UNIT 14: COMPREHENSION II

UNIT STRUCTURE

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14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- define the term of comprehension
- gain idea on the tips and techniques necessary for unseen comprehension passages.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit makes an attempt to acquaint you with descriptive comprehension. In the previous unit you must have worked on how to change your comprehension and reading skills. In this unit, we shall discuss the definition and the techniques that focus on answering unseen passages for exmination purpose.

14.3 DEFINING COMPREHENSION

Comprehension means the power to understand. The passage set in the examination for comprehension aims at testing your knowledge and ability to understand the given passage and answer questions set on it accurately in easy, precise and simple language. In answering such

questions you need not be original; rather you should elicit all the answers from the given passage itself. It is not necessary that you know the meaning of all the words in the passage. You should try to get at the sense of the passage

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14.4 HOW TO WRITE ANSWERS TO AN UNSEEN PASSAGE

Now let us see how to write answers to an unseen passage:

- Read the passage time and again till you understand fully the piece as a whole.
- 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. For example, take up the first question and go through the passage once again to underline the words which form an answer to it and mark them as No. 1.
- Proceed with the other questions in the same way.
- Do not beat about the bush. Try to be brief, clear and to the point.
- Answer the questions in your own words. Stealing words and phrases from the original passage will bring you no credit.
- A revision of your answer will help you in correcting your mistakes in the spellings and punctuation marks.

How to find a heading or title :

- Read the passage over and again to grasp the central idea. You will find it in the beginning, in the middle or at the end.
- Express the title by means of a word, a phrase or proverb.
- It should be as brief as possible.
- The first letter of every important word should be capital.
- It must throw full light on the nature of the passage.

Let us now try a comprehension piece.

Model Passage: Success in life depends largely on good health. Keep your body fit and maintain **cleanliness**, in take of **fresh air**, **regular habits**

and **suitable recreation**, make yourself strong to play the game and to do it in every sense of the word. Avoid anything that will sap your strength. Smoking in your youth stunts the body and clouds the brain. Be temperate in all things and beware of drink. It is the deadly enemy of health and efficiency. Above all, remember that your character is priceless possession.Therefore, keep it untarnished. Be truthful in all things, courteous and considerate to everybody, fair to your rivals, kind and helpful to all who are weak and suffering, and do not be afraid to have the courage to stand up for what is good, pure and noble.

Questions:

1) How can we maintain good health?
2) What are the things we should avoid in particular?
3) What are the traits of character that we should cultivate?
4) Explain: 'be temperate in all things'.
5) Give the opposites of: success, strength.

[A.I. CBSE, 1981]

Let us read the given passage carefully time and again so that it is understood. Now let us go through the questions first and then let's take the first question to be answered. As suggested above, I have underlined the key words in the given passage to answer question no 1. Now let me answer the question for you. You have seen that key words are "cleanliness", "fresh air", "regular habits" and "suitable recreations". Thus, on the basis of this the answers have been framed for you in this way:

Answers:

1) We can maintain good health by keeping clean, breathing fresh air, regular habits and good entertainment. So for rest of the questions proceed in the same way.
2) We should avoid smoking and drinking. They affect the body and the mind badly. They weaken us and make us inefficient.
3) Truthfulness, courtesy, kindness and the courage to stand up for the good are some traits of character. We should try to be considerate to all and helpful to the weak.

4) "Be temperate in all things" means moderate, self–restrained in appetite and passions.

5) Success-failure, strength–weakness.



14.5 LET US SUM UP

Comprehension requires an ability to understand the meaning of what is put forth as well as the competence to express it clearly. The unit is focussed on the tips and techniques necessary for examination purpose. We have given you some suggestions about comprehension and examples of unseen passages in both Unit 13 and 14 which shall provide you a good idea on writing answer to unseen passeges in your examinations.



14.6 FURTHER READING

1) Aggarwala, N.K. (2001). *Essentials of English Grammar and Composition*. New Delhi: Goyal Brothers.

2) De Sarkar, P. K. (2007). *Higher English Grammar and Composition*. Kolkata: Book Syndicate Limited.

3) Wren and Martin (1996). *High School English Grammar and Composition*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company.

