Choose the option that best describes the main idea of each paragraph.

1. Throughout history, a solar eclipse has been a fearful experience, especially in the days when its cause was not understood. At such times, many thought that the end of the world was at hand. The early Chinese thought that a dragon was swallowing the sun, and they made a great commotion in an effort to induce the dragon to release the sun. Such noisemaking during eclipses was common to many early cultures, and even occurs presently among some tribes. Naturally, drumbeating and cymbal clanging always seemed to be a complete success. The sun always returned, shining as brightly as ever.
   A. No one knows the cause of a solar eclipse.
   B. The Chinese thought an eclipse was caused by a dragon swallowing the sun.
   C. A solar eclipse was a fearful experience before the cause was found.
   D. A solar eclipse could be a sign that the end of the world is at hand.

2. Halley’s Comet is unquestionable the most famous of all the comets. Some historians believe that Halley’s Comet is the Christmas star, or star of Bethlehem, depicted in nativity scenes. Almost everyone recognizes the comet’s name, and many people are truly surprised to learn that Halley’s Comet is just one of many comets that ride through the sky. Half a dozen or more are seen every year. Two or three of these are on well-predicted return visits. However, Halley’s Comet is well-known because it is one of the
few that is bright enough to be seen with the naked eye. Also, some people have the opportunity to see the comet twice in their lifetime.

A. Many people have never seen a comet.
B. All comets have unpredictable orbits.
C. Halley’s Comet is the only comet ever seen by the naked eye.
D. Halley’s Comet is the most famous and well-known because it is bright enough to be seen easily.

3. The term drama is often used as a synonym for theater. Such usage is not entirely accurate. As a genre, drama refers to plays that have serious intent but do not fall within the definition of tragedy. In a drama, we do not necessarily have an unhappy ending, but the subject matter is treated in a serious fashion. The events tend to be of lesser magnitude than in tragedy. The heroes are of everyday stuff.

A. A drama is a play that has serious intent but is not a tragedy.
B. Dramas and theater are synonymous.
C. Dramas are the most enjoyable of all theatrical products.
D. Some dramas have unhappy endings.

4. Art, like love, is easier to experience than to define. That is because, like love, it is experienced on different levels. There is art that serves as entertainment and offers a pleasant escape from the cares of life. There is art that propagates the artist’s point of view, whether religious, political, or philosophical. There is art that fulfills Aristotle’s precept by purging our emotions “through pity and terror.” There is art that leads us to a broader understanding and compassion.

A. Art is very much like love in many ways.
B. Art is easier to experience than to define because it is experienced on different levels.

C. Art leads to broader understanding and compassion.

D. Art in the days of Aristotle aroused viewers’ emotions.

5. An intrepid visitor to the perpetually frozen Antarctic could stand alone, raise binoculars, and witness a dramatic sight just a few hundred meters offshore: a spout as tall and strong as a telephone pole fountaining upward from the blowhole of a blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*), then condensing into a massive cloud of water vapor in the frigid air. The gigantic animal beneath the water jet would be expelling stale air from its 1-ton lungs after a dive in search of food. Then, resting at the surface only long enough to take four deep breaths of fresh air, the streamlined animal would raise its broad tail, thrust mightily, and plunge into the ocean again. The observer on shore might see such a sequence only twice per hour, since the blue whale can hold its breath for thirty minutes as it glides along like a submarine, swallowing trillions of tiny shrimplike animals called krill.

A. It is too cold in the Antarctic for anyone to ever see the blue whale.

B. It would be worth standing in the frigid cold of the Antarctic just to see a blue whale come to the ocean’s surface for air.

C. No one has ever seen a blue whale.

D. The blue whale can be seen in any ocean.

6. It is difficult to comprehend the immense proportions of the blue whale, the largest animal ever to inhabit our planet. At 25 to 39 m (80 to 100 ft) in length, this marine mammal is longer than three railroad boxcars and bigger than any dinosaur that ever lumbered on land. It weighs more than 25 elephants or 1600 fans at a basketball game. Its
heart is the size of a beetle—a Volkswagen Beetle. And that organ pumps 7200 kg (8 tons) of blood through nearly 2 million kilometers (1.25 million miles) of blood vessels, the largest of which could accommodate an adult person crawling on hands and knees.
The animal has a tongue the size of a grown elephant. It has 45,500 kg (50 tons) of muscle to move its 54,500 kg (60 tons) of skin, bones, and organs. And this living mountain can still swim at speeds of up to 48 km (30 mi) per hour.

A. It is difficult to comprehend the immense proportions of the blue whale, the largest animal ever to inhabit our planet.

B. It weighs more than 25 elephants or 1600 fans at a basketball game.

C. Its heart is the size of a beetle—a Volkswagen Beetle.

D. This living mountain can still swim at speeds of up to 48 km (30 mi) per hour.

7. You don’t have to be in business to use business principles. You can use marketing principles to get a job and to sell your ideas to others. You can use your knowledge of financial planning to invest wisely in the stock market. Similarly, you’ll be able to use management skills and general business knowledge wherever you go and whatever career you pursue—including government agencies, charities, and social causes.

