

Reading Comprehension Sample Questions

Questions 1 to 3 are based on this passage.

Reviving the practice of using elements of popular music in classical composition, an approach that had been in hibernation in the United States during the 1960s, composer Philip Glass (born 1937) embraced the ethos of popular music in his compositions. Glass based two symphonies on music by rock musicians David Bowie and Brian Eno, but the symphonies' sound is distinctively his. Popular elements do not appear out of place in Glass's classical music, which from its early days has shared certain harmonies and rhythms with rock music. Yet this use of popular elements has not made Glass a composer of popular music. His music is not a version of popular music packaged to attract classical listeners; it is high art for listeners steeped in rock rather than the classics.

Select only one answer choice.

1. The passage addresses which of the following issues related to Glass's use of popular elements in his classical compositions?
 1. How it is regarded by listeners who prefer rock to the classics
 2. How it has affected the commercial success of Glass's music
 3. Whether it has contributed to a revival of interest among other composers in using popular elements in their compositions
 4. Whether it has had a detrimental effect on Glass's reputation as a composer of classical music
 5. Whether it has caused certain of Glass's works to be derivative in quality

Consider each of the three choices separately and select all that apply.

2. The passage suggests that Glass's work displays which of the following qualities?
 1. A return to the use of popular music in classical compositions
 2. An attempt to elevate rock music to an artistic status more closely approximating that of classical music
 3. A long-standing tendency to incorporate elements from two apparently disparate musical styles
3. Select the sentence that distinguishes two ways of integrating rock and classical music.

Explanation

The passage describes in general terms how Philip Glass uses popular music in his classical compositions and explores how Glass can do this without being imitative. Note that there are no opposing views discussed; the author is simply presenting his or her views.

Question 1: One of the important points that the passage makes is that when Glass uses popular elements in his music, the result is very much his own creation (it is “distinctively his”). In other words, the music is far from being derivative. Thus one issue that the passage addresses is the

one referred to in answer choice E — it answers it in the negative. The passage does not discuss the impact of Glass's use of popular elements on listeners, on the commercial success of his music, on other composers or on Glass's reputation, so none of Choices A through D is correct.

The correct answer is Choice E.

Question 2: To answer this question, it is important to assess each answer choice independently. Since the passage says that Glass revived the use of popular music in classical compositions, answer choice A is clearly correct. On the other hand, the passage also denies that Glass composes popular music or packages it in a way to elevate its status, so answer choice B is incorrect. Finally, since Glass's style has always mixed elements of rock with classical elements, answer Choice C is correct. **Thus the correct answer is Choice A and Choice C.**

Question 3: Almost every sentence in the passage refers to incorporating rock music in classical compositions, but only the last sentence distinguishes two ways of doing so. It distinguishes between writing rock music in a way that will make it attractive to classical listeners and writing classical music that will be attractive to listeners familiar with rock. **Thus the correct answer is the last sentence of the passage.**