

READING COMPREHENSION (FUNDAMENTALS)

SCOPE OF LESSON

- ▶ Reading Comprehension in General
- ▶ Understanding the Comprehension Passage
- ▶ Types of Comprehension Questions

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ▶ By the end of the lesson, the student should be able to:
 - I. **digest thoroughly information read from a passage and answer questions on it**
 - II. **draw, if any, moral lessons from a comprehension passage**
 - III. **identify words with specific meaning in given texts and replace them with appropriate words or phrases.**

COMPREHENSION IN GENERAL

Comprehension tests check how well students understand what they read.

This is done by asking the students or candidates questions that show they can find information from a passage, and also by asking questions that make them explain why or how things happen in the passage.

The General Requirement

- ❖ **Reading is the most important requirement for answering a Comprehension test**
- ▶ One needs to be sure that he/she can read fluently and quickly.
- ▶ This does not mean reading so fast that you don't understand or remember what you are reading.
- ▶ Students are required to read carefully and have a complete understanding of the passage before attempting to answer the questions that follow.

Understanding the Comprehension Passage

- ▶ Read with meaning: Explain what you read to yourself.
- ▶ Picture the events in the passage as if you were watching a movie or a film
- ▶ Get yourself involved in the story- Identify with some of the characters.
- ▶ Think about what you read by asking yourself questions.
- ▶ Identify the moral lessons and the message the writer wants to put across.
- ▶ Identify the theme of the passage, ie. the central idea of the story
- ▶ Identify the tone: the feeling and attitude of the writer or the people in the passage (story)
- ▶ Identify the mood: the feeling or attitude you get or find yourself in after reading the passage.
- ▶ Highlight, underline or mark key information mentioned in the passage.
- ▶ Read ideas not just words.
- ▶ Identify how the paragraphs in the passage relate to one another.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

a. Content, Contextual or Factual Questions

- ▶ These are the easiest of all comprehension questions. Here, answers to the questions are explicitly (clearly) stated in the passage. One just has to read the passage once or twice to locate the answer.

These questions usually begin with:

What?

When?

Who?

How long? Etc.

Content Questions are based on recall of facts.

Eg: If the comprehension passage is about a party, the sort of content questions you should expect would be:

How many people attended the party?

Where did the party take place?

When did the writer leave the scene of the party?

What gifts were brought to the birthday celebrant?

Example:

- ▶ Esi sat by the table, her legs stretched out and her feet out of her shoes. Once in a while she would unconsciously lift them up in an attempt to place them on the table- a bad habit she had acquired in college. These are usually done when Esi wasn't comfortable in class and needed to rely on some strategies to feel well.

Question: What two things did Esi do to feel comfortable?

Answers:

- a. Esi stretched her legs.
 - b. She removed her legs out of her shoes.
- ▶ The answers are just located from the passage simply by reading it.

b. Inferential Questions

- ▶ **These are questions that make the student or candidate make inferences (conclusions and judgements) from information in the passage. Here the answers are not clearly stated in the passage, students are to analyze events in the passage and come to a conclusion.**
- ▶ **These questions may not be the easiest to recognize as they can come in many forms. However, here are some common forms in which they can appear:**

why?

how?

give a reason.....

explain.....

true/false questions in the form of a statement, etc.

Example:

Nkansah bought six lottery tickets one day and quit work the next. He bought a hundred acre land at Nsawam and bought a house for his family. He was never in need till death.

Question: Why did Nkansah quit work?

How could Nkansah buy land and a house for his family?

Answer: Nkansah won lottery.

One has to analyse the events in the passage before coming to a conclusion as the answer.

c. Appreciative Questions

- ▶ **These questions deal with the mood or the attitude of the writer.**
- ▶ **Students may be asked to show the attitude of the writer in the passage.**
- ▶ **The mood may sometimes be disapproval, condemnation, dislike, hatred, scorn, contempt, mockery, ridicule, reverence, appreciation, anger, etc.**
- ▶ **The mood is determined by the diction of the passage - choice of words by writer.**

Example:

- ▶ In the insect world, ants are a model of co-operation, industry and order, often working together to drag home objects much larger than themselves. Some ants will even assist injured or exhausted members of the colony back to their nest.
- ▶ **Question:** What is the writer's attitude towards ants?
- ▶ **Answer:** Admiration / The writer admires ants.

d. Grammatical Questions

- ▶ Students are to identify grammatical terms that have been underlined.
- ▶ The underlined expression will be one of the following:

1. Noun Phrase
2. Noun Clause
3. Adjectival Phrase
4. Adjectival/Relative Clause
5. Adverbial Phrase
6. Adverbial Clause

- ▶ After identifying the grammatical term that has been underlined in the passage, students are required to indicate the function of the underlined expression.

Eg. A blessed thought entered their minds that they should pass through the Kakum Forest.

a.i. What is the grammatical name of the underlined structure?

a.ii. What is its function?

Answers:

a.i. Noun Phrase

a.ii. Subject of the verb “entered”

The student’s knowledge of grammatical terms and functions helps in this regard.

e. Questions on Figures of Speech and Literary Devices

- ▶ Students are sometimes made to identify a certain figure of speech or a literary device of an underlined expression.

Eg. After many attempts, the engine finally coughed and roared to life but the car would not move.

Question: What figure of speech is seen in the underlined expression?

Answer: Personification

The student's knowledge of literary devices helps in this regard.

- Sometimes there is a question seeking students understanding of that literary device.

Here the literary device in question is not to be defined. What is needed is the interpretation of the underlined expression.

Eg. After many attempts, the engine finally coughed and roared to life but the car would not move.

Question: What could the underlined expression mean?

Answer: The engine finally started working.

f. Vocabulary Questions

- ▶ **Students are to replace certain words in the passage with other suitable words or phrases that can fit into the passage.**
- ▶ **Here we need the contextual meaning of such words and not the literal or ordinary meaning.**

▶ **Literal Meaning (Ordinary Meaning)**

Eg. Mr. Amu collapsed yesterday.

▶ **In order words**

Mr. Amu fainted yesterday.

► Contextual Meaning

Eg. My business has collapsed.

► In other words

1. My business has fainted .(ungrammatical)
2. My business has gone bankrupt. (Grammatical)

Replace the underlined word with a word or phrase that can best fit in the sentence and could mean the same as the original word.

- The price of gold tumbled to around \$250,000, the lowest in twenty years.

Possible words:

- i. **increased**
- ii. **rose**
- iii. **escalated**
- iv. **upsurged**
- v. **went up**

Considerations: Vocabulary Questions

- 1. The context of the word.**
- 2. The part of speech of the *original word***
- 3. The tense of the word of the word if it is a verb.**

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