

Reading comprehension

Concept

Speed reading strategies

- Widening the eye span
- Avoiding vocalization
- Avoiding using supports
- Avoiding recursive reading
- Avoiding sub-vocalization

Two types of questions

- Literal questions
- Inferential questions

Strategies to crack RC questions

- Take different types of approaches

- ✓ Scholar approach
- ✓ Hunter approach
- ✓ Balanced approach

- Look for signpost words
- Go around speed-breakers
- Itemize

Drill

Exercise 1

Read the following passage and answer the questions below:

One day a visitor knocked at Nasreddin Shah's door. "I am your cousin from Konya," he introduced himself, "and I have brought you a duck to celebrate the visit." Nasreddin was delighted. He asked his wife to cook the duck, and served the visitor a fine dinner. The next day another visitor arrived. "I am a friend of the man who brought you the duck," he said. Nasreddin invited him in and gave him a good meal. The next day, a yet another visitor arrived, claiming that he was the friend of the friend of the man who had brought the duck. Nasreddin treated this man too with a fine meal, but began to get second thoughts that visitors are using his house as a restaurant. Then another visitor came, and said he was the friend of the friend of the friend of the man who had brought the duck. Nasreddin invited him to eat dinner with him. His wife served this visitor some soup and the visitor tasted it. "What kind of soup is this?" asked the visitor very curiously. "It tastes just like warm water." "Ah!" said Nasreddin, "That is the soup of the soup of the soup of the duck." The visitor was bewildered!

1. How many people visited Nasreddin Shah?
2. Why was Nasreddin Shah delighted?
3. What made Nasreddin Shah have second thoughts?
4. How did Nasreddin Shah handle the tricky situation he was in?

Exercise 2

Read the following passage and answer the questions below:

The City Street Manager, Mr. Joseph Parks said that the winter parking rules will be in effect in the city from December 1 through March 31. These rules include alternate-side parking regulations, as well as demarcation of tow-away zones and handicap exceptions. Cars are to be parked on the south and east sides of streets from 8 a.m. to midnight; and on the north and west sides of streets between midnight and 8 a.m. This will help snow-ploughs and emergency vehicles get access to all neighbourhoods, as well as to keep rush-hour traffic to a minimum. Parks had further warned that all vehicles that [excepting those displaying handicapped parking permits] do not follow these guidelines will be towed at the owner's expense.

5. What is the main idea of the passage?
6. When should cars be parked on the east side of the road?
7. What are the winter-parking rules? What are their purpose(s)?

Exercise 3

Read the following passage to state which word(s) you would consider as speed-breaker(s). For how many of these, were you able to get at the meaning as you proceeded with reading the passage?

I discovered that my obsession for having each thing in the right place, each subject at the right time, each word in the right style, was not the well-deserved reward of an ordered mind but just the opposite: a complete system of pretense invented by me to hide the disorder of my nature. I discovered that I am not disciplined out of virtue but as a reaction to my negligence, that I appear generous in order to conceal my meanness, that I pass myself off as prudent because I am evil-minded, that I am conciliatory in order not to succumb to my repressed rage, that I am punctual only to hide how little I care about other people's time. I learned, in short, that love is not a condition of the spirit but a sign of the zodiac.

Speed-Breaker	Meaning

Concept review questions

PASSAGE 1

The world dismisses curiosity by calling it idle or mere idle curiosity even though curious people are seldom idle. Parents do their best to extinguish curiosity in their children because it makes life difficult to be faced everyday with a string of unanswerable questions about what makes fire hot or why grass grows. Children whose curiosity survives parental discipline are invited to join our university. When with the university, they go on asking their questions and trying to find the answers. In the eyes of a scholar, that is what a university is for. Some of the questions which the scholars ask seem to the world to be hardly worth asking, let alone answering. They asked questions too intricate and specialised for you and me to understand without years of explanation. If the world inquires one of them why he wants to know the answer to a particular question he may say (especially if he is a scientist), that the answer will in some obscure way make possible the invention of a new machine or weapon or gadget. He says this because he knows that the world understands and respects utility.

But to you, who are now part of the university, he will say that he wants to know the answer simply because he does not know it. This is akin to a mountain climber wanting to climb a mountain just because it is there. Similarly, a historian asked by an outsider why he studies history may come out with the argument that he has learnt to respect to report on such occasions, something about knowledge of the past, making it possible to understand the present and mould the future. But if you really want to know why a historian studies the past, the answer is much simpler, something happened and he would like to know what. All of this does not mean that the answers which scholars find to their questions have no consequences. They may have enormous consequences but these seldom form the reason for asking the question or pursuing the answers. It is true that scholars can be put to work answering questions for sake of the consequences as thousands are working now, for example, in search of a cure for cancer. But this is not the primary scholars. For the consequences are usually subjugate to the satisfaction of curiosity.

