

第1课: Section C 仔细阅读(细节题)

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课堂讲义

Passage 1---2016.6(1)---结构性失业

51. What does the author think is the root cause of mass unemployment in America?

- A) Corporate mismanagement. B) Insufficient demand.
C) Technological advances. D) Workers' slow adaptation.

52. What does the author think of the experts' claim concerning unemployment?

- A) Self-evident. B) Thought-provoking.
C) Irrational. D) Groundless.

53. What does the author say helped bring down unemployment during the Great Depression?

- A) The booming defense industry. B) The wise heads' benefit package.
C) Nationwide training of workers. D) Thorough restructuring of industries.

54. What has caused claims of huge structural problems to multiply?

- A) Powerful opposition to government's stimulus efforts.
B) Very Serious People's attempt to cripple the economy.
C) Evidence gathered from many sectors of the industries.
D) Economists' failure to detect the problems in time.

55. What is the author's purpose in writing the passage?

- A) To testify to the experts' analysis of America's problems.
B) To offer a feasible solution to the structural unemployment.
C) To show the urgent need for the government to take action.
D) To alert American workers to the urgency for adaptation.

① What can be done about mass unemployment? All the wise heads agree: there're no quick or easy answers. There's work to be done, but workers aren't ready to do it—they're in the wrong places, or they have the wrong skills. Our problems are "structural," and will take many years to solve.

② But don't bother asking for evidence that justifies this bleak view. There isn't any. On the contrary, all the facts suggest that high unemployment in America is the result of inadequate demand. Saying that there're no easy answers sounds wise, but it's actually foolish: our unemployment crisis could be cured very quickly if we had the intellectual clarity and political will to act. In other words, structural unemployment is a fake problem, which mainly serves as an excuse for not pursuing real solutions.

③ The fact is job openings have plunged in every major sector, while the number of workers forced into part-time employment in almost all industries has soared. Unemployment has surged in every major occupational category. Only three states, with a combined population not much larger than that of Brooklyn, have unemployment rates below 5%. So the evidence contradicts the claim that we're mainly suffering from structural unemployment. Why, then, has this claim become so popular?

④ Part of the answer is that this is what always happens during periods of high unemployment—in part because experts and analysts believe that declaring the problem deeply rooted, with no easy answers, makes them sound serious.

⑤ I've been looking at what self-proclaimed experts were saying about unemployment during the Great Depression; it was almost identical to what Very Serious People are saying now. Unemployment cannot be brought down rapidly, declared one 1935 analysis, because the workforce is "unadaptable and untrained. It cannot respond

to the opportunities which industry may offer.” A few years later, a large defense buildup finally provided a fiscal stimulus adequate to the economy’s needs—and suddenly industry was eager to employ those “unadaptable and untrained” workers.

⑥But now, as then, powerful forces are ideologically opposed to the whole idea of government action on a sufficient scale to jump-start the economy. And that, fundamentally, is why claims that we face huge structural problems have been multiplying: they offer a reason to do nothing about the mass unemployment that is crippling our economy and our society.

⑦So what you need to know is that there’s no evidence whatsoever to back these claims. We aren’t suffering from a shortage of needed skills; we’re suffering from a lack of policy resolve. As I said, structural unemployment isn’t a real problem, it’s an excuse—a reason not to act on America’s problems at a time when action is desperately needed.

课后作业

Passage 2---2016.6(1)---电视购物

46. What does Colin Dixon mean by saying “It’s been the year of interactive television advertising for the last ten or twelve years” (Lines 3–4, Para.1)?

- A) Interactive television advertising will become popular in 10–12 years.
- B) Interactive television advertising has been under debate for the last decade or so.
- C) Interactive television advertising is successful when incorporated into situation comedies.
- D) Interactive television advertising has not achieved the anticipated results.

47. What is the public’s response to Cablevision’s planned interactive TV advertising program?

- A) Pretty positive.
- B) Totally indifferent.
- C) Somewhat doubtful.
- D) Rather critical.

48. What is the impact of the wide use of digital video recorders on TV advertising?

- A) It has made TV advertising easily accessible to viewers.
- B) It helps advertisers to measure the click-through rates.
- C) It has placed TV advertising at a great disadvantage.
- D) It enables viewers to check the sales items with ease.

49. What do we learn about Unilever’s interactive campaign?

- A) It proves the advantage of TV advertising.
- B) It has done well in engaging the viewers.
- C) It helps attract investments in the company.
- D) It has boosted the TV advertising industry.

