

PASSAGE 1

In these anxious years of the 21st century, artificial intelligence (AI) is being actively deployed to address a wide range of issues and challenges like automated vehicles and quantum physics. Now, researchers are hoping AI can help untie another complicated knot: America's polarized political landscape. The Collective Debate project, developed by researchers, invites users to debate an AI agent on a potentially divisive question. The idea is to encourage users to become more moderate by presenting opposing facts and figures on the specific issue. If you identify as liberal, the AI agent will argue a conservative position — and vice-versa. Whichever way you lean, left or right, the AI leans back. It's not just an argument generator, though. The Collective Debate AI actually "listens" to your argument, makes educated guesses as to your point of view, then generates counterarguments deemed the most likely to push you toward a more moderate position. After completing the AI debate — and presumably taking in all the relevant counterarguments — users are asked a second time to indicate their position on the initial question. The hypothesis was that users would change their original assessment after debating the issue. Ideally, they would move toward a more moderate position, since that's what the AI agent is specifically programmed to encourage.

1. We can understand from the passage that ----.

- A) the AI agent adopts a different stance from that of the users depending on their arguments
- B) users can choose the topic they want to debate with the AI agent from a wide range of issues
- C) the Collective Debate project aims to raise people's awareness about the polarized political landscape in the US
- D) the AI agent makes the users embrace a completely different political ideology
- E) researchers hope to expand the scope of the project to benefit from the AI agent in different fields

2. Which of the following is true about the Collective Debate project?

- A) Users holding different political views are chosen by the researchers to debate the AI agent.
- B) A considerable amount of resource has been allocated to the project.
- C) Researchers across the USA have collaborated to devise the AI agent.
- D) The subject that users and AI agent have a debate on is likely to cause controversy.
- E) The debate between users and the AI continues until one party fails to make further arguments.

3. Which of the following can be inferred from the passage?

- A) Users need to present some facts and figures while debating with the AI agent.
- B) Users are asked to give feedback on the nature of their debate with the AI agent after it is over.
- C) The AI agent assesses the users' performance as soon as the debate is completed.
- D) Users are allowed to have a second round of debate with the AI agent.
- E) The AI agent analyses the arguments of the users to identify their standpoint.

4. It is stated in the passage that the main aim of developing the AI agent is to ----.

- A) test whether the AI agent is capable of having a reasonable debate with humans
- B) ease the increasing tension regarding the highly polarized political atmosphere around the world
- C) have the users adopt a more balanced viewpoint compared with their initial ideas
- D) find out how the AI agent generates counterarguments during the debate process
- E) encourage the people involved in politics to have a more civilized debate

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PASSAGE 2

A bold plan to create an entire human genome has been scaled back, aiming at a more technically attainable near-term goal. Instead of creating all of the human genome's 3 billion DNA base pairs, the project will now attempt to recode the genome to produce cells immune to viral infection. But even the downsized ambitions might be difficult to achieve soon, because the two-year-old effort still has no dedicated funding for what is estimated to cost tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars and last a decade or more. A virus-proof human cell line would let firms make vaccines, antibodies and other biological drugs without risk of viral contamination. It could also help to make protein drugs with chemical ornaments similar to those in human proteins, to decrease the risk of the body's immune system rejecting them. However, the researchers' main goal is still to improve DNA technologies, not create a particular product. The idea is to develop the technologies to synthesize virus-proof human cell line very quickly and easily using a variety of gene-editing techniques. Researchers believe the ultra-safe human cell line project has the right level of complexity, and many different facets of design to push those technologies forward.

