

# Introduction to Comprehension

## The Four Major Communication Skills

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Learning a language involves acquiring four major skills.

- **Listening:** Frequently used to receive instructions and process instructions
- **Speaking:** Used to communicate in a language effectively
- **Reading:** Used to understand and analyse literature written in a particular language
- **Writing:** Used to reproduce one's thoughts using words and writing formats effectively

These skills are commonly called **LSRW** skills and are collectively termed communication skills. Communication skills help to understand a particular language, process it and use it effectively. Let us examine the role of reading comprehension in acquiring **Reading** skills.

# Reading Comprehension

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## What is Reading Comprehension?

Reading comprehension is the act of understanding what you are reading.

## Reading comprehension involves

- Gaining knowledge from the information shared in the passage
- Building a good vocabulary
- Reviewing the writer's ideas
- Forming an opinion on the facts or the information in the passage
- Appreciating the passage stylistically
- Answering the questions asked at the end of the passage

## Guidelines to Read a Passage

### Comprehension: Prose

- Read the passage thoroughly.
- Identify the main idea and the supporting details of the passage.
- Understand the first (introduction) and the last (conclusion) paragraph of the passage.
- Identify the theme of each paragraph.
- Identify the tone used in the passage.
- Understand the author's purpose and viewpoint.
- Read the questions carefully.
- Understand what is being asked in the questions.

### Comprehension: Poetry

- Read the poem thoroughly.
- Identify the theme and the rhyme scheme of the poem.
- Identify the figures of speech used.
- Read the questions carefully.
- Understand what is being asked in the questions.
- Identify the imagery used by the poet.

The answers that you provide to the questions asked show how well you have understood the given passage.

## Types of Comprehension Passages

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You may come across many types of passages while attempting the reading comprehension section in your paper.

A **factual passage** deals with facts usually shared in the form of reports, scientific articles and historical descriptions.

A **literary passage** consists of extracts from works of great writers and can be in the form of novels, short stories and poetry.

A **discursive passage** consists of articles which present an opinion or a reasoned argument on a topic.

Let us look at some sample passages.

# Sample Comprehension Passages

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## 1. Factual Passage

The first two years of life are a critical 'window of opportunity'. In this period, it is possible to prevent the largely irreversible damage which follows early childhood undernutrition. There are 805 million undernourished people in the world today. That means one in nine people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life.

Hunger and malnutrition are in fact the number one risk to health worldwide—greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. Three-quarters of all hungry people live in rural areas, mainly in the villages of Asia and Africa. An estimated 146 million children in developing countries are underweight—the result of acute or chronic hunger. Poverty trap, lack of investment in agriculture, natural calamities, war and displacement, unstable markets and food wastage are the major causes for the presence of hunger in the world. Hunger leads to malnutrition, which in turn causes diseases. Malnutrition is the largest single contributor to disease in the world, according to the UN's Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN).

Malnutrition at an early age leads to reduced physical and mental development during childhood. According to the World Bank, India is one of the highest ranking countries in the world for the number of children suffering from malnutrition. One of the major causes for malnutrition in India is gender inequality. Because of the low social status of Indian women, their diet often lacks in both quality and quantity. Women who suffer malnutrition are less likely to have healthy babies. In India, mothers generally lack proper knowledge in feeding children. Consequently, new born infants are unable to get adequate amount of nutrition from their mothers.

Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar have very high rates of undernutrition. Studies show that individuals belonging to Hindu, Jain or Muslim backgrounds in India tend to be more malnourished than those from Sikh or Christian backgrounds. The Akshaya Patra Foundation runs the world's largest NGO-run midday meal programme serving freshly cooked meals to over 1.3 million schoolchildren in government and government-aided schools in India. However, the challenge for all these programmes and schemes is how to increase efficiency, impact and coverage.

### Questions

- Q1)** What are the causes of the presence of hunger in the world?
- Q2)** How does gender inequality lead to malnutrition in India?
- Q3)** What role does the Akshay Patra foundation play?
- Q4)** Where are the majority of the hungry people inhabited?
- Q5)** Which religious communities in India tend to be less malnourished?

**Answers**

**A1)** Poverty trap, lack of investment in agriculture, natural calamities, war and displacement, unstable markets and food wastage are the major causes for the presence of hunger in the world.

**A2)** Women in India have a low status because of which their diet often lacks both quality and quantity. This causes them to suffer malnutrition.

