

Passage 1 (Short — Easy)

Bats are the only mammals capable of sustained, powered flight, a trait that required significant evolutionary modification of the forelimb. Unlike birds, whose wings are supported primarily by fused and reduced finger bones, bat wings consist of a thin membrane of skin stretched across four elongated fingers, with the thumb remaining free to aid in climbing and grasping. This structural difference gives bat wings a flexibility that bird wings lack, allowing bats to make rapid, fine-grained adjustments to wing shape mid-flight—an advantage that likely contributes to their exceptional maneuverability, particularly when pursuing erratically moving prey such as flying insects.

Q1. The passage suggests that bat wing flexibility is primarily advantageous because it (A) allows bats to fly for longer distances than birds (B) enables rapid adjustments useful for catching unpredictable prey (C) reduces the energy cost of flight compared to birds (D) allows bats to fly at higher altitudes than birds (E) compensates for the bat's smaller wingspan

Q2. According to the passage, bird wings differ structurally from bat wings in that bird wings (A) lack a thumb entirely (B) are supported mainly by fused and reduced finger bones rather than a skin membrane (C) cannot be adjusted mid-flight under any circumstances (D) are composed of a greater number of elongated fingers (E) evolved more recently than bat wings

Answers: Q1 — B. The passage explicitly links flexibility to "rapid, fine-grained adjustments... particularly when pursuing erratically moving prey." (A), (C), (D), (E) are not stated.

Q2 — B. Direct restatement: bird wings are "supported primarily by fused and reduced finger bones," contrasted with the bat's skin membrane. (A) is too strong/unstated; (D) reverses the comparison (bats have more elongated fingers, not birds).

Passage 2 (Long — Hard)

The question of whether language shapes thought—commonly known as linguistic relativity—has oscillated between extremes since it was first popularized in the mid-twentieth century. Early strong versions of the hypothesis held that the structure of a person's native language fundamentally constrains and determines the range of thoughts available to that person, a view that fell out of favor as it became associated with unfalsifiable claims and, in some cases, with reductive characterizations of non-Western languages and their speakers. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the pendulum swung toward near-total rejection of the hypothesis, as cognitive scientists emphasized universal features of human cognition that appeared to operate independently of language.

More recent research has charted a middle course. Careful experimental work on domains such as color perception, spatial reasoning, and grammatical gender has found modest but measurable effects of language on cognition—speakers of languages that grammatically mark certain distinctions (for instance, absolute cardinal directions rather than relative terms like "left" and "right") perform differently on certain spatial tasks than speakers of languages lacking such distinctions. Crucially, however, these effects tend to be effects on habitual attention and processing speed rather than on the fundamental capacity for thought: speakers of all languages, when required to attend to a distinction not marked in their native grammar, are generally able to do so, only more slowly or with more conscious effort. This suggests that language does not determine what can be thought, but may well influence what is thought about by default.

Critics of even this moderate position note that many of the relevant studies involve small sample sizes and have proven difficult to replicate across different research groups, and that the practical significance of small differences in reaction time or attentional bias remains unclear. Proponents counter that even modest, replicable effects are theoretically significant, since they falsify the strongest anti-relativist claim that language and cognition are entirely independent systems.

Q3. The passage is primarily concerned with (A) advocating for the strong version of linguistic relativity (B) tracing the evolution of a hypothesis from an extreme claim through rejection to a moderated position, along with ongoing debate over that position (C) proving that grammatical gender has no effect on cognition (D) criticizing early researchers for making unfalsifiable claims (E) describing an experiment on spatial reasoning in speakers of different languages

Q4. Based on the passage, which of the following would be most analogous to the "moderate position" described in the second paragraph? (A) A claim that a tool can only be used for the exact purpose its designer intended (B) A claim that all tools function identically regardless of a user's training (C) A claim that a user's training makes certain uses of a tool faster and more habitual, without making other uses impossible (D) A claim that tool design has no relationship to the tasks users perform with it (E) A claim that only some tools can be used by more than one person

