

# ENGLISH COMPREHENSION

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## 15. ENGLISH COMPREHENSION

The term comprehension is derived from the word 'comprehend' which means to understand something fully. It is the basic need for good reading. Thus in order to become a mature reader, we should keep on improving our comprehension. The most important requirement is to understand the ideas that make up the passage. To do so, it is equally important to grasp the language into which the ideas are put.

The main purpose of comprehension is to understand the various important points in the given passage. Generally, these are set of questions after the passage; the correct answers to these questions are to be found out from the given passage. The comprehension tests ascertain the ability to understand the passages and to remember the main points contained in it.

As a matter of fact, all the correct answers, to the questions, already exist in the given passage. The procedure for comprehension is the process of locating these correct answers. In this process, we should understand the gist of the passage and remember the important details. While answering questions after the passage, our opinion does not matter at all. The passage contains the opinion of the author and the same should be given in the answer. If the passage contains erroneous data or unusual opinion on a subject, even then we should stick to what is given in the passage.

Some questions are simple, straight forward and based on facts. Asking you about some specific details mentioned in the passage. Other questions require deeper understanding of the passage.

### 15.1 Types of Comprehension Based Questions:

**1. Antonym and synonym type questions:** A word/phrase/idiom in the passage may either be italicized or under lined. You will be asked to choose the antonym or synonym of the italicized or underlined part, in context of the passage.

The question may take the form:

**Find out the meaning of the word as used in the passage to answer the question.**

**2. Question based on specific information:** These are the most common type of questions that you will encounter. These types of questions judge your power to comprehend that which is explicitly stated in the passage.

These questions generally begin with:

**According to the author, which of the following statement is true/not true.**

**According to the passage,**

**3. Question based on drawing conclusions:** These types of questions judge your ability to understand what is not clearly stated in the passage. Whether you are able to grasp the hidden or implied views of the author or not, whether you are able to draw inferences from the given facts correctly or not.

**4. Questions based on central idea:** These types of questions judge your ability to understand the main thought of the passage.

The question may take the form:

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**What is this passage all about?**

**What were the concerns of the author while writing this article?**

A difficult variation of these types of questions is to suggest a title for the passage. Without knowing the main idea of the passage, you won't be able to suggest the title of the passage.

**5. Questions based on the tone of the passage:** These types of questions test your ability to judge author's attitude towards the topic he is dealing in.

The question may take the form:

**The article can best be described as.**

**What does the author feels about the problem of?**

**What is the attitude of the author?**

### **15.2 Strategies for Comprehension Based Questions:**

1. In any test, time is very crucial. You are supposed to complete the test within stipulated time.
2. You should first read the passage then read the options. As answer choices are given to confuse you.
3. Read the passage fairly and quickly to get the general idea.
4. Read again, a little slowly, so as to know the details.
5. Try to anticipate what the passage is about. Try to remember the main points mentioned by the author.
6. Immediately, thereafter, move to the question section. Read the questions carefully. Answer it and always cross verify your answer with supportive statements from the passage.
7. Study the questions thoroughly. Turn to the relevant portions of the passage, read them again, and then rewrite them in your own words, neatly and precisely.
8. If you are asked to give the meaning of any word or phrase, you should express the idea as clearly as possible in your own words. Certain words require the kind of definition that is given in a dictionary. Take care to frame the definition in conformity with the parts of speech.
9. Always answer from the passage. Don't go out of way to answer that which is not explicit or implicit in the passage.
10. Be fair and objective and base your answer on the facts presented in the passage.

**Example Passage:**

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China's rising power is based on its remarkable economic success. Shanghai's overall economy is currently growing at around 13% per year, thus doubling in size every five or six years. Everywhere there are start-ups, innovations, and young entrepreneurs hungry for profits. In a series of high-level meetings between Chinese and African officials, the advice that the African leaders received from the Chinese was sound, and more practical than they typically get from the World Bank. Chinese officials **stress** the crucial role of public investments, especially in agriculture and infrastructure, to lay the basis for private sector-led growth. In a hungry and poor rural economy, as China was in the 1970s and as most of Africa is today, a key starting point is to raise farm productivity. Farmers need the benefits of fertilizer irrigation and high-yield seeds, all of which were a **core** part of China's economical take off. Two other equally critical investments are also needed: roads and electricity, without which there cannot be a modern economy. Farmers might be able to increase their output, but it won't be able to reach the cities, and the cities won't be able to provide the countryside with inputs. The government has taken pains to ensure that the electricity grids and transportation networks reach every village in China. China is prepared to help Africa in substantial ways in agriculture, roads, power, health and education. And that is not an **empty** boast. Chinese leaders are prepared to share new high-yield rice varieties, with their African counterparts and, all over Africa, China is financing and constructing basic infrastructure.