1. We can understand from the passage that the researchers ----.

- A) have had to abandon their project of creating the human genome due to the scarcity of funding bodies
- B) believe developing a human cell line resistant to viruses even in the long run is nowhere in sight given technological challenges
- C) think ultra-safe human cell line might be abused by the firms developing drugs to improve immune system
- D) are not hopeless with regard to technologies through which virus-proof human cell line can be developed
- E) tend to disregard many different facets of design due to difficulty in developing virus-proof human cell line

2. It is pointed out in the passage that ----.

- A) there are many potential risks involved in creating the human genome
- B) the initial plan to develop an entire human genome has been reduced in scope
- C) the development of human genome was found to be too ambitious to realize
- D) the human genome project has been carried out for many years
- E) the development of the entire human genome is possible to achieve in the near future

3. Which of the following can be true about the virus-proof human cell line?

- A) It might be challenging to accomplish in near future due partly to financial constraints.
- B) Some researchers have ethical concerns over its creation.
- C) Some researchers feel pessimistic about it due to its complexity.
- D) It is being studied by some medical companies to develop vaccines and similar products.
- E) It can be developed in the near future thanks to the long and meticulous research behind it.

4. What is the passage mainly about?

- A) Pros and cons of developing virus-proof human cell line
- B) Inefficiency of the current DNA technologies in the creation of human genome
- C) Potential benefits of utilizing cutting-edge DNA technologies
- D) Several limitations of developing virus-proof cell line
- E) A change to the original scheme to reach a more realistic target

PASSAGE 3

Scientific reasoning helps us understand the intricacies of our world. But every so often, the phenomenon leaves scientists without a solid explanation, take, for example, the ninth planet. Scientists believe that a major planet exists with a mass 10 times that of Earth somewhere in the far depths of the solar system. In 2014, scientists discovered a cluster of objects orbiting the sun, beyond Neptune. Astronomers theorize that a ninth planet might be close to this planet. But even with our best instruments, this hypothetical planet is too dim to detect. It will remain a mystery until scientists can either prove, or disprove, its existence. Unless we have more advanced technology that is sensitive enough to detect reflected light traveling through space, scientists cannot reach conclusive evidence. Until then, astronomers can only speculate its location. Another phenomenon is the animals dying 'en masse'. There are incidents of mass animal deaths that have been recorded all over the world. Conspiracy theorists believe it is the result of UFOs, government testing or that the world is coming to an end. Scientists, on the other hand, theorize that it maybe the effects of global warming or disease among the specific group of animals. It is possible that there is not one correct answer, but even scientists are unable to pinpoint the reason why these animals are vanishing worldwide.

1. We can understand from the passage that ----.

- A) the discovery of objects orbiting the Sun fuelled the debate over the existence of the ninth planet
- B) the theory that planets akin to the ninth planet exist in the solar system has been refuted
- C) scientists and astronomers may come to an agreement over the location of the ninth planet soon
- D) it is not, even with current technology, possible to unravel the existence of the ninth planet yet
- E) scientists have yet to explain whether it is UFOs or governments that caused the demise of certain animals

2. Which of the following can be true about the ninth planet?

- A) It is mostly made up of a cluster of objects revolving around the sun.
- B) A more advanced technology is needed to accurately say whether it is a hospitable planet.
- C) It is thought to be located in the vicinity of Neptune.
- D) It is regarded as by far the biggest planet in our solar system.
- E) Scientists will be able to say the exact location with the help of the current technology.

3. What can be inferred from the mass animal deaths?

- A) Conspiracy theorists' hypotheses have been firmly rejected by scientists.
- B) There has been an unprecedented growth in the number of animals dying in large numbers.
- C) Incidents of animals dying in large numbers can be witnessed only in specific regions.
- D) The most probable explanation for mass animal deaths is the adverse impacts of global warming.
- E) Scientific reasoning may sometimes fail to explain certain phenomena.

