

ENGLISH

Grammar: Reading Comprehension



READING COMPREHENSION

What is Reading Comprehension?

Reading comprehension is the act of understanding what you are reading. The answers that you provide to the questions asked show how well you have understood the given passage.

Reading comprehension involves

- Reading the lessons and the poems in your textbook
- Understanding the information provided in the lessons
- Understanding the meanings of the words used by the writer
- Forming an opinion on the writer's style
- Answering the questions asked at the end of the passage

Guidelines to Read a Passage

Comprehension: Prose

- Read the lesson thoroughly.
- Note the new words you have come across.
- Identify its main and supporting ideas.
- Understand the author's purpose and viewpoint.
- Read the questions carefully.
- Understand what is being asked in the questions.

Comprehension: Poetry

- Read the poem thoroughly.
- Identify the theme and the rhyme scheme of the poem.
- Identify the figures of speech used.
- Read the questions carefully.
- Understand what is being asked in the questions.
- Identify the imagery used by the poet.

Types of Comprehension Passages

You may come across many types of passages while attempting the reading comprehension section in your paper.

A **factual passage** deals with facts usually shared in the form of reports, scientific articles and historical descriptions.

A **literary passage** consists of extracts from works of great writers and can be in the form of novels, short stories and poetry.

A **discursive passage** consists of articles which present an opinion or a reasoned argument on a topic.

Let us look at some sample comprehension passages.

Sample Comprehension Passages

1. Factual Passage

Enid Blyton was a children's writer born in 1897 in London. Her books have been among the world's best-sellers since the 1930s. She was born to Thomas Carey Blyton and his wife Theresa Mary Harrison Blyton. Her father was a cutlery salesman, and Hanly and Carey were her younger brothers. Although Enid suffered from whooping cough a few months after her birth, she was nursed back to health by her father. Enid liked gardening, art, music, literature and the theatre. Her first book was a 24-page collection of poems named *Child Whispers* which was illustrated by a school friend, Phyllis Chase. *The Rockingdown Mystery* published in 1949 was the first of her fifteen *Secret Seven* novels. *The Secret Seven Society* consists of seven children who meet regularly in a shed in the garden to discuss peculiar events in their local community. *Noddy* was a series about a wooden boy from Toyland, and these books became one of her most successful and best-known series. Blyton's books have been translated into almost 90 languages. In fact, the Pogo channel in India used to air the show *Make Way for Noddy* in Hindi and other regional languages for children. Blyton wrote on several topics including education, natural history, fantasy, mystery stories and biblical narratives, and is best remembered today for her *Noddy*, *Famous Five* and *Secret Seven* series.

Questions

Q 1) Complete the following sentences.

- a. Blyton's books have been translated into _____ languages.
- b. The first *Secret Seven* novel was published in _____.

Q 2) Why did Enid have to be nursed back to health?

Q 3) What were Enid's interests other than writing?

Q 4) Choose the correct alternative.

a. *The Secret Seven Society* consists of

- i. 24 poems
- ii. Seven children
- iii. Fifteen children
- iv. A wooden boy

Q 4) Which topics did Enid Blyton write on?

Q 5) Who illustrated Enid's first book?

Answers

A 1)

- a. Blyton's books have been translated into 90 languages.
- b. The first *Secret Seven* novel was published in 1949.

A 2) Enid suffered from whooping cough a few months after her birth. Hence, she had to be nursed back to health.

A 3) Enid liked gardening, art, music, literature and the theatre other than writing.

A 4)

- a. Seven children

A 5) Enid Blyton's school friend, Phyllis Chase, illustrated Enid's first book *Child Whispers*, which was a 24-page collection of poems.

2. Literary Passage

The moon has a face like the clock in the hall;
She shines on thieves on the garden wall,
On streets and fields and harbour quays,
And birdies asleep in the forks of the trees.

The squalling cat and the squeaking mouse,
The howling dog by the door of the house,
The bat that lies in bed at noon,
All love to be out by the light of the moon.

