

## Chapter 25. Reading Skills

### Exercise 1. Read the passage given below:

Its proximity to Delhi and its prolific wildlife make Corbett National Park an ideal site for a weekend break for the Delhiites. Situated in the valley of the Ramganga River near the foothills of the Himalayas, the Park is a little over 250 km from Delhi and is easily accessible either by road or partly by rail and partly by road.



Corbett National Park was set up in 1936 as India's first national park. Since then, it has grown considerably in size and now includes the Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary as a part of its 1319 sq km reserved forest area. Project Tiger was inaugurated here on April 1, 1973. About 100 sq km area of the Park is designated as Tiger Reserve Area. Dhikala is the main entry point into this area. Dhikala is, in fact, the centre of all tourist activity, for it is here that substantial residential accommodation has been built in a large grassy plateau close to the Ramganga Reservoir.

There is a great variety of wildlife on view in Corbett National Park. Apart from tigers, the Park is inhabited by leopards, bears, jackals, and such rare animals as the Himalayan palm civet, Indian grey mongoose, common otter and porcupine. Besides several species of deer and antelopes, the Indian python, viper, krait and king cobra can also be seen in the Park.

The Park offers a great deal for the birdwatchers as it has over 580 species of birds. Most of the waterbirds are the migrant variety and arrive in winters. But egrets, herons, the black-necked storks and the spur-winged lapwings can be seen here all the time.

Tourists visiting Corbett National Park should carry a pair of sharp-eyed binoculars and a mind open to all kinds of wildlife experiences from butterflies to birds to *gharials*, wild elephants and tigers. The elephant safari is the most promising way of tracking the tigers. Sitting on an elephant's back at an elevation of 10 ft, one gets a panoramic view of the Park. Besides, the elephant is not scared of a tiger and will casually take one close to it.

**A. 1. Which of these animals/birds cannot be seen in the Corbett National Park?**

(a) Krait

(b) Egret

(c) Rhinoceros

(d) Porcupine

**2. Cross (✗) the wrong statement:**

(a) Corbett National Park was set up in 1936 to save the tigers.

(b) Dhikala is situated very close to the Ramganga Reservoir.

(c) The best way to look at the tigers in the Park is to go on an elephant safari.

(d) Migratory birds can be seen in the Park in winters.

**B. Answer the following questions:**

1. Why are the people living in the Capital tempted to visit Corbett National Park?
2. What distinguishes Corbett National Park from other wildlife parks and sanctuaries? Give two points.
3. What makes Dhikala the hub of tourist activity?
4. Where is Dhikala situated?
5. Name the rare animals found in Corbett National Park.

**C. Think and answer:**

How would an elephant safari be better than a safari in a jeep?

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

1. closeness
2. in large numbers or quantities
3. that can be reached easily
4. a large flat area high above the sea level
5. covering a wide area

## Exercise 2. Read the passage given below:

We know very little about gorillas. No really satisfactory photograph has ever been taken of one in a wild state; no zoologist has been able to keep the animal under close and constant observation in the dark jungles in which it lives. Nothing can be said with certainty about how long the gorilla lives, or how or why it dies, what is the extent of its intelligence, or what is the exact social pattern of the gorilla family groups.

Gorillas have a strong smell, which can be described as a mixture of human sweat, manure and charred wood. They have good eyesight but are probably deficient in both hearing and smelling. They appear to talk to one another in high-pitched voices, or by smacking their lips or striking their cheeks. If the female gorilla is alarmed, she will scream. If the male finds himself facing some danger, he will utter a terrifying roar. He might drum on his chest and shake the trees around him to suggest that he is very angry. In extreme cases, he will even charge.

As a rule, however, the gorilla is a gentle, kind creature, a most forgiving ape who lives at peace with all other animals, and his reputation for savagery and fierceness is nothing but a myth. When the animal charges, the thing to do is to stand your ground and look him in the eyes. Then he will turn aside and slip away through the undergrowth.

Gorillas are found mostly in African jungles. Their population has considerably dwindled in recent times. They are now a protected species, which means shooting and capturing them is banned. But if they spoil the crops or loot the honey from the wild beehives which the tribesmen have placed in the trees, they have to pay heavily for their misdeeds. The tribesmen track them to their lairs and shoot them dead.

**A. Tick (✓) the right option:**

1. The gorilla has ..... .
  - (a) good eyesight, good hearing power.
  - (b) good hearing power, poor smelling power.
  - (c) good eyesight, poor smelling power.
  - (d) strong smelling power, good eyesight.
  