1. Children whose curiosity survives parental discipline means
 - ☒ a. children retaining their curiosity in spite of being discouraged by their parents
 - ☐ b. children pursuing their mental curiosity
 - ☐ c. children's curiosity subdued due to parents intervention
 - ☒ d. children being disciplined by their parents
2. The author compares the scientist to
 - ☐ a. a historian and mountain climber
 - ☐ b. a historian
 - ☒ c. a mountain climber
 - ☒ d. a scholar
3. The common people consider some of the questions that the scholars ask unimportant
 - ☐ a. as they are too lazy and idle
 - ☐ b. as they are too modest
 - ☒ c. as it's beyond their comprehension
 - ☒ d. as it is considered a waste of time
4. A historian really studies the past
 - ☐ a. to comprehend the present and to reconstruct the future
 - ☐ b. to explain the present and plan the future
 - ☐ c. to understand the present and make fortune
 - ☒ d. to know what exactly had happened
5. According to the passage, parents do their best to discourage curiosity in their children
 - ☐ a. because they have no time
 - ☐ b. because they have no patience to answer them
 - ☐ c. because they feel that their children ask stupid questions continuously
 - ☒ d. because they are unable to answer all the questions

PASSAGE 2

Nationalism, of course, is a curious phenomenon which, at a certain stage in a country's history, gives life, growth and unity but, at the same time, it has a tendency to limit one, because one thinks of one's country as something different from the rest of world. One's perspective changes and one is continuously thinking of one's own struggles and virtues and failings to the exclusion of other thoughts. The result is that the same nationalism which is the symbol of growth for a people becomes a symbol of the cessation of that growth in mind. Nationalism, when it becomes successful, sometimes, goes on spreading in an aggressive way and becomes a danger internationally. Whatever line of thought you follow, you arrive at the conclusion that some kind of balance must be found. Otherwise something that was good can turn into evil. Culture, which is essentially good becomes not only static but aggressive and something that breeds conflict and hatred when looked at from a wrong point of view. How are you to find a balance, I don't know. Apart from the political and economic problems of the age, perhaps, that is the greatest problem today because behind it there is a tremendous search for something which it cannot find. We turn to economic theories because they have an undoubted importance. It would be a mistake to talk of culture or even of God, when human beings starve and die. Before one can talk about anything else one must provide the normal essentials of life to human beings. That is where economics comes in. Human beings today are in no mood to tolerate this suffering and starvation and inequality when they see that the burden is not equally shared. Others profit while they alone bear the burden.

6. The greatest problem in the middle of the passage refers to the question
- how to mitigate hardship to human beings
 - how to contain the dangers of aggressive nationalism
 - how to share the economic burden equally
 - how to curb international hatred
7. Negative national feelings can make a nation
- selfish
 - self-centered
 - indifferent
 - dangerous
8. A suitable title for this passage can be
- Nationalism breeds unity
 - Nationalism - a road to world unity
 - Nationalism is not enough
 - Nationalism and God
9. According to the passage, the concept of economics becomes relevant because
- some nations flourish while other communities bear the brunt
 - culture becomes static and aggressive
 - the fundamental necessities of living have to be granted to humans
 - nationalism has to find the right balance
10. According to the passage, aggressive nationalism
- breeds threat to international relations
 - leads to stunted growth
 - endangers national unity
 - renders a country unproductive

PASSAGE 3

Organisations are institutions in which members compete for status and power. They compete for the resources of the organisation, for example, finances to expand their own departments, for career advancement and for power to control the activities of others. In pursuit of these aims, groups are formed and sectional interests emerge. As a result, policy decisions may serve the ends of political and career systems rather than those of the organisation. In this way, the goals of the organisation may give way to favour sectional interests and individual ambitions. These preoccupations sometimes prevent the emergence of organic systems. Many of the electronic firms in the study had recently created research and development departments employing highly-qualified and well-paid scientists and technicians. Their high pay and expert knowledge were sometimes seen as a threat to the established order of rank, power and privilege. Many senior managers had little knowledge of technicality and possibilities of new developments and electronics. Some felt that close cooperation with the experts in an organic system would reveal their ignorance and show their experience was now redundant.