14.7 EXAMPLES

1. Our country gave birth to a mighty soul and he shone like a beacon not only for India but also for the whole world. And yet he was done to death by one of our own brothers and compatriots. How did this happen? You might think that it was an act of madness, but that does not explain this tragedy. It could only occur because the seed for it was sown in the poison of hatred

and enmity that spread throughout the country and affected so many of our people. Out of that seed grew this poisonous plant. It is the duty of all of us to fight this poison of hatred and ill-will. If we have learnt anything from Gandhiji, we must bear no ill-will or enmity towards any person. The individual is not our enemy; it is the poison within him that we fight and which we must put an end to.

Questions:

i) Who is "the mighty soul" referred to in the passage?

ii) Why was he done to death?

iii) What do we learn from Gandhiji?

iv) What should we fight against in the individual?

v) What is the poison referred to in this passage?

Answers:

i) "The mighty soul" referred to in this passage is Mahatma Gandhi.

ii) Mahatma Gandhi was done to death because the poison of hatred and enmity had spread throughout the country and affected so many of our countrymen.

iii) We learn from Gandhiji that we must have no ill-will or enmity towards any person.

iv) We must fight against the poison of hatred and ill-will present in the country.

v) The poison referred to in this passage is hatred and ill-will towards other persons.

[Aggarwal : 2001, 314]

2. There lived in a certain town of Persia two painters whose fame had spread far. Both were so good at their work that it was hard to say who was the better painter of the two was. So it was settled that each was to draw a picture, and there would be judges to decide who had done the better work. One of the painters painted a bunch of grapes which looked so natural that the birds came and pecked at it. The judges were struck with wonder and thought he was surely going town. When they went to see what the other painter had done, he pointed to a screen that was before their eyes. The rival painter thought that the picture was behind the screen

and went forward to see it. He was greatly surprised to find that there was no screen there, but only the picture of one that had been painted on the wall. The judges were speechless with wonder and gave the second painter the place of honour as his picture had deceived a man while that of his rival had deceived only the birds.

Questions:

i) What steps were taken to find out the better painter of the two?

ii) What pictures did they paint?

iii) Why was the second painter given the place of honour?

Answers:

i) Both the painters were so good that it was difficult to say who the better of the two was. So each was asked to draw a picture, and judges were selected to decide whose work was better.

ii) One of the painters painted a bunch of grapes. It was so natural that the birds came and pecked at it. When the judges went to see the other man's work, he pointed to a screen. Thinking that the picture was behind the screen, the first painter went forward to see it. He was, however, surprised to find that it was no real screen, but the picture of one painted on the wall.

iii) The judges decided in favour of the second painter because while his rival's work had deceived only the birds, his work had deceived a man, himself a good painter.

[De Sarkar : 2007, 666]

14.8 EXERCISE

Read the following passages carefully and answer the questions that follow:

1. The great advantage of early rising is that one can start one's work long before others. The early riser has done a large amount of hard work before other men have got out of bed. Early in the morning the mind is fresh and no sounds or noises disturb our attention. The work done at that

time is generally well done. Also one finds time to take some exercise in the fresh morning air. Exercise supplies him with a good deal of energy that enables him to work hard until the evening. By beginning so early, he knows that he has plenty of time to do his work thoroughly. He does not have to hurry over any part of his work. He gets to sleep long before midnight. At that time sleep is most refreshing. After a night's sound rest, he rises early next morning in good health ready for the labour of a new day.

Questions:

i) What advantages does an early riser have over others?

ii) Why should one take exercise in the morning and begin one's work early?

iii) What are the uses of going to sleep long before midnight?

2. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, there lived a famous Englishman named Sir Walter Raleigh. He was a gentleman of birth, and a favourite with the queen. He was a scholar, a poet, and a brave and daring soldier. He sailed to the New World which we call America, and had many adventures there. He did two useful things: he brought back from America two plants which became very popular with the Europeans. One was tobacco, the other was the potato. Before his time the potato was unknown in Europe, but it is now one of the commonest foods all over the world. Raleigh first planted potatoes in Ireland; and the potato became to the Irish what wheat is to the Punjabi, and rice is to the Bengalee and the Madrasi-their chief food.

Questions:

i) Who was Sir Walter Raleigh?

ii) What is the New World?

iii) What were the two useful things Raleigh did?

iv) What is the importance of the potato?

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