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Weekly Test Lesson 12

Read the text. Then answer the questions.

The Origin of Currency in America

Suppose you wanted to buy something at the store, but you had only a handful of coins from other countries. It may sound strange, but that was what shopping was like during the early days of America. Prior to the late eighteenth century, people often used foreign coins to buy goods.

The first settlers came to this country from different parts of Europe. Many of those settlers brought money from their homelands with them. Coins from England, France, Spain, Germany, and Holland were all part of the mix. If a person had to buy goods, he or she would often use the money from their homeland. This purchasing system was as smooth as ice when people from the same country were buying goods from each other. However, the system posed a significant problem if someone was purchasing goods from a settler from a different country. The buyer and seller had to determine a way to match currencies. The bargaining over currency undoubtedly caused confusion among people. Settlers became accustomed to this process and managed the best they could. Still, it must have been an inefficient system.

Most early American colonies were settled by English colonists, so people often used English coins whenever they could. Then the British Parliament passed laws to prevent the widespread use of their coins in the colonies. This was meant to force the colonists to exchange resources with England. However, enacting this law was a poor decision by the British government. The colonists did not like the restrictions on British currency. As a result, many of them relied on using coins from other countries.

One of the most popular coins in colonial America was the Spanish milled dollar. It had a value of eight *reales* (pronounced ray-AL-ays). For that reason, it was also called a piece of eight. Pieces of eight are often mentioned in stories about sunken ships and buried pirate treasure. In order to make change, merchants sometimes divided these coins into eight small pie-shaped pieces called bits. Eight bits made one dollar. A quarter of a dollar became known as two bits and half of a dollar was four bits.

Some colonies, such as Massachusetts, didn't think that British laws should regulate the use of coins in the Americas. They tried to produce money illegally. People in Massachusetts minted a coin called the pine-tree shilling starting in the mid-1600s. These coins were used, but they were not very popular. Colonists probably didn't trust their value.

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Reading

Once independence had been declared and fought for, the United States didn't have to follow British laws anymore. They started producing their own official coins in 1792. The number of coins made each year was not nearly enough to satisfy the needs of the people in America. Therefore, the Spanish milled dollar and other foreign coins remained in use.

From 1800 to 1850, the United States expanded rapidly. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 added nearly one million miles of territory to be settled. In addition, the California Gold Rush, which began in 1848, also caused people to move west. Settlers moved west like ants on a march, and new states were established. Because of a shortage of American money, people still relied on using coins from other countries. As time went by, the situation slowly improved, but foreign currency could still be found in circulation, and confusion continued. But in 1857, the problem came to a head, so Congress finally passed a law that officially stopped the use of foreign coins.

Today, you can occasionally find pieces of eight at coin shops. They are a reminder of America's early days when the country was settled by people from all across Europe.

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- 1 Read this sentence from the text.

This purchasing system was as smooth as ice when people from the same country were buying goods from each other.

What does the phrase as smooth as ice mean?

- Ⓐ easy
 - Ⓑ cheap
 - Ⓒ slippery
 - Ⓓ troublesome
- 2 Read the paragraph from the text. Underline the sentence that is an opinion of the author.

Most early American colonies were settled by English colonists, so people often used English coins whenever they could. Then the British Parliament passed laws to prevent the widespread use of their coins in the colonies. This was meant to force the colonists to exchange resources with England. However, enacting this law was a poor decision by the British government. The colonists did not like the restrictions on British currency. As a result, many of them relied on using coins from other countries.

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- 3 Read the paragraph from the text.

Some colonies, such as Massachusetts, didn't think that British laws should regulate the use of coins in the Americas. They tried to produce money illegally. People in Massachusetts minted a coin called the pine-tree shilling starting in the mid-1600s. These coins were used, but they were not very popular. Colonists probably didn't trust their value.

Based on the tone of this paragraph, what is the author's attitude toward the laws passed by the British?

- (A) The author thinks the laws were exciting.
- (B) The author thinks the laws were confusing.
- (C) The author thinks the laws were frustrating.
- (D) The author thinks the laws were convenient.

- 4 This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

Part A

Based on the tone of the text, what is the author's point of view toward foreign money being used throughout America's early history?

- (A) The author is surprised that it was stopped so quickly.
- (B) The author is excited with the government's efforts.
- (C) The author thinks the system was messy.
- (D) The author believes it worked well.

Part B

Choose the detail that **best** supports the answer to part A.

- (A) This purchasing system was as smooth as ice when people from the same country were buying goods from each other.
- (B) They started producing their own official coins in 1792.
- (C) From 1800 to 1850, the United States expanded rapidly.
- (D) As time went by, the situation slowly improved, but foreign currency could still be found in circulation, and confusion continued.

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- 5 Which of these statements from the text is a fact?
- Ⓐ The bargaining over currency undoubtedly caused confusion among people.
 - Ⓑ Still, it must have been an inefficient system.
 - Ⓒ Then the British Parliament passed laws to prevent the widespread use of their coins in the colonies.
 - Ⓓ Colonists probably didn't trust their value.
- 6 What does the author mean by stating that "settlers moved west like ants on a march"? Use details from the text to support your answer.

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Writing

- 7 Read the sentence.

The pioneers travel along the Oregon Trail in the covered wagon tomorrow.

What revision is needed?

- Ⓐ Change travel to traveled.
 - Ⓑ Change travel to traveling.
 - Ⓒ Change travel to will travel.
 - Ⓓ Change travel to have traveled.
- 8 Which sentence is written incorrectly?
- Ⓐ I received the new dollar coin from the bank yesterday.
 - Ⓑ Tomorrow, we studied interesting facts about U.S. money.
 - Ⓒ Last week, David gave his friend the five dollars he owed him.
 - Ⓓ This bill contains the names of 35 states on the Lincoln Monument.
- 9 Read the paragraph. Underline the **three** words that are spelled incorrectly.

Let's try a new restaurant tonight. The meanu has many of my favorites, including spinach salad. Don't panick if you don't know what to select! We're a big group and we probably all preffer something different, so we can share. Sophia deserves credit for picking such a special place!

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Writing

- 10 David is writing a problem-solution paragraph for class. Read the beginning of his paragraph. Then complete the task that follows.

My family loves going to the beach in the summer. We used to go to Harborview, but lately we haven't gone. There is a lot of trash on the beach. Seaweed collects and no one cleans it up. People should clean it up. Then it will be a nice place to go to again.

Rewrite David's paragraph to include two or more reasons that tell why his solution would work. Remember to use transition words to connect the ideas.
