This final summary question requires you to work with the main idea of the passage. As we’ve learned, the main idea appears throughout the passage; use the active reading strategies discussed earlier to find it. For this type of question, avoid picking answers that refer to specific details. Here are the correct answers.

Rachel Carson was a pioneering environmentalist who helped draw public attention to the effects of human activity on wildlife.

- Carson’s three books about ocean ecology increasingly focused on the dangers humans posed to marine life.
- The book Silent Spring has had both immediate and long-term influence on environmentalism.
- The government considered Carson a valued expert and invited her input on ecological policy.

Each of the correct answers is somehow related to the initial boldfaced statement. The first correct response refers to the effects of “human activity on wildlife,” and the second and third refer to Carson’s environmental influence.

For this question, it is helpful to look at the wrong answers. Here’s the first one that we eliminated.

Carson at first considered majoring in English and becoming a nonscientific writer.

This is a detail mentioned in the paragraph, but it is not related to the summary, which focuses on Carson as a “pioneering environmentalist who helped draw public attention to the effects of human activity on wildlife.”

Let’s look at another incorrect answer choice.

Many scientists doubted Carson’s conclusions, causing her to write more books to support them.

This choice mentions scientists doubting Carson’s conclusions, which doesn’t match the summary. Look to eliminate answers that are opposite of the tone of the summary.

Here’s the last incorrect answer choice.

Carson did much of her research by talking to people with everyday experience using pesticides.

Once again, we have a specific detail. Eliminate this choice because it doesn’t touch on the main themes of environmentalism or drawing people’s attention to the problem. Instead, it focuses on research methods.

**READING DRILL #2**

1. C Our first question is a detail question. Return to the first paragraph and look for the information about the “design of the typical flag.”

The traditional flag of fabric is still used to mark buildings, ships, and diplomatic caravans by national affiliation, but its visual design makes it adaptable for other roles as well.
This matches nicely with answer choice (C). Here's why the other answer choices are incorrect.

- Choice (A) is wrong; if anything, the passage states that flags are “instantly recognizable.”
- There is no mention of flags changing with technology, so eliminate choice (B).
- Choice (D) states that the flag is older than the country it represents, but this is beyond the information in the passage. The passage only states that flags are an “ancient” symbol.

2. D For this vocabulary in context question, let’s look at the following lines:

Their strong colors and geometric patterns are usually instantly recognizable even if ______ to less than a square centimeter. Images of flags can thus serve as identifying icons on airliners, television broadcasts, and computer displays.

A good word for the blank may be something like *reduced* because the flag is “less than a square centimeter” and can fit on “television broadcasts” and “computer displays.” Only answer choice (D) fits this meaning. Here’s why the other answer choices are incorrect.

- Answer choice (A) is a trap answer. Be careful not to add your own interpretation to the passage.
- Although you may think that putting the flag on an airliner or a computer is a form of publicity, the passage doesn’t state that. There is no support for either answer (B) or (C).

3. B Here’s another vocabulary in context question. Look at the following sentences from the passage:

Despite its simplicity, the national flag as we know it today is in no way a ______ artifact. It is, rather, the product of millennia of development in many corners of the globe.

This sentence has some good context clues. The first sentence says *despite its simplicity*, which means the shaded word should have a meaning close to *simplicity*. Also, the next line states that the flag is “the product of...development...” which means a good word for the blank could be *simple* or *undeveloped*. Often on vocabulary questions, the right answer is found in the text. Here’s why the other answer choices are incorrect.

- Choice (A) is the trap answer. One way of avoiding it is to notice that *ancient* shows up earlier in the passage, in the first line. Remember that for vocabulary questions, you should be looking at only the two or three lines closest to the word you’re being questioned about. Therefore, if you see a word that appears outside of that range, it is probably a trap answer.
- Choice (C) is similar to choice (A) in that the first paragraph mentions how easy it is to identify a flag, but that information is not relevant to this sentence.
- There is no support for answer choice (D).