This illustrates what is wrong with the World Bank. The World Bank has often forgotten the most basic lessons of development, preferring to lecture the poor and force them to privatise basic infrastructure, which is **untenable**, rather than to help the poor to invest in infrastructure and other crucial sectors. The Bank's failure began in the early 1980s when under the ideological **sway** of then American President and British Prime Minister it tried to get Africa and other poor regions to cut back or close down government investments and services. For 25 years, the bank tried to get governments out of agriculture, leaving impoverished peasants to fend for themselves. The result has been a disaster in Africa, with farm productivity stagnant for decades. The bank also pushed for privatization of national health systems, water utilities, and road and power networks, and has grossly underfinanced these critical sectors. This extreme free-market ideology, also called "**structural adjustment**", went against the practical lessons of development successes in China and the rest of Asia. Practical development strategy recognises that public investments-in agriculture, health, education, and infrastructure-are necessary complements to private investments. The World Bank has instead wrongly seen such vital public investments as an enemy of private sector development. Whenever the bank's ideology failed, it has blamed the poor for corruption, mismanagement, or lack of initiative. Instead of focusing its attention on helping the poorest countries to improve their infrastructure, there has been a crusade against corruption. The good news is that African governments are getting the message on how to spur economic growth and are getting crucial help from China and other partners that are less wedded to extreme free-market ideology than the World Bank. They have declared their intention to invest in infrastructure, agriculture modernisation, public health, and education. It is clear the Bank can regain its relevance only if it becomes practical once again, by returning its focus to financing public investments in priority sectors. If that happens, the Bank can still do justice to the bold vision of a world of shared prosperity that promoted its creation after World War II.

1. The author's main objective in writing the passage is to
    - a. make a case for the closure of the World Bank since it promotes US interests over those of other countries.
    - b. illustrate how China can play a more concrete role in Africa.
    - c. criticise the World Bank for playing a crucial role in China's development but neglecting Africa.
-

- d. recommend that China adopt the guidelines of the World Bank to sustain growth.
- e. use China's success as an example of the changes required in World Bank ideology.

Ans: **(e)**

2. What advice have African leaders received from their Chinese counterparts?

- a. Focus primarily on innovation, start-ups and urban development.
  - b. To ensure all citizens benefit from economic development, investment in crucial sectors should come from the government, not the private sector.
  - c. Improve agricultural output through government investment to stimulate economic growth.
1. None    2. Only (C)    3. Only (B)    4. Both (A) and (B)    5. Both (B) and (C)

Ans: **(5)**

3. What effect has the World Bank policy had on African nations?

- a. The African government has restricted private sector investment in agriculture.
- b. Africa has focused more on health and education rather than on agriculture.
- c. The agriculture sector in these countries is not as productive as it could be.
- d. US and Britain have volunteered substantial aid to Africa as Africa has complied with World Bank ideology.
- e. None of these

Ans: **(c)**

4. What is the difference in the Chinese and World Bank approach to development?

- a. Unlike the World Bank, China favours the public sector and restricts private sector participation in crucial sectors.
- b. Country to China's strategy of dependence on the private sector, the World Bank pressurises government to take the lead in investing in agriculture.
- c. While the World Bank has focused on agriculture, China's priority has been rooting out corruption so that investment in infrastructure is utilised appropriately.
- d. The Chinese government has retained control over essential services like transport while the World Bank favours private sector involvement.
- e. None of these

Ans: **(e)**

5. What is China's view on the development of the transportation and power network?

- a. Development in these sectors is not as important as investing in agriculture.
  - b. Resources need to be diverted from the rural to the urban areas to meet the needs of the growing population in cities.
  - c. The government should be solely responsible for developing these services so all citizens have access to them.
  - d. It is more important to develop and maintain transportation networks and power grids in rural areas.
-

e. None of these

Ans: **(e)**

6. Which of the following cannot be said about structural adjustment?

- a. It is the World Bank's free market ideology adapted by Asian countries.
- b. Under the strategy public sector investment in priority sectors is discouraged.
- c. As a development strategy it has failed in Africa.
- d. With this strategy there has been a lack of adequate investment in critical sectors.
- e. It is an ideology advocated to facilitate economic growth.

