

Chapter 27. Reading Skills

Exercise 1. Read the passage given below.

The Taj Mahal is one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. About three hundred fifty years ago, emperor Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal as a tomb for his wife.



Shah Jahan loved his wife very much. It is said that he remained in mourning for two years, during which his hair turned grey with grief. He vowed to build a tomb worthy of his wife's memory, something absolutely without equal anywhere in the world. He just wanted the tomb to be perfect. He did not care about time or money. He found the finest workmen in Asia. Altogether, over 20,000 different men worked on the building. It took over twenty-two years to finish it.

The building rests on a platform of sandstone. Four slender white towers, or minarets, rise from the corners of the terrace. A large dome rises from the centre of the building. Around this large dome there are smaller domes.

The building is made of fine white marble with inlays of coloured marble. It has eight sides and many open arches. There is an open corridor just inside the outer walls. From this corridor, the visitor looks through carved marble screens to a central room. The bodies of Shah Jahan and his wife lie in a tomb below the room.

The Taj has been praised so much that most visitors approach it with the fear that they will be disappointed. But it has rarely disappointed anyone. It can be seen again and again and every time one visits it, one is able to discover some new beauty in it.

A. 1. Tick (✓) the correct statement:

- (a) The finest workmen chosen from all over India built the Taj Mahal.
- (b) The building was completed in less than fifteen years.
- (c) The number of minarets rising from the corners of the terrace is six.
- (d) The Taj rests on a platform of sandstone.

2. Tick (✓) the correct response:

The bodies of Shah Jahan and his wife lie in a tomb

- (a) in the central room.
- (b) below the central room.
- (c) on the terrace.
- (d) in the corridor inside the outer wall.

3. Cross (✗) the wrong statement:

- (a) The Taj Mahal is one of the most beautiful buildings in the world.
- (b) Over 20,000 men took about 22 years to complete the Taj Mahal.
- (c) The Taj is octagonal in shape.
- (d) The main building of the Taj is built of sandstone.

B. Answer the following questions:

1. How was Shah Jahan affected by his wife's death?

2. Why did Shah Jahan build the Taj?

3. What kind of tomb did Shah Jahan want to build?

4. What fear do visitors carry in their hearts when they go to see the Taj?

5. What is the visitors' reaction after seeing the Taj again and again?

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

1. completely _____

2. without any flaw _____

3. thin _____

4. very seldom _____

Exercise 2. Read the passage given below.

While I was returning one hot afternoon to the ice cream depot I work for, I was caught in a traffic jam of cars bound for the beach. Feeling hot and thirsty, I decided to eat an ice cream from the back of my truck. As I was returning to my seat, relishing the cool touch and the delicious taste of the ice cream, I became conscious of the presence of four sweltering kids looking towards me with expectant eyes. Feeling sorry for them, I gave an ice cream to each one of them. Soon I got surrounded by a large number of children. Having entertained four of them, I found it impossible to refuse the others. Besides, I was feeling genuinely sorry for them, for it was clear from their shabby and tattered clothes that they hadn't often experienced the luxury of eating an ice cream. By the time the traffic began to move, I had gone through four cartons. Rather than explain to my boss, I decided to pay for them myself.

As soon as I arrived at the depot, I was called to the manager's office and asked why I had been giving away company stock. I was quite sure that neither my explanation nor my decision to pay was going to save me from being sacked. But my boss broadly smiled at me and said that the company had never had such an effective advertising campaign for years. Parents had been phoning to thank the company.

A. Tick (✓) the correct statement:

1. The narrator decided to eat an ice cream because

(a) he was fond of ice cream.

(b) he wanted to have some publicity for his ice cream.

(c) he wanted to attract the children standing nearby.

(d) he was feeling hot and thirsty.

2. The narrator decided to pay for the ice cream cartons from his own pocket because
- (a) he wanted to get the satisfaction of having done a noble deed.
 - (b) he was afraid that his boss would not accept his explanation.
 - (c) he was afraid that he might lose his job for having wasted the company's stock.
 - (d) both (b) and (c).

