Offspring of a Legend

Being the offspring of a legend is never easy, but some make it look easier than others. Hank Williams, Jr., for instance, put together a very successful country music career that only paled in comparison to that of his legendary father. And Peter and Jane Fonda both became bona fide stars in their own right, though their father, Henry Fonda, clearly had a better career. Some have even surpassed their celebrated fathers’ achievements. Barry Bonds certainly was a more productive baseball player than was Bobby Bonds, though Bobby Bonds led the National League in runs scored in 1969. Similarly, Elizabeth I was one of the best monarchs in English history, while her father, Henry VIII, is more famous today for his six wives than he is for his years of ruling England.

Of course, these are all exceptions to the rule. For most, being the son or daughter of a legend is crippling. Such is the case for the son of legendary American automaker and innovator Henry Ford. Edsel Ford was groomed to run the company his father made, the eponymous Ford Motor Company. But Edsel Ford was not his father, a fact of which his father reminded him at every opportunity. For instance, the younger Ford actually preferred cars that were more flashy than those favored by his father, whose famous innovation was the dull but economical Model T, but Henry Ford resented his son’s attempts to move Ford forward. Henry had made Edsel president of the company in 1919, but Edsel’s attempts to modernize Ford and make nicer looking cars were overruled by his father, who continued to rule the company behind the scenes, even after Edsel’s death in 1943 (Henry would die in 1947). Thus, the Ford Motor Company was slow to introduce Edsel’s suggestions, including a more powerful engine, the V-8, and a separate line of cars, which eventually became the Model A of 1927.

As if overruling Edsel’s decisions were not enough, Henry was actively hostile and deprecatory toward his son. Though Henry had made Edsel president, Henry had no interest in relinquishing control. Instead, he used the presidency to manipulate shareholders in the company to sell their shares to Henry so that he could more firmly control the company. Yes, Henry attempted to decrease the value of Ford stock for his own personal gain and used his poor son for his ruse! Worst, Henry would publicly humiliate Edsel, telling him to shut up in front of Edsel’s subordinates on several occasions. Once, Henry even fired an entire department (accounting) just to spite Edsel, who had begun work on new office space to provide all departments with more space.

Throughout Edsel’s reign at Ford, the company’s sales paled to Chevrolet’s, which became the best-selling automobile manufacturers in the United States. And though Edsel was successful at strengthening overseas production for Ford, saving the stylish Lincoln line of automobiles, and modernizing the company’s cars by adapting modern styling and the hydraulic brakes standard on other American cars (his suggestion to add better brakes was seen by Henry Ford as a knock on his cars and earned Edsel one of the aforementioned “shut up” shouts), Edsel Ford’s time at Ford Motor Company was viewed as a failure, as the company lost its grip on the American consumer.

Today he is best remembered as the namesake for one of the biggest business blunders in history: the Edsel line of Fords designed in 1957 and named to honor Edsel. The line of cars was supposed to broadly appeal to all American consumers as the car of the future, yet the Ford Motor Company clearly misidentified what Americans were supposed to want in cars, and the committee that designed the cars ended up losing Ford millions of dollars. Today, the concept of “Edsel” is
synonymous in business circles with any product designed by a corporate culture out of touch with the consuming public. Thus, poor Edsel Ford could never escape the overshadowing presence of his father in his life and then had his name tarnished posthumously by the company he helped to save.

1) The people listed in paragraph 1 are used as examples of
   A. children whose parents treated them poorly once they became adults
   B. children of famous people who struggled to escape the shadow of their parents
   C. children of famous industrialists who were able to surpass their parents’ legacies
   D. children whose parents had far more successful careers than the children did
   E. children of famous people who have made names for themselves

2) The first sentence of paragraph 2 does which of the following?
   I. It redirects the passage to its main subject.
   II. It anticipates a potential objection from a reader.
   III. It points out that the examples listed in paragraph 1 were counterexamples.
   IV. It emphasizes the conflicting relationship between the author and his or her subject.
   A. I only
   B. I and II only
   C. I and III only
   D. II, III, and IV only
   E. II and IV only

3) Based on its use in paragraph 2, the word **eponymous** could best be used to describe which of the following?
   A. a sports franchise that was named by fans as part of a naming contest
   B. a restaurant named for the region in France in which the cuisine originated
   C. a corporate conglomerate named by the fusing of two smaller companies’ names
   D. a sitcom named after the famous comedian who stars in it
   E. a book named after a line from a famous poetic work

