

Reading Comprehension

Introduction

The reading comprehension section tests the level of understanding of a student. It involves the ability to understand the meaning of what one reads and to use the information to answer the questions that follow.

In this section, questions are asked based on the given passages. These questions are meant to assess the vocabulary of the students as well as to test comprehension, inference, evaluation and analysis. In other words, students are tested for their understanding of the passage and its implications.

Types of passages:

The passages given in the reading comprehension section may be of the following types:

1. *Factual texts*: Texts that can be categorised under this category are reports, scientific findings, historical revelations, etc.
2. *Literary texts*: Texts that can be categorised under this category are extracts from novels, poetry, short stories, etc.
3. *Discursive texts*: Texts that can be categorised under this category are articles that present a reasoned argument to express one's views on a topic.

Types of questions:

Questions of reading comprehension could be of the following types:

1. *Multiple choice questions*: In these questions, a set of alternatives are provided as the answer to a question. Students are required to select the best possible answer out of the given choices.
2. *Gap filling*: These questions require a student to fill in the gaps in a given paragraph. These questions test a student's understanding and ability to use the language correctly.
3. *Sentence completion*: These questions require the students to complete the unfinished sentences based on their understanding of the passage.
4. *Table completion*: These questions require the students to complete the given table on the basis of their understanding of the passage. Sometimes, the table may be

partially filled in with answers. In such cases, students may take cues from them to fill in the required answer.

5. Word attack (vocabulary based): Such questions test a student's ability to understand the general and/or intended meaning of a word or phrase. These questions may include synonym, meaning, antonym, etc.

6. Short answer questions: These questions test a student's ability to answer the questions in a concise manner.

Tips and guidelines:

1. Read the given passage thoroughly in order to get a clear picture of what is being expressed.
2. Try to find and understand the main idea of the passage.
3. Read the question carefully and understand what is being asked.
4. Sometimes the tense used in the question gives a cue to the answer.
5. Use the information given in the passage intelligently to answer the questions.
6. For the vocabulary-based questions, the students might have to make assumptions about the meanings of the words that they come across for the first time. For this, try placing the words in the context of the sentence and the passage as a whole.

Panchatantra Tales

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow by choosing the answers from the given options.

Once upon a time, Amarasakti ruled the city-state of Mahilaropyam in the south of India. He had three witless sons who became a matter of endless worry for him. Realising that his sons had no interest in learning, the king summoned his ministers and said: "You know I am not happy with my sons. According to men of learning an unborn son and a stillborn son are better than a son who is a dimwit. What good is a barren cow? A son who is stupid will bring dishonour to his father. How can I make them fit to be my successors? I turn to you for advice."

One of the ministers suggested the name of Vishnu Sharman, a great scholar enjoying the respect of hundreds of his disciples. "He is the most competent person to tutor your children. Entrust them to his care and very soon you will see the change."

The king summoned Vishnu Sharman and pleaded with him, “Oh, venerable scholar, take pity on me and please train my sons into great scholars and I will make you the lord of hundred villages.”

Vishnu Sharman said, “Oh, king, listen to my pledge. Hundred villages do not tempt me to vend learning. Count six months from today. If I do not make your children great scholars, you can ask me to change my name.”

The king immediately called his sons and handed them to the care of the learned man. Sharman took them to his monastery where he started teaching them the five strategies (Panchatantra).

Q 1: It was the king’s belief that _____.

- A.** even a barren cow was better than his sons
- B.** his three sons could never be trained into great scholars
- C.** having no son was better than having foolish ones
- D.** his ministers would be able to help him meet Vishnu Sharman

Q 2: Amarasakti’s attitude towards the scholar can be best described as _____.

- A.** diplomatic
- B.** hesitant
- C.** autocratic
- D.** humble

Q 3: To ‘vend’ means to _____.

- A.** pursue
- B.** provide
- C.** share
- D.** sell

Q 4: Vishnu Sharman pledged that he would _____.