B. Answer the following questions:

1. Who is the narrator of the passage?

2. Why did he give the four kids an ice cream each?

3. Where did his kindness lead him to?

4. What was his fear and how did it end?

C. Complete the following on the basis of your reading of the passage:

1. When the narrator was returning to his seat in the truck, _____

2. The shabby clothes of the children were a clear indication that _____

3. The narrator distributed _____

4. He decided to pay for the ice creams himself _____

D. Pick out from the passage the words which mean the same as the following:

1. to enjoy _____

2. really _____

3. old and in a bad condition _____

4. container _____

5. feeling hot and uncomfortable _____

Exercise 3. Read the passage given below.

No obstacles can ever block the way to success if one has the will to succeed. Determined people accept the difficulties of life as challenges and, instead of meekly giving in, struggle with greater vigour and triumph in the end. Lal Bahadur Shastri, Dhirubhai Ambani, Premchand, S. Ramanujan were all born in poor families. They drew strength from their poverty and rose to the pinnacles of glory in their chosen fields.



The renowned Indian physicist Meghnad Saha too was born in a very poor family. He was the fifth child of his parents and his father wanted him to start contributing to family earnings as soon as possible. He was able to step into a school only because a kind-hearted neighbour agreed to pay his tuition fees. His school was 14 km away and he had to walk to the school and back home everyday. Walking 28 kilometres a day was hard labour but it only whetted his thirst for knowledge. Later he began to give tuitions to small children in Physics and Mathematics to supplement the family income. Even this activity involved cycling long distances in the morning and evening. From these humble beginnings, Meghnad rose to become one of the greatest Indian scientists.

Meghnad kept himself updated about the latest developments in Physics taking place in Europe by reading Physics books in German. He borrowed these books from an Austrian teacher of Botany, Dr Bruhl, in the Bengal Engineering College, Kolkata. He translated some of these latest theories into English to explain them to other students. In fact, he himself developed certain theories and made a significant contribution to the advancement of Physics.

A. 1. Tick (✓) the correct statement:

Meghnad Saha was

- (a) an industrialist.
- (b) a teacher of Botany in the Bengal Engineering College.
- (c) a professional translator.
- (d) a physicist.

2. Cross (✗) the correct statement:

- (a) While at school, Meghnad Saha had to walk 14 km everyday.
- (b) Meghnad Saha earned money by translating some Physics theories from German into English.
- (c) Meghnad Saha's early education was made possible by the generosity of a kind-hearted neighbour.
- (d) Dr Bruhl taught Physics in the Bengal Engineering College.

B. Answer the following questions:

1. What obstacle to success does the passage specifically mention?

2. How did the great people mentioned in the opening paragraph overcome the problems posed by their humble beginnings?

3. What difficulties did Meghnad have to face as a student?

4. What unusual qualities of Meghnad as a student are suggested in the passage?

C. Think and answer:

1. Why is poverty usually considered to be an obstacle to success?

2. How can giving tuitions be helpful to one's own studies?

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

1. energy and enthusiasm _____

2. to emerge victorious _____

3. crowning point _____

4. to sharpen, to increase _____

Exercise 4. Read the poem given below.

Freedom is the right to do
Anything that pleases you,
As long as you keep in sight
That others also have a right.

Have you the right to kill a cat?
Oh no! It's wrong, just consider that
The cat has the right to live like you
A right of eating and drinking too!

So remember that it's certainly wrong
To deprive a nightingale its song,
To cheat the poor people, as rich men do
To rob the innocent, as robbers do,

To injure someone to win a race
To despise some and others embrace,
To disobey every order and rule
And drown a swimmer in the pool,

And shout and scream like a fool
Disrespecting the teachers in the school.
So never forget that although you are free,
You should think of others, not only 'ME'.



A. Answer the following questions:

1. How are the rights of a cat similar to ours?

2. What similarity has the poet pointed out between rich men and robbers? Has the poet been fair in suggesting this similarity?

3. How should students conduct themselves in their school?

4. Some undesirable qualities are mentioned below. We should try to avoid them. Cross the ones which are not suggested in the fourth stanza:

(a) rudeness

(b) dishonesty

(c) discrimination

(d) falsehood

(e) arrogance

(f) flouting of rules

B. Complete the following statement:

We have the right to do _____ as long as we remember that _____.

C. Reproduce the lines that sums up the theme of the poem.