But all of the things that belong to the day
Cuddle to sleep to be out of her way;
And flowers and children close their eyes
Till up in the morning the sun shall rise.

Questions

- Q 1)** Whom does the moon shine on in the garden?
Q 2) Who loves to be awake at night?
Q 3) Give one word from the poem that means 'branches'.
Q 4) Identify the rhyming words from each stanza.
Q 5) What has the moon been compared to in the first stanza?

Answers

- A 1)** The moon shines on the thieves in the garden.
A 2) The cat, the mouse, the dog and the bat love to be awake at night.
A 3) A word from the poem that means 'branches' is 'forks'.
A 4) The rhyming words from each stanza are hall-wall, mouse-house, noon-moon, day-way and eyes-rise.
A 5) The moon has been compared to the clock in the hall in the first stanza.

3. Literary Passage

Lying in bed, Swami realised with a shudder that it was Monday morning. It looked as though only a moment ago it had been the last period on Friday; already Monday was here. He hoped that an earthquake would reduce the school building to dust, but that good building Albert Mission School had withstood similar prayers for over a hundred years now. At nine o'clock Swaminathan wailed, -I have a headache. His mother said, -Why don't you go to school in a bullock cart?

-So that I may be completely dead at the other end? Have you any idea what it means to be jolted in a cart?

-Have you any important lessons today?

-Important! Bah! That geography teacher has been teaching the same lesson for over a year now. And we have arithmetic, which means for a whole period we are going to be beaten by the teacher. Important lessons!

And mother generously suggested that Swami might stay at home.

At 9:30, when he ought to have been lining up in the school prayer hall, Swami was lying on the bench in mother's room. Father asked him, -Have you no school today?

-Headache, Swami replied.

-Nonsense! Dress up and go.

-Headache.

-Loaf about less on Sunday and you will be without a headache on Monday.

Swami knew how stubborn his father could be and changed his tactics. -I can't go so late to class.

-I agree, but you'll have to; it is your own fault. You should have asked me before deciding to stay away.

-What will the teacher think if I go so late?

-Tell him you had a headache and so are late.

-He will beat me if I say so.

-Will he? Let us see. What is his name?

-Mr Samuel.

-Does he beat the boys?

-He is very violent, especially with boys who come late. Some days ago, a boy was made to stay on his knees for a whole period in a corner of the class because he came late, and that after getting six cuts from the cane and having his ears twisted. I wouldn't like to go late to Mr Samuel's class.

-If he is so violent why not tell your headmaster about it?

-They say that even the headmaster is afraid of him. He is such a violent man.

And then Swami gave a lurid account of Samuel's violence; how when he started caning he would not stop till he saw blood on the boy's hand, which he made the boy press to his forehead like a vermilion marking. Swami hoped that his father would be made to see that he couldn't go to his class tale. But father's behaviour took an unexpected turn. He became excited. -What do these people mean by beating our children? They must be driven out of service. I will see.

The result was he proposed to send Swami late to his class as a kind of challenge. He was also going to send a letter with Swami to the headmaster. No amount of protest from Swami was of any avail: Swami had to go to school.

By the time he was ready, father had composed a long letter to the headmaster, put in an envelope and sealed it.

-What have you written, father? Swaminathan asked apprehensively.

-Nothing for you. Give it to your headmaster and go to your class.

Swami's father did not know the truth that Mr Samuel was actually a very kind and gentle man.

Questions

- Q 1)** Give the meaning of each of the following words as used in the passage. One word answers or short phrases will be accepted.
- jolted (line 21)
 - stubborn (line 21)
 - avail (line 45)
- Q 2)** What was Swami's Monday morning wish unlikely to be answered?
- Q 3)** Was Swami's father sympathetic to his son's headache?
- Q 4)** How different was Swami's mother's response from his father's?
- Q 5)** Why did Swami give a colourful account of Mr Samuel to his father?
- Q 6)** In what way did father's behaviour take an unexpected turn?
- Q 7)** What was Swami finally ordered to do by his father?

