

Chapter 33. Reading Comprehension

Exercise 1. Read the passage given below.

Nagaland, one of India's smallest states, is located in the north-east. It is bounded by Myanmar on the east, Arunachal Pradesh on the north, Assam on the west and Manipur on the south. Nagaland is mostly mountainous except the part bordering the Assam valley. Mount Saramati is the highest peak and forms a natural barrier between Nagaland and Myanmar.



The Nagas, inhabitants of Nagaland, form more than twenty tribes. Konyak is the largest of the Naga tribes. Traditionally, the Nagas wear colourful tribal outfits with bamboo shields and decorated spears. They are simple at heart, are known for their festive spirit and burst into dance and music on such occasions as festivals, marriages and harvest.

Folk songs and ballads popular among the Nagas uphold such values as bravery, love, generosity, etc. Dances are mostly woven around war themes and are performed with amazing mock war emotions. Bamboo dance is a well-known dance of the Nagas. Colourfully dressed young girls performing the bamboo dance at an incredible speed and with great accuracy present a fascinating sight.

The Nagas celebrate their festivals with great enthusiasm. Almost every Naga tribe has its own festival. *Sankarni* is the major festival of the Zemis tribe. This religious festival coincides with Shivratri. *Sekrenyi* is a festival celebrated by the Angamis tribe to ensure the health and well-being of the community. *Moatsu* is the most important festival celebrated by the Aos tribe after the sowing is over. Feasting and merry-making invariably accompany festivals.

Wood-carving is a famous Naga craft. The Konyaks, the best wood-carvers among all the Naga tribes, are skilled in carving human and animal figures. Weaving is a traditional Naga art in which each tribe has its own special designs and colours. Shawls, shoulder bags, and intricately woven mats and baskets make magnificent souvenirs for the tourists.

A. Write T for true and F for false statements:

1. The part of Nagaland touching Assam is mostly mountainous.
2. Most of Nagaland's population consists of tribal people.
3. Moatsu is a religious festival of the Nagas.
4. The Nagas are adept in wood-carving.
5. The folk songs of the Nagas deal mostly with war themes.

B. Tick (✓) the right choice:

1. Mount Saramati separates
(a) Nagaland and Assam. (b) Myanmar and Manipur.
(c) Myanmar and Nagaland. (d) Manipur and Assam.
2. The Aos tribe of Nagaland celebrates
(a) Sankarni. (b) Moatsu.
(c) Sekrenyi. (d) Shivratri.
3. The best wood-carvers of Nagaland belong to the tribe.
(a) Zemis (b) Aos
(c) Konyak (d) Moatsu
4. The largest Naga tribe is
(a) Konyak. (b) Zemis.
(c) Aos. (d) Angami.

C. Complete the following statements:

1. Traditionally, the Nagas are dressed in _____.
2. The Angamis celebrate the _____.
3. The Konyaks, who form the largest tribe of Nagaland, are expert in _____.
4. Tourists visiting Nagaland bring _____ as souvenirs.
5. _____ girls performing the bamboo dance _____ look very impressive.

D. Find words from the passage which mean the following:

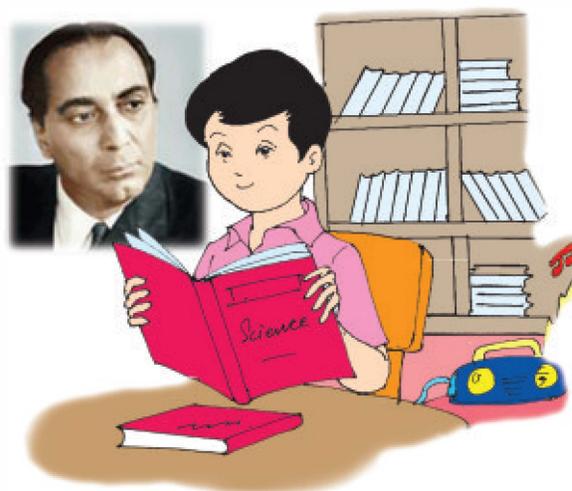
1. a set of clothes worn for a particular occasion _____
2. that which is suitable for a festival _____
3. a poem that tells a story _____
4. to happen at the same time _____
5. something that you buy, give or receive to preserve the memory of an occasion _____

E. Find from the passage the **synonyms** of the following words:

1. astonishing _____
2. correctness _____
3. attractive _____
4. unbelievable _____
5. zeal _____

Exercise 2. Read the passage given below.

In his childhood, Homi* bubbled with immense energy, slept much less than children of his age. His mother Meheran and his father Jehangir Bhabha took him to many doctors. They subjected him to several tests. They found nothing wrong. He was a perfectly healthy child. Why did he spend lesser time in sleep? It took them some time to understand the cause. Homi had a super-active brain. It was ticking away, merrily, handling streams of new ideas and novel thoughts.



That news thrilled his parents. Now they knew they had no cause for anxiety. But it made their job more difficult. They could not guess what the future held for Homi. But they could shape his destiny by helping him develop his native talent. They decided to do that. They stacked the bookshelves at home with the best of books on a wide range of subjects. They provided him with a collection of records of western music, introduced him to the great masters in the field of literature, led him to books on nature and science and technology and fine arts. The seed for the quest for greatness was sown then.