Ans: **(a)**

7. Which of the following is NOT true in the context of the passage?

- a. China's involvement in Africa so far has been restricted to advising its leaders.
  - b. The World Bank was created by the US and Britain for the sole purpose of furthering their interests.
  - c. China's economy was once in the same state as many African countries are today.
1. None    2. Only (B)    3. Only (A)    4. Both (A) and (B)    5. None of these

Ans: **(4)**

8. What has/have been the outcome/s of Shanghai's economy prospering?

- a. The World Bank has changed its development strategy.
  - b. China's importance globally has been enhanced.
  - c. Rural areas are being neglected to promote development of cities.
1. Only (B)    2. Both (A) and (B)    3. Both (B) and (C)    4. All (A), (B) and(C)  
5. None of these

Ans: **(5)**

9. Why is the author optimistic about Africa's future?

- a. The World Bank has committed itself to invest huge sums in Africa's development.
- b. Africa has decided to adopt a structural adjustment ideology which has benefited many nations.
- c. Africa has committed itself to adopting China's strategy for economic growth.
- d. China has urged the World Bank to waive the interest on its loans of Africa.
- e. None of these

Ans: **(c)**

10. What advice has the author given the World Bank?

- a. Support China's involvement in developing Africa.
  - b. Reduce the influence of the US and Britain in its functioning.
  - c. Adopt a more practical ideology of structural adjustment.
-

d. change its ideology to one encouraging both public and private sector investment in basic infrastructure.

e. Focus on fighting corruption rather than interfering in the governance of developing countries.

Ans: **(d)**

Choose the word which is most nearly the SAME in meaning as the word printed in bold as use in the passage.

11. **sway**

- a. fluctuate
- b. influence
- c. govern
- d. dependence
- e. unsteady

Ans: **(b)**

12. **core**

- a. centre
- b. heart
- c. adequate
- d. intermediate
- e. essential

Ans: **(e)**

13. **stress**

- a. highlight
- b. strain
- c. taxing
- d. tension
- e. emphasis

Ans: **(a)**

Choose the word which is most OPPOSITE in meaning of the word printed in bold as used in the passage.

14. **untenable**

- a. viable
  - b. unsound
  - c. consistent
  - d. superior
  - e. attractive
-

Ans: **(a)**

15. **empty**

- a. full
- b. objective
- c. meaningful
- d. occupied
- e. intelligent

Ans: **(c)**

**Example Passage:**

Throughout recorded history, India was celebrated for her fine textiles, her muslins and brocades of silver and gold. As a matter of fact, there is evidence that her textile industry goes back at least five thousand years, for Indian muslins were found wrapped around mummies in Egyptian pyramids dating back to 3000 BC. The ancient Indian iron and steel industry was equally famous. The well-known Damascus steel for swords and armour used in the Crusades came from India. Thus in countless industries and crafts, the Indian craftsman, worker, builder and artist created and prospered, and their products found favor both at home and abroad. And then political disintegration and foreign conquest closed at long golden chapter of India's **advancement** and creative achievement.

**1.** The India had a flourishing textile industry in the past is proved by the fact that

- a. India produced muslins and brocades of silver and gold
- b. The country was already famous for its fine textiles
- c. The industry claims to be five thousand years old
- d. Indian muslins were used for covering Egyptian mummies in 3000 BC

Ans: **(b)** We know according to the passage that The India had a flourishing textile industry in the past is proved by the fact that the country was already famous for its fine textiles. Therefore option 'b' is correct.

**2.** According to the writer, the ancient Indian iron and steel industry was famous because

- a. India supplied swords and armour to Damascus.
- b. India provided steel with which swords and armour were made for the Crusaders.
- c. Indian steel was famous among those fighting the crusades.
- d. Products of iron and steel were shipped to Damascus from India.

