

# ADVANCED READING

## PASSAGE 1

Wherever the crime novels of P. D. James are discussed by critics, there is a tendency on the one hand to exaggerate her merits and on the other to castigate her as a genre writer who is getting above herself. Perhaps underlying the debate is that familiar, false opposition set up between different kinds of fiction, according to which enjoyable novels are held to be somehow slightly lowbrow, and a novel is not considered true literature unless it is a tiny bit dull. Those commentators who would elevate James' books to the status of high literature point to her painstakingly constructed characters, her elaborate settings, her sense of place, and her love of abstractions: notions about morality, duty, pain, and pleasure are never far from the lips of her police officers and murderers. Others find her pretentious and tiresome; an inverted snobbery accuses her of abandoning the time-honored conventions of the detective genre in favor of a highbrow literary style. The critic Harriet Waugh wants P. D. James to get on with "the more taxing business of laying a tricky trail and then fooling the reader"; Philip Oakes in *The Literary Review* groans, "Could we please proceed with the business of clapping the handcuffs on the killer?" James is certainly capable of strikingly good writing. She takes immense trouble to provide her characters with convincing histories and passions. Her descriptive digressions are part of the pleasure of her books and give them dignity and weight. But it is equally true that they frequently interfere with the story; the patinas and aromas of a country kitchen receive more loving attention than does the plot itself. Her devices to advance the story can be shameless and thin, and it is often impossible to see how her detective arrives at the truth; one is left to conclude that the detective solves crimes through intuition. At this stage in her career P. D. James seems to be less interested in the specifics of detection than in her characters' vulnerabilities and perplexities. However, once the rules of a chosen genre cramp creative thought, there is no reason why an able and interesting writer should accept them. In her latest book, there are signs that James is beginning to feel constrained by the crime-novel genre, here her determination to leave areas of ambiguity in the solution of the crime and to distribute guilt among the murderer, victim, and bystanders points to conscious rebellion against the traditional neatness of detective fiction. It is fashionable, though reprehensible, for one writer to prescribe to another. But perhaps the time has come for P. D. James to slide out of her handcuffs and stride into the territory of the mainstream novel.

## PASSAGE 2

Many Native Americans view the archaeological excavation and museum display of ancestral skeletal remains and items buried with them as a spiritual desecration. A number of legal remedies that either prohibit or regulate such activities may be available to Native American communities, if they can establish standing (a position from which one may assert or enforce legal rights and duties) in such cases. In disinterment cases, courts have traditionally affirmed the standing of three classes of plaintiffs: the deceased's heirs, the owner of the property on which the grave is located, and parties, including organizations or distant relatives of the deceased, that have a clear interest in the preservation of a particular grave. If an archaeologically discovered grave is of recent historical origin and associated with an identifiable Native American community, Native Americans are likely to establish standing in a suit to prevent disinterment of the remains, but in cases where the grave is ancient and located in an area where the community of Native Americans associated with the grave has not recently lived, they are less likely to be successful in this regard. Indeed, in most cases involving ancient graves, to recognize that Native Americans have standing would represent a significant expansion of common law. In cases where standing can be achieved, however, common law may provide a basis for some Native American claims against archaeologists and museums. Property law, for example, can be useful in establishing Native American claims to artifacts that are retrieved in the excavation of ancient graves and can be considered the communal property of Native American tribes or communities. In *Charrier v. Bell*, a United States appellate court ruled that the common law doctrine of abandonment, which allows the finder of abandoned property to claim ownership, does not apply to objects buried with the deceased. The court ruled that the practice of burying items with the body of the deceased "is not intended as a means of relinquishing ownership to a stranger" and that to interpret it as such "could render a grave subject to despoliation either immediately after interment or...after removal of the descendants of the deceased from the neighborhood of the cemetery." This ruling suggests that artifacts excavated from Native American ancestral graves should be returned to representatives of tribal groups who can establish standing in such cases. More generally, United States courts have upheld the distinction between individual and communal property, holding that an individual Native American does not have title to communal property owned and held for common use by his or her tribe. As a result, museums cannot assume that they have valid title to cultural property merely because they purchased in good faith an item that was originally sold in good faith by an individual member of a Native American community.