A. You can use your knowledge of financial planning to invest wisely in the stock market.

B. You can use marketing principles to get a job and to sell your ideas to others.

C. You’ll be able to use management skills and general business knowledge wherever you go.

D. You don’t have to be in business to use business principles.
8. The history of America shows that disadvantaged groups have rarely achieved a greater measure of justice without a struggle. Legal equality has rarely been bestowed by the more powerful upon the less powerful. Their gains have nearly always occurred through intense and sustained political movements, such as the civil rights movement of the 1960s, that have pressured established interests to relinquish or share their privileged status.

A. Legal equality has rarely been bestowed by the more powerful upon the less powerful.

B. Their gains have nearly always occurred through intense and sustained political movements.

C. Disadvantaged groups in America are now making progress toward social justice.

D. The history of America shows that disadvantaged groups have rarely achieved a greater measure of justice without a struggle that includes sustained, intense political movements.

9. If the Buddhist temple is dedicated to private worship, then its extreme opposite can be found in the total encompassment of a community religious experience: the medieval Christian cathedral. And the supreme example of that idea is the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Chartres, in France. Chartres Cathedral was built, rebuilt, and modified over a period of several hundred years, but the basic structure, which is in the Gothic style, was established in the 13th century. A cathedral—as opposed to a church—is the bishop’s domain and therefore is always in a town or a city. This one fact is crucial to understanding the nature of Chartres and the role it played in the people’s lives.
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B. A cathedral—as opposed to a church—is the bishop’s domain and therefore is always in a town or a city.

C. Chartres Cathedral was built, rebuilt, and modified over a period of several hundred years, but the basic structure, which is in the Gothic style, was established in the 13th century.

D. The supreme example of that idea is the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Chartres, in France.

10. In addition to television interviews and debates, presidential campaigns include political advertising in the form of televised commercials. Television commercials are by far the most expensive part of presidential campaigns. Since 1976, political commercials on television have accounted for about half of the candidates’ expenditures in the general election campaign. In 1992, Bush and Clinton each spent more than $30 million on advertising in the general election, and Perot spent even more. Perot relied heavily on “informercials”—30-minute and hour-long commercials that emphasized substance over slogan.

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11. Thousands of feet below the sea’s surface, where pressure is so great even a steel-hulled submarine would be crushed, live countless deep-sea animals. In scalding hot springs and solidly frozen permafrost, there are bacteria. Scientists have even discovered viruses that can survive the freezing vacuum of space. Obviously, life can survive in very harsh conditions.

A. Obviously, life can survive in very harsh conditions.

B. Thousands of feet below the sea’s surface, where pressure is so great even a steel-hulled submarine would be crushed, live countless deep-sea animals.

C. In scalding hot springs and solidly frozen permafrost, there are bacteria.

D. Scientists have even discovered viruses that can survive the freezing vacuum of space.

12. Is there life out there? Most scientists believe that Earth is not the only place where life exists. Evidence that life probably existed on Mars at one time is growing. There is also more and more evidence that there may be life on one or more of the moons of Jupiter. Of course, there are countless solar systems besides our own scattered throughout the universe where life may also exist.

A. There is more and more evidence that there may be life on one or more of the moons of Jupiter.

B. Most scientists believe that Earth is not the only place where life exists.
C. Evidence that life probably existed on Mars at one time is growing.

D. Of course, there are countless solar systems besides our own scattered throughout the universe where life may also exist.

13. Would you find a desert in Alaska? Most people would probably say no, but in fact there is a large desert in Alaska. The word desert usually brings to mind a picture of the great white dunes of the Sahara in North Africa. Though all deserts are places of little or no rain, not all deserts are hot. Besides Alaska, there are deserts in other very cold places, such as in South America and China. In fact, deserts can be found in many different parts of the world.

A. The word desert usually brings to mind a picture of the great white dunes of the Sahara in North Africa.

B. Most people would probably say no, but in fact there is a large desert in Alaska.

C. Though all deserts are places of little or no rain, not all deserts are hot.

D. In fact, deserts can be found in many different parts of the world.

14. During their journey of exploration from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, Lewis and Clark were some of the first white men to discover the amazing wildlife of the American West. On the prairies, they saw thundering herds of bison as well as prairie dogs, coyotes, and the inquisitive raven. Further west as they climbed the mountains, they found an abundance of game animals: elk, mule, deer, and bighorn sheep. Of course, there were predators as well. Grizzly and black bears, mountain lions, wolverines, badgers, and gray wolves were common. On the Pacific Coast, Lewis and Clark were awed by the rivers filled with trout and the beaches lined with seals and sea lions.
A. Further west as they climbed the mountains, they found an abundance of game animals: elk, mule, deer, and bighorn sheep.

B. On the prairies, they saw thundering herds of bison as well as prairie dogs, coyotes, and the inquisitive raven.

C. During their journey of exploration from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, Lewis and Clark were some of the first white men to discover the amazing wildlife of the American West.

D. Of course, there were predators as well.

15. Beginning a new job is both exciting and frightening. It gives you the feeling of a new start and presents new challenges. However, you may also feel apprehensive about trying something new. You will be working with a different group of people and in a different environment. It is completely normal to feel both excited and anxious in this situation at the same time.

A. It gives you the feeling of a new start and presents new challenges.

B. Beginning a new job is both exciting and frightening.

C. You will be working with a different group of people and in a different environment.

D. It is completely normal to feel both excited and anxious in this situation at the same time.