**A3)** The Akshaya Patra Foundation runs the world's largest NGO-run midday meal programme serving freshly cooked meals to over 1.3 million schoolchildren in government and government-aided schools in India.

**A4)** Three-quarters of all hungry people live in rural areas, mainly in the villages of Asia and Africa.

**A5)** According to studies, individuals belonging to the Sikh or Christian communities are less malnourished than those from Hindu, Jain or Muslim backgrounds.

## 2. Literary Passage

"Mum!" I shouted. "Are you okay?" I saw her little tent shuddering in the gale and listened closely for her response. Her voice was almost casual, "Oh, yes, I'm fine" That's my mother. It was the first night of our cycling trip through the interior of Iceland—a region so remote and inhospitable that for centuries, according to legend, it was abandoned. The weather was decidedly hurricane-like, but Mum wasn't concerned. Months ago, I told her about my plan to pedal across Iceland. "It will be really difficult," I said. "The roads are unpaved and often washed out, and the wind is blowing constantly—sometimes so hard that it pushes you off the road." There was silence for a moment. Then she asked, "Can I come?" "Sure," I replied. "But like the rest of us, you have to train to do two 160 kilometres a day back-to-back," "Wow," she said, "I could never do that," I had more faith in my mother's physical abilities than she did.

I'd seen her raise six children and put in long hours doing physical labour on our small farm.

"Sure you can," I told her, "Start tomorrow." What really concerned me was what I perceived to be her frustrating humility: I thought her too self-deprecating about her attractiveness just because she had not completed college. I felt she underestimated her attractiveness just because she was not the type to wear make-up or fancy clothes. As I had grown into adulthood, the life I'd chosen seemed light years away from Mum's quiet existence, still caring for her children and her children's children. Sometimes, on a visit home, I'd describe some recent trip I'd taken, and her blue eyes would shine with interest. So, I couldn't help thinking this trek might revitalise Mum, who had started to slow down in her 50s. It might spice up what I saw as her humdrum life. And it might be a boost to her tentative and retiring persona. Mum trained furiously, months in advance. As the trip roster was pared down to Mum, my good friend Allen and me, she stood as the most dedicated. Soon she was riding 80–100 kilometres per day, and was as strong a rider as Allen or I.

### Questions

**Q1) Based on your reading of the passage, complete the following sentences.**

- a. The narrator describes the roads across Iceland as \_\_\_\_\_
- b. The narrator had faith in his mother's physical abilities as \_\_\_\_\_
- c. The training to take the adventure trip on cycle included \_\_\_\_\_
- d. In his adulthood, the narrator realised that his life was \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Descriptions of his trips always \_\_\_\_\_
- f. The narrator was sure that the trip would \_\_\_\_\_
- g. The narrator and his friend were sure about Mum's preparation when \_\_\_\_\_

**Q2) Find words from the passage that mean the same as the following.**

- a. noticed/become aware of
- b. to give new life
- c. hesitant/not certain

**Answers:**

**A1)**

- a. The roads in Iceland were unpaved and washed out according to the author.
- b. The narrator had seen her bring up six children and carry out physical labour in the farm he grew up in.
- c. The training included back-to-back cycling for 160 kilometres every day.
- d. The narrator's life was different from his mother's quiet existence.
- e. Around the interest of the narrator's mother.
- f. Revitalise the narrator's mother's life which according him was quiet and different from his. It would spice up her life and deliver her from her humdrum existence.
- g. When she started riding 80–100 kilometres a day and proved to be as good as the narrator and his friend.

**A2)**

- a. Perceived
- b. Revitalise
- c. Retiring

### 3. Literary Passage (Poem)

My teenybopper has a phone;  
She really never is alone.  
It beeps and jitters day and night,  
Emitting tiny bluish light.

Her ringtone is the latest rage,  
As other preteens text and page.  
One-liner messages appear  
That make her grin from ear to ear.

The latest crisis, who likes whom,  
The rock star with the best perfume;  
Such weighty matters cause her thrill  
And elevate our monthly bill.

And yet, the silver lining glows,  
For we have never come to blows.  
I never have to raise my voice,  
Because I have a high-tech choice.

If school assignments pile sky-high,  
I exhale with a weighty sigh.  
Like every modern mom who cares,  
I simply telephone upstairs.

When chores demand her energies,  
I simply text her, asking "Please!"  
No alibis or missing word,  
Because it's clear that she has heard.

And if my daughter goes outside  
To visit friends, both far and wide,  
Her curfew's easy to enforce  
With her new cellular resource.