11. The theme of the passage is
- groupism in organisations
 - individual ambitions in organisations
 - frustration of senior managers
 - shortcomings of the established order of rank, power and privilege
12. According to the passage, members in an organisation contend with each other for all the following reasons except:
- authority to regulate the functions of other members in the organisation
 - progress in the careers of the members
 - gaining expert knowledge of technicality and possibilities of new developments
 - capital for expansion of the members' departments
13. According to the passage, policy decisions in organisations may involve
- cooperation at all levels in the organisation
 - modernization of the organisation
 - assisting the objectives of political and career structures in the organisation
 - keeping in view the larger objectives of the organisations
14. The author makes out a case for
- organic systems
 - research and development
 - an understanding between senior and middle level executives
 - a refresher course for senior managers
15. The author tends to look at the senior managers as
- ignorant and incompetent
 - a little out of step with their work environment
 - jealous of their younger colleagues
 - robbed of their rank, power and privilege

PASSAGE 4

The Ring at Casterbridge was merely the local name of one of the finest Roman amphitheatres, if not the very finest remaining in Britain. Casterbridge announced old Rome in every street, alley, and precinct. It looked Roman, spoke the art of Rome, and concealed dead men of Rome. It was impossible to dig more than a foot or two deep about the town fields and gardens without stumbling upon some tall soldier or other of the Empire, who had laid there in his silent unobtrusive rest for a space of fifteen hundred years. He was mostly found lying on his side, in an oval scoop in the chalk, like a chicken in its shell; his knees drawn up to his chest; sometimes with the

remains of his spear against his arm; a brooch of bronze on his breast or forehead; an urn at his knees, a jar at his throat, a bottle at his mouth; and mystified conjecture pouring down upon him from the eyes of Casterbridge street boys, who had turned a moment to gaze at the familiar spectacle as they passed by. Imaginative inhabitants, who would have felt an unpleasantness at the discovery of a comparatively modern skeleton in their gardens, were quite unmoved by these hoary shapes. They had lived so long ago, their time was so unlike the present, their hopes and motives were so widely removed from ours, that between them and the living there seemed to stretch a gulf too wide for even a spirit to pass.

The Amphitheatre was a huge circular enclosure, with a notch at opposite extremities of its diameter north and south. It was to Casterbridge what the ruined Coliseum is to modern Rome, and was nearly of the same magnitude. The evening was the proper hour at which a true impression of this place could be received. Melancholy, impressive, lonely, yet accessible from every part of the town, the historic circle was the frequent spot for appointments of a furtive kind. Tentative meetings were experimented there after divisions and feuds. But one kind of appointment - in itself the most common of any - seldom had place in the Amphitheatre - that of happy lovers.

Why, seeing that it was pre-eminently an airy, accessible, and sequestered spot for interviews, the most cheerful form of those occurrences never took kindly to the soil of the ruin, would be a curious inquiry. Perhaps it was because its associations had about them something sinister. Its history proved that. Apart from the sanguinary nature of the games originally played therein, such incidents attached to its past as these: that for scores of years the town-gallows had stood at one corner; that in 1705 a woman who had murdered her husband was half-strangled and then burnt there in the presence of ten thousand spectators. Tradition reports that at a certain stage of the burning her heart burst and leapt out of her body, to the terror of them all, and that not one of those ten thousand people ever cared particularly for hot roast after that. In addition to these old tragedies, pugilistic encounters almost to the death had come off down to recent dates in that secluded arena, entirely invisible to the outside world save by climbing to the top of the enclosure, which few towns people in the daily round of their lives ever took the trouble to do, so that, though close to the turnpike-road, crimes might be perpetrated there unseen at mid-day.

16. The word 'hoary' in the passage is closest in meaning to
 - a. unimaginative
 - b. buried
 - c. curled up
 - d. mummified
 - e. ancient
17. The 'curious enquiry' refers to finding out
 - a. why happy lovers never met at the Amphitheatre
 - b. why interviews never took place at the Amphitheatre
 - c. what historical events took place at the Amphitheatre
 - d. how the Amphitheatre came to have sinister associations
 - e. why the Amphitheatre lay in ruins
18. The word 'round' in the passage most nearly means
 - a. route
 - b. routine
 - c. meanderings
 - d. circle
 - e. journey
19. The attitude of the local residents to the unearthed remains of dead Romans was one of
 - a. total apathy
 - b. confusion and unease
 - c. trepidation
 - d. momentary interest
 - e. revulsion
20. The incident of the woman who was burnt is mentioned in order to
 - a. horrify the reader
 - b. illustrate one reason for the unsavory reputation of the place
 - c. show the bloodthirsty nature of former occupants
 - d. add realistic details to an imaginary plot
 - e. show the magnitude of the gulf between the past and the present

