

Reading Comprehension

By

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Reading Comprehension: is the ability of understanding a text or a passage. To be able to understand the written material, students need to be able to 1. Decode what they read, 2. make connection between what they read and what they already know and 3. Think deeply about what they have read.

One big part of comprehension is having a sufficient vocabulary, or knowing the meanings of enough words. Readers who have strong comprehension are able to draw conclusions about they read- what is important, what is a fact, what caused an event to happen. Thus comprehension involves combining reading, thinking and reasoning.

Strategies for the Reading Comprehension Questions:

1. Skim the reading passage to determine the main idea in the passage: you don't need to understand every detail in the passage to answer the questions correctly. It is therefore a waste of time to read the passage with the intent of understanding every single detail before you try to answer the questions.

2. Find the part of the passage that deals with each question. The question-type tells you exactly where to look in the passage to find correct answers.

-For main idea questions, look at the first line of each paragraph.

-For direct and indirect questions, choose a key word in the question and skim for that key word in order in the passage.

-For vocabulary questions, the question will tell you where the word is located

-For overall questions, the answers are found anywhere in the passage.

3. Read the part of the passage that contains the answer carefully. The answer will probably be in the same sentence (or one sentence before or after) the keyword or idea.

4. Choose the best answer to each question from the choices listed in your test. You can choose the best answer according to what is given in the part of the passage, eliminate the wrong answers and mark your best guess on the answer sheet.

Types of questions:

1. Main Idea Questions: every reading passage will have a question about the main idea of the passage. Such questions may be stated in a variety of ways. You may, for example, be asked to identify the topic, subject, title or main idea. To answer such a question, you need to look at the topic sentence which is most probably found at the beginning of a paragraph to determine the main idea.

2. Direct Questions: this kind of questions asks about one piece of information in the passage rather than the passage as a whole. The correct answer to this question is often a restatement of what is given in the passage. This means that the correct answer often expresses the same idea as it is written in the passage but the words are not exactly the same.

3. Indirect Questions: you answer this kind of questions by drawing a conclusion from specific details in the passage. Questions of this type contain the words implied, inferred, likely or probably to let you know that the answer to the question is not directly mentioned. Instead some information will be given in the passage and you need to draw a conclusion from that information.

4. Vocabulary Questions: this kind of questions will ask you about the meaning of a certain word in the passage. You usually determine the meaning of the word from the context i.e. the passage will give you an indication of what the word means.

5. Overall Questions: this kind of questions ask about the passage as a whole rather than one small detail. Such questions ask for example about the tone of the passage, the author's purpose in writing the passage or the course the passage might be part of.

A sample of Reading Passage:

Herman Melville, an American author best known today for his novel *Moby Dick*, was actually more popular during his lifetime for some of his other works. He travelled extensively and used the knowledge gained during his travels as the basis for his early novels. In 1837, at the age of eighteen, Melville signed as a cabin boy on a merchant ship that was to sail from Massachusetts home to Liverpool, England. His experiences on this trip served as a basis for the novel *Redburn* (1849). In 1841, Melville set out on a whaling ship headed for the South Seas. After jumping ship in Tahiti, he wandered around the islands of Tahiti and Moorea. This South Sea island sojourn was a backdrop to the novel *Omoo* (1847). After three year away from home, Melville joined up with a U.S. naval frigate that was returning to the eastern United States around Cape Horn. The novel *White-Jacket* (1850) describes this lengthy voyage as a navy seaman.

With the publication of these early adventure novels, Melville developed a strong and loyal following among readers eager for his tales of exotic places and situations. However, in 1851, with the publication of *Moby Dick*, Melville's popularity started to diminish. *Moby Dick*, on one level the saga of the hunt for the great white whale, was also a heavily symbolic allegory of the heroic struggle of humanity against the universe. The public was not ready for Melville's literary metamorphosis from romantic adventure to philosophical symbolism. It is ironic that the novel that served to diminish Melville's popularity during his lifetime is the one for which he is best known today.

1. The main subject of the passage is
 - a. Melville's travels
 - b. the popularity of Melville's novels
 - c. Melville's personal background
 - d. *Moby Dick*

2. According to the passage, Melville's early novels were
 - a. published while he was travelling
 - b. completely fictional
 - c. all about his work on whaling ships

d. based on his travels

3. In what year did Melville's book about his experiences as a cabin boy appear?

a. 1837

b. 1841

c. 1847

d. 1849

4. The word "basis" in line 5 is closest in meaning to

a. foundation

b. message

c. bottom

d. theme

5. The passage implies that Melville stayed in Tahiti because

a. he had unofficially left his ship

b. he was on leave while his ship was in port

c. he had finished his term of duty

d. he had received permission to take a vacation in Tahiti

6. A frigate in line 8 is probably

a. an office

b. a ship

c. a troop

d. a train

7. How did the publication of Moby Dick affect Melville's popularity?

- a. His popularity increased immediately
- b. It had caused no effect on his popularity
- c. It caused his popularity to decrease
- d. His popularity remained as strong as ever

8. According to the passage, Moby Dick is

- a. a romantic adventure
- b. a single-faceted work
- c. a short story about a whale
- d. symbolic of humanity fighting the environment

9. The word "metamorphosis" in line 15 is closest in meaning to

- a. circle
- b. change
- c. mysticism
- d. descent

10. The passage would most likely be assigned reading in a course on

- a. nineteenth-century novels
- b. American history
- c. oceanography
- d. modern American literature