4. B This reference question asks us to find the word to which a pronoun refers. Here are the sentences in question.

Even after various grains had been domesticated, people needed cooperation from the elements to assure good harvests. For all these reasons, they feared and depended on the power of the wind, which could bring warmth from one direction and cold from another.

For a pronoun reference, it is sometimes helpful to “trim the fat.” Let’s get rid of some of the extra information.
Even after various grains had been domesticated, people needed cooperation from the elements to assure good harvests. For all these reasons, they feared and depended on the power of the wind, which could bring warmth from one direction and cold from another.

Based on this, who “feared and depended on the power of wind”? It must be the “people” from the first sentence. It wouldn’t make sense for any of the other answers to fear and depend on wind.

5. C Make sure you rephrase the question first. This is a detail question that asks.
Why were flags associated with divine power?
Look in the passage for the phrase divine power. Here are the lines we need.

Ascertaining the direction of the wind using a simple strip of cloth tied to the top of a post was more reliable than earlier methods, such as watching the rising of smoke from a fire or the swaying of field grasses. The association of these prototypes of the flag with divine power was therefore a natural one. Tribes began to fix long cloth flutters to the tops of totems before carrying them into battle, believing that the magical assistance of the wind would be added to the blessings of the gods and ancestors represented by the totem itself.

From these lines, it seems that there is a connection between the wind and divine power, hence choice (C). Here’s why the other answer choices are incorrect.
• Look for extreme wording in answers, such as in choices (A) and (D). The first choice says flags were flown “as high as people could reach” whereas (D) says that tribes with flags “always won” battles. These concepts are not supported in the passage.
• There is no mention of “valuable” field grasses, as in choice (B).

6. C The same lines will help us with this lead word question. The first line tells us that tribes used a “simple strip of cloth tied to the top of a post.” This matches with the sentence “Tribes began to ___ long cloth flutters to the tops of totems.” Thus, a good word for the blank may be tie. That makes (C) the best choice. The other answers are tempting, but they do not relate to the shaded word.

7. A Question 7 is a paraphrase question. Here’s the boldfaced sentence.
These flutters may seem like close kin of our present-day flags, but the path through history from one to the other wanders through thousands of years and over several continents.

This sentence doesn’t have a lot of fat to trim, so POE may be a good strategy here.
• Start with the first part of the sentence and find the subject—it’s referring to flags. Therefore, we can eliminate choice (C), which is about historians, not flags.
• Now look at the second part of the sentence. It says the path “through history…wanders through thousands of years and…several continents.” Eliminate answers that bring in new information not related to these terms. Choice (D) mentions official journeys, which is not part of the sentence. Eliminate it.
• Choice (B) states that ancient flags are “still used in some parts of the world.” Nothing about that appears in the sentence, so the answer must be (A).
8. D First rephrase the question, which asks about a *detail* from the passage. It asks us
What do we know about the first known flag in history?
Return to paragraph 4 and read these lines.

The first known flag of a nation or ruler was unmarked: The king who established the Chou Dynasty in China (around 1000 B.C.) was reputed to have a white flag carried ahead of him.

Thus, the flag was unmarked, which makes choice (D) the best. You may have noticed that the answer to reading questions on the TOEFL are often very close to the lead word or line reference provided in the question. Remembering this will help you avoid many trap answers. Notice how the other answers are not mentioned at all in the relevant line, making them all easy to eliminate.

9. C This *vocabulary in context* question asks “What is a crest?” Let’s look for the word “crest” in the passage. We find it in the following lines:

In Europe, the Chinese-derived flag met up with the modern flag’s second ancestor, the heraldic crest. The flags used in Asia may have been differentiated by color, but they rarely featured emblems or pictures. European nobles of the medieval period had, however, developed a system of crests (symbols or insignias specific to particular families) that were commonly mounted on hard surfaces; shields to be used in battle often displayed them especially prominently.

