Test Taking Strategies

There are two basic kinds of questions you will be asked on tests, literal and inferential. This handout will tell you about both types and how best to study for them.

Which one of the following multiple choice questions is literal and which one is inferential (however, keep in mind not all test questions are multiple choice questions)?

1. The oath of fealty gave the most power to this class

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| a. serfs | b. Knights | c. Nobles | d. Kings | e. peasants |

2. The oath a vassal took was called

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| a. homage | b. investiture | c. liege | d. fealty | e. heresy |

# Type One

Literal Questions: this type of question asks you to know the basic information. The answers to the questions would be easy if you could use your textbook and time was not a factor. Literal questions determine what you can remember. With this definition in mind, the strategies below can help you prepare for literal questions.

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| **Learning**  **The**  **Content** | 1. Read assigned textbook reading 2. Take notes on readings – make them concise, with abbreviations 3. Look up and take notes on any words you do not know from the readings and include the definitions in your notes 4. Ask questions of the teacher in class on anything you do not understand and take notes on the answer given |

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| **Memorizing**  **The**  **Content** | 1. Revise notes by grouping information (people, places, etc., or chronological order or topical) and combine both lecture notes & reading notes together 2. Create flashcards and study them 3. Reread revised notes while quizzing with the flash cards 4. **C**reate **A**cronyms to **R**emember information (**CAR**) |

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| **Studying**  **The** Content | 1. Create a practice test with challenging questions and answers 2. Trade tests and flash cards with a friend from the class; go over answers with that friend 3. Create new questions on your friend’s test and give it back to him/her |

# Type Two

Inferential Questions: this type of question asks you to sequence events, compare/contrast, determine cause and effect, analyze documents and information, synthesize complex ideas into simplified ideas, or evaluate concepts/decisions/documents – basically to have a deeper understanding of the material.

The format of a test with inferential questions is important as to how you will prepare – you may need to practice essay or paragraph response. As you prepare you must realize one thing: you must first know and remember literal information, only then can you figure out the deeper levels of the information. Because of this, when studying for this type of testing you need to begin by doing the steps outlined above and then add the following:

1. Go through your textbook notes complete/review the questions, analysis, and inferences sections.
2. Determine the central ideas of the unit.

- Ask yourself “What is the main theme here?” as you review your notes. Write the themes as opinionated thesis-like statements. For example – Democracy will fail without active, informed citizens.

1. Without looking at your notes write down specific literal facts from the readings and lectures to support those themes.
2. Create graphic organizers to begin to prepare your mind for doing the kind of thinking that an effective inferential question will force you to do.

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| **Skill to Practice** | **Helpful Graphic Organizer** |
| \* sequence events | Thematic timelines |
| \* compare & contrast concepts | Venn Diagrams & Mind Maps |
| \* determine cause and effect | Flow Charts |
| \* analyze documents & information | Complex Flow Charts |
| \* put complex ideas in simple statements | Mind Maps  Paraphrasing |
| \* evaluate concepts, decisions, & documents | Venn Diagrams  Positive/Negative Effects T-Chart |
| \* predict outcomes based on historical precedent | Parallel Complex Flow Charts |

1. Discuss the materials with a friend or parent. The trick is to have it truly be a conversation where one person is asking questions to probe the understanding of the other. If you practice asking questions, you will realize there is as much value in questioning as in the responding. (Effective questioners force the respondent to clarify, specify, and expand upon their original answers.)