



**In Class Exercises Set A**

**Historical Passage**

13 minutes

*Adapted from "Free Thought and Official Propaganda," a 1922 lecture given by British philosopher, pacifist, and mathematician Bertrand Russell.*

When we speak of anything as "free," our meaning is not definite unless we can say what it is free from. Whatever or whoever is "free" is not subject to some external  
5 compulsion, and to be precise we ought to say what this kind of compulsion is. Thus, thought is "free" when it is free from certain kinds of outward control which are often present. Some of these kinds of control which must be absent  
10 if thought is to be "free" are obvious, but others are more subtle and elusive . . .

It is clear that the most elementary condition, if thought is to be free, is the absence of legal penalties for the expression of opinions.  
15 No great country has yet reached to this level, although most of them think they have. The opinions which are still persecuted strike the majority as so monstrous and immoral that the general principle of toleration cannot be held to  
20 apply to them. But this is exactly the same view as that which made possible the tortures of the Inquisition. There was a time when Protestantism seemed as wicked as Bolshevism seems now. Please do not infer from this  
25 remark that I am either a Protestant or a Bolshevik.

Legal penalties are, however, in the modern world, the least of the obstacles to freedom of thoughts. The two great obstacles  
30 are economic penalties and distortion of evidence. It is clear that thought is not free if the profession of certain opinions makes it impossible to earn a living. It is clear also that thought is not free if all the arguments on one  
35 side of a controversy are perpetually presented as attractively as possible, while the arguments on the other side can only be discovered by diligent search. ...

We may say that thought is free when it  
40 is exposed to free competition among beliefs— i.e., when all beliefs are able to state their case, and no legal or pecuniary advantages or disadvantages attach to beliefs. This is an ideal which, for various reasons, can never be fully  
45 attained. But it is possible to approach very much nearer to it than we do at present ...

William James used to preach the "will to believe." For my part, I should wish to preach the "will to doubt." None of our beliefs  
50 are quite true; all have at least a penumbra of vagueness and error. The methods of increasing the degree of truth in our beliefs are well known; they consist in hearing all sides, trying to ascertain all the relevant facts, controlling  
55 our own bias by discussion with people who have the opposite bias, and cultivating a readiness to discard any hypothesis which has proved inadequate. These methods are practiced in science, and have built up the body  
60 of scientific knowledge. Every man of science whose outlook is truly scientific is ready to admit that what passes for scientific knowledge at the moment is sure to require correction with the progress of discovery; nevertheless, it is  
65 near enough to the truth to serve for most practical purposes, though not for all. In science, where alone something approximating to genuine knowledge is to be found, men's attitude is tentative and full of doubt.



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- 1) Write the paragraph blueprints for the passage:  
  
P1:  
  
P2:  
  
P3:  
  
P4:  
  
P5:
- 2) The main purpose of the passage is to
  - A) emphasize the value of a tradition.
  - B) stress the urgency of a threat.
  - C) propose a solution to a problem.
  - D) question an undertaking's feasibility
- 3) As used in Lines 5 and 6, "compulsion" most nearly means
  - A) desire
  - B) pressure
  - C) dereliction
  - D) misunderstanding
- 4) Which of the following best mirrors Russell's description of "subtle and elusive" control?
  - A) The Alien and Sedition Act allowing for the arrest of foreign dissenters.
  - B) A professor allowing students to discuss their views on taxes in class.
  - C) A school district conducting background checks on teachers' political views for hiring purpose.
  - D) The Patriot Act authorizing the arrest of suspected terrorists.
- 5) Russell uses the example of torture during the Spanish Inquisition mainly to
  - A) criticize the principles used by proponents of "morality" in thought.
  - B) undermine the idea that religion is a key factor in how society treats others.
  - C) disprove the idea that Western countries are freer than developing countries.
  - D) argue for the exclusion of individuals from the professional field.
- 6) Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?
  - A) Lines 15 – 16 ("No great ... they have")
  - B) Lines 16 – 20 ("The opinions ... to them")
  - C) Lines 31 – 33 ("It is clear ... a living")
  - D) Lines 43 – 44 ("This is ... present.")
- 7) The example of Protestants and Bolsheviks in lines 23 – 25 mainly serves to emphasize that
  - A) evidence can be used to disprove false claims.
  - B) dissenting ideas can become the norm.
  - C) minority opinions should have less weight.
  - D) belief in dogma is strictly bad.
- 8) Russell claims freedom "can never be fully attained" (lines 43 – 45) to indicate that
  - A) economic penalties will consistently outweigh freedom
  - B) he doubts society will allow any true freedom.
  - C) numerous obstacles prevent a true competition of beliefs.
  - D) obvious controls are more powerful than subtle and elusive controls.



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- 9) Russell characterizes the “penumbra of vagueness and error” (line 49 – 52) as
- A) frustrating and impossible to accept.
  - B) scientific but unnecessary to note.
  - C) untrue but fundamental to society.
  - D) reducible but essential to acknowledge.
- 10) Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer choice to the previous question?
- A) Lines 39 – 43 (“We may . . . beliefs”)
  - B) Lines 47 – 49 (“William James . . . doubt”)
  - C) Lines 51 – 58 (“The methods . . . inadequate”)
  - D) Lines 58-60 (“These methods . . . knowledge”)
- 11) Russell believes that for thought to be free, it must be
- A) only unimpeded by legal restrictions.
  - B) generally agreed upon among a community.
  - C) localized to the private sphere.
  - D) able to be challenged.
- 12) Which statement provides the best description of a technique that Russell uses throughout the passage to advance his main point?
- A) He uses data and scientific evidence to provide the conclusions of his passage with certainty.
  - B) He develops his argument through a series of examples that ultimately support his solution.
  - C) He appeals to the emotional side of a concerned audience to gain sympathy for an unpopular cause.
  - D) He emphasizes the reasonableness of his views by presenting them as though they are universally held.