Ans: **(b)** We know according to the passage that according to the writer, the ancient Indian iron and steel industry was famous because India provided steel with which swords and armours were made for the Crusaders. Therefore option 'b' is correct.

**3.** Which one of the following statements is not true?

- a. There is a long history of excellence that Indian craftsmen had achieved in various crafts
- b. Creation of Indian craftsmen brought to them prosperity
- c. Even after foreign conquest these crafts ensured India's industrial progress.
- d. India crafts died due to political division of the country

Ans: **(c)** We know according to the passage that the statement 'even after foreign conquest these crafts ensured India's industrial progress' is not true. Therefore option 'c' is correct.

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4. Which of the following is opposite in meaning to the word "advancement" occurring in the passage?

- a. Poverty
- b. Failure
- c. Deterioration
- d. Backwardness

Ans: **(c)** We know according to the passage that the word 'deterioration' is opposite in meaning to the word "advancement". Therefore option 'c' is correct.

5. Which one of the following would be the most suitable title for the passage?

- a. rise and fall of Indian crafts
- b. India's textile industry
- c. Indian exports in the ancient times
- d. Indian iron and steel industry in the past

Ans: **(a)** We know according to the passage that the most suitable title for the passage is 'rise and fall of Indian crafts'. Therefore option 'a' is correct.

## EXERCISE FOR PRACTICE

### Exercise I

Even if the objects of diplomacy are well defined and the machinery for its pursuit firmly established, the desired results will depend a great deal on the means and methods used. As I have pointed out earlier, goodwill for one's country can only be created by making its policies better understood, by earning respect for it, by recognizing other peoples' legitimate interests, and above all by honest dealing. Because in diplomacy, as in other human relations, one can earn genuine respect only by fair and honest dealing. Diplomacy by trickery seldom helps a country to achieve its objects. The methods of diplomacy are therefore important.

The object of diplomacy being to safeguard the vital interests on one's country, a diplomat has always to remember that the person dealing with him has precisely the same object in his own mind in respect of his country. He has thus to deal with trained and experienced persons well aware of the strength and weakness of the opponent. That is, the Ambassador of country A in discussing with the Foreign Minister of country B is dealing with someone whose objective is to safeguard and further, if possible, the interests of his country, who wants to yield as little and gain as much as possible. So, it is always a question of reconciling interests, of obtaining something by yielding something, of striking a balance, or reaching a compromise. Rien pour rien, nothing for

Nothing, is the law of bargaining; something has to be given if something is to be gained. What is given may be a promise of future support, a modification of a certain line of action, friendly will yield, but you can be sure that no country will yield an iota of its interests unless it gets something in return. Diplomacy is a matter of give and take.

1. Goodwill for one's country can only be created:
    - (a) by making its policies better understood
    - (b) by earning respect for one's country
    - (c) by recognizing other peoples' legitimate interests
    - (d) by honest dealing
    - (e) all the above
-

2. diplomacy by trickery:
    - (a) always helps a country to achieve its objects
    - (b) never helps a country to achieve its objects
    - (c) seldom helps a country to achieve its objects
    - (d) is the best type of diplomacy
    - (e) none of the above
  
  3. A diplomat has to deal with persons:
    - (a) who know their own weaknesses
    - (b) who know the weaknesses of the diplomat
    - (c) who know their own weaknesses and strength
    - (d) who know his weakness and strength
    - (e) none of these
  
  4. The law of bargaining is:
    - (a) that nothing is to be given for a lot of gain
    - (b) a lot of gain is to be sacrificed for getting nothing
    - (c) something is given if something is to be gained
    - (d) something has to be given if something is to be gained
    - (e) none of the above
  
  5. What is given' is:
    - (a) promise of future support
    - (b) a change in a certain line of action
    - (c) friendly interest in some field
    - (d) only (a)
    - (e) (a), (b) and (c)
  
  6. 'Legitimate' means:
    - (a) reasonable
    - (b) sticky
    - (c) legal
    - (d) illegal
    - (e) none of these
  
  7. 'Vital' means:
    - (a) useful
    - (b) useless
    - (c) organic
    - (d) powerful
    - (e) important
  
  8. "To strike a balance' means:
    - (a) to hit the scales
    - (b) to tilt the scales
    - (c) to settle a bargain
    - (d) to compromise
    - (e) none of these
  
