

Aptitude Advanced

Reading Comprehension Basics

Assignment 01

RC Practice Assignment 01

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

Passage-1

A hundred years or so ago, parents were the supreme authority in a child's destiny. Parents were held responsible for their children's rearing and were answerable for their actions to God alone. Even if a good-hearted person or people saw that a parent had failed in their duties all they could do is give food, or help the child provided the parents consented. As a rule, the community was not admitted to taking matters into their own hands when dealing with the mistreatment of a child by their parents. Parents and guardians in the absence of parents were allowed to starve their children, leave them naked, prey upon their children by making them work in factories or as chimney-sweeps and the like; the law was silent and the State acquiesced. On the other hand, Good-hearted parents, who were unsuccessful in life, were tormented at the sight of their children grow up ignorant and feeble due to them being short of food and garments. Their only hope for help was banking on the kindliness of their more

prosperous neighbours and the ill-organised charities left by the benevolent dead.

Question 1: Identify the main subject of the article.

Passage-2

Imagine an economy that produces only two things: hot dogs and buns. Consumers in this economy insist that every hot dog come with a bun and vice versa. And labour is the only input to production. OK, timeout. Before we go any further, I need to ask what you think of an essay that begins this way. Does it sound silly to you? Were you about to turn the virtual page, figuring that this couldn't be about anything important? One of the points of this column is to illustrate a paradox: You can't do serious economics unless you are willing to be playful. Economic theory is not a collection of dictums laid down by pompous authority figures. Mainly, it is a menagerie of thought experiments--parables, if you like--that are intended to capture the logic of economic processes in a

simplified way. In the end, of course, ideas must be tested against the facts. But even to know what facts are relevant, you must play with those ideas in hypothetical settings. And I use the word "play" advisedly: Innovative thinkers, in economics and other disciplines, often have a pronounced whimsical streak.

Question 2: Identify the main subject of the article.

Passage-3

Arthur Koestler, while explaining the logic of laughter, used the following example. An English baron came back home from his hunting expedition and found his wife in the arms of the local Bishop. To this, he reacted strangely. He opened the window of his bedroom, the scene of the episcopal escapade, and began to bless the passers-by, as a Bishop would. This elicited indignant protests from the Bishop against a baron usurping his function. Thereupon the baron replied: "My Lord if you are doing my work, shouldn't I do yours?" We could respond to this joke

in two contrary ways. The first is to organise a protest rally of the faithful, labelling it as a scurrilous attack on bishopric and, by implication, on the Christian faith. The other is to chuckle over the prospect of reacting in a 'heretical' manner, as opposed to a stereotypical way, to a situation which could, otherwise, result in bloodshed. Those, whose minds are conditioned to trudge only on the beaten track, would expect the jilted baron to stick a knife through the Bishop. Others are free to enjoy discovering that there are alternative ways of dealing with any given situation, including those that are grossly provocative. The capacity to laugh at oneself is a sign of an individual's strength and wholeness. The inclination to discover grievances where none exists, on the other hand, is a sign of emotional or psychological ill-health. What is true of individuals is also true of societies. Indeed the illness of a society can be calibrated on its readiness to be provoked, factored on the flimsiness of the provocations involved. The disposition to be immoderately upset by even innocuous situations or statements should get us all deeply concerned.

Question 3: Identify the main subject of the article.

Directions for the following questions: For the following passages, provide the answers to the questions in the space provided.

Passage-4

Why is advertising so annoying? Because it is founded on market failure. Your attention is being bought and sold by 3rd parties, and as a result, the advertising industry under prices its value to you. The result is that the cost of advertising to advertisers is too low, and thus an excess amount of advertising is produced which wastes the precious commodity of your valuable attention by distracting you with the information you don't want or need. It's the same basic problem as pollution by factories of neighbouring streams and rivers or excessive resource extraction of commons (like global fisheries).

Economists would see the basic problem as poorly assigned property rights. If you could assert your property rights to your attention, you could sell it for a price that reflects its value to you. The personalized advertising one

sees on Google or Facebook reflects that. They make an implicit bargain to provide you with services you value in exchange for some of your attention. They also use personalization to reduce the costs of advertising to you: you will receive less useless and annoying information about products you don't want or need. Google and Facebook advertising is, therefore, less welfare destructive and may even be welfare enhancing, to the extent that their success in filtering advertising for you provides you with helpful information it would have been more difficult to find in other ways.

Nevertheless, another important shift has taken place in that now it is your personal information about preferences and interests that are being packaged and sold on by 3rd parties (by Facebook at least, Google claims to use this information only to enhance its products). Again this may be welfare destructive because you have never been able to exercise property rights over this information. Thus your information may be being used in ways you disagree with - to manipulate you, track your behaviour across the internet, sold on to potential employers, etc. - that have significant negative consequences for your life. Because you never had the chance to sell this information yourself, the value it has to you is not reflected in its price. Rather, that price reflects the cost of collecting and aggregating it

(putting cookies on your computer, data-mining programs, etc.), which is almost free.

Question4: Identify the main subject of the article.

Passage-5

Socialism has not even worked out what are the reasonable conditions of a State marriage contract, and it would be ridiculous to pretend it had. This is not a defect in Socialism particularly, but a defect in human knowledge. At countless points in the tangle of questions involved, the facts are not clearly known. Socialism does not present any theory whatever about the duration of the marriage. Whether, as among the Roman Catholics, it should be for life and forever; or, as among the various divorce-permitting Protestant bodies, until this or that eventuality. Or even, as Mr. George Meredith suggested some years ago, for a term of ten years. In these matters,

Socialism does not decide, and it is quite reasonable to argue that Socialism need not decide. Socialism maintains an attitude of neutrality. And the practical effect of an attitude of neutrality is to leave these things as they are at present. The State is not urgently concerned with these questions. So long as a marriage contract provides for the health and sanity of the contracting parties, and for their proper behaviour so far, as their offspring is concerned, and for so long as their offspring need it, the demands of the community, as the guardian of the children, are satisfied. That certainly would be the minimum marriage, the State marriage, and I, for my part, would exact nothing more in the legal contract. But some more representative Socialists than I care for a legally compulsory life marriage. Some—but they are mostly of the older, less definite, Social Democratic teaching—are for a looser tie. Let us clearly understand that we are here talking about the legal marriage only—the State's share. We are not talking about what people will do, but of how much they are to be made to do. A vast amount of stupid confusion arises from forgetting that. What was needed more than that minimum I have specified would be provided, I believe—it always has been provided hitherto, even to excess—by custom, religion, social influence, public opinion

Question 5: Identify the main subject of the article.

RC Practice Assignment 01 - Answer Key

Passage		Explanation
Passage- 1	Q. 1	Parents were supreme authority. They had all the authority to raise their kids in the any they wanted. However good-hearted but unsuccessful parents were helpless.
Passage- 2	Q. 2	You can't do serious economics unless you are willing to be playful.
Passage- 3	Q. 3	There are many ways of looking at any situation and the capacity to laugh at oneself is a sign of an individual's strength and wholeness. The inclination to discover grievances where none exists, on the other hand, is a sign of emotional or psychological ill-health
Passage-	Q. 4	Advertising is annoying Because it is

4 founded on market failure. Your attention is being bought and sold by 3rd parties, and as a result, the advertising industry underprices its value to you.

Passage- Q. 5
5 Socialism has remained neutral on State marriage contract and is not urgently concerned so long as a marriage contract provides for the health and sanity of the contracting parties, and for their proper behaviour so far as their offspring are concerned.