2. When a male gorilla is faced with danger, ..... .
  - (a) he climbs up a tree.
  - (b) he hides in bushes.
  - (c) being very gentle, he quietly sneaks away.
  - (d) he may express his anger by shaking trees.

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

1. The gorilla is a kind of ape.
2. Killing a gorilla is illegal in Africa.
3. The gorilla is a savage animal.
4. Zoologists have made a detailed study of the gorillas living in African jungles.

**C. Complete these statements:**

1. Gorilla's smell can be described as ..... .
2. Gorillas communicate with one another by producing high-pitched sounds, or ....., or ..... .
3. It is wrong to think that gorillas are cruel animals. They are, in fact, ..... .
4. If we are ever in danger of being attacked by a gorilla, the best thing is ..... .
5. Although killing gorillas is illegal, tribesmen don't hesitate to kill them if ..... .

**D. Answer the following questions:**

1. Give any three points to prove that our knowledge about gorillas is very inadequate.
2. How do the male and female gorilla behave when faced with danger?

**E. Find words from the passage which mean the following:**

1. burnt and black
2. lacking
3. to move forward quickly and violently
4. to decrease in number
5. an underground place where a wild animal lives

**Exercise 3. Read the passage given below:**

I came in contact with animals far more in prison than I had done outside. I had always been fond of dogs, and had kept some, but I could never look after them properly as other matters claimed my attention. In prison I was grateful for their company. Indians do not, as a rule, approve of animals as household pets. It is remarkable that in spite of their general philosophy of non-violence to animals, they are often singularly careless and unkind to them. Even the cow, that favoured animal, though looked up to and almost worshipped by many Hindus and often the cause of riots, is not treated kindly. Worship and kindness do not always go together.



Different countries have adopted different animals as symbols of their ambition or character — the eagle of the United States of America and of Germany, the lion and bulldog of England, the fighting cock of France, the bear of old Russia. How far do these patron animals mould national character? Most of them are aggressive, fighting animals, beasts of prey. It is not surprising that the people who grow up with these examples before them should mould themselves consciously after them and strike up aggressive attitudes and roar, and prey on others. Nor is it surprising that the Hindu should be mild and non-violent, for his patron animal is the cow.

—Jawaharlal Nehru

**A. 1. Tick (✓) the animal adopted by the Germans as a symbol of their character:**

(a) Bulldog

(b) Eagle

(c) Fighting cock

(d) Bear

## 2. Cross (✗) the wrong statement:

- (a) The cow is the patron animal of the Hindus.
- (b) The Hindus always treat the cow with kindness.
- (c) Riots have sometimes erupted in India because of the attitude of the non-Hindu communities towards the cow.
- (d) There is a direct relationship between the mildness of the Hindus and that of the cow.

## B. Complete the following sentences:

1. Although Indians believe in non-violence, ..... .
2. The author could not take care of his pets because ..... .
3. That worship and kindliness do not always go together is proved by the fact that ..... .
4. People from countries which have adopted fighting animals as their national symbols develop violence in their attitude because ..... .
5. Since the patron animal of the Hindus is the cow, it is not surprising that ..... .

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

1. ready to attack
2. strong desire to achieve

**Exercise 4. Read the poem given below:**

**The Owl**

At night, when all is still,  
The forest's sentinel  
Glides silently across the hill  
And perches in an old pine tree.

A friendly presence his!  
No harm can come  
From night bird on the prowl.  
His cry is mellow,  
Much softer than a peacock's call.

Why then this fear of owls  
Calling in the night?  
If men must speak,  
Then owls must hoot—  
They have the right.  
On me it casts no spell:  
Rather, it seems to cry,

“The night is good—all's well, all's well.”

—*Ruskin Bond*



**A. Now answer the following questions:**

1. What does the owl do when the darkness of the night envelops the entire scene?
2. Why does the poet describe the owl as the sentinel of the forest?
3. Which two birds does the poet compare in regard to their cry? Whose cry does he like more?

4. How is the owl's hooting normally interpreted? What does the owl's hooting mean to the poet?
  5. What argument does the poet offer to prove that the owl's hooting can cause no harm?
- B.** Reproduce any three lines from the poem to suggest that there is no reason to be afraid of owls.
- C.** What impression do you form of the poet's personality from the reading of the poem?