The first line tells us that the crest was the flag’s “second ancestor.” However, that is not mentioned in the answer choices, so keep reading. The next mention of crests states that nobles had “developed a system of crests (symbols or insignias specific to particular families)....” This information is what we need. Here’s why the other answer choices are incorrect.

- Answers (A) and (D) don’t make sense because they state that the crest is a person instead of an object.
- Answer (B) is wrong because it refers to flags, not crests.

10. D We know the answer to this *detail* question is somewhere in paragraph 6, so let’s find it. The question asks
Why did the number of flag designs increase?
Take a look at the following lines, which mention the word “increasing”:

While crests began to appear on flags as well as shields, the number of prominent families was also increasing. They required an ever greater number of combinations of stripes, crosses, flowers, and mythical animals to distinguish themselves. These survived as the basic components of flag design when small regional kingdoms were later combined into larger nation-states. They remain such for many European countries today.

These lines state that there were more families, and they needed an “ever greater number of combinations of stripes, crosses, flowers, and mythical animals to distinguish themselves.” Therefore, choice (D) must be correct. Here’s why the other answer choices are incorrect.

- Answer choice (A) states the opposite of what the passage says.
- Although it is true that kingdoms were combined into “larger” nation-states, this doesn’t answer the question of why flag designs increased, which eliminates choice (B).
Finally, eliminate choice (C) because there is no mention of artists having greater freedom.

11. A This is another pronoun reference question. Let's look at the passage excerpt again.
   European nobles of the medieval period had, however, developed a system of crests (symbols or insignias specific to particular families) that were commonly mounted on hard surfaces; shields to be used in battle often displayed _____ especially prominently.

   Try to put your own word in the blank. According to the sentence, what is being “displayed”? It must be the crests. It wouldn’t make sense for the other choices to be displayed.

12. D Question 12 is a more typical vocabulary in context question. Again, let’s look at the passage excerpt.
   They required an ever greater number of combinations of stripes, crosses, flowers, and mythical animals to distinguish themselves. These survived as the basic _____ of flag design when small regional kingdoms were later combined into larger nation-states.

   What word would fit in the blank? We need a word that would mean stripes, crosses, flowers, and mythical animals because these are the items that are referred to by the sentence. A good choice for the shaded portion may be things or items, and choice (D) comes closest to that. Here’s why the other answer choices are incorrect.
   - Answers (B) and (C) don’t make sense; the sentence says “these survived...,” which must refer to the things in the previous sentence.
   - Choice (A) may be tempting, but the sentence refers to individual parts of the flags, not the overall style.

13. D Start by taking a moment to understand what this detail question is asking you to find.
   How do the two flags of Poland differ?

   Go back to the final passage and read about the two flags of Poland, looking for something different between them.

   For example, the flag of Poland is a simple rectangle with a white upper half and red lower half. The colors themselves have been associated with Polish nationalism since the 1700s. They originated as the colors of the Piast family, which during its rule displayed a crest bearing a white eagle on a red field. Homage is paid to the Piast Dynasty in the Polish ensign, the flag officially used at sea. Unlike the familiar plain flag flown on land, the ensign has a red shield with a white eagle centered on its upper white stripe.

   One difference mentioned in the passage is that one flag is flown at sea and one on land; however, that difference is not one of our choices. If you’re not sure what the answer is based on your reading, don’t forget the importance of POE. Here’s how to use POE to determine why the other answer choices are incorrect.
   - Answer (A) says the two flags don’t use the same colors, but that is incorrect—they both use red and white, according to the passage.
• The next choice says that the flags represented different families. Be careful on this one. The passage states the flag used at sea represents the Piast Dynasty, but there is no mention of any other family. So eliminate choice (B).
• Choice (C) must be wrong as well because the passage doesn’t state that the flag used on land isn’t the official flag.

Therefore, we’re left with choice (D). The sea flag, according to the passage, has “a red shield with a white eagle,” which is “unlike the plain flag flown on land.”

14. This is a sentence insertion question. Recall that for this question type, you have to look at the sentences before and after the black squares (■) to try to match the information in those sentences with the new sentence. Here’s the sentence we are going to add.

