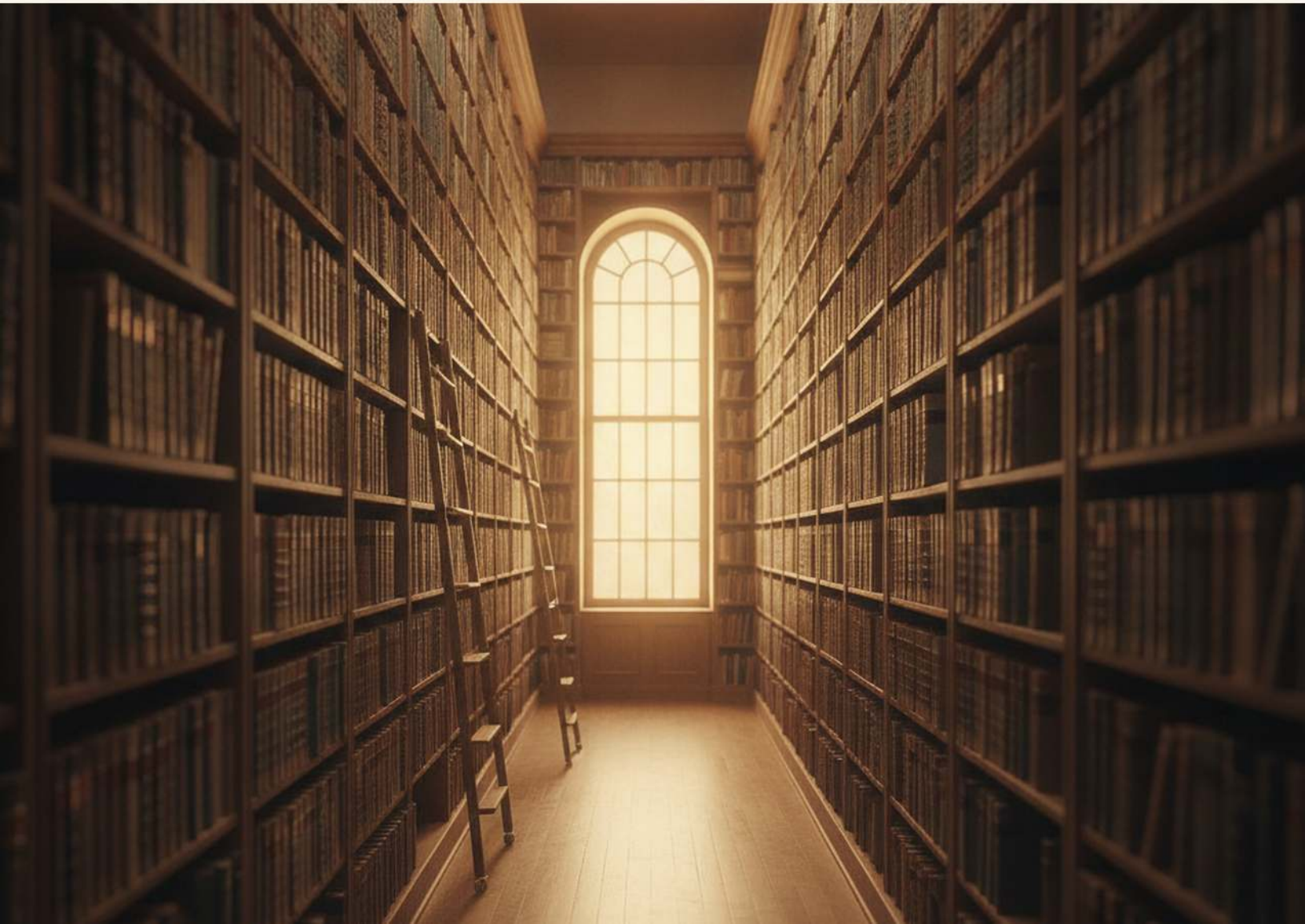
LSAT READING COMPREHENSION MASTERY

Passage Strategies That Save You Time



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The passage map technique

After reading, before looking at the questions, build a **passage map**: a 4-6 line sketch of the passage's structure. Example:

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P1: Introduces theory X (traditional view: markets self-correct)
P2: Author's objection: 3 historical counterexamples
P3: Presents theory Y (regulation necessary in crises)
P4: Concedes Y is incomplete; proposes hybrid view
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That is it. You do not need more. When a question asks "In the second paragraph, the author mentions the 1907 panic primarily in order to..." you go to P2 in your map, find the counterexamples, and answer without re-reading the whole passage. The map turns a 500-word passage into a searchable index.

Build the map in 20-30 seconds after your first read. If you cannot summarize a paragraph in one line, you were reading details, not structure - and that is useful feedback.

