

19th century author Timothy Nielsen has long been lauded by literary critics. Many reviewers have cited the innovative use of narrative in his seminal work *A Long Cold Winter* as the inspiration for the narrative styles of 20th century novelists like F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Nielsen's development of peripheral characters in *A Courtesan's Tale* and *The Dragons of Antioch* is widely regarded as the template upon which many modern authors have built their own emotionally rounded supporting casts. However, a recent book examining Nielsen's works questions the validity of the notion that he has been such a motivating force in the novels of the American writer of the 20th century.

Timothy Nielsen: Separating the Man from the Myth, by modern critic Scott Baisch, presents a far less flattering view of Nielsen's place in literary history. Baisch writes, "What is considered by some as indicative of Nielsen's unique narration is actually a style uniquely derivative of the truly great authors of the nineteenth century." *Separating the Man from the Myth* further alludes to Nielsen's ability to flush out what might be considered lesser characters in his work as, "simply an excuse for ignoring the more significant development of the protagonist." To be fair to Baisch, he does not dismiss Nielsen as an untalented writer whose works have no merit. But Baisch is unequivocal about his disregard for Nielsen's supposed innovation of the genre and subsequent influence on the many great novelists who have followed him.

There are some elements of *Separating the Man from the Myth* that do seem meritorious. For example, the special use of narrative whose creation is attributed to Nielsen in *A Long Cold Winter* does not appear that different than the style used years before by Mark Twain in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. It may be overstating the case to call Nielsen's work "derivative", but there are unquestionably some significant similarities between the narration of Nielsen's Horatio Tucker and that of Tom Sawyer, the protagonist in Twain's best-known work. Further, some reviewers have complained about the relatively sparse treatment Nielsen gives to fully developing the character of Tobin Bobbitt, the arch villain of *The Dragons of Antioch*. Yet while these reasonable criticisms of Nielsen's work may have some weight, his influence on some of the 20th century's most read authors is still undeniable.

Literary critics may have their own opinions about the impact that Nielsen has had on other writers, but it is difficult to ignore the opinions of those authors themselves. Modern novelists from John Irving to Elmore Leonard have personally cited Nielsen's work as having a certain effect on their own style of writing. The criticisms leveled by Baisch in his book *Timothy Nielsen: Separating the Man from the Myth* may expose some reviewers as a bit too cloying in their assessment of Nielsen, but with testimony from 20th century luminaries for additional support, it appears that Nielsen's legacy as one of the preeminent American authors of the 19th century remains intact.

8. Which of the following is the primary purpose of the passage above?
 - A) Explain how an inaccurate view of a specific author's work has been accepted by the literary community.
 - B) Describe the various assessments of a particular novelist in light of his books and their impact on society in general.
 - C) Address recent criticism of a long held view of a certain writer and his influence on authors who have followed him.
 - D) Refute how an individual novelist has been associated with a larger group of authors.
 - E) Support the position held by a particular book reviewer in his review of the works of a 19th century writer.

9. According to the passage, literary critic Scott Baisch differs from many other literary critics in his opinion of author Timothy Nielsen in that Baisch:
 - A) Disputes the originality of Nielsen's work and the impact his novels have had on future writers.
 - B) Believes that Nielsen demonstrates an innovative use of narrative that had not been shown prior to *A Long Cold Winter*.
 - C) Credits Nielsen's work in *A Courtesan's Tale* as directly influencing F. Scott Fitzgerald's piece *The Great Gatsby*.
 - D) Questions the accuracy of other critics who claim that Nielsen's novels were well received by readers of his era.
 - E) Claims that some of the books that have been attributed to Nielsen were actually penned by other authors.

10. The author suggests which of the following about the relationship between *A Long Cold Winter* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*?
 - A) *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* borrows liberally in its development of lesser characters from *A Long Cold Winter*.
 - B) Neither of the two books is particularly original in its use of plot twists or chapter elongation.
 - C) *A Long Cold Winter* had a dramatic impact on Mark Twain when he wrote *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
 - D) *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* may have had an impact on the narrative style used by Timothy Nielsen in *A Long Cold Winter*.
 - E) *A Long Cold Winter* could never have been written without the direct use of characterization used in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