Answers

- A 1)**
- shook violently
 - adamant
 - be of use or advantage
- A 2)** On a Monday morning, Swami wished that an earthquake would reduce the school building to dust. His wish was unlikely to be answered because the building withstood similar prayers for over a hundred years now.
- A 3)** The sentence, –Loaf about less on Sundays and you will be without a headache on Monday. tells us that Swami's father was completely unsympathetic to his son's headache.
- A 4)** Unlike his father, Swami's mother was concerned about his health as well as his education. She questioned him about his headache and if he had any important lessons that day.
- A 5)** Swami gave a colourful account of Mr Samuel to his father to escape going to school on a Monday morning.
- A 6)** After the account of Mr Samuel, Swami's father suddenly became excited and decided to challenge the teacher by purposefully sending his son late to school. He also decided to write to the headmaster about the matter.
- A 7)** Swami was finally ordered to go to school late with a letter for the headmaster written by his father.

4. Factual Passage

From the danger of losing one leg due to a knee injury to winning an Olympic bronze medal, Yogeshwar Dutt has come a long way. The freestyle wrestler's story is one of passion for the sport and his perseverance and solid determination in realising his dream. Thanks to him, Bhainswal Kalan, a village some 20 kilometres away from Sonapat in Haryana, has become very popular now. Yogeshwar has qualities of a champion, and virtues like humility, respect for others and extending a helping hand to the needy, which make him even more endearing. His dream of winning an Olympic medal was not fulfilled in Beijing in 2008. Going through the injuries was a difficult period for him. The Mittal Champions Trust helped him when he had the knee injury. His intense desire to win a medal worked as a healing agent to all his injuries; he trained hard and God listened to his prayers. After 2008, his sole target was the 2012 Olympics. He wanted to participate in more competitions, but he was pulled down by injuries in 2009 and that robbed him of nearly one year. After that, he could not reduce his weight too often to take part in various events. All the time the Olympics was there in his mind. Even when he was injured he thought of winning an Olympic medal. His back injury was a problem, but he got over it. His friends and family backed him a lot. His brother and friends shared his responsibilities and allowed him to focus on wrestling with a free mind.

Questions

- Q 1)** What are the three qualities of a true champion?
- Q 2)** Why did Yogeshwar Dutt almost lose a year in 2009?
- Q 3)** What kept him motivated despite his injuries?
- Q 4)** What makes Yogeshwar Dutt an endearing person?
- Q 5)** Find words from the passage which mean
- dedication: _____
 - quality: _____

Answers

- A 1)** Perseverance, determination and passion are three qualities of a true champion.
- A 2)** Yogeshwar Dutt almost lost a year in 2009 because of injuries.
- A 3)** The thought of the Olympic medal kept Yogeshwar Dutt motivated despite his injuries.
- A 4)** Yogeshwar has qualities of a champion, and virtues like humility, respect for others and extending a helping hand to the needy, which make him an endearing person.
- A 5)**
- perseverance
 - virtue

