article:

- ¶ 11 **Junk** science [...] our courtrooms have been flooded by a tsunami of **unreliable** and even outright **dishonest** “science.” So-called experts with qualifications ranging from **questionable** to utterly **fake** have provided [...] all manner of damaging theories based on allegedly scientific analyses

✗ To convey that this is science used as forensic evidence.

9. (1 point) Why are people accused of serious crimes often represented by inexperienced lawyers?

They do not have money to pay for good lawyers so they are represented by court-appointed lawyers with little or no experience.

Most defendants are poor so they cannot afford good lawyers. They are often defended by court-appointed lawyers who are young and do not have enough experience to handle complex cases.

Cf. article:

- ¶ 9 **Bad lawyering.** Those accused of serious crimes rarely have money. So most are represented by public defenders appointed by the court. While some of these lawyers are good, many others are young and lack the experience to handle complex cases, putting their clients at a serious disadvantage. but too many get stuck with court-appointed lawyers with little or no experience. All too often, given the complexity of the cases, the defense lawyers are simply in over their heads.

10. (1 point) Which of the following is the best restatement for what Professor Garrett’s says in paragraph 12: “There is a national epidemic of shoddy forensic testimony”?

- a. There is a nation-wide problem with incorrect testing results. [forensic testimony ≠ testing results]
- b. Science is important for deciding many criminal cases in the US.
- c. In the United States, the law requires scientists to give expert opinion in court.
- d. Bad scientific information given in American courts has become widespread.

11. (1 point) Which quote by Professor Garrett best fills the blank at the end of ¶ 12?

- a. The true scope of the problem is only now coming into focus.
- b. But do not worry, we will find a solution soon.
- c. The biggest problem here is corrupt policemen.
- d. I have studied nearly all of the trial transcripts.

12. (1 point) What two noun phrases from ¶ 13 and ¶ 14 are used to describe Steven Hayne and Michael West as a pair?

two of the most brazen experts ever allowed in a courtroom [¶13]
these two professional testifiers [¶14]

Cf. article:

- ¶ 13: *The Cadaver King and the Country Dentist*, chronicles the story of **two of the most shameless experts ever allowed in a courtroom**.
- ¶ 14: Over two decades, elected judges permitted **these two professional testifiers** to convince ill-informed jurors that science was on the side of the state.

13. (2.5 points) Match the people on the left with a potential weakness on the right **that the text mentions**.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <u>d</u> Judges | a) being prone to bullying others |
| <u>b</u> Lawyers | b) not having the necessary knowledge despite good intentions |
| <u>a</u> Police officers | c) being too easily influenced |
| <u>c</u> Eyewitnesses | d) being too concerned about their status |
| <u>e</u> Junk scientists | e) wanting money |

14. (3 points) Indicate whether the following statements are true or false (T/F) based on the information given in the reading passage. Provide the evidence from the text that supports your answer.

- E a. The 2,000 exonerations over the past 25 years mean all innocents have been freed.
Evidence: ¶ 4 **All told, there have been more than 2,000 exonerations in the U.S. during that same period. But we've only scratched the surface.**
- I b. As a general rule, eyewitness testimony is not very reliable.
Evidence: ¶ 8 **More often than not, those who witness violent acts have trouble accurately recalling the facts and identifying those involved. Physical and photo lineups may make the problem even worse because police sometimes manipulate them to focus suspicion on favored suspects.**
- E c. All the people convicted because of Hayne's and West's testimony will eventually be pardoned and released from prison.

Evidence: ¶ 13 Several of these improper convictions have already been overturned; some are currently under appeal. **Many others, however, are destined to stand.**

Cf. article:

- ¶ 13 Steven Hayne was a controversial forensic pathologist who once boasted of performing more than 2,000 autopsies in a single year. His sidekick, Michael West, was a small-town dentist who claimed to be an expert in many other fields. Together they appeared at hundreds of rape and murder trials in Mississippi and Louisiana, acquiring an impressive number of convictions. Several of these improper convictions have already been overturned; some are currently under appeal. Many others, however, are destined to stand.

15. (1.5 points) Define the following terms using context clues.

- a. coerce (¶ 6): force; pressure someone into doing something
intimidate...
threaten...
bully...

Cf. article:

- ¶ 6: some have been known to hide, alter, or fabricate evidence; lie in court; **coerce** false confessions; intimidate and threaten witnesses; and manipulate eyewitness identifications.
- ¶ 7: False confessions. Most jurors simply can't believe suspects would confess to serious crimes they didn't commit. Yet the average citizen, if taken to a basement room and **forced** to endure ten hours of nonstop abusive interrogation by experienced cops, might be surprised at what **he** would say.

- b. bogus (¶ 7): false; made up; untrue
- c. impartial (¶ 10): unbiased; fair; just

16. (1.5 points) What do the following refer to?

- a. he (¶ 7): the average citizen; a typical person, after
experiencing long and abusive questioning by police

Cf. article: Most jurors simply can't believe suspects would confess to serious crimes they didn't commit. Yet the average citizen, if taken to a basement room and forced to endure ten hours of nonstop abusive interrogation by experienced cops, might be surprised at what **he** would say.

- b. them (¶ 8): physical and photo lineups

Cf. article: More often than not, those who witness violent acts have trouble accurately recalling the facts and identifying those involved. Physical and photo lineups may make the problem even worse because police sometimes manipulate **them** to focus suspicion on favored suspects.

✗ people who witness violent acts

c. The atrocities (¶ 15): wrongful convictions

Cf. article:

- 13: Together they [Hayne and West] appeared at hundreds of rape and murder trials in Mississippi and Louisiana, acquiring an impressive number of convictions. Several of these improper convictions have already been overturned
- ¶ 15: The atrocities that occurred in Mississippi and Louisiana aren't specific to one time and place.