   Therefore, strong winds could easily tear roofs from houses or cause high waves that imperiled travelers.

Now we’ll check each of the potential insertion places.

   Historians believe it had two major ancestors, of which the earlier served to indicate wind direction. Therefore, strong winds could easily tear roofs from houses or cause high waves that imperiled travelers. Early human societies used very fragile shelters and boats.

How well do these sentences match? Not very well, as you can see. The boldface sentence talks about strong winds tearing off roofs, but the first sentence doesn’t talk about houses at all. The second sentence does, but it doesn’t make sense to provide a detail about the houses before introducing the idea. So, let’s look at the next black square.

   Early human societies used very fragile shelters and boats. Therefore, strong winds could easily tear roofs from houses or cause high waves that imperiled travelers. Their food sources were similarly vulnerable to disruption.

Now look at how well these sentences match. The first sentence introduces “fragile shelters and boats,” which matches with the boldfaced sentence’s mention of “houses” and “high waves.” And the second sentence says that the “food sources were similarly vulnerable,” which links the ideas of dangers encountered by the early human ancestors. Thus, the second square is our choice.

15. The final question of the group is a summary question. From the previous questions and our initial reading of the passage, you should have a pretty good sense of the main idea. Use this to help you eliminate answers. Here’s the completed table.

   There were many historical steps in the evolution of the national flag as it’s known today.
   • Ancient tribes respected the power of the wind and began to carry totem poles with flutters for good luck in battle.
   • A Chinese king’s practice of having a flag carried ahead of him spread across Asia to Europe.
   • Heraldic crests and colors combined with a standard rectangular shape to make a symbol with many uses.
The first sentence refers to the “steps” in the development of the flag, and each of these three choices gives one of the steps.

Looking at the wrong answers is helpful as well.
- “Early humans lived lives that were vulnerable to disruption by natural forces” doesn’t mention flags at all, so you should eliminate it.
- “Many countries have followed Poland’s example and used an eagle on their flags to symbolize strength and power” is mentioned as an example, not a main part of the passage. Remember to eliminate choices that refer to specific details.
- “Some flags used in Asian countries may have been colored in distinct ways” is just a minor detail. Eliminate it.

**READING DRILL #3**

1. **C** This *vocabulary in context* question requires us to look at the following lines:

   When reviewing the current journals of taxonomy, the science of organizing animals into neat classifications, it is important to remember that names are a human _____ ____. Nature is not concerned with putting her creations into simple and objective categories.

   Based on these lines, it appears that although nature doesn’t put animals into “simple and objective categories,” humans do. So our word for the blank should be something that has to do with this idea of making things simple. We may use the word *help* or *assistance*. Choice (C) is the closest match to this word. Here’s why the other answer choices are incorrect.
   - Choices (A) and (D) are similar in meaning to the word *convenience*, but they don’t make sense in this context. Nothing in the sentence indicates that the names comfort anything or are luxurious.
   - Similarly, there is no evidence that the names support anything, so eliminate choice (B).

2. **A** On this *vocabulary in context* question, you may have to read a few more lines than you are accustomed to. Let’s look at the passage.

   An excellent example of the problem with naming species is the case of *Ensatina*, a _____ of salamander found in the Central Valley area of California. Central Valley is about 40 miles wide, and although salamanders do not live in the valley itself, they are found in the forests and mountains that ring the valley. At the southern tip of the valley live two distinct types of salamander....

   For this question, you may be able to figure out the answer right away if you know the word *species*. If not, don’t give up! Read a few more lines, and you’ll see that the passage refers to “two distinct types of salamander.” This is to what the blank refers. Another way of approaching this question is with POE. Here’s how to use POE to determine why the other answer choices are incorrect.
   - There is no mention of the color of the salamanders or the quality, so eliminate (B) and (D).
   - Answer choice (C) doesn’t make sense either because you wouldn’t say a “location” of salamander.