5. Literary Passage

Margaret, the eldest of the four, was sixteen, and very pretty, being plump and fair, with large eyes, plenty of soft brown hair, a sweet mouth, and white hands, of which she was rather vain. Fifteen-year-old Jo was very tall, thin, and brown, and reminded one of a colt, for she never seemed to know what to do with her long limbs, which were very much in her way. She had a decided mouth, a comical nose, and sharp, grey eyes, which appeared to see everything, and were by turns fierce, funny or thoughtful. Her long, thick hair was her one beauty, but it was usually bundled into a net, to be out of her way. Round shoulders had Jo, big hands and feet, a flyaway look to her clothes, and the uncomfortable appearance of a girl who was rapidly shooting up into a woman and didn't like it. Elizabeth, or Beth, as everyone called her, was a rosy, smooth-haired, bright-eyed girl of thirteen, with a shy manner, a timid voice, and a peaceful expression which was seldom disturbed. Her father called her 'Little Miss Tranquillity', and the name suited her excellently, for she seemed to live in a happy world of her own, only venturing out to meet the few whom she trusted and loved. Amy, though the youngest, was the most important person, in her own opinion at least. A regular snow maiden, with blue eyes, and yellow hair curling on her shoulders, pale and slender, and always carrying herself like a young lady mindful of her manners. The clock struck six and, having swept up the hearth, Beth put a pair of slippers down to warm. Somehow the sight of the old shoes had a good effect upon the girls, for Mother was coming, and everyone brightened to welcome her. Meg stopped lecturing, and lighted the lamp, Amy got out of the easy chair without being asked, and Jo forgot how tired she was as she sat up to hold the slippers nearer to the blaze.

(From *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott)

Questions

- Q 1)** The four sisters mentioned in the passage are _____.
- Q 2)** What was special about Jo's eyes?
- Q 3)** Why was 'Little Miss Tranquillity' called so?
- Q 4)** What did Jo dislike about herself?
- Q 5)** Find words from the passage which are similar in meaning to
- chubby: _____
 - skinny: _____
 - serenity: _____

Answers

- A 1)** The four sisters mentioned in the passage are Margaret, Jo, Elizabeth and Amy.
- A 2)** Jo's eyes were expressive, sharp and grey. It seemed as if they saw everything and would turn fierce, funny or thoughtful in turns.
- A 3)** Beth was called 'Little Miss Tranquillity' by her father because her face had a peaceful expression which was seldom disturbed.
- A 4)** Jo had the uncomfortable appearance of a girl who was rapidly shooting up into a woman and she didn't like it.
- A 5)**
- Plump
 - Thin
 - Tranquillity

6. Literary poem

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Questions

- Q 1)** Where did the poet see the daffodils?
- Q 2)** What does the poet compare the daffodils to?
- Q 3)** Name the figure of speech in the lines 'Fluttering and dancing in the breeze'.
- Q 4)** Give an example of hyperbole from the poem.
- Q 5)** Find words from the poem that mean
- valley
 - merry
 - thoughtful

Answers

- A 1)** The poet saw the daffodils beneath the trees along the lakeside.
- A 2)** The poet compares the daffodils to the shining stars.

A 3) The figure of speech is personification as daffodils are personified by using the words 'fluttering' and 'dancing' to describe their movements.

A 4) The lines 'Ten thousand saw I at a glance' is an example of hyperbole.

A 5)

- a) vale
- b) jocund
- c) pensive

7. Discursive Passage

This is the high noon of the Age of Sponsorship. For several years now, we have become used to all kinds of events being sponsored. In many newspapers, every possible feature, barring the editorials, is sponsored. Even the daily weather report is.

Student organisations, which were once content to hold low-key festivals in their college, now find corporate sponsors and get massive media exposure for such events.

Ganesh Chaturthi, the festival was once an affair confined to individual homes. Today, in Mumbai it provides competition for rival sponsors as the size of the idols grows in height and girth every year and the festivities are held with greater gusto and noise.

During Dushera, Mumbai reverberates to the beat of drums. Thousands of young people spend nights dancing to the various versions of the traditional Gujarati 'garba' dance, including the mutant 'disco garba'. It is one of those strange twists of irony that dance, which actually liberated women and gave them a legitimate reason to dance their hearts out, has now become a highly sponsored event in which there is no place for traditional 'garba' dancers. In the past, the dancing was free of both self-consciousness, as it was a women's dance, and commerce as it was held in the courtyard. Thus, each year something precious is being lost—and the worst part of it is that the majority of us are not even aware of it.

Questions

- Q 1) Why is it called the age of sponsorship?
- Q 2) What roles did Garba play in the lives of the women in the past?
- Q 3) How has Ganesh Chaturthi changed over a period of time in Mumbai?
- Q 4) Find a word from the passage that means 'adapted or changed'.
- Q 5) What are most people not aware of according to the writer?