50. How does the author view the hitherto high click-through rates?

- A) They may be due to the novel way of advertising.
- B) They signify the popularity of interactive advertising.
- C) They point to the growing curiosity of TV viewers.
- D) They indicate the future direction of media reform.

①Interactive television advertising, which allows viewers to use their remote controls to click on advertisements, has been pushed for years. Nearly a decade ago it was predicted that viewers of “Friends,” a popular situation comedy, would soon be able to purchase a sweater like Jennifer Aniston’s with a few taps on their remote control. “It’s been the year of interactive television advertising for the last ten or twelve years,” says Colin Dixon of a digital-media consultancy.

②So the news that Cablevision, an American cable company, was rolling out interactive advertisements to all its customers on October 6th was greeted with some skepticism. During commercials, an overlay will appear at the bottom of the screen, prompting viewers to press a button to request a free sample or order a catalogue. Cablevision hopes to allow customers to buy things with their remote controls early next year.

③Television advertising could do with a boost. Spending fell by 10% in the first half of the year. The popularization of digital video recorders has caused advertisers to worry that their commercials will be skipped. Some are turning to the Internet, which is cheaper and offers concrete measurements like click-through rates—especially important at a time when marketing budgets are tight. With the launch of interactive advertising, “many of the dollars that went to the Internet will come back to the TV,” says David Kline of Cablevision. Or so the industry hopes.

④In theory, interactive advertising can engage viewers in a way that 30-second spots do not. Unilever recently ran an interactive campaign for its Axe deodorant (除臭剂), which kept viewers engaged for more than three minutes on average.

⑤The amount spent on interactive advertising on television is still small. Magna, an advertising agency, reckons it will be worth about \$138 million this year. That falls far short of the billions of dollars people once expected it to generate. But DirecTV, Comcast and Time Warner Cable have all invested in it. A new effort led by Canoe Ventures, a coalition of leading cable providers, aims to make interactive advertising available across America later this year. BrightLine iTV, which designs and sells interactive ads, says interest has surged: it expects its revenues almost to triple this year. BSkyB, Britain’s biggest satellite-television service, already provides 9 million customers with interactive ads.

⑥Yet there are doubts whether people watching television, a “lean back” medium, crave interaction. Click-through rates have been high so far (around 3-4%, compared with less than 0.3% online), but that may be a result of the novelty. Interactive ads and viewers might not go well together.

第2课：六级阅读C篇 —— 推断二

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课堂真题讲解：

Passage 3---2016.6(3)---美国教育体系

51. What do we learn about America's education system?

- A) It provides a ladder of opportunity for the wealthy.
- B) It contributes little to the elimination of inequality.
- C) It has remained basically unchanged for generations.
- D) It has brought up generations of responsible citizens.

52. What is chiefly responsible for the undesirable performance of inner-city schools?

- A) Unqualified teachers.
- B) Lack of financial resources.
- C) Unfavorable learning environment.
- D) Subconscious racial discrimination.

53. What does the author think the union should do to win popular support?

- A) Assist the city government in reforming schools.
- B) Give constructive advice to inner-city schools.
- C) Demand higher pay for teachers.
- D) Help teachers improve teaching.

54. What is the finding of the gold standard study by Harvard and Columbia University scholars?

- A) Many inner-city school teachers are not equal to their jobs.
- B) A large proportion of inner-city children often miss classes.
- C) Many students are dissatisfied with their teachers.
- D) Students performance has a lot to do with teachers.

55. Why does the author say the Chicago union's demand is an insult to students?

- A) It protects incompetent teachers at the expense of students.
- B) It underestimates students' ability to tell good teachers from poor ones.
- C) It makes students feel that they are discriminated against in many ways.
- D) It totally ignores students' initiative in the learning process.

①America's education system has become less a ladder of opportunity than a structure to transmit inequality from one generation to the next.

②That's why school reform is so critical. This is an issue of equality, opportunity and national conscience. It's not just about education, but about poverty and justice.

③It's true that the main reason inner-city schools do poorly isn't teachers' unions, but poverty. Southern states without strong teachers' unions have schools at least as awful as those in union states. Some Chicago teachers seem to think that they shouldn't be held accountable until poverty is solved. There're steps we can take that would make some difference, and Mayor Rahm Emanuel is trying some of them—yet the union is resisting.

④I'd be sympathetic if the union focused solely on higher compensation. Teachers need to be much better paid to attract the best college graduates to the nation's worst schools. But, instead, the Chicago union seems to be using its political capital primarily to protect weak performers.

