Aptitude Advanced

Reading Comprehension Basics

Assignment 02

RC Practice Assignment 02

Directions for questions: *For the following paragraphs, identify the main idea and topic sentence of the given paragraph.*

Passage-1

I don't understand the ABC of Indian politics. Or for that matter the AGP, or RJD, or NCP, or PKP, or JD(S). Scientists say life arose on earth from a primordial soup. Political life in India seems to have arisen from an alphabet soup. What am I or you, or even the CEC, come to that to make of a statement like: 'Apart from JD(S), the Third Front consists of CPM, CPI, RSP, FB, TDP, AIADMK, TRS, BSP, HJC, and BJD'? Or 'An alliance finally made headway on Sunday when PMK president met AIADMK boss'? Or 'Four Left parties and TDP, TRS, AIADMK, JD(S) and BJD decided to come up with a vision document'?

Well, bully for them. And I wish they'd share their vision all properly documented, and gift-wrapped, thank you with me. Because what with all these abbreviations UPA, NDA, BJP, CPI(ML), DMK, MDMK, JMM, and what have U. I can't see the trees for the wood, or the parties for the alphabet.

So far as I can make out which admittedly, isn't very far, or

IVF, to keep in the alphabetic abbreviation mode of things the only Indian political party which hasn't been reduced to initials-only size is the Congress. And even this isn't entirely true because quite often the Congress is referred to as the INC (Indian National Congress), as distinct from the NCP (which stands for Nationalist Congress Party, or Nationalist Congress Pawar, take your pick). The Congress is also often called the GOP (which stands for Grand Old Party, or Gandhi's' Own Party, you get to take your pick again, you lucky thing).

All this abbreviated alphabetisation of politics is of course environmentally very sound. If, for example, instead of CPI(ML) you had to go the full monty as it were as in Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, or instead of AIADMK you had to write All India Anna DravidaMunnetraKazhagam. Or instead of JSS you had to tongue sticking out of the corner of your mouth in concentration put down JanathipathiyaSamrakshanaSamithy, and watch how you spell Samrakswhosis, you'd have finished up all the space in this column just naming the parties involved. And to find out what they did to each, or with each other, readers would have to turn to the Classified Ads Section on Page 23 where further details might be found tucked away between solicitations like: 'Russian Escort Hi-Profile Decent Educated Indian, Turkey, Punjabi Model Masseurs.

M/F 24 Hrs. H/H Serv. All C.C. Accepted'. Can you imagine how many Scandinavian pine forests would have to be mowed down to provide the extra newsprint for political reportage if our parties hadn't done the decent thing and alphabetically abbreviated themselves? Our eco-warriors would have thrown a fit. Not to mention our Decent Educated M/F Masseurs, All C.C. Accepted.

No, the political abbreviations are decidedly a good thing. The only problem is that it makes it a bit difficult for non-bearded, non-celebrity, non-televised, non-psephologists like me to figure out exactly who's doing what to whom, and how: Will JKNPP split the PDP vote to JKNC's advantage?

Somewhere between all those Ps, and Js, and Ks, and Ns, I've lost it. Never mind what it does or doesn't do to the PDP vote. Somewhere along the line, the JCPKN (or is it the NKJPD?) has split whatever little political understanding I possess. I'd try colour-coding all those MZPCs, and RLDs, and KEC(M)s, and SAD(M)s, and UKKDs, and UGDPs. But there are some 730 registered parties, all alphtabrtd (alphabetically abbreviated) as of the CEC's last count in 2005. And the last time I looked there weren't 730 different and distinct and distinguishing shades of color in vibgyor (violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red: this alphtabrtd is catching).

So I'm resigned to not understanding the ABC of politics which is fine because politics probably doesn't want to understand me either. Alphtabrtd as I am in the north Indian political lexicon as a right ignorant BCMC. Whatever that stands for.

Question 1: Identify the main subject of the article.

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Directions for questions: *Read the passage and, in your own words, put down the idea of the paragraph.*

Passage - 2

Good teachers don't want to go to just those places where they're needed the most. I started in 1999 to try and address this problem with an experiment. I embedded a computer into a wall of a slum in New Delhi. The children barely went to school; they didn't know any English -- they'd never seen a computer before, and they didn't know what the internet was. I connected high-speed internet to it -- it's about three feet off the ground -- turned it on and

left it there. After this, we noticed that children will learn to do what they want to learn to do. We also concluded that groups of children can learn to use computers and the internet on their own, irrespective of who or where they were.