4) According to the passage, how many years passed between Edsel Ford becoming the president of the Ford Motor Company and the introduction of the Model A?
   A. 2 years
   B. 4 years
   C. 6 years
   D. 8 years
   E. 10 years
5) The author most likely ends the passage by discussing the Edsel line of Fords in order to
   A. conclude the author’s argument about the relationship between Edsel and Henry Ford
   B. prove that Edsel Ford eventually was able to get his designs into production
   C. refute the notion that Edsel Ford’s influence on the Ford Motor Company ended with his death in 1943
   D. emphasize that, even in his death, Edsel Ford has not gotten the treatment he deserves
   E. suggest that Edsel Ford is viewed as an embarrassment by the Ford Motor Company, even today

6) According to the author, Edsel Ford’s contributions to the Ford company included each of the following EXCEPT
   A. the creation of a more powerful engine
   B. the saving of the Lincoln line of cars
   C. the introduction of the Edsel line
   D. the development of the Model A
   E. the strengthening of overseas production

7) The author’s attitude toward Edsel Ford can best be characterized as
   A. sympathetic
   B. disinterested
   C. condemnatory
   D. envious
   E. suspicious

8) The author argues that Henry Ford treated Edsel Ford
   A. candidly
   B. maladroitly
   C. congenially
   D. equitably
   E. maliciously

9) Which of these facts did you already know about the Fords? How much of the information in the passage was new for you? Explain.
10) What do you believe was the author’s purpose for writing this passage? Who is the target audience for this passage? How do you know?
1) E  
Question Type: Reasoning

In paragraph 1, the author opens up a discussion of people with famous parents and argues that “being the offspring of a legend is never easy.” It then proceeds to list a bunch of people who make it look relatively easy. Hank Williams, Jr. and the two Fonda children both had careers that “paled only in comparison” to those of their famous fathers, while Barry Bonds and Elizabeth I actually had careers surpassing those of their famous fathers. They are, thus, examples of children of famous people who have made names for themselves. These children are, of course, “exceptions to the rule” that it is impossible for children of famous people to achieve success in the same field as their parents did, but, nevertheless, they still are examples of successful children of successful people or legends. Thus, choice (E) is correct.

Though the passage’s main subject, Edsel Ford, was indeed treated poorly by his father (Henry Ford) when he was an adult, none of the people listed in paragraph 1 were necessarily treated poorly by their parents. The passage provides no information at all about how the children mentioned in paragraph 1 got along with their famous fathers. Thus, choice (A) is incorrect.

Though the passage opens by discussing how difficult it is for the children of legends to escape the shadow of their parents, the examples listed in paragraph 1 are all examples that disprove that rule, not examples of children who struggled as offspring of legends. Thus, choice (B) is incorrect.

Though the examples listed in paragraph 1 include children who did surpass their famous parents in accomplishments, none of the children listed are sons or daughters of industrialists. Edsel Ford is the only son of an industrialist discussed in the text, and he is not discussed until paragraph 2. For this reason, choice (C) is incorrect.

Though the passage opens by discussing how difficult it is for the children of legends to escape the shadow of their parents, the examples listed in paragraph 1 are all examples that disprove that rule, not examples of children who struggled as offspring of legends. Thus, they are not children whose parents far surpassed them in success, and choice (D) is incorrect.

2) C  
Question Type: Reasoning

The second paragraph begins by stating that, the examples listed in paragraph 1 are “exceptions to the rule.” The passage then states that, “for most, being the son or daughter of a legend is crippling.” The passage goes on to introduce the main focus of the passage, Edsel Ford, who did struggle to overcome his father’s legend. Thus, the second paragraph’s first sentence does redirect the passage to its main subject, Edsel Ford, and away from the examples listed at the end of paragraph 1, which are counterexamples. This means option (I) is supported. The first sentence of paragraph 2 also makes it clear that those examples were counterexamples, as it clearly states that they are “exceptions to the rule.” Option (III) is also supported, then, making choice (C) correct.
Choice (A) is incorrect because option (I) is not the only statement that describes what the first sentence of paragraph 2 does.

Choice (B) is incorrect because the first sentence of paragraph 2 does not anticipate an objection from the reader, as the passage has already introduced the objection that most children of legends do not emerge from their parents' shadows. Thus, option (II) is not supported.

Choice (D) is incorrect because options (II) and (IV) are not supported. The first sentence of paragraph 2 does not anticipate an objection from the reader, as the passage has already introduced the objection that most children of legends do not emerge from their parents' shadows. And it certainly does not imply a conflict between the author and Edsel Ford, his or her subject.

Choice (E) is incorrect because options (II) and (IV) are not supported. The first sentence of paragraph 2 does not anticipate an objection from the reader, as the passage has already introduced the objection that most children of legends do not emerge from their parents' shadows. And it certainly does not imply a conflict between the author and Edsel Ford, his or her subject.