4. What is the primary purpose of the author?

- A) To criticise scientists for their inefficiency to determine the reasons of some phenomena
- B) To encourage scientific circles to address the unresolved issues
- C) To inform the audience of some mysteries that are yet to be solved
- D) To suggest ways of dealing with mysteries surrounding the planets in our solar system
- E) To stress the importance of and the need for advanced technology in unravelling mysteries

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PASSAGE 4

You are at a restaurant with a group of friends. When the waiter brings the bill you want to check it to calculate your share. Only you forget how bad you are at basic addition. Meanwhile, you are hoping your friends won't notice how red your face is turning. Math anxiety is a real thing. An estimated 80 percent of community college students suffer from moderate to high math anxiety, defined as a negative emotional reaction to math. Having math anxiety makes you even worse at math, which leads some people to avoid math at all costs and dismiss all math-related careers as hopeless. Sian Beilock, a cognitive scientist, conducted extensive research on math anxiety in children and adults. The brain scans on people with math anxiety have shown that even the prospect of doing a math problem triggered a response. "Before people even see the math problem, just knowing that it is coming, the areas of the brain linked to the neural pain matrix are activated", she says. In her research, 50 percent of first- and second-graders also say that math makes them nervous. And rumour has it in many societies that girls are not as good as the boys at math, which makes girls even more anxious on average. And when high anxiety leads to bad performance on math tests, people jump to the conclusion that they were born to be bad at math.

1. Why did the writer give the example of the restaurant at the beginning of the passage?

- A) To emphasize the significance of coping with math anxiety in everyday situations
- B) To show that math anxiety is quite prevalent among people
- C) To illustrate why people are bad at dealing with their math anxiety
- D) To draw attention to the dire need to address math anxiety among students
- E) To exemplify how poor community college students' math skills are

2. One can understand from the passage that ----.

- A) the level of math anxiety depends on the age and sex of individuals
- B) some people may even refuse to participate in research due to their math anxiety
- C) gender has nothing to do with having math anxiety
- D) the larger the group at a restaurant is, the higher one's anxiety grows
- E) people with math anxiety may refrain from jobs that involve math

3. Which of the following can be true about the Beilock's research?

- A) One does not necessarily have to deal with a math problem to exhibit signs of anxiety.
- B) The research is more comprehensive than the previous studies into math anxiety.
- C) First- and second-graders can be the ones that math makes nervous most.
- D) The research shows that having math anxiety is on the increase among students.
- E) Math anxiety may be triggered only when one is doing a math problem in front of others

4. According to the passage, ----.

- A) college students can have a more negative attitude to math problems than children
- B) some people, though they wish the other way round, are born with poor math skills
- C) that girls are worse than the boys at math is nothing but a social construction
- D) performance on math tests can lead people to jump the conclusion that girls are bad at math
- E) brain scan is the most efficient method in determining whether people have math anxiety

PASSAGE 5

Teaching children according to their individual "learning style" does not achieve better results and should be discarded by schools in favor of evidence-based practice, according to leading scientists. Thirty eminent academics from the worlds of neuroscience, education and psychology have voiced their concern over the popularity of the learning style approach among some teachers. They say it is ineffective, a waste of resources and potentially even damaging as it can lead to a fixed approach that could impair pupils' potential to apply or adapt themselves to different ways of learning. The academics oppose the theory that learning is more effective if pupils are taught using an individual approach identified as their personal "learning style". Some pupils, for example, are identified as having a "listening" style and could therefore be taught with storytelling and discussion rather than written exercises. They also stated that this approach is one of a number of common neuromyths that do nothing to enhance education. School leaders say the enthusiasm for learning styles in schools has faded, but research in 2012 among teachers in the UK and Netherlands found that 80% believed individuals learned better when they received information in their preferred learning style. In 2013, research found that 76% of teachers had used learning styles in their teaching.