Q5. The passage indicates that critics of the moderate position on linguistic relativity primarily question (A) whether language has any relationship to thought whatsoever (B) the methodological reliability and practical significance of the supporting studies (C) whether grammatical gender exists in most languages (D) whether cognitive scientists should study language at all (E) whether the strong version of the hypothesis was ever seriously proposed

Q6. The author's tone throughout the passage can best be described as (A) polemical and one-sided (B) dismissive of empirical research (C) measured and attentive to competing considerations (D) nostalgic for early linguistic theories (E) uncertain to the point of avoiding any substantive claims

Answers: Q3 — B. The passage moves through three stages (strong hypothesis → rejection → moderate position) and closes with an active debate over that moderate position — matching (B) exactly. (C) and (E) are far too narrow (single details); (A) and (D) misrepresent the author's balanced framing.

Q4 — C. The moderate position holds language influences default attention/speed without limiting fundamental capacity — mirrored by a tool that's used more readily for trained purposes but isn't restricted to only those uses. (A) matches the strong (rejected) version instead.

Q5 — B. The passage states critics note "small sample sizes," replication difficulty, and unclear "practical significance" — methodological and significance concerns. (A) describes a stronger objection than what's stated (critics accept some effect exists, just question its size/reliability).

Q6 — C. The passage carefully presents each side (proponents/critics) with hedged language ("modest but measurable," "crucially, however") — balanced and considered, not polemical or dismissive.

Passage 3 (Short — Medium)

Plant roots were long believed to grow strictly downward in response to gravity, a phenomenon known as gravitropism. Recent research, however, has shown that root growth is also shaped by the physical properties of soil itself, including moisture gradients and resistance to penetration. When roots encounter compacted soil, they often alter their growth angle to seek paths of lower resistance, even if this means growing at an angle to the gravitational pull rather than directly toward it. This suggests that gravitropism, while an important factor, operates alongside other environmental signals rather than as an overriding, singular directive.

Q7. The passage suggests that the traditional understanding of root growth has been complicated by evidence that (A) roots do not respond to gravity at all (B) roots integrate signals beyond gravity, such as soil resistance, in determining growth direction (C) moisture gradients are the sole determinant of root growth direction (D) compacted soil prevents root growth entirely (E) gravitropism only occurs in certain plant species

Q8. The passage implies that root growth angle in compacted soil is best understood as a result of (A) a malfunction in the plant's gravitropic response (B) the plant prioritizing paths of lower resistance over strict gravitational alignment (C) random variation unrelated to environmental conditions (D) the complete absence of gravitropic signaling (E) a permanent change in the plant's genetic structure

Answers: Q7 — B. Directly supported: roots "alter their growth angle" in response to soil resistance, showing gravitropism "operates alongside other environmental signals." (A) and (C) overstate; (D) and (E) aren't discussed.

Q8 — B. The passage states roots "seek paths of lower resistance... even if this means growing at an angle to gravitational pull" — a prioritization, not a malfunction or randomness. (A) and (D) mischaracterize this as a failure rather than an adaptive response.

Passage 4 (Short — Easy)

The placebo effect—improvement in a patient's condition attributable to belief in treatment rather than the treatment's active properties—has traditionally been treated as a nuisance variable to be controlled for in clinical trials. Recent research, however, suggests the placebo effect may itself be a legitimate object of study, with measurable neurological and physiological mechanisms, including the release of endogenous opioids in response to expectation of pain relief. Some researchers now argue that harnessing the placebo effect deliberately, rather than merely controlling for it, could complement conventional treatments, provided this is done without compromising informed consent.

Q1. The primary purpose of the passage is to (A) argue that placebo treatments should replace conventional medicine (B) describe a shift in how the placebo effect is understood and potentially used (C) explain the chemical structure of endogenous opioids (D) criticize clinical trials for failing to control for the placebo effect (E) prove that belief has no measurable physiological basis

Q2. The passage suggests that deliberately harnessing the placebo effect would be acceptable only if (A) it completely replaced conventional treatment (B) patients were unaware that a placebo was being used (C) informed consent was not compromised (D) endogenous opioids were removed from consideration (E) clinical trials were discontinued entirely

Answers: Q1 — B. The passage moves from "nuisance variable" to "legitimate object of study" to a proposal for deliberate use — a shift in understanding/use, matching (B). (A) overstates; (C) is a minor detail, not the purpose.