What to annotate on the digital test

You get limited tools and limited time. Annotate only what serves the three captures:

- **Viewpoint signals:** highlight phrases like "critics argue," "traditional scholars maintain," "the author concedes." These mark who thinks what.
- **Structural pivots:** highlight contrast words - *however, but, yet, nevertheless, although, on the other hand, despite, instead.* Every pivot is a structural joint.
- **The main point:** when you find the sentence that states the author's thesis (often in paragraph 1 or the final paragraph), highlight it. This is your anchor for every main-point, purpose, and attitude question.
- **Do not** highlight facts, dates, names, or examples on the first read. You will find them with your passage map when a detail question needs them.

A good annotated passage has maybe 8-12 highlights. If you have 40, you are highlighting the passage, not mapping it.

- **Exaggerating agreement.** The passages agree on the topic, not necessarily on conclusions. “Both discuss urban farming” does not mean “both support urban farming.”
- **Attributing A’s view to B.** Keep the viewpoints separate. A quick note on your scratch paper - “A: pro-regulation; B: anti-regulation” - prevents cross-contamination.

Mini-example

Passage A argues that cities should convert vacant lots to community gardens, citing food access and community cohesion. Passage B argues that vacant lots should be sold to developers, citing tax revenue and housing supply, but concedes community gardens have social value.

Relationship line: *B disagrees with A’s proposal but concedes part of A’s rationale.*

A question asking “On which point would the two authors most likely agree?” - the answer is the social/community value of gardens, the one point of overlap. An answer like “cities should prioritize gardens over development” reflects only A. An answer like “tax revenue is the decisive factor” reflects only B.

Worked Example: A Comparative Set

Here is a short comparative set with the method applied. Read Passage A, then Passage B, then build the relationship line before looking at the questions. (Dr. Vasquez, her archive, and both authors’ findings are invented for this example; treat the set as practice material, not Roman history.)

Passage A

Historians have long debated why the Roman Empire maintained its vast road network long after the legions that built it had withdrawn from many provinces. The conventional answer is inertia: bureaucracies maintain what they inherit. But recent work by Dr. Elena Vasquez suggests a more active logic. Examining maintenance records from third-century Gaul, Vasquez found that local communities petitioned imperial officials to keep roads repaired - not for military reasons, but because the roads had become commercial arteries. The empire maintained its roads, Vasquez argues, because its subjects demanded it: infrastructure built for conquest was repurposed, from below, for trade.

Passage B

Vasquez’s “bottom-up” account of Roman road maintenance is appealing, but the evidence is thinner than it appears. The petitions she cites come overwhelmingly from a single archive in southern Gaul, a region unusually dependent on overland trade. In provinces

Answer Explanations

1. (C) The passage's arc: introduces adverse possession and the economic account (paragraph 1), presents Adler's moral-desert thesis (paragraph 2), raises the widows/orphans objection (paragraph 3), then offers the reconciliation - moral language was legitimation, the real work was clearing title (paragraph 4) - and extends the point to modern courts (paragraph 5). (C) captures this full arc. (A) is wrong: the author never calls for abolition. (B) is wrong: the author does not fully reject the economic account - the reconciliation *keeps* it as the operative logic. (D) misstates the tone; the author is analytical, not accusatory, and "hypocrites" is too strong. (E) is too narrow: agrarian ideology is part of Adler's evidence, not the author's conclusion.

2. (E) The author calls Adler's thesis "provocative" (serious engagement), takes its evidence seriously (the case study is presented fairly), but then raises "a significant objection" and offers a "more persuasive reading." That is receptive-but-skeptical. (A) and (D) are too hostile - the author never attacks Adler's methods. (B) is wrong because the author *does* criticize the conclusion. (C) contradicts the extended engagement.

3. (B) Function question: locate the paragraph's job. Paragraph 3's job is to raise an objection to Adler's thesis. The widows/orphans/veterans are the evidence for that objection: if moral desert drove decisions, sympathetic owners would win; they did not. (A) describes content, not function - the paragraph is not about harshness in general. (C) is wrong: the author never advocates reform. (D) misreads - the point is the *indifference* of the rule, not bias. (E) is too strong ("in every case") and misplaces the function.

4. (D) Detail/locate: paragraph 1 states the classroom answer - the doctrine "clears stale titles, encourages productive use of land," and is "a statute of limitations in disguise, one that favors the vigilant occupier over the sleeping owner." (D) paraphrases this. (A) is the *opposite* - the passage says the account denies the doctrine rewards wrongdoing. (B), (C), and (E) are not in paragraph 1.

5. (A) Inference: paragraph 4 argues the moral language was "not the engine of decision but its public justification" for "outcomes that were functionally about clearing title." That supports (A). (B) is closer to Adler's thesis than to the author's view; the author treats the agrarian imagery as rhetoric, not motive. (C) is too strong - "legitimating" is not the same as deliberate deception. (D) is unsupported and comparative beyond the text. (E) invents a claim about corporations in the 19th century; corporations appear only in the modern paragraph.

6. (B) Function: the final paragraph extends the historical argument to the present - picturesque possessors get moral narrative, corporate boundary cases get terse technical opinions. The job is to show the pattern continues: rhetoric vs. operative logic. (B) states