

Sample Writing Skills Placement Test Essay

The essay below contains the same number and types of errors that an actual Writing Skills Test would contain. However, for demonstration purposes, only a few sections of some sentences have been selected for revision. These sections are in **bold type**. Answer options for each section are on the next page. (Note: There are additional errors in the essay that are not in bold type. If this was the actual test, you would need to locate the additional errors in this essay and select the answer option you feel is correct for each section.)

ESSAY

An increasing number of lakes and rivers in the northern United States invaded are being by a mussel no larger than a fingernail.

The zebra mussel probably steamed aboard a transatlantic ship sometime in the mid-1980's from the Caspian Sea into U.S. waters. Despite its growth was explosive, partly because the species **was preyed upon by very few native predators in its new environment**. As a consequence, the zebra mussels did find a plentiful food supply. They eat huge amounts of phytoplankton, which tiny free-floating sea organisms that dwell in water. **Scientists are concerned when the mussels** may compete aggressively with other species that depend on the same food supply.

Others concerned by the invading species are industry, public utilities, and boat owners. Zebra mussels cluster in huge colonies, being anchored themselves to any hard surface. These colonies can clog your water intake pipes of electric and water treatment plants. Fishery specialists are currently casting about and baiting their hooks to gun down control methods that will cause the lowest amount of damage to water supplies and other aquatic species. Two of the alternatives exploring are interrupting the species reproductive cycle and finding a bacterium harmful only to zebra mussels.

Segment 1

- A. An increasing number of lakes and rivers
- B. An increasingly number of lakes and rivers
- C. A number increasing of lakes and rivers
- D. A number increasingly of lakes and rivers
- E. An increasing of lakes and rivers

Segment 2

- A. Was preyed upon by very few native predators in its new environment.
- B. Found very few predators in its new environment.
- C. Found very few native predators and was seldom eaten in its new environment.
- D. Was preyed on by very few native predator species in its new environment.
- E. Was seldom eaten or preyed on by native predator species in its new environment

Segment 3

- A. Scientists are concerned when the mussels
- B. Scientists are concerned that if the mussels
- C. Scientists are concerned wherein the mussels
- D. Scientists are concerned that the mussels
- E. Scientists are concerned as if the mussels

Item 4 (end of essay)

The writer wishes to add a sentence at the end of Paragraph 1 that will serve as a transition between Paragraph 1 and 2 and will establish the main focus of the essay. Which of the following sentences most effectively fulfills that purpose?

- A. The zebra mussel will provide a difficult challenge for public utility managers.
- B. The zebra mussel is only the latest in a series of newly introduced species to thrive in the U.S.
- C. No one knows how far south and west the zebra mussel is likely to spread, but scientists think they may be on the trail of important clues.
- D. Although small in size, the zebra mussel may become a huge problem for pleasure boat owners in North American waterways.
- E. Despite its size, however, the zebra mussel may have a dramatic effect on North American waterways.