

## • Intermediate Critical Reading - Photography

In 1760, a man named Tiphaigne de la Roche made a bizarre prediction. In an imaginary story called Giphantie, mirror images of scenes from nature could be captured permanently on a canvas covered with a sticky material. After the material dried in darkness, the image would remain on the canvas forever. At the time, the idea was unheard of. It was not until the following century that the concept of photography was born, starting with some experiments by Nicéphore Niépce.

Nicéphore Niépce, who was a French inventor, was interested in lithography, which is a printmaking technique. He was experimenting with lithography when he found a way of copying etchings onto glass and pewter plates using a chemical that changes when it is exposed to light. He learned to burn images onto the plates and then print the images on paper. He shared his findings with Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, who improved the process and announced it to the French Academy of Sciences in 1839. The Daguerreotype, the photography method named after Daguerre, met with great success. It was so successful, in fact, that French newspapers said the French public had an illness called *Daguerreotypomania!* Daguerreotypes were inexpensive and were suitable for portraiture. People called the Daguerreotype a “mirror with a memory.” Some portrait artists went out of business when Daguerreotypes came into vogue. Others became Daguerreotypists, now known as photographers.

Photography took off and today includes You Tube fans, I-Reporters, and everybody with a cell phone camera. Today photography captures life around the globe. The bizarre prediction of Mr. de la Roche has come true, and then some.

But how was the prediction of mirror-image pictures made in the first place? Was de la Roche’s prediction of mirror-image photography just a lucky guess? Or was the Daguerreotype a picture-perfect case of life imitating art?

## Questions

1. According to the passage, which of the following statements is/are true?
  - I) Photographic images were shown in de la Roche's book *Giphantie*.
  - II) Nicéphore Niépce experimented with printmaking.
  - III) Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre invented photography.
  - A) I only
  - B) II only
  - C) III only
  - D) I and II only
  - E) II and III only
  
2. In line 1, *bizarre* most closely means
  - A) common
  - B) humorous
  - C) obvious
  - D) popular
  - E) strange
  
3. In the context of the passage, which of the following best articulates the author's opinion?
  - A) It is hard to know how de le Roche predicted a photographic-type process a full century before photography was invented.
  - B) It is hard to draw a comparison between early Daguerreotypists and modern-day photographers.
  - C) It was inaccurate to say that the Daguerreotype was a "mirror with a memory," since the images were not reversed.
  - D) It is difficult to understand why the French public preferred Daguerreotypes to painted portraiture.
  - E) It was difficult for portrait artists to acquire the skills necessary to become Daguerreotypists.

## Answers and Explanations

1. The correct answer is **B**.

- I) Incorrect. Photographic images were **not** shown in de la Roche's book *Giphantie*. According to lines 1-3, "In an *imaginary* story called *Giphantie*, mirror images of scenes from nature could be captured permanently on a canvas ..." Since the story was an imaginary story about images, the images were not shown. Further, according to line 1, the story was a *prediction*, which tells about something that does not yet exist.
- II) Correct. According to lines 6-7, "Nicéphore Niépce, who was a French inventor, was interested in lithography, which is a printmaking technique. He was experimenting with lithography ..." Since he was experimenting with lithography, and lithography is a type of printmaking, then he was experimenting with printmaking.
- III) Incorrect. It is **not** stated in the passage that Daguerre invented photography. According to line 10, Daguerre *improved* the process which had been shared with him by Nicéphore Niépce.

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

2. The correct answer is **C**.

- A) Incorrect. The prediction could **not** have been common. According to line 4, "At the time, the idea was *unheard of*." When something is *unheard of*, it is very uncommon or completely nonexistent.
- B) Incorrect. The story was *imaginary* (line 1), and the idea was *unheard of* (line 4), and while some imaginary stories might be humorous, there is **nothing** which indicates that the prediction was *humorous*.
- C) Incorrect. Something which is *obvious* is easy to see. Since the prediction was made in an *imaginary* story (line 1), the idea was *unheard of* (line 4), and photography was not invented until the following century (lines 4-5), all stated in the first paragraph, the prediction could **not** have been *obvious*.
- D) Incorrect. The prediction could not have been *popular*. In order for something to be popular, it must be well-known. Since this idea was *unheard of*, according to line 4, it was **not** *well-known*, and therefore it was **not** *popular*.
- E) Correct. The prediction was *strange*.

3. The correct answer is **A**.

- 25      A) Correct. The last paragraph shows the author's difficulty understanding how the

prediction was made. “But how was the prediction of mirror-image pictures made in the first place? Was de la Roche’s prediction of mirror-image photography just a lucky guess? Or was the Daguerreotype a picture-perfect case of life imitating art?”

- B) Incorrect. In lines 14-15, the author writes, “Others became Daguerreotypists, now known as photographers.” Here the author states that Daguerreotypists are the *same* as photographers, so she has **no** difficulty comparing them.
- C) Incorrect. Although may be true that the phrase is inaccurate, there was **no** mention that the term “mirror with a memory” was inaccurate.
- D) Incorrect. In lines 12-14, the author writes, “It was so successful, in fact, that French newspapers said the French public had an illness called *Daguerreotypomania!* Daguerreotypes were inexpensive and were suitable for portraiture,” which shows that the French public liked Daguerreotypes because they were inexpensive and suitable for portraiture.
- E) Incorrect. In lines 14-15, the author writes, “Others (other portrait artists) became Daguerreotypists, now known as photographers.” There was **no** mention of the difficulty of acquiring photography skills.