

Lecture Notes For Reading Comprehension

We can see reading comprehension for all aptitude exams. A reading comprehension puts to test your reading as well as writing skills. One has to be very very careful about how one is reading and how one is solving. First of all, remember the different methodology of reading and keeping in mind what is essential.

Read effectively for reading comprehension:

To read a comprehension you have to follow the following points:

1. Skimming
2. Scanning
3. Main idea
4. Tone and style
5. Vocabulary
6. References
7. Conclusion

1. Skimming: When you read something and go fast over the details. If there are a lot of facts related things etc. which would not be read so much, you can go quickly over the details.

2. Scanning: We will go with the essential points and go a little slow in that area, meaning you are reading carefully. In this case there are the points from where the main idea comes and from where the author shows the change, showing an important example or trying to put an argument. So, the points from which question has been asked. These are the points which you have to scan while reading.

3. Main idea: The main idea is essence. The main idea is something around which the whole passage is revolving.

4. Tone and style: When you talk about tone and style, you have to look at the purpose of writing. Basically, why has something being written, automatically you try to find the tone and style.

Eg. Informational style of writing, entertainment style of writing, argumentative style of writing or analytical style of writing.

5. Vocabulary: Vocabulary in context means according to passage how the particular word is used. As you start reading the passage, you are likely to come across new words. Do not be frightened. Try to guess the meaning with the help of context and move ahead.

6. References: Point of references from where the author asked the questions. Point of references could be a fact, any information, any data, any vocabulary word, an example and a person.

7. Conclusion: The conclusion is what you learnt from the passage.

How to find main idea

Before trying to find out the main idea, also look at the kinds of topics that one needs to be comfortable with while reading.

TOPICS:

1. Philosophy
2. Psychology
3. Genetic- biology, animal life, ecology and environment.
4. Science and technology
5. Politics and sociology
6. Civilization and History
7. Economics
8. Biography

These topics you can read from- bbc.com, history.com, Hindu editorial, epw.in, national geographic magazine, encyclopedia, economist magazine etc. these are the places from where you can read and become comfortable with all these topics.

What you have to keep in mind while reading:

1. What is the topic?
2. What is the most essential point about the topic and i.e. the main idea.

The positive argument, negative argument, by supporting, by opposing, by explaining etc. if everything is pointing towards the one thing, i.e. your main idea.

Whatever you think of the main idea, if you remove it from the story and you find that the whole story changes you got the right main idea.

Note that the author doesn't need to write the entire main idea of a paragraph in one sentence. Sometime the main idea might be distributed across two or three sentences in the paragraph.

Passage 1:

"In the first weekend of every August, the town of Twinsburg, Ohio, holds a parade. Decorated floats, cars and lorries roll slowly past neat, white houses and clipped lawns, while thousands of onlookers clap and wave flags in the sunshine. The scene is a perfect little slice of America. There is, though, something rather strange about the participants: they all seem to come in pairs. Identical twins of all colours, shapes, ages, and size are assembling for the world's largest annual gathering of their kind.

The Twinsburg is of interest to more people than just the twins themselves. Every year, the festival attracts dozens of scientists who come to prod, swab, sample and question the participants. For identical twins are natural clones: the odd mutation aside, they share 100% of their genes. That means studying them can cast light on the relative importance of genetics and environments in sharing particular human characteristics."

Answer:

The topic is 'identical twins' and the main idea as expressed in the second last and last sentences of the second paragraph is that studying identical twins can help us understand better, the relative importance of genetics and environment is shaping particular human characteristics.'

Passage 2:

In Pakistan - they are kachi bodies, in Cuba - focus isalubers, in India - bustees and Brazil - favelas. Whatever the local name of slums, there are a lot of them and they are growing fast. A new report, "The Habitat," by the United Nations agency responsible for "human settlement", says that in 2001, just under a billion people were living in slums -- about a third of the world's city dwellers. In the last decade, the urban population in less developed regions increased by a third. On present trends, says the UN report, 2 billion people could be living in slums by 2023.

In Africa, many parts of the Middle East, Latin America and Asia, migrants are leaving farmland which is unable to support them, and arriving in cities which are unprepared to deal with them. This has been a long term trend and is unlikely to abate no matter how awful the slums become. In 1800, only 2 % of the world's population was urbanized; by 2008, more than half of the world will be. Because such migration is so predictable and long-established, it might seem surprising that many governments are ill-equipped for it. But there is little new in that either: the much-rich countries fared just as badly when their cities first began to grow rapidly.

