SAT Reading Practice Paper 3

Question 1:

In this passage a Mexican American historian describes a technique she used as part of her research.

Doña Teodora offered me yet another cup of strong, black coffee. The aroma of the big, paper-thin Sonoran tortillas filled the small, linoleum-covered kitchen, and I knew that with the coffee I would receive a buttered tortilla straight from the round, homemade comal (a flat, earthenware cooking pan) balanced on the gas-burning stove. For three days, from ten in the morning until early evening, I had been sitting in the same comfortable wooden chair, taking cup after cup of black coffee and consuming hot tortillas. Doña Teodora was ninety years old, and although she would take occasional breaks from patting, extending, and turning over tortillas to let her cat in or out, it appeared that I was the only one exhausted at the end of the day. But once out, as I went over the notes, filed and organized the tape cassettes, exhilaration would set in. The intellectual and emotional excitement I had previously experienced when a pertinent document would suddenly appear now waned in comparison to the gestures and words, the joy and anger doña Teodora offered.

She had not written down her thoughts; but the ideas, recollections, and images evoked by her lively oral expression were jewels for anyone who wanted to know about the life of Mexicanas * in booming mining towns on both sides of the Mexico-United States border in the early twentieth century. She never kept a diary. The thought of writing a memoir would have been put aside as presumptuous. But all her life doña Teodora had lived amidst the telling and retelling of family stories. Genealogies of her own family as well as complete and up-to-date information of the marriages, births, and deaths of numerous families that made up her community were all well-kept memories. These chains of generations were fleshed out with recollections of the many events and tribulations of these families. Oral history had proven to be a fertile field for my research on the history of Mexicanas.

My search had begun in libraries and archives—repositories of conventional history. The available sources were

to be found in census reports, church records, directories, and other such statistical information. These, however, as important as they are, cannot provide one of the essential dimensions of history, the full narrative of the human experience that defies quantification and classification. In certain social groups this gap can be filled with diaries, memoirs, letters, or even reports from others. In the case of Mexicanas in the United States, one of the many devastating consequences of defeat and conquest has been that the traditional institutions that preserve and transfer culture (the documentation of the past) have ignored these personal written sources. The letters, writings, and documents of Mexican people have rarely, if ever, been included in archives, special collections, or libraries. At best, some centers have attempted to collect newspapers published by Mexicans, but the effort was started late. The historian who tries to reconstruct the past from newspapers is constantly frustrated because, although titles abound, collections are scarce and often incomplete.

Although many hours of previous study and preparation had taken me to doña Teodora's kitchen, I was initially unsure of my place. Was I really an insider or were the experiences that had made the lives of my interviewees such that, although I could speak Spanish and am Mexicana, I was still an outsider?

I realized, nonetheless, that the richness and depth of the spoken word challenges the comforting theories and models of the social sciences. Mexican history challenges social-science models derived solely from victorious imperialistic experiences.

Our history cannot be written without new sources. These sources will determine which concepts are needed to illuminate and interpret the past, and these concepts will emerge from the people themselves. This will permit the description of events and structures to assume a culturally relevant perspective, thus emphasizing the point of view of the Mexican people. The use of theoretical constructs must follow the voices of the people who live the reality, consciously or not. For too long the experiences of women have been studied according to male-oriented sources and constructs. These must be questioned. For the history of Mexican people, the sources primarily exist in our own worlds. And it is here where we must begin. I often found that as the memory awakened, other sources would emerge.

	Boxes of letters, photographs, and even manuscripts and
	diaries would appear. Long-standing assumptions of
	illiteracy were shattered and had to be reexamined. I saw
85	that constant reevaluation became the rule rather than the
	exception. I entered women's worlds created on the margin
	—not only of Anglo life, but of, and outside of, the lives
	of their own fathers, husbands, sons, brothers, or priests,
	bosses, and bureaucrats.

1. **The author's comments in the third paragraph (lines 36-56) suggest that her research project resembles more conventional research in its**

- attention to the details of everyday life in certain communities
- use of written public materials as a starting point
- adoption of family memories of past events as data
- reliance on church and state records to test new theories
- assumption that conventional sources are accurate but incomplete

2. **In what sense are "census reports, church records, directories" (line 38) inadequate?**

- They place too great a reliance on political factors.
- They blur the distinction between the political and the religious realm.
- They are not of sufficient accuracy to be of use to historians.
- They do not tell the human side of the story.
- They are often too difficult to obtain.

3. **The "gap" referred to in line 43 can best be described as the distance between the**

- politically motivated view of reality and the personally motivated view of reality
- abundance of concrete facts and the shortage of scholarly interpretation of them
- pictures presented by traditional historical sources and by subjective personal accounts

- information contained in libraries and the information that has been lost
- story of one person and the history of a nation as a whole

4. **In line 59, "place" most nearly means**

- home
- duty
- role
- appropriate moment
- geographical location

5. **What is the effect of the question in lines 59-62?**

- It suggests that sharing ethnicity and language might not be enough to make one an insider.
- It eliminates the distinction between insider and outsider.
- It refutes the claim that being an outsider is an important criterion for doing research.
- It suggests that only those with an outsider's perspective can see things objectively.
- It suggests that human sympathy is more important than ethnicity or language.

6. **Which statement most accurately presents the author's sense of the relationship between the "spoken word" (line 64) and the "theories and models of the social sciences" (lines 64-65)?**

- Theories and models must come first in order to make sense of the spoken word.
- The spoken word makes general theories and models unnecessary.
- Theories and models cannot account for quantitative data as well as the spoken word can.

- The spoken word is more likely to introduce errors into the historical record than are theories and models.
- The spoken word can yield greater insight than presently accepted theories and models can.

7. **The author indicates that the "concepts" mentioned in lines 69-70 originate in**

- informal records and information provided by ordinary people
- comments of senior members of a community on the ways the community has functioned
- patterns of social behavior that have been exhibited by previously studied cultures
- personal experiences of historians who have interviewed many people
- systematic categories devised by historians for various types of sources