1. One can understand from the passage that learning style approach is ----.

- A) ineffective unless students can identify their own learning approach
- B) best if learners are taught by utilising real life experiences
- C) still being implemented in well-established schools all around the world
- D) more popular than before especially in the UK and Netherlands
- E) likely to have an adverse impact on learners' capability to adjust themselves to new situations

2. It is clearly stated in the passage that ----.

- A) some educators still utilise learning style approach without letting the school administration know about it
- B) some students are willing to make use of learning style approach since they believe it is beneficial for them
- C) in spite of the dire warning from researchers, school administrations are reluctant to get rid of learning style approach
- D) despite the decrease in the popularity of learning style approach, it was commonly practiced in some schools
- E) much research still supports the theory that learning style approach is to the benefit of learners

3. It is pointed out in the passage that ----.

- A) more research is needed to refute the theory that learners should be taught according to their preferred learning styles
- B) some distinguished scholars from various realms are apprehensive about employing learning style approach
- C) some educators find teaching through story telling more beneficial than teaching through mechanical written exercises
- D) learning style approach still has priority over other approaches implemented by educators
- E) some schools are undermining the creativity of their students by exploiting some outdated teaching methods

4. What is the main purpose of the author?

- A) To criticize the academics who still believe in the efficiency of learning style approach
- B) To dissuade the teachers in the UK and Netherlands from using learning style approach
- C) To raise the awareness of language teachers about the risks of learning style approach
- D) To highlight the ineffectiveness of learning style approach
- E) To inform the reader of the learning styles implemented by teachers around the world

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PASSAGE 6

It is hard to imagine attending the latest blockbuster without a jumbo bucket of popped corn. Popcorn was hugely popular at fairs and carnivals in the mid-1800s. Street vendors were able to easily make and sell it when the first steam-powered popcorn maker was created in 1885. However, movie theaters wanted to stay far away from popcorn. A real theater would refuse to be associated with food that would be noisily eaten and messily scattered across by consumers during showings. Before films with speech and sound, literacy was a necessity for film-goers, and movie theaters wanted to target a well-educated crowd. However, in 1927, movies were no longer just geared toward a literate audience. Going to the movies became an activity anyone could enjoy. This coincided with the Great Depression – the worst economic downturn in the history of the industrialized world – and Americans wanted cheap entertainment that would help them to get lost in a new reality. *Movies fit the bill.* Although early theaters weren't equipped to handle popcorn machines, independent vendors were quick to jump at the opportunity of selling directly to consumers. Popcorn was inexpensive and customers who were not well-off could enjoy it. Soon, movie theater owners began to cut out the street vendors and sell popcorn themselves. For theater owners, the way to stay alive during the Depression was to give the people what they wanted. During World War II, the sales of popcorn in the United States really took off. The food's popularity continued to grow, and the rest is movie history.

1. One can understand from the passage that ----.

- A) there was a conflict between the vendors and theatre owners over popcorn sales
- B) vendors weren't allowed to sell any product other than popcorn in the movie theatres
- C) going to the movies was once associated with an illiterate audience
- D) movies had once educational purposes and were limited to an elite audience
- E) the economic crisis contributed to the sales and popularity of popcorn

2. What does the author mean when he says "*Movies fit the bill.*"?

- A) Movies helped raise the awareness of the people about the social issues.
- B) Movies enabled the owners of the theatres to make huge profits.
- C) Movies met the demands of the American audience at that time.
- D) Movies helped the US government to overcome adverse effects of the Great Depression.
- E) Movies had a positive impact on the sales of popcorns.

3. It is stated in the passage that ----.

- A) movie theatres refrained from popcorn during the late 19th century due to its negative connotations
- B) there was a substantial increase in the number of film-goers soon after the introduction of popcorn
- C) people who were uneducated were not allowed to watch movies in most movie theatres in the 19th century
- D) the government encouraged people to go to the movie theatres to distract their attention from economic problems
- E) the introduction of popcorn was a golden opportunity for film-makers to recover from the economic crisis in the film industry

4. It is pointed out in the passage that ----.

- A) street vendors were slow to seize the opportunity that popcorn provided
- B) during the era of silent movies, movie theatres aspired a sophisticated audience
- C) popcorn was once demanding and expensive to produce
- D) popcorn owed its popularity to street vendors in the early 19th century
- E) movie audiences associated popcorn with noisy and illiterate crowds