Q2 — C. Directly stated in the final clause: "provided this is done without compromising informed consent." (B) actually contradicts informed consent, so it can't be the answer.

Passage 5 (Medium — Structure/Function)

Economists have long debated whether minimum wage increases lead to job losses among low-wage workers. Classical supply-and-demand models predict that raising the price of labor above its market equilibrium should reduce the quantity of labor demanded, resulting in unemployment. Yet empirical studies examining actual minimum wage increases have produced

mixed results: some find measurable job losses consistent with the classical prediction, while others find negligible or even positive employment effects. One explanation for this discrepancy is that labor markets, particularly for low-wage work, may not always resemble the perfectly competitive markets assumed by classical models. In markets where a small number of employers hold disproportionate power over wages—a condition economists term "monopsony"—employers may have been paying workers below their true productive value, meaning a wage increase can be absorbed without job losses, or can even increase employment as more workers are drawn into the labor market.

Q3. The passage's discussion of "monopsony" functions primarily to (A) prove that classical supply-and-demand models are entirely incorrect (B) offer a possible explanation for empirical findings that classical models fail to predict (C) argue that all labor markets are monopsonistic (D) suggest that minimum wage increases always raise employment (E) criticize economists for relying on outdated theoretical models

Q4. According to the passage, in a monopsonistic labor market, a minimum wage increase might (A) always result in significant job losses (B) be absorbed without job losses, or even increase employment (C) have no effect on employer behavior (D) cause employers to exit the market entirely (E) only affect workers in unionized industries

Answers: Q3 — B. Monopsony is introduced specifically as "one explanation for this discrepancy" between classical predictions and mixed empirical results — a possible explanation, not a proof or blanket claim. (A) and (C) overstate the passage's claims.

Q4 — B. Near-direct restatement: "a wage increase can be absorbed without job losses, or can even increase employment." (A) is the opposite of what's stated for this specific market condition.

Passage 6 (Short — Hard, Vocabulary/Inference)

Some conservation biologists have grown wary of the term "invasive species," arguing that it carries an implicit value judgment that obscures more than it clarifies. A species introduced to a new region by human activity is not inherently harmful; many introduced species integrate into local ecosystems without displacing native species or causing measurable ecological damage. Labeling all non-native species as "invasive," these critics argue, conflates mere novelty of origin with demonstrated harm, potentially diverting conservation resources toward species that pose little actual threat while obscuring genuinely damaging cases under the same blanket terminology.

Q5. The word "conflates" as used in the passage most nearly means (A) celebrates (B) incorrectly equates (C) financially values (D) scientifically measures (E) publicly announces

Q6. The passage suggests that the critics' central concern is that the term "invasive species" (A) is used too rarely by conservation biologists (B) fails to distinguish between species that cause harm and those that do not (C) applies only to species introduced before human civilization existed (D) has no scientific basis whatsoever (E) is primarily an economic rather than ecological classification

Answers: Q5 — B. "Conflates novelty of origin with demonstrated harm" means treating two distinct things (being non-native, and causing harm) as the same — "incorrectly equates" captures this precisely.

Q6 — B. The passage's core criticism is that blanket labeling fails to distinguish harmful from harmless non-native species, "conflating" origin with harm and "obscuring genuinely damaging cases." (D) overstates — critics don't deny scientific basis outright, just object to the blanket application.

Passage 7 (Short — Easy)

The phenomenon of bioluminescence—the production of light by living organisms through chemical reactions—occurs across a striking range of unrelated species, from deep-sea fish to fireflies to certain fungi. Because these organisms are only distantly related, scientists believe bioluminescence evolved independently many times rather than being inherited from a single common ancestor. This pattern, known as convergent evolution, suggests that producing light offers such significant survival advantages—whether for attracting prey, deterring predators, or finding mates—that natural selection favored it repeatedly across very different evolutionary lineages.

