Questions for “Women’s Brains”

1. What purposes do the quotations in this essay from George Eliot’s novel *Middlemarch* serve? (You’ll need to look up George Eliot and *Middlemarch)*. Why does Gould, when introducing the quotation from Broca in paragraph 5, refer to Eliot? Why are quotations from Eliot, whose real name was Mary Anna Evans, especially appropriate for Gould’s essay?
2. In paragraph 3, Gould states, “I have the greatest respect for Broca’s meticulous procedure. His numbers are sound.” Despite this praise, Gould goes on to refute Broca’s findings. What vulnerability does Gould find in Broca’s coclusions? Does Gould’s praise of Broca strengthen or weaken his own argument? Explain.
3. Gould builds two parallel arguments: one on scientific method, another on speculative conclusions. In which passage does he question the scientific method(s) rather than the findings themselves? How does Gould weave these sources together in order to make his own point.
4. How does each of the individuals Gould cites—Paul Broca, L. Manouvrier, Gustave Le Bon, and Maria Montessori—contribute to the development of his argument? Does each make a separate point, or do they reinforce one another? Could Gould have eliminated any of them without damaging his argument? Explain your reasoning.
5. At the end of Paragraph 7, Gould adds a footnote reassessing an earlier point. Does this admission add or detract from his credibility?
6. Paragraphs 9-12 work as a unit to develop a single point that is integral to the overall essay. What is this point? How do paragraph 9-12 develop the point?
7. In paragraph 13, Gould shows how Broca and his colleagues extended their conclusions to other groups. What is Gould’s purpose in developing this point as elaborately as he does?
8. What is Gould’s claim?