The strategy of Homi's parents paid rich dividends. By the age of 15, he was much better informed than most boys of his age. He could understand complex ideas. Once he took everyone by surprise when he talked at length about Einstein's Theory of Relativity. He also got a tip from Einstein. Success, Einstein had linked with hard work, total commitment to the job and a never-say-die spirit. That formula appealed to Homi.

—R.K. Murthi

*Dr Homi J. Bhabha, the famous Indian scientist.

A. Tick (✓) the right choice:

1. As a child, Homi was
- (a) lazy. (b) unhealthy.
- (c) overactive for his age. (d) difficult to handle.
2. Homi's parents took him to doctors because
- (a) he was frequently falling ill.
- (b) he did not sleep as much as other children of his age.
- (c) he always remained tensed up.
- (d) he had a super-active brain.
3. Homi's parents helped him by
- (a) taking him to Einstein.
- (b) teaching him high moral values.
- (c) seeking medical help for him.
- (d) buying him books on a wide range of subjects.
4. A person with a never-say-die spirit
- (a) never talks about death.
- (b) is not afraid of death.
- (c) does not accept defeat.
- (d) believes that the spirit never dies.

B. Now answer the following questions:

1. Why were Homi's parents anxious about him in his childhood?

2. How did Homi's parents discover that he was an exceptionally talented child?

3. What strategy did they adopt to help Homi's talent grow?

4. What evidence of Homi's great knowledge and intelligence do you find in the passage?

5. What does commitment to one's goal mean?

C. Find out from the passage the **synonyms** of the following words:

1. large _____

2. happily _____

3. inborn _____

4. search _____

Exercise 3. Read the passage given below.

Puppetry is an ancient form of theatre and entertainment practised mostly in rural India. It is, in fact, a combination of several art forms like sculpture, painting, designing, acting, writing and music. It is an art which enchants children as well as adults.



A large variety of raw materials are used to create puppets. The famous puppets of Rajasthan are made out of wood and are known as *kathputli*. Leather, papier-mâché, and stuffed cloth are also frequently used to make puppets.

Puppets may be classified according to the material they are made from or the methods of manipulating them, that is, the means used by the puppeteer to make the puppets move, for example, hand puppets, string puppets, rod puppets and shadow theatre. In India, puppets are regarded as divine and held in reverence by the puppeteer. After they become old and worn out, they are not discarded but kept at home like ageing relatives. The stories enacted by the puppets are influenced by the epics—*Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the *Panchtantra* stories and glorious tales of past warriors and heroes.

The islands of Bali and Sumatra in Indonesia also have a rich tradition of puppetry. Japan is famous for its puppet theatre called 'bunraku', in which majestic dolls almost 150 cm tall are animated and skilfully manipulated by several puppeteers.

A. Tick (✓) the right choice:

1. *Kathputlis* are puppets from

(a) Japan.

(b) Rajasthan.

(c) Indonesia.

(d) Sumatra.

2. In India, old, worn-out puppets are

(a) discarded.

(b) neglected.

(c) worshipped.

(d) carefully preserved.

3. 'Bunraku' is a puppet theatre from

(a) Japan.

(b) Indonesia.

(c) India.

(d) Bali.

4. In 'bunraku', puppets may be almost tall.

(a) 15 cm

(b) 150 inches

(c) 150 cm

(d) 15 feet

B. Write T for true and F for false statements:

1. Puppetry is meant to entertain children.

2. Puppetry is a recent art form related to theatre developed in rural India.

3. Puppetry is popular in India as well as some other Asian countries.

C. Answer the following questions:

1. Explain the ways in which puppets are classified.

2. How many kinds of puppets are there according to the method of manipulating them?

3. What is the source of the stories told in India through puppetry?

4. How is the art of puppetry as practised in Japan different from the one practised in India?

D. Find words from the passage which mean the following:

1. to throw away, to get rid of

2. getting old

3. to produce an impact

4. very often

5. to charm, to fascinate

Exercise 4. Read the poem given below.

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he, laughing, said to me:

‘Pipe a song about a lamb!’
So I piped with merry cheer.
‘Piper, pipe that song again;’
So I piped: he wept to hear.

‘Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy cheer!’
So I sang the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.

‘Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book, that all may read.’
So he vanished from my sight;
And I plucked a hollow reed.

And I made a rural pen,
And I stained the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

—*William Blake*



A. Prepare a **summary** of the poem taking help from the salient points of each stanza given below:

Stanza 1. A piper saw a child on a cloud.

Stanza 2. “**Pipe** a song about a **lamb!**” said the child.

Stanza 3. “**Sing** thy songs of happy cheer!”

Stanza 4. “**Write** thy songs in a book.”

Stanza 5. I wrote my happy songs.

B. Answer the following questions:

1. Do you think the piper actually saw the child on the cloud? What else can the cloud suggest?

2. What, in your view, could the *lamb* suggest? Innocence? Gentleness? Meekness? Christ? All of them? (Christ is often called lamb.)

3. What effect did the piping produce on the child’s mind? Why?

4. How did the piper manage a pen and ink?

Note. Would you like to read the songs William Blake wrote after this? They are included in his book *Songs of Innocence*.