Q1. The passage suggests that bioluminescence evolved independently in different species primarily because (A) all bioluminescent species share a recent common ancestor (B) light production likely offers substantial survival advantages across varied contexts (C) fungi and fish occupy the same ecological habitats (D) scientists have not yet determined how bioluminescence functions (E) convergent evolution is more common than inherited traits

Q2. The passage implies that convergent evolution occurs when (A) unrelated species inherit a trait from a shared ancestor (B) a trait offers enough advantage that it arises independently across separate lineages (C) two species compete directly for the same resource (D) a species migrates to a new geographic region (E) genetic mutation rates increase across a population

Answers: Q1 — B. The passage attributes independent evolution to light production offering "significant survival advantages" across contexts (prey, predators, mates). (A) directly contradicts the passage's premise of independent evolution.

Q2 — B. This is essentially the passage's definition: a trait "evolved independently many times" because of the advantage it confers, matching (B). (A) describes the opposite (inheritance, not convergence).

Passage 8 (Long — Hard)

Debates over the proper interpretation of quantum mechanics have persisted since the theory's early formulation, largely because the mathematics of the theory makes highly accurate predictions while remaining silent on what, if anything, those predictions imply about the underlying nature of reality. The Copenhagen interpretation, historically dominant, holds that a quantum system exists in a superposition of states until measured, at which point the act of measurement causes the system to "collapse" into a single definite state. Critics of this view have long objected that it grants an unexplained, seemingly special status to measurement and to the observer performing it, without specifying what physically distinguishes a "measurement" from any other physical interaction.

Alternative interpretations attempt to resolve this ambiguity in different ways. The many-worlds interpretation dispenses with collapse altogether, proposing instead that all possible outcomes of a quantum measurement occur, each in a separate, non-communicating branch of reality. This approach avoids the need to specify what counts as a measurement, since nothing ever collapses, but it does so at the considerable cost of positing a vast, empirically unobservable multiplicity of parallel worlds. Pilot-wave theory, by contrast, retains a single, objectively real world without collapse by proposing that particles always have definite positions guided by an underlying wave, with apparent quantum randomness arising from our ignorance of initial conditions rather than from any fundamental indeterminacy in nature.

Notably, all three interpretations agree entirely on the predictions of quantum mechanics for any experiment that has so far been performed; they differ only in the metaphysical picture offered to explain why those predictions hold. This has led some physicists to argue that choosing among interpretations is not a scientific question at all, since no proposed experiment could currently distinguish between them, while others maintain that the interpretive question remains a legitimate and important one, since a theory's explanatory adequacy involves more than its predictive success alone.

Q3. The primary purpose of the passage is to (A) argue that the many-worlds interpretation is the most scientifically valid (B) present several competing interpretations of quantum mechanics and a debate over whether choosing among them is even a scientific question (C) explain the mathematical formalism underlying quantum superposition (D) prove that pilot-wave theory eliminates all quantum randomness (E) criticize the Copenhagen interpretation as unscientific

Q4. According to the passage, a key criticism of the Copenhagen interpretation is that it (A) fails to make accurate predictions in laboratory experiments (B) does not specify what physically distinguishes measurement from other interactions (C) requires belief in parallel,

non-communicating worlds (D) denies that particles have definite positions at all times (E) has been experimentally disproven in favor of pilot-wave theory

Q5. The passage suggests that pilot-wave theory explains apparent quantum randomness as arising from (A) the collapse of the wave function upon measurement (B) genuinely random, fundamental indeterminacy in nature (C) our lack of knowledge of a system's initial conditions (D) the branching of reality into multiple worlds (E) the special role of the observer in measurement

Q6. The final paragraph indicates that physicists disagree about whether (A) quantum mechanics makes accurate predictions (B) interpretive questions about quantum mechanics count as legitimate scientific questions (C) the many-worlds interpretation is mathematically consistent (D) pilot-wave theory predicts different experimental outcomes than Copenhagen (E) any interpretation of quantum mechanics is worth studying at all

Answers: Q3 — B. The passage lays out three interpretations (Copenhagen, many-worlds, pilot-wave) and closes on a genuine debate over whether interpretive choice is a scientific question — matching (B). (A) and (E) wrongly imply the author takes a side; the passage stays neutral throughout.