Answers

- A 1) It is called the age of sponsorship because newspapers and festivals in colleges are commercialised.
- A 2) In the past, Garba was a medium of allowing women to get rid of their inhibitions and self-consciousness.
- A 3) Earlier, Ganesh Chaturthi was a festival confined to individual homes. However, in the present, it provides an opportunity for sponsors to invest money.

A 4) Adapted or changed: Mutant

A 5) According to the writer, most people are not aware that the commercialisation of festivals is leading to the loss of the essence of culture.

8. Factual Passage

Valley of Flowers is a national park in Uttarakhand, India. Nestled in the West Himalayas, the valley is located at an altitude of 3,600 metres above sea level and is famous for charming meadows of alpine flowers. Myriad alpine flowers stretched across 87.5 sq kms make this place a colourful paradise. The beautiful valley is also a world heritage site with its pristine beauty and mystical surroundings attracting nature lovers, photographers and botanists. Valley of Flowers is bifurcated by Pushpawati River. The locals believe that the valley was once inhabited by fairies. It is one of the famous trekking destinations in India. One cannot stay at the Valley of Flowers. Therefore, Ghangaria, the base camp for the trek to the Valley of Flowers, remains an ideal place to relax and sleep.

The Valley of Flowers is a 3-km climb from Ghangaria. The Brahmakamal, the Blue Poppy and the Cobra Lily are some flowers that bloom in the valley. The Himalayan Balsam is the most predominant flower of the valley. The woolly white Edelweiss is a captivating site. This flower grows in inaccessible places, at high altitudes in the mountains of Europe, Asia and South America and is associated in Slovenia with mountaineering. The valley is covered with snow for most of the year. The valley opens on 1st June every year for visitors. There are huge glaciers in the Valley of Flowers in June. At this time, snow starts melting and the seeds of the last year's plants start germinating. By July, all the flowers are at full bloom. One can find the maximum number of flowers until mid-August. Snowfall starts in October, and the valley is closed officially for public.

Questions

Q 1) What is special about the Valley of Flowers?

Q 2) Why is Ghangaria an important location for visitors?

Q 3) Which flowers can one find in the valley?

Q 4) The Valley of Flowers is located at an altitude of _____ where myriad alpine flowers are stretched across _____.

Q 5) Find from the passage synonyms of the following words

Spotless: _____

Magical: _____

Distant: _____

Populated: _____

Answers

A 1) The Valley of Flowers is a national park in Uttarakhand, India. It is famous for the charming meadows of alpine flowers stretched across several kilometres and the valley is also a world heritage site.

A 2) Trekkers cannot stay in the valley. Therefore, Ghangaria, the base camp for the trek to the Valley of Flowers, is important as it is an ideal place to relax and sleep.

- A 3) The Brahmakamal, the Blue Poppy, the Cobra Lily and the woolly white Edelweiss are some flowers found in the valley. The best time to visit the valley is from July to September.
- A 4) The Valley of Flowers is located at an altitude of 3,600 metres above sea level where myriad alpine flowers are stretched across 87.5 sq kms.
- A 5)
- a) mystical
 - b) inaccessible
 - c) inhabited
 - d) pristine

9. Factual Passage

School used to be all about writing, whether it was the exercise books we wrote in or the notes we passed around. But not anymore. Now it's all about typing. Learning your QWERTY is almost as important as learning your ABC. So, when my daughter came home last year with cursive handwriting homework, I was nonplussed. Cursive writing was originally developed to make it easier for children to write with a quill. By joining up the letters, it kept the quill on the parchment and minimised ink blots. But my daughter writes with a laptop. I explained as much to her teacher at the next parents' day. But the teacher explained that research suggests that the process of writing information down on paper, by hand, has a more direct effect on the formation of memories in the learning process than typing. Taking notes in class is still the most effective way to learn. It's a better way to store the skills for written language in a child's brain than pressing keys. She went on to say, —But that doesn't mean that one should ditch computers. Children should be taught to touch-type early on. She just feels that learning is aided by the physical act of writing. Authors often write their first draft by hand. Whether it's to do with the pace of thought, or some kind of stimulation the physical act has, we don't know. But it's a fact.

