

## PRACTICE 11

Questions 1-9. Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers. This passage is taken from a contemporary book about the history of American film.

5 The mood of the American people at the end of 1975 was gloomy. Earlier that year an “America-watcher” of long standing found it “perfectly logical” to assert that “the springs shall become silent, the seas polluted, and the atmosphere heated to a degree destructive of human life as we have found it.”<sup>1</sup> Things did not seem to be going well for the United States in the 1970s.

10 The very foundations of the American Dream had been severely shaken during the first half of the decade: the Watergate crisis had resulted in the resignation of President of the United States and criminal prosecution of high-ranking federal officials; the armed forces had been defeated in combat by an Asian people; the Arab oil embargo forced recognition that the United States no longer enjoyed unlimited natural  
15 resources; the economy floundered between the seemingly irreconcilable forces of increasing unemployment and inflation; a vocal and alien counterculture had challenged successfully various traditional values; “crime-in-the-streets” as well as rioting in the inner city and on campus threatened permanent  
20 damage to domestic tranquility; various minority groups through escalating, sometimes violent, demands seemed to have irreparably rent the fabric of American society. So dour, indeed, did everyday American life appear that in 1974 a positive and hopeful assessment of the United States in the  
25 1970s characterized the decade as “the age of the rip-off.”<sup>2</sup>

30 Suddenly, in 1976, with the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the creation of the United States, the nation’s mood changed perceptibly. Bicentennial America, almost overnight, put behind it Watergate, Vietnam, stagflation, and many other problems. The media—which for so long had highlighted the negative side of American life—now spoke of “the ongoing resilience of what used to be called The American Dream.”<sup>3</sup> Even *U.S. News & World Report*, well known for its weekly  
35 prophecies of doom and analyses of the various malaises

<sup>1</sup> Gerald W. Johnson, *America Watching: Perspectives in the Course of an Incredible Century* (Owings Mills, Maryland: Stemmer House Publishers, 1976), p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> Tad Sculc, *Innocents At Home: America in the 1970s* (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), p. 43. For a perceptive overview of contemporary America by a foreigner, see Robert Hargreaves, *Super Power: A Portrait of America in the 70s* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1973).

<sup>3</sup> “Our America,” *Newsweek*, 4 July 1976, p. 32.

troubling the United States, now unabashedly declared that  
"nowhere on earth . . . do the hopes for the future appear more  
exciting than they do in the U.S., rich in spirit . . . power . . .  
and people."<sup>4</sup> A German observer of the American scene found  
40 that concern over America's problems had given way, at least  
for the moment, to celebration of the bicentennial.<sup>5</sup>

[The film] *Rocky* is an integral if somewhat unusual part of  
that bicentennial binge. Set in the white ethnic working-class  
slums of South Philadelphia, *Rocky* deals with such  
45 unappetizing aspects of current life in the United States as  
organized crime, professional boxing, media exploitation, and  
the hard-scrabble world of the working-class, blue-collar  
ethnic. Yet, even though dealing with the underside of  
contemporary America, *Rocky* is a celebration of the American  
50 Dream. Movie critic Frank Rich perceptively analyzed the  
film's wide appeal when he described *Rocky* as a "fairy tale,"  
"tapped the popular spirit of the present: . . . the old-fashioned, Bi-  
Centennial vision of America."<sup>6</sup>

At first glance the film's eponymous protagonist seems an  
55 unusual hero for bicentennial America. Rocky Balboa  
(Sylvester Stallone)—self-styled "The Italian Stallion"—is a  
dim-witted, fourth-rate, thirty-year-old club fighter of no  
particular distinction, except perhaps for the fact (of which he  
proudly boasts) that in ten years of fighting his nose has never  
60 been broken. Professional boxing has netted him nothing. He  
earns his keep working as a muscle man for Gazzo, a loan  
shark. Rocky's life is bleak. He seems to have no future. He  
lives alone, in squalor. Drunks, bums, and seedy layabouts line  
the streets of his rundown Philadelphia neighborhood. . . .

65 Whatever the drawbacks of Rocky's world, the film makes  
clear—in that peculiar cinematic shorthand so well understood  
by movie audiences all over the world—that although he may  
be a bum, he is a bum with a heart. Rocky . . . is presented as  
"an innocent . . . an earth child from the streets of a slum."<sup>8</sup> He  
70 likes animals: his confidantes are two pet turtles named Cuff  
and Link. He cares about people: on a cold night he takes a  
drunkard out of the gutter and carries him into the corner

<sup>4</sup> "As the Nation Turns 200 . . .," *U.S. News & World Report*, 3 July 1976, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Christian Hacke, "Rückblick auf 200 Jahre: Wege und Probleme der Weltmacht USA," *Das Parlament*, 7 August 1976, p. 1

<sup>6</sup> Frank Rich, "Rocky Hits a Nerve," *The New York Post*, 4 December 1976, p. 44

.....  
<sup>8</sup> Katie Kelly, "In this corner, a stunning *Rocky*," *The East Side Express*, 25 November 1976, p. 11

saloon. He is not mean: even though ordered to break the thumb of one of Gazzo's clients, Rocky refrains from so doing.