Q4 — B. Directly stated: critics object that Copenhagen doesn't specify "what physically distinguishes a 'measurement' from any other physical interaction." (C) describes many-worlds, not a criticism of Copenhagen.

Q5 — C. Explicitly stated: randomness "aris[es] from our ignorance of initial conditions rather than from any fundamental indeterminacy." (B) is the opposite of what pilot-wave theory claims.

Q6 — B. The passage ends noting some physicists think interpretive choice "is not a scientific question at all," while others think it's "a legitimate and important one" — a disagreement over legitimacy as a scientific question, not over predictions (which all three interpretations share, per paragraph 3).

Passage 9 (Short — Medium)

Traditional accounts of memory treat it as a process of storage and retrieval, akin to filing away a document and later retrieving an unchanged copy. Cognitive research complicates this model considerably: each act of recalling a memory appears to render it temporarily unstable, requiring it to be "reconsolidated" before it is stored again—a process during which the memory can be subtly altered by new information or emotional context present at the time of recall. This suggests that memory is not simply retrieved but is, in some sense, reconstructed anew each time it is accessed, with each retrieval carrying the potential to reshape the memory itself.

Q7. The passage's discussion of reconsolidation primarily serves to (A) prove that human memory is entirely unreliable and should not be trusted in any context (B) challenge the traditional model of memory as static storage and retrieval (C) describe the biochemical structure of long-term memory storage (D) argue that emotional memories are stored differently from factual memories (E) suggest that memories should never be recalled in order to preserve their accuracy

Q8. It can be inferred from the passage that a memory recalled multiple times over the years, in different emotional contexts, would likely (A) remain completely identical to its original form (B) become permanently inaccessible after each recall (C) potentially be altered somewhat by each act of recall (D) be stored as a separate, unrelated memory each time (E) be immune to any further reconsolidation

Answers: Q7 — B. The passage explicitly contrasts "traditional accounts" (static storage/retrieval) with the reconsolidation research, using it to complicate that model — matching (B). (A) and (E) overstate the passage's claims into a call to action or judgment not made.

Q8 — C. Follows directly from "the memory can be subtly altered by new information or emotional context present at the time of recall" — repeated recall in different contexts implies repeated potential for alteration. (A) contradicts the passage's central claim.

Passage 10 (Short — Easy/Medium)

Wildfire suppression policies in many forested regions, historically aimed at extinguishing all fires as quickly as possible, are increasingly being reconsidered in light of ecological research showing that periodic low-intensity fires play a necessary role in forest health. Such fires clear accumulated underbrush and dead vegetation that would otherwise serve as fuel for larger, more destructive fires, while also releasing nutrients into the soil and triggering seed germination in certain plant species adapted to fire cycles. Decades of aggressive suppression, ironically, may have contributed to the increased severity of recent wildfires by allowing fuel loads to build up unchecked.

Q9. The passage suggests that historical wildfire suppression policies may have had which unintended consequence? (A) A decrease in the total number of forested regions (B) An increase in the severity of subsequent wildfires due to fuel accumulation (C) The complete elimination of fire-adapted plant species (D) A reduction in soil nutrient levels across all forest types (E) An increase in the frequency of low-intensity fires

Q10. According to the passage, low-intensity fires contribute to forest health by (A) preventing all future fires from occurring (B) eliminating fire-adapted plant species to make room for new

growth (C) clearing fuel buildup and releasing nutrients into the soil (D) increasing the density of underbrush over time (E) exclusively benefiting animal species rather than plant species

Answers: Q9 — B. Direct restatement of the passage's closing point: suppression "may have contributed to the increased severity of recent wildfires by allowing fuel loads to build up unchecked."

Q10 — C. Directly stated: fires "clear accumulated underbrush... while also releasing nutrients into the soil." (B) is the opposite — fire-adapted species benefit from fire, they aren't eliminated by it.