⑤ There's solid evidence that there are huge differences in the effectiveness of teachers. The gold standard study by Harvard and Columbia University scholars found that even in high-poverty schools, teachers consistently had a huge positive or negative impact.

⑥ Get a bottom 1% teacher, and the effect is the same as if a child misses 40% of the school year. Get a teacher from the top 20%, and it's as if a child has gone to school for an extra month or two. The study found that strong teachers in the fourth through eighth grades raised the skills of their students in ways that would last for decades. Just having a strong teacher for one elementary year left pupils a bit less likely to become mothers as teenagers, a bit more likely to go to college and earning more money at age 28.

⑦ How does one figure out who is a weak teacher? Yes, that's a challenge. But researchers are improving systems to measure a teacher's performance throughout the year, and, with three years of data, it's usually possible to tell which teachers are failing.

⑧ Unfortunately, the union in Chicago is insisting that teachers who are laid off—often for being ineffective—should get priority in new hiring. That's an insult to students.

⑨ Teaching is so important that it should be like other professions, with high pay and good working conditions but few job protections for bottom performers.

⑩ This isn't a battle between garment workers and greedy bosses. The central figures in the Chicago schools strike are neither strikers nor managers but 350,000 children. Protecting the union demand sacrifices those students, in effect turning a blind eye to the injustice in the education system.

课后作业

Passage 2---2016.6(3)---厨房的发展

51. What does the author say about the kitchen of today?

- A) It is where housewives display their cooking skills.
- B) It is where the family entertains important guests.
- C) It has become something odd in a modern house.
- D) It is regarded as the center of a modern home.

52. Why does the Georgian-style kitchen sell at a very high price?

- A) It is believed to have tremendous artistic value.
- B) No duplicate is to be found in any other place.
- C) It is manufactured by a famous British company.
- D) No other manufacturer can produce anything like it.

53. What does the change in the status of the kitchen reflect?

- A) Improved living conditions. B) Women's elevated status.
- C) Technological progress. D) Social change.

54. What was the Beecher sisters' idea of a kitchen?

- A) A place where women could work more efficiently.
- B) A place where high technology could be applied.
- C) A place of interest to the educated people.
- D) A place to experiment with new ideas.

55. What do we learn about today's kitchen?

- A) It represents the rapid technological advance in people's daily life.
- B) Many of its central features are no different from those of the 1920s.
- C) It has been transformed beyond recognition.
- D) Many of its functions have changed greatly.

① These days, nobody needs to cook. Families graze on high-cholesterol take-aways and microwaved ready-meals. Cooking is an occasional hobby and a vehicle for celebrity chefs. Which makes it odd that the kitchen has become the heart of the modern house: what the great hall was to the medieval castle, the kitchen is to the 21st-century home.

② The money spent on kitchens has risen with their status. In America the kitchen market is now worth \$170 billion, 5 times the country's film industry. In the year to August 2007, IKEA, a Swedish furniture chain, sold over one million kitchens worldwide. The average budget for a "major" kitchen overhaul in 2006, calculates Remodeling magazine, was a staggering \$54,000; even a "minor" improvement cost on average \$18,000.

③ Exclusivity, more familiar in the world of high fashion, has reached the kitchen: Robinson & Cornish, a British manufacturer of custom-made kitchens, offers a Georgian-style one which would cost £145,000–155,000—excluding building, plumbing and electrical work. Its big selling point is that nobody else will have it: "You won't see this kitchen anywhere else in the world."

④ The elevation of the room that once belonged only to the servants to that of design showcase for the modern family tells the story of a century of social change. Right into the early 20th century, kitchens were smoky, noisy places, generally located underground, or to the back of the house, and as far from living space as possible. That was as it should be: kitchens were for servants, and the aspiring middle classes wanted nothing to do with them.

⑤ But as the working classes prospered and the servant shortage set in, housekeeping became a matter of interest to the educated classes. One of the pioneers of a radical new way of thinking about the kitchen was Catharine Esther Beecher, sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe. In *American Woman's Home*, published in 1869, the Beecher sisters recommended a scientific approach to household management, designed to enhance the efficiency of a woman's work and promote order.

⑥ Many contemporary ideas about kitchen design can be traced back to another American, Christine Frederick, who set about enhancing the efficiency of the housewife. Her 1919 work, *Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home*, was based on detailed observation of a housewife's daily routine. She borrowed the principle of efficiency on the factory floor and applied it to domestic tasks on the kitchen floor.

