

43. D. The passage was written by George Orwell. It was first published in April 1946. You can infer from the passage that it must have been written near the end of or shortly after World War II. The first paragraph refers to a “blitzed site.” The second paragraph refers specifically to every “February since 1940” and “the past five or six years.”
44. D. His uncertainty about whether toads are reptiles or amphibians does not suggest that the speaker is especially interested in or well informed about natural history. It is much more likely that he chooses to favor the toad for an effect of originality and surprise. If he had said that his favorite sign of spring was the robin, many readers would not go on. The toad is the first of several surprises in this passage.
45. C. This phrase, and indeed the whole passage, is colloquial. Many dictionaries still list “boost” as colloquial, and the idea of poets as boosters is another of the passage’s small surprises. Formal (A) is exactly the wrong word to describe Orwell’s prose in this passage. Nor is it interpretive (B), reproachful (E), or jargon-ridden (too dependent on a specialized vocabulary and idiom).
46. E. These plants and birds are those that have had a boost from the poets as signs of spring—for example, by Shakespeare (the cuckoo), Rossetti (the blackthorn), and Hopkins (the thrush). The casual “etc.” at the end of the list indicates Orwell’s lack of enthusiasm for these conventional signs of spring.
47. B. In a traditional, formulaic essay, this sentence would probably begin the paragraph—the topic sentence. By not using it first, Orwell can get away with this less-than-original assertion without losing his reader. Imagine how different this paragraph would be if this sentence came first instead of the sentence about the spawning of toads. Next time someone tells you to begin all paragraphs with a topic sentence, show him or her this passage.
48. B. The line “many people do not like reptiles or amphibians” is literal. It means exactly what it says. Choices A, C, and D are all metaphors. The metaphors are in the words “boost,” “performance,” and “lease.” “Like the toads” (E) is a simile.
49. E. One of the techniques Orwell uses several times to present the coming of spring to London is to place a detail from the urban scene next to something from the natural world. Each of the first four options here places nature (blue sky, elder in leaf, flying kestrel, blackbird) next to a part of the cityscape (chimney pots, blitzed site, Deptford gasworks, Euston Road). Choice E describes a natural scene but has no detail of the city.
50. B. Like a scene from Dickens, the passage suggests that the city has its own life and is at odds with nature, which pays no rent. The narrow and gloomy streets near the Bank of England, the commercial heart of the city, are presented as trying their best but failing to keep spring out, and it is the most “official” of the choices.
51. A. One of the jokes of the passage is Orwell’s using a cliché (“new lease of life”) in a sentence that speaks of another cliché (“miracle”) as a “worn-out figure of speech.” The allusion may be to real estate (B), but the phrase is a metaphor, not a simile. It is not an error in syntax (C), a symbol (D), or an example of poetic license (E).
52. B. This is certainly the most unexpected comparison for spring that the passage presents; comparing spring to a poison gas is highly unusual. The Persephone and the miracle figures are merely clichés. In line 28, “it” (A) is simply a pronoun, not a figure of speech.
53. E. The paragraph begins by putting quotation marks around “a miracle” and calling the term a worn-out figure of speech for spring. Others, the author suggests, may use this word, but not me. Because the winters have been so terrible, spring does “seem miraculous.” Notice the hedge is still there in “seem.” Finally, several lines later, all hesitation disappears, and “the miracle happens.”
54. D. Though the air is “warm,” that the sparrows must “nerve” themselves to take a bath serves to control the optimism of the passage. The image of the bird with six months of accumulated London grime is characteristic of the unique approach to spring of this passage.
55. B. You can infer his poverty from the description of his home as a “decaying slum.” A few details suggest that the author is unsympathetic to capitalism (D). No details support choices A, C, or E.
56. A. The passage is never pedantic, which refers to a strict and haughty regard for academic and technical knowledge. It is, at times, comic, optimistic, realistic, and spontaneous.