3) D
   Question Type: Vocabulary

eponymous (adjective): named after a particular person.

In paragraph 2, the author writes that, “Edsel Ford was groomed to run the company his father [Henry Ford] made, the eponymous Ford Motor Company.” As Ford is both the founder’s name and also the name of the company, it follows that the word eponymous means something named after someone. Thus, the correct choice here would be the one that presents a situation in which something is named for a specific person. Choice (D) is correct, then, as a sitcom named for its star would be eponymous.

In paragraph 2, the author writes that, “Edsel Ford was groomed to run the company his father [Henry Ford] made, the eponymous Ford Motor Company.” As Ford is both the founder’s name and also the name of the company, it follows that the word eponymous means something named after someone. Thus, the correct choice here would be the one that presents a situation in which something is named for a specific person. Being named by someone is not the same as being named after someone, so choice (A) does not present something eponymous.

In paragraph 2, the author writes that, “Edsel Ford was groomed to run the company his father [Henry Ford] made, the eponymous Ford Motor Company.” As Ford is both the founder’s name and also the name of the company, it follows that the word eponymous means something named after someone. Thus, the correct choice here would be the one that presents a situation in which something is named for a specific person. Choice (B) is incorrect because it presents a situation in which something is named for a place, not after a person.

In paragraph 2, the author writes that, “Edsel Ford was groomed to run the company his father
[Henry Ford] made, the eponymous Ford Motor Company." As Ford is both the founder's name and also the name of the company, it follows that the word eponymous means something named after someone. Thus, the correct choice here would be the one that presents a situation in which something is named for a specific person. Choice (C) is incorrect because it presents a situation in which two names are merged into one, not in which one thing is named after a particular person.

In paragraph 2, the author writes that, “Edsel Ford was groomed to run the company his father [Henry Ford] made, the eponymous Ford Motor Company.” As Ford is both the founder's name and also the name of the company, it follows that the word eponymous means something named after someone. Thus, the correct choice here would be the one that presents a situation in which something is named for a specific person. Choice (E) is incorrect because it presents a situation in which something is named after something else, not after someone.

4) D
   Question Type: Research

To find the answer to this detail question, look for the part of the passage that discusses the introduction of the Model A and also Edsel Ford's ascension to the presidency. This occurs in the second paragraph. There, the author states that Edsel Ford became “president of the company in 1919” and, at the end of the paragraph, that the Model A was introduced in 1927. This means that 8 years passed between Edsel becoming president and the Model A being introduced, as 1927 – 1919 is 8. Thus, choice (D) is correct.

Choices (A), (B), (C), and (E) are each incorrect because the passage does not suggest that Edsel Ford introduced the Model A within 2, 4, 6, or 10 years of becoming president.

5) D
   Question Type: Reasoning

At the end of the passage, the author states that Edsel Ford is “best remembered as the namesake for one of the biggest business blunders in history.” He or she goes on to state that Edsel had “his name tarnished posthumously by the company he helped save in spite of his father's shadow.” This implies that Edsel Ford was wronged in death much as he was in life. In life, his father treated him poorly, and, in death, he had his name given to a mistake. Thus, the author likely ends the passage with the story of the Edsel line of Fords in order to emphasize that Edsel Ford has not gotten fair treatment, even in death. Choice (D) is correct because of this.

The introduction of the Edsel line of Fords takes place chronologically after both Edsel and Henry Ford's respective deaths. Thus, it logically does not conclude the author's argument about their relationship, as the passage does not even mention their relationship. Because of this, choice (A) is incorrect.

The final paragraph does not suggest that the Edsel line of Fords was designed by Edsel Ford, though the cars may have been inspired by Edsel Ford's influence. Choice (B) is incorrect because the passage in no way suggests that the Edsel line shows that Edsel Ford eventually got his designs made into cars.
Choice (C) is incorrect because the passage never argues nor refutes the idea that Edsel Ford’s influence on Ford cars ceased to exist when he died in 1943. As that claim is never made in the passage, the final paragraph can neither support nor refute it.

Choice (E) is incorrect because it distorts information in the passage. The passage suggests that Edsel Ford’s name has become synonymous with business blunders, but it does not suggest that the Ford Motor Company sees him or saw him as an embarrassment. In fact, it can be assumed that the cars were named after Edsel Ford as a tribute, as they were not designed to be a failure; they just became one anyway.