⑦ Frederick's central idea, that "stove, sink and kitchen table must be placed in such a relation that useless steps are avoided entirely," inspired the first fully fitted kitchen, designed in the 1920s by Margarete Schütter-Lihotsky. It was a modernist triumph, and many elements remain central features of today's kitchen.

第3课：六级阅读B篇---（查读与略读）

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课堂真题讲解：

Passage 1---2016.6(1)---环境保护与经济增长的矛盾

36. Examples show that both rich and poor countries exploited the environment for economic progress.
37. Environmental protection and improvement benefit people all over the world.
38. It is not necessarily true that economic growth will make our world cleaner.
39. The common theme of the UN reports is the relation between environmental protection and economic growth.
40. Development agencies disagree regarding how to tackle environment issues while ensuring economic progress.
41. It is difficult to find solid evidence to prove environmental friendliness generates more profits than exploiting the natural environment.
42. Sustainable management of ecosystems will prove rewarding in the long run.
43. A politician noted for being cautious asserts that sustainable human development depends on the natural environment.
44. Poor countries will have to bear the cost for rich nations' economic development.
45. One recent study warns us of the danger of the exhaustion of natural resources on Earth.

Can Societies Be Rich and Green?

[A] “If our economies are to flourish, if global poverty is to be eliminated and if the well-being of the world’s people enhanced—not just in this generation but in succeeding generations—we must make sure we take care of the natural environment and resources on which our economic activity depends.” That statement comes not, as you might imagine, from a stereotypical tree-hugging, save-the-world greenie (环保主义者), but from Gordon Brown, a politician with a reputation for rigor, thoroughness and above all, caution.

[B] A surprising thing for the man who runs one of the world’s most powerful economies to say? Perhaps; though in the run-up to the five-year review of the Millennium (千年的) Goals, he is far from alone. The roots of his speech, given in March at the roundtable meeting of environment and energy ministers from the G20 group of nations, stretch back to 1972, and the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm.

[C] “The protection and improvement of the human environment is a major issue which affects the well-being of peoples and economic development throughout the world,” read the final declaration from this gathering, the first of a sequence which would lead to the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992 and the World Development Summit in Johannesburg three years ago.

[D] Hunt through the reports prepared by UN agencies and development groups—many for conferences such as this year’s Millennium Goals review—and you will find that the linkage between environmental protection and economic progress is a common thread.

[E] Managing ecosystems sustainably is more profitable than exploiting them, according to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. But finding hard evidence to support the thesis is not so easy. Thoughts turn first to some sort of global statistic, some indicator which would rate the wealth of nations in both economic and environmental

terms and show a relationship between the two.

[F] If such an indicator exists, it is well hidden. And on reflection, this is not surprising; the single word “environment” has so many dimensions, and there are so many other factors affecting wealth—such as the oil deposits—that teasing out a simple economy-environment relationship would be almost impossible.

[G] The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, a vast four-year global study which reported its initial conclusions earlier this year, found reasons to believe that managing ecosystems sustainably—working with nature rather than against it—might be less profitable in the short term, but certainly brings long-term rewards.

[H] And the World Resources Institute (WRI) in its World Resources 2005 report, issued at the end of August, produced several such examples from Africa and Asia; it also demonstrated that environmental degradation affects the poor more than the rich, as poorer people derive a much higher proportion of their income directly from the natural resources around them.

[I] But there are also many examples of growing wealth by trashing the environment, in rich and poor parts of the world alike, whether through unregulated mineral extraction, drastic water use for agriculture, slash-and-burn farming, or fossil-fuel-guzzling (大量消耗) transport. Of course, such growth may not persist in the long term—which is what Mr. Brown and the Stockholm declaration were both attempting to point out. Perhaps the best example of boom growth and bust decline is the Grand Banks fishery. For almost five centuries a very large supply of cod (鱈鱼) provided abundant raw material for an industry which at its peak employed about 40,000 people, sustaining entire communities in Newfoundland. Then, abruptly, the cod population collapsed. There were no longer enough fish in the sea for the stock to maintain itself, let alone an industry. More than a decade later, there was no sign of the ecosystem re-building itself. It had, apparently, been fished out of existence; and the once mighty Newfoundland fleet now gropes about frantically for crab on the sea floor.