1. Topic.
2. Main idea.

Answer:

1. Spiraling slums. (Spiraling means increasing very very fast)
2. Main idea: whatever the local name of slums, there are alot of them and they are growing fast.

Passage 3:

They have a dismal track record when it comes to predicting economic growth, exchange rates or the direction of the stock market. So, you might have expected economists to despair at the thought of forecasting sports results. Not at all. Efforts to work out the numbers of medals which countries are likely to get in the Athens Olympics, which start on August 13th, are well underway.

Answer:

The topic is forecasting sports results and the main idea: Efforts to work out the numbers of medals which countries are likely to get in the Athens Olympics.

Passage 4:

"You want rubes! We can do business!" the anonymous caller promised a lucrative deal over the phone: stumps up dollars in advance, and he would produce a glittering hoard in Johannesburg. But your correspondence refused, so the caller instead produced some colourful abuse, sneered at British muscle prowess, and hung up.

It is rare for any attempted African scam to be executed so inelegantly. Advance-fee frauds often lure victims to part with tens of thousands of dollars on the promise of huge, but somehow plausible, later gains. Nigerian, especially are renowned for elaborate and persuasive tables: "my uncle the president, died leaving me a million to smuggle to your country; let me use your bank account to hide the cash, and you will get a slice; oh, and pay me a few thousand dollars in advance for handling fees".

Answer:

Topic: Advance fee frauds in Africa.

Main idea: What is done in these frauds.

Theory of reading comprehension:

The best way to approach the reading comprehension section is to begin reading for the reading comprehension, to begin to interact with the text. When you read every day, start to ask yourself questions:

- What is the main idea of this passage?
- What is the author's position and tone (neutral? positive? critical? etc.)?
- What is the structure of the argument (two opposing or one-sided, informational or author's opinion)?

You can start by reading some publications available online:

The Economist, The Washington Post, Scientific American, Businessweek, the Hindu etc. these are some places from which you can read, and they give you an excellent insight about how to understand different topics.

You will learn how to read the different sections of passages more freely and learn how the other parts of texts are interwoven.

Therefore:

- Try to practice active reading once every day.
- Read CRT exam level publications.
- Practice determining the main idea, tone, type and structure of text.
- Pay attention to how the text flows. notice change in opinion or content.

Different question type in reading comprehension

- General
- Specific
- Direct
- Indirect
- Main idea
- Style and tone
- Title

General: General question is basically from where you can read the whole passage and answer. Question like:

- Which of the following authors agree with?
- Which of the following authors disagree with?
- Which of the following is mentioned in the passage?
- Which of the following is not mentioned in the passage?

These kinds of questions are your general questions.

Specific: Specific questions are from a particular point of reference; you just have to go to that point and give the answer.

Specific points - could be a fact, could be an argument, could be information, could be a vocabulary word etc.

Direct: Question based on fact, information and data are the direct question.

Indirect: These are the basic assumption, inference, conclusion question. Indirect questions are also called as which of the following can be implied, concluded, inferred or assumed.

Main idea: The main idea is usually either at the starting idea, as a concluding idea, somewhere in the middle and sometimes inferential, based on the passage you have to find out the essence.

The main idea can be direct and general, can be indirect and general, can be indirect and specific.

Style and tone - We already talked about style and tone.

Title: Some time this question comes. So, for this question, you have to be related to the topic in their idea. The title has to be related to the passage.

One thing is better to read the question first or read the passage first. If it is a long passage, it is better to read the question first because then you know which part of the passage you can skim and which part you have to scan.

Solving reading comprehension

Passage 1:

Ordinarily, nothing upset the equilibrium of the Pundit. But the loss of the necklace, which his wife had borrowed from a neighbour, and the fact that he had to replace it worried him. He spent all his time in devising ways and means to replace the debt. Six months later, he gave his wife a gold necklace. It was exactly what he had yearned for. "There is no need to repay it", she said.

The Pundit was surprised. She explained, 'the necklace was not stolen. That was the only way I could think of making you get me one'.

1. The Pundit was almost never upset as he

- a. Had the courage to face a problem.
- b. Had a balanced attitude.
- c. Was indifferent to ordinary incidents.
- d. Always succeeded in finding a solution to his problem.
- e. There always existed a solution.

Ans : had a balanced attitude.

2. What worried the pandit most was that?

- a. His wife had lost the necklace.
- b. He had to replace the necklace.
- c. His wife was so foolish and careless.
- d. The necklace was very expensive.
- e. His wife had hidden the necklace.

Ans: he had to replace the necklace.