- A.** meet the king only after six months

- B. turn the king's sons into learned men
- C. change his name if he was unable to prove the king wrong
- D. teach the king's children in his monastery for six months

Q 5: The antonym of 'competent' is _____.

- A. inept
- B. intolerant
- C. narrow-minded
- D. uncooperative

Solutions

- 1. (C)
- 2. (D)
- 3. (D)
- 4. (B)
- 5. (A)

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J. K. Rowling

Read the following passage carefully.

They had to study the night skies through their telescopes every Wednesday at midnight and learn the names of different stars and the movements of the planets. Three times a week they went out to the greenhouses behind the castle to study Herbology, with a dumpy little witch called Professor Sprout, where they learned how to take care of all the strange plants and fungi, and found out what they were used for.

Easily the most boring class was History of Magic, which was the only one taught by a ghost. Professor Binns had been very old indeed when he had fallen asleep in front of the staff room fire and got up next morning to teach, leaving his body behind him. Binns droned on and on while they scribbled down names and dates, and got Emetic the Evil and Uric the Oddball mixed up.

Professor Flitwick, the Charms teacher, was a tiny little wizard who had to stand on a pile of books to see over his desk. At the start of their first class he took the roll call, and when he reached Harry's name he gave an excited squeak and toppled out of sight.

Professor McGonagall was again different. Harry had been quite right to think she wasn't a teacher to cross. Strict and clever, she gave them a talking-to the moment they sat down in her first class.

"Transfiguration is some of the most complex and dangerous magic you will learn at Hogwarts," she said. "Anyone messing around in my class will leave and not come back. You have been warned."

Based on your reading of the passage, complete the following sentences.

Q 1: 'History of Magic' was taught by _____.

Q 2: Students studied Herbology in the _____.

Q 3: One of the toughest classes was that of _____.

Find words/phrases from the passage that mean the same as the following.

Q 4: talk dully

Q 5: tedious

Solutions

1. Professor Binns, the only ghost teacher at Hogwarts
2. greenhouses behind the castle
3. Transfiguration, which was taught by Professor McGonagall
4. drone on
5. boring

Around the World in Eighty Days by Jules Verne

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow.

He mechanically set about making the preparations for departure. He had to set a time table to accomplish a task thought to be unachievable by many. Around the world in eighty days! By eight o'clock Passepartout had packed the modest carpet-bag,

containing the wardrobes of his master and himself; then, still troubled in mind, he carefully shut the door of his room, and descended to Mr. Fogg. He was perplexed and worried for he too could not understand his master's objective. With these thoughts he proceeded.

Mr. Fogg was quite ready. He was set for his journey. Under his arm might have been observed a red-bound copy of Bradshaw's Continental Railway Steam Transit and General Guide, with its timetables showing the arrival and departure of steamers and railways. He took the carpet-bag, opened it, and slipped into it a goodly roll of Bank of England notes, which would pass wherever he might go.

"You have forgotten nothing?" asked he.

"Nothing, monsieur."

"My mackintosh and cloak?"

"Here they are."

"Good! Take this carpet-bag," handing it to Passepartout. "Take good care of it, for there are twenty thousand. Together they commenced the journey with eagerness for one and confusion for the other.

Q 1: Who do you think is Passepartout?

Q 2: Why was Passepartout worried?

Q 3: What does the word 'perplexed' mean?

Q 4: What was the task "thought to be unachievable by many"?

Q 5: "The journey commenced with eagerness for one and confusion for the other." Who do you think was eager and who was confused out of the two men?

Solution

1. Passepartout is probably Mr. Fogg's assistant or servant.

2. Passepartout was worried as he could not understand his master's objective in travelling around the world in eighty days.

3. Perplexed means to be confused or full of difficulty.

4. The task that was thought to be unachievable by many was to travel around the world in eighty days.

5. Mr. Fogg was eager and his assistant/servant, Passepartout, was confused.