This beeping tether holds her close,  
While helping her feel grandiose.  
If separation e'er occurs,  
My speed-dial links my heart to hers.

Our handy cell phones help us out.  
Convenient, easy, with no doubt.  
Yes, certainly, they have their place.  
But can't we talk once, face to face?



## Questions

**Q1)** Why is the speaker's daughter never alone?

**Q2)** How does the speaker make sure that the assignments are completed?

**Q3)** Why can't the daughter make any excuse when she is asked for help by her mother?

**Q4)** How do you think cell phones have affected face-to-face communication?

**Q5)** Identify the figure of speech in *If school assignments pile sky-high*.

## Answers

**A1)** The speaker's daughter is never alone because she always has a phone with her which keeps beeping, vibrating and emitting light all the time.

**A2)** The speaker is the mother of the 'teenybopper' and uses the cell phone to her advantage. Whenever her daughter's school work is pending, the speaker doesn't hesitate to call her even if they are in the same house and ask her to complete the tasks.

**A3)** The mother smartly texts the daughter about the help needed on her cell phone. In this way, the daughter cannot make an excuse that she didn't hear her mother because everything is clearly written in the message.

**A4)** Cell phones are no doubt convenient and easy, but they do not show you the actual feelings of a person talking or texting. Thus, when we use cell phones to communicate, we might not be aware of the person's actual state of mind, which might make the communication ineffective.

**A5)** Hyperbole

## 4. Discursive Passage

It is important that you recognise the signs of stress in your behaviour, and be healthy enough to enjoy your success. Stress can strike anytime, in a fashion that may leave you unaware of its presence in your life. While a certain amount of pressure is necessary for performance, it is important to be able to recognise your individual threshold. For instance, there are some individuals who accept competition in a healthy fashion. There are others who collapse into weeping wrecks before an exam, or on comparing marksheets and finding that their mates have scored better.

Whenever there is a change in the external environment such as temperature, pollutants, humidity and working conditions, it leads to stress. In these days of competition when a person makes up his mind to surpass what has been achieved by others, leading to an imbalance between demands and resources, it causes psycho-social stress. It is a part and parcel of everyday life.

Stress has a different meaning depending on the stage of life you're in. The loss of a toy or a reprimand from the parents might create a stress shock in a child. An adolescent who fails an examination may feel as if everything has been lost and life has no further meaning. In an adult, the loss of a companion, job or professional failure may appear as if there is nothing more to be achieved.

Stress can be seen in the attitude and behaviour of the individual, as muscle tension in various parts of the body, palpitation and high blood pressure, indigestion and hyperacidity and ultimately in self-destructive behaviour such as eating and drinking too much, smoking excessively, relying on tranquillisers, trembling, shaking, nervous blinking, dryness of throat and mouth and difficulty in swallowing. The professional under stress behaves as if he is a perfectionist followed by depression, lethargy and weakness for further work. Periodic mood shifts also indicate the stress status of students, executives and professionals.

### Questions

**Q1)** How do individuals handle competition?

**Q2)** How does external environment cause stress?

**Q3)** Does the age of a person have any impact on stress levels?

**Q4)** Find words from the passage which mean:

- a. contaminant
- b. sedative

### Answers:

**A1)** Different people deal with competition differently. Some people accept competition in a healthy fashion. However, there are others who collapse under the pressure of competition.

**A2)** A change in the external environment such as temperature, pollutants, humidity and working conditions leads to stress.

**A3)** An individual experiences stress for different reasons according to his age. The loss of a toy or a reprimand from parents might create a stress shock in a child. An adolescent who fails an examination may feel as if everything has been lost and life has no further meaning. In an adult, the loss of a companion, job or professional failure may appear as if there is nothing more to be achieved.

A4)

- a. pollutant
- b. tranquillisers

## 5. Factual Passage

Both alligators and crocodiles are members of the reptilian order Crocodylia. But the families they belong to, Alligatoridae and Crocodylidae respectively, differ. Often, when people use the word "crocodile" what they really mean is "crocodilian." This term encompasses not just the common alligators and crocodiles you might already know, but also the lesser known Gavialidae family that contains the lone gavial, or gharial. All told, there are 23 species of crocodilians.

As a group, crocodilians are pretty impressive animals: Their lineage goes back 240 million years, meaning they've outlived the dinosaurs by a good 65 million years. Ideally suited for life in water and on land, members of the order can swim up to 20 mph (32 kph) and run up to 11 mph (17.6 kph). They're most at home in the water and can hold their breath for up to an hour. Eyes situated atop their heads enable them to keep a lookout for prey, while their powerful tails swiftly propel them through the water.