6) C
   Question Type: Research

To answer this detail question, look for the parts of the passage that describe what Edsel Ford contributed to the Ford Motor Company. This occurs in paragraphs 2 and 4. In paragraph 2, the author mentions the introduction of “a more powerful engine, the V-8” and the introduction and development of a “separate line of cars, which eventually became the Model A of 1927.” In paragraph 4, the author writes that “Edsel was successful at strengthening overseas production for Ford” and “saving the stylish Lincoln line of automobiles.” The only contribution not listed is the introduction of the Edsel line of Fords, which was done in 1957, fourteen years after Edsel Ford’s death. This question asks for the choice that was NOT a contribution of Edsel Ford, so choice (C) is correct.

Choice (A) is incorrect because paragraph 2 makes it clear that Edsel Ford did help create “a more powerful engine, the V-8.” This question asks for the choice that was NOT a contribution of Edsel Ford, so choice (A) is incorrect.

Choice (B) is incorrect because paragraph 4 credits Edsel Ford with “saving the stylish Lincoln line of automobiles. This question asks for the choice that was NOT a contribution of Edsel Ford, so choice (B) is incorrect.

Choice (D) is incorrect because the second paragraph credits Edsel Ford with introducing “a separate line of cars, which eventually became the Model A of 1927.” This question asks for the choice that was NOT a contribution of Edsel Ford, so choice (D) is incorrect.

Choice (E) is incorrect because paragraph 4 credits Edsel Ford with “strengthening overseas production for Ford.” This question asks for the choice that was NOT a contribution of Edsel Ford, so choice (E) is incorrect.

7) A
   Question Type: Reasoning

The author never criticizes Edsel Ford, and he or she generally portrays him as a sympathetic character who never got treated fairly. Early on, the author refers to Edsel Ford’s life as “crippling,” and, at the end of the passage, the author refers to “poor Edsel Ford.” Thus, the author tends to see
Edsel Ford as a sad figure, and the author’s attitude can therefore be seen as primarily sympathetic, making choice (A) correct.

The author cannot be said to be disinterested or unbiased toward Edsel Ford. He or she editorializes at times in the passage. For instance, when he or she writes, “Yes, Henry attempted to decrease the value of Ford stock for his own personal gain and used his poor son for his ruse!,” he or she is clearly being critical of Henry Ford and sympathetic to “poor” Edsel Ford. For this reason, choice (B) is incorrect.

The author is never once critical of Edsel Ford, and so it cannot be said that he or she is condemnatory of Edsel Ford. Instead, the author refers to him as “poor Edsel Ford,” which is not a way someone would refer to a person he or she condemned or criticized. Thus, choice (C) is incorrect.

Though the author seems to feel sorry for Edsel Ford, he or she never sounds envious of him. In fact, the passage makes Edsel Ford’s life sound pretty terrible and not something about which anyone should feel jealousy. Because of this, choice (D) is incorrect.

The author never seems to question Edsel Ford or mistrust anything about his life. Thus, it cannot be stated that the author is suspicious about Edsel Ford, and choice (E) is incorrect.

8) E
Question Type: Research

The passage makes it very clear that Henry Ford treated Edsel Ford poorly. For instance, the author states, in paragraph 3, that “Henry was actively hostile and deprecatory toward his son.” It also states that Henry took actions “just to spite Edsel.” Thus, choice (E) is correct. Maliciously means done with malice and hostility, and that accurately describes how Henry Ford treated his son.

The passage makes it very clear that Henry Ford treated Edsel Ford poorly. For instance, the author states, in paragraph 3, that “Henry was actively hostile and deprecatory toward his son.” It does not imply that Henry treated Edsel “candidly,” or in a straightforward and truthful manner. Thus, choice (A) is incorrect.

The passage makes it very clear that Henry Ford treated Edsel Ford poorly. For instance, the author states, in paragraph 3, that “Henry was actively hostile and deprecatory toward his son.” He or she does not imply that Henry Ford treated his son maladroitly, though, as maladroitly means done in an ineffective or bungling way. There is no indication that anything Henry Ford did was done poorly or inexpertly, so choice (B) is incorrect.

The passage makes it very clear that Henry Ford treated Edsel Ford poorly. For instance, the author states, in paragraph 3, that “Henry was actively hostile and deprecatory toward his son.” This implies
that Henry Ford was not congenial at all toward his son and did not treat him congenially. Congenially means done in a pleasant and agreeable manner, and nothing implies that Henry Ford was ever pleasant to his son. Because of this, choice (C) is incorrect.

The passage makes it very clear that Henry Ford treated Edsel Ford poorly. For instance, the author states, in paragraph 3, that “Henry was actively hostile and deprecatory toward his son.” The author implies that Henry Ford did not treat his son nicely or fairly, implying that he did not treat Edsel equitably, as equitably means done in a fair and impartial way. Because of this, choice (D) is incorrect.