75 .....

Viewing *Rocky* was an emotion-charged experience for many American moviegoers. The film touched "a live nerve with the public," as Frank Rich put it.<sup>43</sup> American audiences, influenced by the bicentennial's strong emphasis on the validity of the American Dream, had lost interest in downbeat themes, in bleak reality, in attacks on old-fashioned values—all subjects which as films of one sort or another had recently done well at the box office. Stallone rather perceptively touched on the changing interests of moviegoers in one of his many interviews: "I believe the country as a whole is beginning to break out of this . . . antieverything syndrome . . . this nihilistic, Hemingwayistic attitude that everything in the end must wither and die. . . ."<sup>44</sup>

90 .....

*Rocky* succeeded because of its mythic qualities which neatly dovetailed with the imagery that had been sold by the bicentennial. The sociologist Andrew Greeley has argued that "ethnicity has become almost fashionable."<sup>60</sup> But it was not that fashion which sold *Rocky*. The movie, as Frank Rich said, "can hold its own with Cinderella," as it sets forth that a bum can become a real contender overnight, that riches can come from nowhere, that hard work and the will to make good can still succeed in the United States, that "a shy and unattractive heroine can blossom into a worldly beauty by getting contact lenses and losing her virginity," and that happy endings still exist.<sup>61</sup> And it is to such myths that *Rocky's* audiences responded so enthusiastically.

105 .....

The film itself and the public's response to it speak volumes about how Americans saw themselves in 1976. *Rocky* captured the mood of bicentennial America, a mood which saw the reaffirmation of many traditional values, including racial prejudices that seemed rejuvenated by the economic and social pressures of the 1970s. *Rocky* also highlighted America's changing attitude toward the white lower middle class and toward ethnic blue-collar America. Stallone hit at the core of the matter in his comments on audience response to the film: "when they're cheering for Rocky, they're cheering for themselves."<sup>64</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Rich, p. 42.

<sup>44</sup> David Sterritt, "The man behind *Rocky*," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 13 January 1977, p. 12.

<sup>60</sup> Andrew M. Greeley, *Why Can't They Be Like Us? America's White Ethnic Groups* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975), p. 15.

<sup>61</sup> Rich, p. 44.

<sup>64</sup> Sterritt, "The man behind *Rocky*."

1. Which of the following best states the subject of the passage?
  - (A) The willingness of Americans to ignore painful truths
  - (B) The unusual confluence of social and economic problems in the 1970s
  - (C) The parallels between a movie and the culture during the time it appeared
  - (D) The media's ability to create, as much as report on, a cultural climate
  - (E) The parallels between the movie *Rocky* and fairy tales such as "Cinderella"
  
2. The first paragraph concludes with a(n)
  - (A) understatement
  - (B) allusion
  - (C) euphemism
  - (D) conjecture
  - (E) prediction
  
3. From footnote 2, the reader can infer that
  - (A) the author considers Robert Hargreaves to be more perceptive than Tad Sculc
  - (B) relatively few foreign works are published in New York
  - (C) Tad Sculc's and Robert Hargreaves' perspectives differ significantly
  - (D) Tad Sculc is most likely an American
  - (E) Robert Hargreaves is most likely an American living abroad
  
4. The sentence that includes the unusual word "stagflation" (lines 29-31) would be clearer if the author had done which of the following?
  - I. placed the word in quotation marks
  - II. substituted the word "inflation"
  - III. followed the word with "stagnation plus inflation" in parentheses
  - (A) I only
  - (B) II only
  - (C) I and II only
  - (D) I and III only
  - (E) I, II, and III
  
5. In relation to the description of Rocky Balboa in the paragraph in lines 54-64, the description of him in the following paragraph serves to
  - (A) reiterate it
  - (B) intensify it
  - (C) refute it
  - (D) emphasize it
  - (E) qualify it

6. The rhetorical element most obvious in the paragraph that begins in line 90 is
- (A) ellipsis
  - (B) parallelism
  - (C) appeal to authority
  - (D) periodic sentences
  - (E) antithesis
7. Which of the following phrases seems out of context in relation to the content and tone of the last paragraph?
- (A) “how Americans saw themselves”
  - (B) “including racial prejudices”
  - (C) “economic and social pressures”
  - (D) “ethnic blue-collar America”
  - (E) “‘when they’re cheering for Rocky’”
8. Which of the following LEAST hints at the author’s attitude toward the renewed hopefulness engendered by the bicentennial?
- (A) “almost overnight” (line 29)
  - (B) “binge” (line 43)
  - (C) “validity” (line 79)
  - (D) “sold” (line 91)
  - (E) “myths” (line 101)
9. The footnotes as a whole suggest that
- (A) the author considers books to be more useful than periodicals as resources
  - (B) the author refers to a work by Frank Rich throughout this article
  - (C) since the end of the 1970s, little has been written about that decade
  - (D) the author is merely restating what others have said about the influence of the film *Rocky*
  - (E) few films were analyzed during the 1970s to the extent that *Rocky* was