[J] There is a view that modern humans are inevitably sowing the seeds of a global Grand Banks-style disaster. The idea is that we are taking more out of what you might call the planet’s environmental bank balance than it can sustain; we are living beyond our ecological means. One recent study attempted to calculate the extent of this “ecological overshoot of the human economy,” and found that we are using 1.2 Earth’s-worth of environmental goods and services—the implication being that at some point the debt will be called in, and all those services—the things which the planet does for us for free—will grind to a halt.

[K] Whether this is right, and if so where and when the ecological axe will fall, is hard to determine with any precision—which is why governments and financial institutions are only beginning to bring such risks into their economic calculations. It is also the reason why development agencies are not united in their view of environmental issues; while some, like the WRI, maintain that environmental progress needs to go hand-in-hand with economic development, others argue that the priority is to build a thriving economy, and then use the wealth created to tackle environmental degradation.

[L] This view assumes that rich societies will invest in environmental care. But is this right? Do things get better or worse as we get richer? Here the Stockholm declaration is ambiguous. “In the developing countries,” it says, “most of the environmental problems are caused by under-development.” So it is saying that economic development should make for a cleaner world? Not necessarily; “In the industrialized countries, environmental problems are generally related to industrialization and technological development,” it continues. In other words, poor and rich both over-exploit the natural world, but for different reasons. It’s simply not true that economic growth will surely make our world cleaner.

[M] Clearly, richer societies are able to provide environmental improvements which lie well beyond the reach of poorer communities. Citizens of wealthy nations demand national parks, clean rivers, clean air and poison-free food. They also, however, use far more natural resources—fuel, water (all those baths and golf courses) and building materials.

[N] A case can be made that rich nations export environmental problems, the most graphic example being climate change. As a country's wealth grows, so do its greenhouse gas emissions. The figures available will not be completely accurate. Measuring emissions is not a precise science, particularly when it comes to issues surrounding land use; not all nations have released up-to-date data, and in any case, emissions from some sectors such as aviation are not included in national statistics. But the data is exact enough for a clear trend to be easily discernible. As countries become richer, they produce more greenhouse gases; and the impact of those gases will fall primarily in poor parts of the world.

[O] Wealth is not, of course, the only factor involved. The average Norwegian is better off than the average US citizen, but contributes about half as much to climate change. But could Norway keep its standard of living and yet cut its emissions to Moroccan or even Ethiopian levels? That question, repeated across a dozen environmental issues and across our diverse planet, is what will ultimately determine whether the human race is living beyond its ecological means as it pursues economic revival.

课后作业

Passage 2 --- 2016.6 (2) --- 美国医疗改革

36. With a tax imposed on expensive health insurance plans, most employers will likely transfer money from health expenses into wages.
37. Changes in policy would be approved or rejected as a whole so that lobbyists would find it hard to influence lawmakers.
38. It is not easy to curb the rising medical costs in America.
39. Standardization of forms for automatic processing will save a lot of medical expenses.
40. Republicans and the insurance industry are strongly opposed to the creation of a public insurance plan.
41. Conversion of paper to electronic medical records will help eliminate redundant tests and prevent drug interactions.
42. The high cost of medical services and unnecessary tests and treatments have driven up medical expenses.
43. One main factor that has driven up medical expenses is that doctors are compensated for the amount of care rather than its effect.
44. Contrary to analysts' doubts, the author believes drug prices may be lowered through negotiation.
45. Fair competition might create a strong incentive for insurers to charge less.

Reform and Medical Costs

[A] Americans are deeply concerned about the relentless rise in health care costs and health insurance premiums. They need to know if reform will help solve the problem. The answer is that no one has an easy fix for rising medical costs. The fundamental fix—reshaping how care is delivered and how doctors are paid in a wasteful, abnormal system—is likely to be achieved only through trial and error and incremental (渐进的) gains.

[B] The good news is that a bill just approved by the House and a bill approved by the Senate Finance Committee would implement or test many reforms that should help slow the rise in medical costs over the long term. As a report in *The New England Journal of Medicine* concluded, “Pretty much every proposed innovation found in the health policy literature these days is contained in these measures.”

[C] Medical spending, which typically rises faster than wages and the overall economy, is propelled by two things: the high prices charged for medical services in this country and the volume of unnecessary care delivered by doctors and hospitals, which often perform a lot more tests and treatments than a patient really needs.

[D] Here are some of the important proposals in the House and Senate bills to try to address those problems, and why it is hard to know how well they will work.