Our next experiment was in Hyderabad with a group of children with a very strong Telugu accent. I gave them a computer with a speech-to-text interface and asked them to speak into it. So when they spoke into it, the computer typed out gibberish, so they said, "Well, it doesn't understand anything of what we are saying." So I said, "Yeah, I'll leave it here for two months. Make yourself understood to the computer." So the children said, "How do we do that." And I said, "I don't know, actually." And I left. Two months later those accents had changed and were remarkably close to the neutral British accent in which I had trained the speech-to-text synthesiser.

Can Tamil speaking 12-year-old children in a South Indian village teach themselves biotechnology in English on their own? I called in 26 children. They all came in there, and I told them that there's some really difficult stuff on this computer. I wouldn't be surprised if you didn't understand anything. It's all in English, and I'm going. So I left them with it. I came back after two months, and the 26 children marched in looking very, very quiet. I said, "Well, did you

look at any of the stuff?" They said, "Yes, we did." "Did you understand anything?" "No, nothing" So I said, "Well, how long did you practice it before you decided you understood nothing?" They said, "We look at it every day." So I said, "For two months, you were looking at stuff you didn't understand?" So a 12-year-old girl raises her hand and says, literally, "Apart from the fact that improper replication of the DNA molecule causes genetic disease, we've understood nothing else."
So their scores had gone up from zero to 30 percent, but 30 percent is not a pass. So I found that they had a friend, a local accountant, a young girl, and they played football with her. I asked that girl, "Would you teach them enough biotechnology to pass?" And she said, "How would I do that? I don't know the subject." I said, "No, use the method of the grandmother." She said, "What's that?" I said, "Well, what you've got to do is stand behind them and admire them all the time. Just say to them, 'That's cool. That's fantastic. What is that? Can you do that again? Can you show me some more?'" She did that for two months. The scores went up to 50, which is what the posh schools of New Delhi, with a trained biotechnology teacher, were getting.

In Gateshead, I took 32 children and I started to fine-tune the method. I made them into groups of four. I said, "You make your own groups of four. Each group of four can

use one computer and not four computers." Remember, from the Hole in the Wall. "You can exchange groups. You can walk across to another group, if you don't like your group, etc. You can go to another group, peer over their shoulders, see what they're doing, come back to your group and claim it as your work." And I explained to them that, you know, a lot of scientific research is done using that method.

The children enthusiastically got after me and said, "Now, what do you want us to do?" I gave them six GCSE questions. The first group -- the best one -- solved everything in 20 minutes. The worst, in 45 They used everything that they knew -- newsgroups, Google, Wikipedia, Ask Jeeves, etc. The teachers said, "Is this deep learning?" I said, "Well, let's try it. I'll come back after two months. We'll give them a paper test -- no computers, no talking to each other, etc." The average score when I'd done it with the computers and the groups was 76 percent. When I experimented, when I did the test, after two months, the score was 76 percent. There was photographic recall inside the children; I suspect because they're discussing with each other. A single child in front of a single computer will not do that. I have further results, which are almost unbelievable, of scores which go up with time. Because their teachers say that after the session is over, the children continue to Google further.

Excerpted from a TED talk by Sugata Mitra

Passage - 3

My contention is, all kids have tremendous talents. And we squander them, pretty ruthlessly. So I want to talk about education and I want to talk about creativity. My contention is that creativity now is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status.

Kids always will take a chance. If they don't know, they'll have a go. They're not frightened of being wrong. Now, I don't mean to say that being wrong is the same thing as being creative. What we do know is, if you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything original -- if you're not prepared to be wrong. And by the time they get to be adults, most kids have lost that capacity. They have become frightened of being wrong. We stigmatise mistakes. And we're now running national education systems where mistakes are the worst thing you can make. And the result is that we are educating people out of their creative capacities. Picasso once said that all children are born artists. The problem is to remain an artist as we grow up. We don't grow into creativity; we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out if it. So why

is this?
Every education system on earth has the same hierarchy of subjects. Every one.It doesn't matter where you go. You'd think it would be otherwise, but it isn't. At the top are mathematics and languages, then the humanities and the bottom are the arts. And in pretty much every system too, there's a hierarchy within the arts. Art and music are normally given a higher status in schools than drama and dance. There isn't an education system on the planet that teaches dance every day to children the way we teach them mathematics. Why not? I think math is very important, but so is dance. What happens is, as children grow up, we start to educate them progressively from the waist up. And then we focus on their heads. And slightly to one side.