  9. Antonym of 'friendly' is:
    - (a) sincerely
-

- (b) enmity
- (c) opposition
- (d) antagonistic
- (e) allied

10. 'Iota' means :

- (a) modicum
- (b) enormous
- (c) heterogeneous
- (d) light
- (e) harmful

**ANSWERS :-**

1.( ) 2.( ) 3.( ) 4.( ) 5.( ) 6.( ) 7.( ) 8.( ) 9.( ) 10.( )

**Exercise II**

**2.** One of the most significant phenomena of our time has been the development of the cinema from a turn-of-the-century mechanical toy into the century's most potent and versatile art form. In its early chameleon-like phase the cinema was used variously as an extension of photography, as a substitute for the theatre and the music hall, and as part of the magician's paraphernalia. By the twenties, the cynics and know-alls had stopped smirking and turned down their noses.

Today, the cinema commands the respect accorded to any other form of creative expression. In the immense complexity of its creative process, it combines in various measures the functions of poetry, music, painting, drama, architecture and a host of other arts, major and minor. It also combines the cold logic of science with the subtlest abstractions of the human imagination. No matter what goes into the making of it, no matter who uses it and how a producer for financial profits, a political body for propagandavOr an avant garde intellectual for the satisfaction of an aesthetic urge-the cinema is basically the expression of a concept or concepts in aesthetic terms; terms which have crystallized through the incredibly short years of its existence.

It was perhaps inevitable that the cinema should have found the greatest impetus in America. A country without any deep rooted cultural and artistic traditions was perhaps best able to appraise the new medium objectively. Thanks to pioneers like Griffith, and to the vast sensation-mongering public with its constant clamour for something new, the basic style of film making was evolved and the tools for its production perfected much quicker than would be normally possible. The cinema has now attained a stage where it can handle Shakespeare and psychiatry with equal facility....

1. The cinema, in the present century, has become :

- (a) the most powerful and varied art form
  - (b) omnipotent and intellectual art form
  - (c) most manly and poetic art form
  - (d) most potential and popular art form
  - (e) none of these
-

2. One of the reasons given by the writer for cinema's having immense complexity is that :
    - (a) it is a creative art
    - (b) it is the product of the contribution of many people
    - (c) it combines the scientific temper with human imagination
    - (d) it combines scientific attitude with art
    - (e) it is the synthesis of science and anthropology.
  
  3. 'avant garde' means :
    - (a) pioneer in art
    - (b) political person
    - (c) film maker
    - (d) architect
    - (e) professional artist.
  
  4. Cinema is basically the expression of the concepts in aesthetic terms which :
    - (a) have been made clear in a very short time
    - (b) have been made clear in due course of time
    - (c) are inharmonious
    - (d) are forgotten in a short span of time
    - (e) are nebulous.
  
  5. Cinema found the greatest impetus in America, because :
    - (a) America has financial resources
    - (b) America take great interest in film-making
    - (c) America has deep-rooted cultural and artistic traditions
    - (d) America is advanced in science and technology
    - (e) none of these
  
  6. 'Thanks to' means :
    - (a) thankful to
    - (b) full of gratitude
    - (c) owing to
    - (d) in fact
    - (e) per se
  
  7. The basic style of film making was evolved because :
    - (a) of the demand of the public
    - (b) of the demand of the elite
    - (c) of the demand of the public, fond of spreading sensational
    - (d) of the demand of the people fond of sex-and -violence on the screen which arouses their sensations
    - (e) demand of crazy public
  
  8. Cinema now can make film on Shakespeare's dramas as well as on :
    - (a) any theme
    - (b) most serious themes
    - (c) theme concerned with high - brows
    - (d) themes depicting psychological problems
    - (e) humorous
  
  9. 'Host' means:
-

- (a) the man who visits somebody
- (b) the man who is visited by a guest
- (c) inimical
- (d) a place to stay
- (e) a large number of

10. 'Chameleon - like' means :

- (a) like an animal
- (b) colorful
- (c) unstable
- (d) adaptable
- (e) infant-stage

**ANSWERS: -**

1.( )    2.( )    3.( )    4.( )    5.( )    6.( )    7.( )    8.( )    9.( )    10.( )

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