PASSAGE 5

First, AOL and Time Warner announced their intention to combine. Then came Time Warner/EMI and Tribune/Times Mirror. Even more significant, however, has been the speculation that these mergers have caused: If these transactions are consummated, a large number of additional media mergers are expected. There is even the possibility of a nightmare scenario - a wave of media mergers so large that within a decade most of our information will be supplied by perhaps six of these huge conglomerates and a fringe of much smaller firms. It's time to ask two critical questions. Is this kind of media oligopoly what we, as society, want? And if not, can the antitrust laws effectively prevent the threatened merger wave? The answer to the first question is clear. We do not want a media oligopoly. The answer to the second question, however, is far less certain. We should distrust a media oligopoly because it would give undue control to a small number of individuals. This need not manifest itself in a price-rise for the daily newspaper or AOL's monthly fee. Rather, it could consist of a change in editorial viewpoints, a shift in the relative prominence of links to certain websites or a decision not to cover certain topics, because they are not "newsworthy". These problems could exist without any improper intent on the part of the media barons. Even if they try to be fair and objective, they will necessarily bring their own worldview to the job. And in time, some of these help in grappling with the issues presented by large media mergers. The anti-merger laws are commonly understood as protecting price competition, and a relatively small number of firms to greatly oversimplify, let's say at most half a dozen are normally thought to be

enough to keep a market price competitive. In industry after industry, firms merge until there is only a handful left, and the antitrust enforcers are normally unable to do anything to prevent this. (In former years, mergers were governed by an "incipiency" standard that prevented mergers and merger waves well before they would have led to very large or likely anti-competitive problems.) Even if a handful of firms are enough to ensure effective competition in most industries, would six conglomerate media firms be sufficient for the diversity of viewpoints necessary to democracy? Would we be reassured if they could somehow guarantee that they would sell their magazines and Internet advertisements at competitive prices? I am hopeful that the antitrust laws, if correctly interpreted, are adaptable enough to meet this challenge. This is because antitrust is not exclusively about price. It is essentially about choice - about giving consumers a competitive range of options in the marketplace so that they can make their own, effective selection from the market's offerings. Consumers should be able to make their choices along any dimension important to them - including price, variety and editorial viewpoint.

Communications media compete in part by offering independent editorial viewpoints and an independent gatekeeper function. Six media firms cannot effectively respond to the demand for choice or diversity competition by extending their product lines, because new media products will inevitably bear, to some degree, the perspective of their corporate parent. For these reasons competition in terms of editorial viewpoint or gate-keeping can be guaranteed only by ensuring that a media market contains a significantly larger number of firms than is required for price competition in other, more conventional markets.

It is unclear, however, whether this interpretation of the anti-trust laws will be applied by the enforcement agencies and the courts. What is needed, therefore, is a much more careful look at the challenges that will be raised by future media mergers.

This could best be accomplished if the Congress created a temporary committee to study media mergers and media convergence. This committee could include members of Congress; the heads of the Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Communications Commission and the Justice Department's antitrust division; CEOs of media companies and representatives of consumer groups. The committee would identify problems that may be caused by large media mergers and by media convergence. If the committee concludes that existing antitrust laws are inadequate, it should recommend to Congress that new anti-merger legislation be enacted. This may be the only way to prevent the nightmare scenario of a media oligopoly.

21. A wave of media mergers could
 - a. be a threat to democracy
 - b. result in limiting editorial viewpoints
 - c. result in misuse of certain laws
 - d. both (a) and (b)
 - e. none of the above
22. The word "Incipiency" in the passage is closest in meaning to which of the following words:
 - a. induction
 - b. mutation
 - c. nepotism
 - d. defrauding
 - e. despondency
23. Which of the following statements, according to the author, are true
 - A. half a dozen firms are enough to keep the market price - competitive
 - B. half a dozen companies are not enough to provide a democratic media
 - C. enforcement agencies may not interpret the anti-trust laws correctly
 - D. half a dozen companies will be inadequate to meet the consumer demand for product diversity
 - a. A, B
 - b. A, B, C
 - c. A, B, C, D
 - d. B, C, D
 - e. A, C, D
24. According to the passage, the current anti-trust laws
 - a. are not sufficient to deal with issues relating to large scale media mergers
 - b. can prevent mergers from happening
 - c. will be effective if properly interpreted
 - d. favour a particular company or group of companies
 - e. none of the above
25. To get a clear picture of the challenges posed by media mergers, the author recommends
 - a. creation of strict laws
 - b. strengthening the enforcement agencies
 - c. creation of a study committee by the Congress
 - d. none of the above
 - e. all of the above