11. The passage implies that *Timothy Nielsen: Separating the Man from the Myth* can best be described as:
- A) A vindictive work by an author jealous of the success of a past writer.
 - B) A thoroughly accurate review of the complete works of 19th century writer Timothy Nielsen.
 - C) An objective assessment of the lasting literary value of *The Dragons of Antioch*, the most popular book penned by Timothy Nielsen.
 - D) The seminal work of literary critic Scott Baisch that brings to light the true nature of one author's work from the previous century.
 - E) A negative review of some validity that ultimately does not serve to denigrate the worth of the author being reviewed.
12. The author states that 20th century authors John Irving and Elmore Leonard:
- A) Disagree with the opinions of most literary critics in regards to the writing of 19th century author Timothy Nielsen.
 - B) Both admit to having been directly influenced by the novels of writer Timothy Nielsen.
 - C) Have never been the subject of a book review by 20th century reviewer Scott Baisch.
 - D) Adapted their own literary style based on the works of a wide variety of authors both in and out of their own genres.
 - E) Were more popular and well read than their 19th century counterparts.
13. Which of the following best describes the attitude of the author of the passage toward the work of Timothy Nielsen and its impact on other writers?
- A) abject criticism
 - B) qualified support
 - C) fervent admiration
 - D) skeptical optimism
 - E) passive rejection

STOP

IF YOU FINISH BEFORE TIME IS CALLED, YOU MAY CHECK YOUR WORK ON THIS SECTION ONLY.
DO NOT WORK ON ANY OTHER SECTION IN THE TEST.

Answer Key 8-13:

- 8. C
- 9. A
- 10. D
- 11. E
- 12. B
- 13. B

Explanations for Questions 8-13:

8. The authors' primary purpose is basically why the author has written the passage. The point of the author here seems to be to present the widely held view about the works of 19th century author Timothy Nielsen and then assess that view in light of the recent contradictory opinion set forth by reviewer Scott Baisch in *Timothy Nielsen: Separating the Man from the Myth*. The author gives a fair discussion of the valid points that Baisch may have and then indicates that even so, Nielsen's impact is not tarnished. The answer that best captures this structure of the passage and its purpose is C. Be careful of choices that are close but distort what happens in the passage. B might sound good, but the passage focuses on Nielsen's impact on other writers, not society in general.
9. This is an explicit detail question, where the test makers want you to cite something directly from the passage. The first paragraph sets up the idea that most reviewers praise the innovation of Nielsen's work and the influence it has had on other authors. Then the author juxtaposes that with the opinion of Baisch, who suggests that the opinion of those critics is wrong. Thus, Baisch differs from those other critics in that he doesn't believe that Nielsen's novels are original or that they have had a lasting impact on writers who have followed. A is the best choice. When passages present different opinions from different sources, make sure you are answering the question asked with the right opinion. Answer choice B is the opinion of the other critics, not Baisch, so that is a trick answer choice.
10. With inference questions like this one, don't go too far beyond what is stated in the passage. The author uses *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as an example of a book that preceded *A Long Cold Winter* but used a similar narrative style as a means of giving some credence to the beliefs set forth by Baisch. Take note that this is in the third paragraph where the author does give some examples to support the thesis presented by Baisch. So, even though many critics believe that *A Long Cold Winter* was innovative, the inference in paragraph three is that it is quite similar in the use of narrative to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Thus, D is inferable and the correct response. Notice the moderate language as well: *may have had an impact*. That is the kind of language that you will find in good inference answer choices on the LSAT, and it stands in contrast to the use of

extreme language like *never* in answer choice E. Look out for answer that use extreme language, they are rarely if ever correct.

11. How does the author feel about the review of Nielsen's work by Baisch? Well, the author gives it some validity in the third paragraph and then turns around in paragraph four and supports the more commonly held view of other critics. So, *Timothy Nielsen: Separating the Man from the Myth* may have some points, but it does not negate the notion that Nielsen really has had a lasting influence on other writers. Answer choice E expresses that idea the best. Watch out for answer choice D. In the end, the author of the passage does not wholly support the work of Baisch, so D cannot be correct.
12. Why does the author discuss Irving and Leonard? They are examples in the fourth paragraph of 20th century authors who have directly cited Nielsen as having influenced their work. That is the whole point of that paragraph. With explicit detail questions, the language of the right answer should be very close to the language of the passage, and answer choice B here is a very close paraphrase. Avoid choices like D and E that bring up issues that were never discussed in the passage and are thus totally outside the scope.
13. This is a question type that comes up every so often on the LSAT. It is asking you to identify the author's attitude. How does the author feel about the work of Nielsen and its effect on other writers? The author gives some credit to the contrary views expressed by Baisch, but concludes that those views do not detract from Nielsen's legacy. The choice that best represents that attitude is qualified support, choice B. Again, extreme-sounding choices like C, "fervent admiration," should be avoided.

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