If you were to visit education, as an alien, and say "What's it for, public education?" I think you'd have to conclude who are the winners -- I think you'd have to conclude the whole purpose of public education throughout the world is to produce university professors. I like university professors, but you know, we shouldn't hold them up as the high-water mark of all human achievement. There's something curious about professors in my experience -- not all of them, but typically -- they live in their heads. They live up there, and slightly to one side. They're disembodied, you know, in a

kind of literal way. They look upon their body as a form of transport for their heads.

Now our education system is predicated on the idea of academic ability. And there's a reason. The whole system was invented before the 19th century. They all came into being to meet the needs of industrialism. So the hierarchy is rooted in two ideas. Number one that the most useful subjects for work are at the top. So you had probably steered benignly away from things at school when you were a kid, things you liked, on the grounds that you would never get a job doing that. Benign advice -- now, profoundly mistaken. And the second is academic ability, which has really come to dominate our view of intelligence because the universities designed the system in their image. If you think about it, the whole system of public education around the world is a protracted process of university entrance. And the consequence is that many highly talented, brilliant, creative people think they're not, because the thing they were good at school wasn't valued, or was actually stigmatised.

You didn't have a job it's because you didn't want one. But now kids with degrees are often heading home to carry on playing video games because you need an MA where the previous job required a BA, and now you need a PhD for

the other. It's a process of academic inflation. We need to rethink our view of intelligence radically.

Excerpted from a TED talk by Ken Robinson

Passage - 4

In pre-penicillin 1937, medicine was cheap and very ineffective. If you were in a hospital, it was going to do you good only because it offered you some warmth, some food, shelter, and the caring attention of a nurse. Doctors and medicine made no difference at all. This was when the core structure of medicine was created – what it meant to be good at what we did and how we wanted to build medicine to be. If you had a prescription pad, if you had a nurse, if you had a hospital that would give you a place to convalesce, maybe some basic tools, you really could do it all. This was a life as a craftsman. As a result, we built it around culture and set of values that said what you were good at was being dared, at being courageous, at being independent and self-sufficient. Autonomy was our highest value.

Well, we've now discovered 4,000 medical procedures. We've discovered 6,000 drugs. And we've reached the point where we've realised, as doctors, we can't know it

all. We're all specialists now. But holding onto that structure, we built around the daring, independence, self-sufficiency of each of those people has become a disaster. We have trained, hired and rewarded people for being cowboys. But it's pit crews that we need, pit crews for patients.

As we've looked at the data about the results that have come as the complexity has increased, we found that the most expensive care is not necessarily the best care. And vice versa, the best care often turns out to be the least expensive. But when we look at the positive deviants -- the ones who are getting the best results at the lowest costs -- we find the ones that look the most like systems are the most successful. Having great components is not enough, and yet we've been obsessed in medicine with components. We want the best drugs, the best technologies, the best specialists, but we don't think too much about how it all comes together.
In a system, however, when things start to come together, you realise it has certain skills for acting and looking that way. Skill number one is the ability to recognise success and the ability to recognise failure. When you are a specialist, you can't see the end result very well. You have to become really interested in data. I got interested in this when the World Health Organization came to my team asking if we could help with a project to reduce deaths in

surgery. Now our usual tactics for tackling problems like these are to do more training, give people more specialisation or bring in more technology.

Well in surgery, you couldn't have people who are more specialised and you couldn't have people who are better trained. And yet we see unconscionable levels of death and disabilities that could be avoided. And so we looked at what other high-risk industries do. We looked at skyscraper construction, we looked at the aviation world, and we found that they have the technology, the training, and one other thing: They have checklists. We got the lead safety engineer for Boeing to help us.

