

Reading Comprehension

The word comprehension refers to understanding and grasping of any fact when presented orally or in a written form. Understanding any fact or information properly requires one's ability to understand the language in which the fact or the information has been presented. Your familiarity with a language helps you understand the message conveyed in the text you read or hear. Different type of texts you can come across such as literary, inferential, social, biographical etc.

Thus, to evaluate the level of your understanding of the language you may read a text in English. After that you see whether you have understood the substance of passage you have chosen for comprehension. If there are dialogues, see if you follow them properly and understand them. Then write a brief summary of the passage and give to your guide for evaluation. The guide, who evaluates your summary, will find out whether you have understood the passage properly or not. Here is given below the summary of the four literary texts (stories) to help you understand the meaning of the reading passages prescribed in your WBUT syllabus. Try to read in between the lines while dealing with such text type. Many new words as well as constructions also you will get to learn from these literary texts that will develop your speaking, writing as well as comprehension ability.

The Open Window by Saki

The story is woven with humor on one side and elements of unfathomable innocence and gullible nature on the other. How Vera, the niece of Mrs Sappleton, simply beguiles Mr Nuttel by her incredibly fictitious version of the disappearance of Mr Sappleton and his brother through the French window is indeed amusing. The story revolves round two characters and when you read it, you can visualize the setting very well because the dramatic elements of description and conversation are mingled in the right proportion. Read the conversations well. Take cues from them and portray the characters of Vera, Mr Nuttel and Mrs Sappleton.

Answer the questions that are given in the book for comprehension.

With the words given for notes and meanings, make sentences so that you learn the applications of the words. Also remember the spellings of the words that you come across, may be, for the first time.

Marriage is a Private Affair by Chinua Achebe

The story breathes wonderful feelings of a father and a grandfather. The way it explores the subtle tender feelings blended with joy, affection and remorse of a grandfather especially at the end of the story is indeed captivating. The imageries used by the author juxtapose vividly the metamorphosis of human emotions and that of nature. You can learn the verbs as they are used most appropriately.

It is not only language skill or precision of writing that we look at. You also enjoy the story and develop a sense of appreciation that helps you in developing a critical view as well. Moreover, you enhance your writing skill by reading the story several times. Note the different verbs used. Underline them and look up the meaning if you do not know the meanings of some of them. The story brings out a social issue and reveals how a marriage between Nnaemeka and Nene causes a breach in the family. Nnaemeka's father cannot accept the marriage that defies social taboos and so he gives up all relationship with his son. He is so enraged that he repudiates the strong bonding between a father and a son. It is his daughter-in-law who at last is able to evince sympathy from her father-in-law and make him realize his mistake.

Here you have three characters. Portray the characters and make a list of adjectives that you can give to each one of them.

Answer the questions given at the end of the story in your own words. Remember that you read a story for amusement, yet you learn quite a lot from it.

The Moon in the Earthen Pot by Gopini Karunakar

This story is full of fantasies where the author's Guddava stories are woven replete with demons and Guddava herself playing the role of a protagonist, the storyteller

to the author and her siblings. You cannot help feeling sad where the tale depicts the poverty-stricken life of Guddavva and the terrible state she was in when she became blind. However, she goes on with her stories as she is pestered by her grandchildren. The author narrates the story as it has been narrated by Guddavva.

The story gives you the conversations as they are narrated by the author. The conversations help you learn the conversational style. Read them aloud. Then try to change the direct speech into an indirect form of narration. There are questions following the story. Answer them.

The four stories you have read from the book are simply guidelines on how you can improve and practice various aspects to hone your language skill.

Read the other stories from the collection and work out the exercises for practice. Learn the new words to increase your vocabulary. Note the verbs as they are used in the sentences. Make your own sentences and you will find that they have become your own. According to the need you can use them in your communication rather spontaneously without much deliberation or thinking.

Reading comprehension

(INFERENTIAL)

Drawing inferences reading a given passage may appear to be a difficult task for you people- but it's not so. It just requires you to analytically approach the passage unlike the literary text. As you read more these type of passages more you develop the following skills-

- These scientific passages help you develop the analytical power as you are required here to analyse the facts given in the passage in order to answer the questions.
- It enriches the knowledge on scientific and technical topics.
- It introduces various scientific and technical terms.
- You get an outlook towards scientific writings and the way to approach such type of writings.
- It also helps to think logically and establish every point you try to establish with reason.
- Helps to recognize the author's view of the world including the author's biases.
- Offer conclusions from facts presented in the text.
- Helps to relate what is happening in the text to their existing knowledge of the world.

An extract from a Sample of the above text type-

Marie Curie was one of the most accomplished scientists in history. Together with her husband, Pierre, she discovered radium, an element widely used for treating cancer, and studied uranium and other radioactive substances. Pierre and Marie's amicable collaboration later helped to unlock the secrets of the atom.

Marie was born in 1867 in Warsaw, Poland, where her father was a professor of physics. At an early age, she displayed a brilliant mind and a blithe personality. Her great exuberance for learning prompted her to continue with her studies after high school. She became disgruntled, however, when she learned that the university in Warsaw was closed to women. Determined to receive a higher education, she defiantly left Poland and in 1891 entered the Sorbonne, a French university, where she earned her master's degree and doctorate in physics.