[E] Both bills would reduce the rate of growth in annual Medicare payments to hospitals, nursing homes and other providers by amounts comparable to the productivity savings routinely made in other industries with the help of new technologies and new ways to organize work. This proposal could save Medicare more than \$100 billion over the next decade. If private plans demanded similar productivity savings from providers, and refused to let providers shift additional costs to them, the savings could be much larger. Critics say Congress will give in to lobbyists and let inefficient providers off the hook (放过). That is far less likely to happen if Congress also adopts strong “pay-go” rules requiring that any increase in payments to providers be offset by new taxes or budget cuts.

[F] The Senate Finance bill would impose an excise tax (消费税) on health insurance plans that cost more than \$8,000 for an individual or \$21,000 for a family. It would most likely cause insurers to redesign plans to fall beneath the threshold. Enrollees would have to pay more money for many services out of their own pockets, and that would encourage them to think twice about whether an expensive or redundant test was worth it. Economists project that most employers would shift money from expensive health benefits into wages. The House bill has no similar tax. The final legislation should.

[G] Any doctor who has wrestled with multiple forms from different insurers, or patients who have tried to understand their own parade of statements, know that simplification ought to save money. When the health insurance industry was still cooperating in reform efforts, its trade group offered to provide standardized forms for automated processing. It estimated that step would save hundreds of billions of dollars over the next decade. The bills would lock that pledge into law.

[H] The stimulus package provided money to convert the inefficient, paper-driven medical system to electronic records that can be easily viewed and transmitted. This requires open investments to help doctors convert. In time it should help restrain costs by eliminating redundant tests, preventing drug interactions, and helping doctors find the best treatments.

[I] Virtually all experts agree that the fee-for-service system—doctors are rewarded for the quantity of care rather than its quality or effectiveness—is a primary reason that the cost of care is so high. Most agree that the solution is to push doctors to accept fixed payments to care for a particular illness or for a patient’s needs over a year. No one knows how to make that happen quickly. The bills in both houses would start pilot projects within Medicare. They include such measures as accountable care organizations to take charge of a patient’s needs with an eye on both cost and quality, and chronic disease management to make sure the seriously ill, who are responsible for the bulk of all health care costs, are treated properly. For the most part, these experiments rely on incentive payments to get doctors to try them.

[J] Testing innovations do no good unless the good experiments are identified and expanded and the bad ones are dropped. The Senate bill would create an independent commission to monitor the pilot programs and recommend changes in Medicare's payment policies to urge providers to adopt reforms that work. The changes would have to be approved or rejected as a whole by Congress, making it hard for narrow-interest lobbies to bend lawmakers to their will.

[K] The bills in both chambers would create health insurance exchanges on which small businesses and individuals could choose from an array of private plans and possibly a public option. All the plans would have to provide standard benefit packages that would be easy to compare. To get access to millions of new customers, insurers would have a strong incentive to sell on the exchange. And the head-to-head competition might give them a strong incentive to lower their prices, perhaps by accepting slimmer profit margins or demanding better deals from providers.

[L] The final legislation might throw a public plan into the competition, but thanks to the fierce opposition of the insurance industry and Republican critics, it might not save much money. The one in the House bill would have to negotiate rates with providers, rather than using Medicare rates, as many reformers wanted.

[M] The president's stimulus package is pumping money into research to compare how well various treatments work. Is surgery, radiation or careful monitoring best for prostate (前列腺) cancer? Is the latest and most expensive cholesterol-lowering drug any better than its common competitors? The pending bills would spend additional money to accelerate this effort.

[N] Critics have charged that this sensible idea would lead to rationing of care. (That would be true only if you believed that patients should have an unrestrained right to treatments proven to be inferior.) As a result, the bills do not require, as they should, that the results of these studies be used to set payment rates in Medicare.

[O] Congress needs to find the courage to allow Medicare to pay preferentially for treatments proven to be superior. Sometimes the best treatment might be the most expensive. But overall, we suspect that spending would come down through elimination of a lot of unnecessary or even dangerous tests and treatments.

[P] The House bill would authorize the secretary of health and human services to negotiate drug prices in Medicare and Medicaid. Some authoritative analysts doubt that the secretary would get better deals than private insurers already get. We believe negotiation could work. It does in other countries.

[Q] Missing from these bills is any serious attempt to rein in malpractice costs. Malpractice awards do drive up insurance premiums for doctors in high-risk specialties, and there is some evidence that doctors engage in "defensive medicine" by performing tests and treatments primarily to prove they are not negligent should they get sued.