# Critical Skills Practice

## Unit Test Reading Pasages

### Passage 1

**Instructions:** Use this passage to answer Questions 1–5 of the online portion of the Unit Test for the Critical Skill Practice unit.

### from “Amy Foster”

by Joseph Conrad

One day, as we trotted out of a large village into a shady bit of road, I saw on our left hand a
low, black cottage, with diamond panes in the windows, a creeper on the end wall, a roof of
shingle, and some roses climbing on the rickety trellis-work of the tiny porch. Kennedy pulled
up to a walk. A woman, in full sunlight, was throwing a dripping blanket over a line stretched
between two old apple-trees. And as the bobtailed, long-necked chestnut, trying to get his
head, jerked the left hand, covered by a thick dog-skin glove, the doctor raised his voice over
the hedge:

“How’s your child, Amy?”

I had the time to see her dull face, red, not with a mantling blush, but as if her flat cheeks
had been vigorously slapped, and to take in the squat figure, the scanty, dusty brown hair
drawn into a tight knot at the back of the head. She looked quite young. With a distinct catch in
her breath, her voice sounded low and timid.

“He’s well, thank you.”

We trotted again. “A young patient of yours,” I said; and the doctor, flicking the chestnut absently, muttered, “Her husband used to be.”

“She seems a dull creature,” I remarked listlessly.

“Precisely,” said Kennedy. “She is very passive. It’s enough to look at the red hands
hanging at the end of those short arms, at those slow, prominent brown eyes, to know the
inertness of her mind—an inertness that one would think made it everlastingly safe from all the
surprises of imagination. And yet which of us is safe? At any rate, such as you see her, she
had enough imagination to fall in love. She’s the daughter of one Isaac Foster, who from a
small farmer has sunk into a shepherd; the beginning of his misfortunes dating from his
runaway marriage with the cook of his widowed father—a well-to-do, apoplectic grazier, who
passionately struck his name off his will, and had been heard to utter threats against his life.
But this old affair, scandalous enough to serve as a motive for a Greek tragedy, arose from the
similarity of their characters. There are other tragedies, less scandalous and of a subtler
poignancy, arising from irreconcilable differences and from that fear of the Incomprehensible
that hangs over all our heads—over all our heads.…”

### Passage 2

**Instructions:** Use this passage to answer Questions 21–25 of the online portion of the Unit Test for the Critical Skill Practice unit.

#### Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

(1) The first of America’s First Ladies, Martha Dandridge, she was born near Williamsburg, Virginia in 1731. (2) When she was only 18 years old, she married her first husband Daniel Parke Custis, a wealthy landowner who was twenty years her senior. (3) Although the couple had four children, only two survived past infancy. (4) These two were still young children when Custis died in 1757. (5) Martha was only 26 years old.

(6) Not long afterwards, Martha met the young colonel George Washington, who was several years younger than she was. (7) The two married in 1759 and with the new marriage, Washington became a wealthy landowner and the family resettled at Mount Vernon. (8) Martha and George never had children of their own, but Washington was devoted to Martha’s children. (9) Sorrow struck the family again when Martha’s daughter died at age seventeen.

(10) As political unrest in the colonies grew, George Washington became more and more involved. (11) He was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army at the second Continental Congress. (12) As its leader, Washington was often far from home. (13) Martha spent most of the Revolutionary War at Mount Vernon. (14) But she took her place by her husband’s side when he was elected to the Presidency and despite the hard work, she fulfilled her duties with dignity. (15) She outlived her husband by several years and is buried at Mount Vernon, which her husband is also buried at.