### PASSAGE 3

When the same habitat types (forests, oceans, grasslands etc.) in regions of different latitudes are compared, it becomes apparent that the overall number of species increases from pole to equator. This latitudinal gradient is probably even more pronounced than current records indicate, since researchers believe that most undiscovered species live in the tropics. One hypothesis to explain this phenomenon, the “time theory” holds that diverse species adapted to today’s climatic conditions have had more time to emerge in the tropical regions, which, unlike the temperate and arctic zones, have been unaffected by a succession of ice ages. However, ice ages have caused less disruption in some temperate regions than in others and have not interrupted arctic conditions. Alternatively, the species-energy hypothesis proposes the following positive correlations: incoming energy from the Sun correlated with rates of growth and reproduction; rates of growth and reproduction with the amount of living matter (biomass) at a given moment; and the amount of biomass with number of species. However, since organisms may die rapidly, high production rates can exist with low biomass. And high biomass can exist with few species. Moreover, the mechanism proposed—greater energy influx leading to bigger populations, thereby lowering the probability of local extinction—remains untested. A third hypothesis centers on the tropics’ climatic stability, which provides a more reliable supply of resources. Species can thus survive even with few types of food, and competing species can tolerate greater overlap between their respective niches. Both capabilities enable more species to exist on the same resources. However, the ecology of local communities cannot account for the origin of the latitudinal gradient. Localized ecological processes such as competition do not generate regional pools of species, and it is the total number of species available regionally for colonizing any particular area that makes the difference between, for example, a forest at the equator and one at higher latitude. A fourth and most plausible hypothesis focuses on regional speciation, and in particular on rates of speciation and extinction. According to this hypothesis, if speciation rates become higher toward the tropics, and are not negated by extinction rates, then the latitudinal gradient would result—and become increasingly steep. The mechanism for this rate-of-speciation hypothesis is that most new animal species, and perhaps plant species, arise because a population subgroup becomes isolated. This subgroup evolves differently and eventually cannot interbreed with members of the original population. The uneven spread of a species over a large geographic area promotes this mechanism: at the edges, small populations spread out and form isolated groups. Since subgroups in an arctic environment are more likely to face extinction than those in the tropics, the latter are more likely to survive long enough to adapt to local conditions and ultimately become new species.

## PASSAGE 4

Two impressive studies have reexamined Eric Williams' conclusion that Britain's abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and its emancipation of slavers in its colonies in 1834 were driven primarily by economic rather than humanitarian motives. Blighted by depleted soil, indebtedness, and the inefficiency of coerced labor, these colonies, according to Williams, had by 1807 become an impediment to British economic progress. Seymour Drescher provides a more balanced view. Rejecting interpretations based either on economic interest or the moral vision of abolitionists, Drescher has reconstructed the populist (believer in the rights, wisdom, or virtues of the common people) characteristics of British abolitionism, which appears to have cut across lines of class, party, and religion. Noting that between 1780 and 1830 antislavery petitions outnumbered those on any other issue, including parliamentary reform, Drescher concludes that such support cannot be explained by economic interest alone, especially when much of it came from the unenfranchised masses. Yet, aside from demonstrating that such support must have resulted at least in part from widespread literacy and a tradition of political activism, Drescher does not finally explain how England, a nation deeply divided by class struggles, could mobilize popular support for antislavery measures proposed by otherwise conservative politicians in the House of Lords and approved there with little dissent. David Eltis' answer to that question actually supports some of Williams' insights. Eschewing Drescher's idealization of British traditions of liberty, Eltis points to continuing use of low wages and Draconian vagrancy laws in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to ensure the industriousness of British workers. Indeed, certain notables (notable: plural, often capitalized: a group of persons summoned especially in monarchical France to act as a deliberative body) even called for the enslavement of unemployed laborers who roamed the British countryside—an acceptance of coerced labor that Eltis attributes to a preindustrial desire to keep labor costs low and exports competitive. By the late eighteenth century, however, a growing home market began to alert capitalists to the importance of “want creation” and to incentives such as higher wages as a means of increasing both worker productivity and the number of consumers. Significantly, it was products grown by slaves, such as sugar, coffee, and tobacco, that stimulated new wants at all levels of British society and were the forerunners of products intended in modern capitalist societies to satisfy what Eltis describes as “nonsubsistence or psychological needs.” Eltis concludes that in an economy that had begun to rely on voluntary labor to satisfy such needs, forced labor necessarily began to appear both inappropriate and counterproductive to employers. Eltis thus concludes that, while Williams may well have underestimated the economic viability of the British colonies employing forced labor in the early 1800s, his insight into the economic motives for abolition was partly accurate. British leaders became committed to colonial labor reform only when they became convinced, for reasons other than those cited by Williams, that free labor was more beneficial to the imperial economy.