3. The Pundit struggle for six months so that

- a. He could present a necklace to his wife.
- b. He could lend the necklace to the others.
- c. His wife could replace the lost necklace.
- d. His wife could satisfy her desire to own a necklace.
- e. He could buy a new necklace for his wife.

Ans : his wife could replace the lost necklace.

4. The reason why the Pundit's wife refused to return the necklace was that

- a. She had always wanted one like it.
- b. The real owner did not expect it back.
- c. She had not lost any necklace.
- d. She was tempted to keep this one for herself.
- e. The real owner gifted it to her.

Ans : she had not lost the necklace.

5. The Pundit's wife had told him a lie in order to

- a. Trick him to satisfying her yearning.
- b. Punish him.
- c. Make him repay a debt.

- d. Force him to work hard to earn.
- e. None of these.

Ans : Trick him to satisfying her yearning.

Passage 2:

Pablo Picasso showed his truly exceptional talent from a very young age. His first word was lapis(Spanish for pencil), and he had to learn to draw before he could talk. He was the only son in the family, and he was good- looking, so he was thoroughly spoilt. He hated school and often refused to go unless his doting parents allowed him to take one of his father's pet pigeons with him.

Apart from pigeons, his great love was art, and when in 1891 his father, who was an amateur artist, got a job as a drawing teacher at a college, Pablo went with him to the college. He often watched his father paint and sometimes was allowed to help. One evening his father was painting a picture of their pigeon when he had to leave the room. He returned to find that Pablo had completed the picture, and it was so amazingly beautiful and lifelike that he had given to his son his own palette and brushes and never painted again. Pablo was just 13.

1. As a boy Pablo Picasso was

- a. Ordinary looking but talented.
- b. Loved by one and all.
- c. Handsome and studious.
- d. Handsome and hardworking.
- e. Glamorous and happening.

Ans : loved by one and all.

2. He was spoilt mostly because he was

- a. A smart boy.
- b. Loved by one and all.
- c. The only son in the family.
- d. Always surrounded by notorious boys.
- e. Of the money power.

Ans : the only son in the family.

3. Picasso went to school only when

- a. His friends accompanied him.'
- b. His father went to him.'
- c. He was allowed to paint at school.
- d. He was allowed to carry a pet with him.

- e. He was allowed to carry a new school bag.

Ans : he was allowed to carry a pet with him.

4. When his father painted his college, Pablo

- a. Never helped him.
- b. Rarely helped him.
- c. Always helped him.'
- d. Invariably helped him.
- e. Occasionally helped him.

Ans : occasionally helped him.

5. Pablo's father gave up painting because he

- a. Did not like this job.
- b. Retired from the college.
- c. Was impressed by his son's talent.
- d. Lost interest in painting.
- e. He thought about changing his profession.

Ans : was impressed by his son's talent.

Passage 3:

Nature challenges humans in many ways, through disease, weather, and *famine*. For those living along the coast, one unusual phenomenon capable of *catastrophic* destruction is the tsunami (pronounced "tsoo-NAH-mee"). A tsunami is a series of waves generated in a body of water by an impulsive disturbance. Earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions, explosions and even the *impact* of meteorites can create tsunamis. Starting at sea, a tsunami slowly approaches land, growing in height and losing energy through bottom friction and turbulence. Still, just like any other water wave, tsunamis *unleash* tremendous energy as they *plunge* onto the shore. They have great erosion potential, stripping beaches of sand, undermining trees, and *flooding* hundreds of meters inland. They can easily crash cars, homes, vegetation, and anything they *collide* with. To minimize the devastation of a tsunami, scientists are constantly trying to *anticipate* them more accurately and more quickly. Because many factors come together to produce a life-threatening tsunami, foreseeing them is not easy. **Despite this**, researchers in meteorology *preserve* in studying and predicting tsunami behaviour.

1. Which sentence best expresses the essential information of this passage?

- a. Tsunamis become a new source of usable energy in the next hundred years.
- b. Tsunamis do more damage to the land than flooding.
- c. Tsunamis can have an especially catastrophic impact on coastal communities.

- d. Scientists can predict and track tsunamis with a fair degree of accuracy, reducing their potential impact.

Ans : tsunamis can have an especially catastrophic impact on coastal communities.

2. In the first sentence, why does the author mention the weather?

- a. Because tsunamis are caused by bad weather.
- b. Because tsunamis are more destructive than weather phenomena.
- c. As an example of a destructive nature force.
- d. As an introduction to the topic of coastal storm.

Ans : as an example of a destructive nature force.