Could we design a checklist for surgery? What they taught us was that designing a checklist to help people handle complexity actually involves more difficulty than I had understood. You have to think about things like pause points. You need to identify the moments in a process when you can actually catch a problem before it's a danger and do something about it. You have to identify that this is a before-takeoff checklist. And then you need to focus on the killer items. We created a 19-item two-minute checklist for surgical teams. We had the pause points immediately before anaesthesia is given, immediately before the knife hits the skin and immediately before the patient leaves the room. Also

checks for making sure an antibiotic is given in the right time frame because that cuts the infection rate by half or making sure everyone in the room had introduced themselves by name at the start of the day.

We implemented this checklist in eight hospitals around the world, deliberately in places from rural Tanzania to the University of Washington in Seattle. We found that after they adopted it, the complication rates fell 35 percent. It fell in every hospital it went into. The death rates fell 47 percent. This was bigger than a drug.

Extracted from a TED talk by Atul Gawande

Passage - 5

Although websites such as Facebook and MySpace experienced exponential growth during the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, some users remain oblivious to the fact that the information they post online can come back to haunt them. First, employers can monitor employees who maintain a blog, photo diary, or website. Employers can look for controversial employee opinions, sensitive information disclosures, or wildly inappropriate conduct. For example, a North Carolina newspaper fired one of its features writers after she created a blog on which she anonymously wrote about the idiosyncrasies of her job and coworkers.

The second unintended use of information from social networking websites is employers who check on prospective employees. On June 11, 2006, New York Times article reported that many companies recruiting on college campuses use search engines and social networking websites such as MySpace, Xanga, and Facebook to conduct background checks. Although the use of MySpace or Google to scrutinise a student's background is somewhat unsettling to many undergraduates, the Times noted that the utilisation of Facebook is especially shocking to students who believe that Facebook is limited to current students and recent alumni.

Corporate recruiters and prospective employers are not the only people interested in college students' lives. The third unintended use of social networking websites is college administrators who monitor the Internet – especially Facebook – for student misconduct. For example, a college in Boston's Back Bay expelled its Student Government Association President for joining a Facebook group highly critical of a campus police sergeant. Additionally, fifteen students at a state university in North Carolina faced charges in court for underage drinking because of photos that appeared on Facebook.

Although more users of websites such as Facebook are becoming aware of the potential pitfalls of online identities, many regular users still fail to take three basic security precautions. First, only make your information available to a specific list of individuals whom you approve. Second, regularly search for potentially harmful information about yourself that may have been posted by mistake or by a disgruntled former associate. Third, never post blatantly offensive material under your name or on your page as, despite the best precautions, this material will likely make its way to the wider world. By taking these simple steps, members of the digital world can realise the

many benefits of e-community without experiencing some of the damaging unintended consequences.

RC Practice Assignment 02 – Answer Key

Passage		Explanation
1	Q. 6	The political abbreviation is decidedly a good thing. The only problem is that it makes it a bit difficult for non-bearded, non-celebrity, non-televised,

		non-psephologists to figure out exactly who's doing what to whom, and how.
2	Para 1	What is important in learning, is interest.
	Para 2	The machine /computer can be an excellent teacher.
	Para 3	Language is not a barrier to learning.
	Para 4	Our friends are our best teachers.
	Para 5	It is essential to learn in groups.
	Para 6	Group work leads to long-term learning.
3	Para 1	Creativity is Important.
	Para 2	Fear of making mistakes kills creativity.
	Para 3	Bias in our education system towards logic at the expense of emotion.
	Para 4	Teachers want to create their own clones in students
	Para 5	The logic based system was good for factory jobs – but the factory jobs market is shrinking now.
	Para 6	Over-qualification plagues Today's world.
4	Para 1	Early doctors were more independent artists than scientists.
	Para 2	Teamwork is vital in medicine now.

	Para 3	Good players don't make good teams.
	Para 4	Overspecialization means no one can see the big picture – data can help all of us see that.
	Para 5	The surgery improvement team looked at industries like aviation to learn how to manage risks better.
	Para 6	Simple stuff like checklists helped reduce the mortality rate by 50% in surgeries!
5	Para 1	Your personal life and professional life do mix. Beware when this mixing is online.
	Para 2	The oldies have caught up to FB – they are checking your posts before they hire you.
	Para 3	And even your professors. OMG, what is the world coming to ☺
	Para 4	Be cautious about what you post – and ideally allow only specified people to see your posts.