

Sample Items: **VERBAL REASONING**

(Extracted from *MCAT Practice Test 3R*)

Passage V (Questions 100-109)

Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For these reasons, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.

But our conceptual system is not something we are normally aware of. In most of the little things we do every day, we simply think and act more or less automatically along certain lines. Just what these lines are is by no means obvious. One way to find out is by looking at language. Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for what that system is like.

Primarily on the basis of linguistic evidence, we have found that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature. And we have found a way to begin to identify in detail just what the metaphors are that structure how we perceive, how we think, and what we do.

To give some idea of what it could mean for a concept to be metaphorical and for such a concept to structure an everyday activity, let us start with the concept ARGUMENT and the conceptual metaphor

ARGUMENT IS WAR. This metaphor is reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expressions:

Your claims are indefensible.

He attacked every weak point in my argument. . . .

If you use that strategy, he'll wipe you out.

He shot down all of my arguments.

It is important to see that we don't just talk about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. . . . Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. Though there is no physical battle, there is a verbal battle, and the structure of an argument–attack, defense, counterattack, etc. – reflects this. It is in this sense that the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is one that we live by in this culture; it structures the actions we perform in arguing.

Try to imagine a culture where arguments are not viewed in terms of war, where no one wins or loses, where there is no sense of attacking or defending, gaining or losing ground. Imagine a culture where an argument is viewed as a dance, the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently. But we would probably not view them as arguing at all: they would simply be doing something different. It would seem strange even to call what they were doing "arguing." Perhaps the most neutral way of describing this difference between their culture and ours would be to say that we have a discourse form structured in terms of battle and they have one structured in terms of dance.

Material used in this test passage has been adapted from the following source:

G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*. ©1980 by University of Chicago Press.

- 100.** The central thesis of the passage is that:
- A) we are basically unaware of our conceptual system.
 - B) a culture can view argument as an aesthetically pleasing dance or as war.
 - C) metaphors control our perceptions, thoughts, and actions.
 - D) metaphor is a poetic as well as a rhetorical device.
- 101.** Implicit in the statement that we plan and use strategies in arguments is the idea that we do so because:
- A) it is important to think before speaking in an argument.
 - B) schools teach us to use plans and strategies in argumentation.
 - C) we believe an argument is a battle, and strategies are essential for a successful conquest.
 - D) we want our ideas and logic to be understood.
- 102.** Given the claims made in the passage, the expressions "She's brimming with vim and vigor," "She's overflowing with vitality," "He's devoid of energy," and "I don't have any energy left at the end of the day" would suggest that:
- A) some people have more energy than other people.
 - B) most people wish that they had more energy.
 - C) many people think of vitality as a substance.
 - D) some people think that vitality affect our ability to argue.
- 103.** According to the passage, if a speaker says, "I've never won an argument with him," he or she is most likely thinking that:
- A) arguments are violent.
 - B) arguments are like contests.
 - C) conceptual systems are metaphorical.
 - D) competition is unpleasant.

- 104.** The ideas discussed in this passage would likely be of most use to:
- A) an ambassador to a different culture.
 - B) a senator engaged in a serious debate.
 - C) a financial analyst for a large corporation.
 - D) a general preparing for battle.
- 105.** An appropriate theory of metaphor derived from the information contained in the passage would state that metaphor involves:
- I. understanding one thing in terms of another.
 - II. experiencing one thing in terms of another.
 - III. communicating about one thing in terms of another.
- A) I only
 - B) II only
 - C) I and II only
 - D) I, II, and III
- 106.** The expression "This is driving me around the bend" would best support a metaphor that compares madness to:
- A) a location.
 - B) a vehicle.
 - C) a road.
 - D) a force.
- 107.** According to information in the passage, the best way to conduct an argument with someone from a culture that views an argument as a dance would be to:
- A) methodically attack the person's weaker claims.
 - B) calmly respond to the person's charges.
 - C) explain that arguments are not like dances.
 - D) irrationally defend your position.

108. Which of the following statements is NOT presented as evidence for the metaphorical conceptual system on which arguments are supposedly based?

- A) We gain and lose ground.
- B) We attack an opponent's position.
- C) We plan and use strategies.
- D) We claim that criticisms are on target.

109. According to the passage, many people think that they can get along very well without metaphor because they believe that metaphor is:

- I. used only by rhetoricians and poets.
- II. a characteristic of language but not of thought.
- III. a device that alters one's perception of reality.

- A) II only
 - B) III only
 - C) I and II only
 - D) I, II, and III
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