The French would doubtless agree. They love their handwriting. Teachers in France believe that fluency with a pen 'unlocks the mind' and they spend more time on writing than reading between the ages of three and eight. We teach children the formation of letters and the appropriate joining strokes. But after a few years, we leave them on their own devices, just as the written workload starts to increase. That's when the bad habits set in.

But as proper writing becomes rarer, spending some time improving your handwriting is a good investment. In the future, sending a handwritten letter will be a display of affluence and class, which is why the sale of fountain pens is reviving.

Questions

- Q 1) What was the original purpose of cursive writing?
- Q 2) How is writing on paper better than typing?
- Q 3) Why does handwriting become illegible as children grow older?
- Q 4) Spending some time in improving one's handwriting is a good investment as_____.
- Q 5) Find words from passage which mean
- a) encouragement: _____
 - b) plume: _____

Answers

- A 1) Cursive writing was originally developed to make it easier for children to write with a quill.
- A 2) Writing is better than typing because handwriting has a more direct effect on the formation of memories in the learning process than typing.
- A 3) As children grow older, the written workload starts to increase, which is a reason why handwriting become illegible.
- A 4) Spending some time in improving one's handwriting is a good investment as in the future sending a handwritten letter will be a display of affluence and class.
- A 5)
- a) stimulation
 - b) quill

10. Factual Passage

Ever wondered about those tall structures that are landmarks along every shore all over the world? Lighthouses. We see them in pictures and in movies and along every seashore. Tall, stately structures looking out to sea, warning the incoming ships of approaching land. Did you know what served as a lighthouse in the early years? The locals from the area would light a fire at a height to warn boats of any impending dangers like rocks or even land. The early constructors of lighthouse included the Greeks, Romans and Phoenicians. How do you think these lighthouses showed the way to incoming ships? Those were the days when technology had not taken over the world. The lighthouses used lamps to guide the ships. However, these lamps could throw light only as far as a few miles into the sea. It was only much later that mirrors, prisms, electricity and the automatic working of a lighthouse came to be. It is indeed amazing what these stately structures out in lonely locations across the world mean to the sailors as they near land after days out at sea. Did you know that the Lighthouse of Alexandria is one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World? It was located on the island of Pharos in Egypt and it was built in 290 BC. The lighthouse used fire at night and reflected the sunrays during the day to warn sailors of land. This monument is a legacy in the world today although it was destroyed by several earthquakes that hit it in the 1300s. Today, in its place stands a fort built in 1480 using the marble and stones from the lighthouse, a breathtaking structure that came down ravaged by nature.

Questions

- Q 1) What is the purpose of a lighthouse?
- Q 2) How would lighthouses operate in the early years?
- Q 3) What is unique about the fort built in 1480?
- Q 4) What was so special about the Lighthouse of Alexandria?
- Q 5) Find words from the passage which mean
- a) residents: _____
 - b) demolished: _____

Answers

- A 1)** A lighthouse is a tall structure looking out to sea, warning the incoming ships of approaching land.
- A 2)** In the early years, when technology had not taken over, locals from the area would light a fire at a height to warn boats of rocks or even land. Early lighthouses used lamps to guide the ships.
- A 3)** The fort built in 1480 is made from the marble and stones of the Lighthouse of Alexandria which was destroyed by the earthquakes that hit it in the 1300s.
- A 4)** The Lighthouse of Alexandria is special because it used fire at night and reflected the sunrays during the day to warn sailors of land.
- A 5)**
- a) locals
 - b) ravaged

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