Crocodiles and alligators are top-notch hunters and will eat just about anything they can get their teeth on, from fish and turtles to monkeys and buffalo. With teeth specialized just for spearing, neither family even bothers to chew its food -- they swallow large chunks or the entire animal whole.

As if that weren't scary enough, crocodilians have incredibly powerful senses to detect their prey. Their eyesight above water is top notch, and thanks to vertical pupils that can open up extra wide to let in additional light, they also have keen night vision. And even though you can't see their ears, don't be fooled -- these small slits are sensitive enough to hear offspring calling from inside their eggs. Even their sense of smell is highly developed due to special organs in their snouts.

### Questions

**Q1) Complete the following sentences.**

- a. Alligatoridae, Crocodylia and Gavialidae are subgroups of the main group \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. The \_\_\_\_\_ died 65 million years ago.

**Q2) Describe the eating habits of crocodiles.**

**Q3) How sharp are the ears of crocodiles?**

**Q4) Choose the correct alternative.**

**a. Crocodiles can stay**

- |                  |                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| i. Only in water | iii. Both on land and in water |
| ii. Only on land | iv. None of the above          |

**b. How do crocodiles have a keen night vision?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| i. Because their eyes are situated atop their heads | iii. Because they have vertical pupils |
| ii. Because they have sensitive ears                | iv. Because they are top-notch hunters |

**Q 5) Find words in the passage that mean**

- a. To drive or push something forward
- b. The science of classification
- c. Descent from the ancestors
- d. Outstanding

**Answers**

**A1)**

- a. Alligatoridae, Crocodylia and Gavialidae are subgroups of the main group Crocodylidae.
- b. The dinosaurs died 65 million years ago.

**A2)** Crocodiles are great hunters and can prey on just about anything they can get their teeth on. Whether it is fish or turtles, monkeys or buffaloes, crocodiles swallow large chunks or the entire animal whole since they have teeth specialised just for spearing.

**A3)** One may not be able to see their ears, but crocodile ears are sensitive enough to hear offspring calling from inside their eggs.

**A4)**

- a. Both on land and in water
- b. Because they have vertical pupils

**A 5)**

- a. Propel
- b. Taxonomy
- c. Lineage
- d. Top-notch
- e. Offspring

## 6. Discursive Passage

The New Year is a time for resolutions. Mentally, at least most of us could compile formidable lists of 'do's' and 'don'ts'. The same old favourites recur year in and year out with monotonous regularity. We resolve to get up earlier each morning, eat less, find more time to play with our children, do a thousand and one jobs about the house, be nice to people we don't like, drive carefully, and take the dog for a walk every day. Experience has taught us that certain accomplishments are beyond attainment. If we remain deep-rooted liars, it is only because we have so often experienced the frustration that results from failure.

Most of us fail in our efforts at self-improvement because our schemes are too ambitious and we never have time to carry them out. We also make the fundamental error of announcing our resolutions to everybody so that we look even more foolish when we slip back into our bad old ways. Aware of these pitfalls, this year I attempted to keep my resolutions to myself. I limited myself to two modest ambitions: to do physical exercise every morning and to read more in the evening. An all-night party on New Year's Eve provided me with a good excuse for not carrying out either of these new resolutions on the first day the year, but on the second, I applied myself assiduously to the task.

The daily exercise lasted only eleven minutes and I proposed to do them early in the morning before anyone had got up. The self-discipline required to drag myself out of bed eleven minutes earlier than usual was considerable. Nevertheless, I managed to creep down into the living room for two days before anyone found me out. After jumping about on the carpet and twisting the human frame into six uncomfortable positions, I sat down at the breakfast table in an exhausted condition. It was this that betrayed me. The next morning the whole family trooped in to watch the performance. That was really unsettling but I fended off the taunts and jibes of the family good humouredly and soon everybody got used to the idea. However, my enthusiasm waned, and the time I spent at exercises gradually diminished. Little by little, the eleven minutes fell to zero. By 10 January, I was back to where I had started from.

### Questions

**Q1) What is the New Year a time for?**

(i) enjoying parties (ii) sending greetings (iii) making resolutions (iv) watching TV programmes

**Q2) For how long did his physical exercise last?**

(i) eleven minutes (ii) eleven hours (iii) eleven days (iv) eleven months

**Q3) Why did the writer not carry out his resolutions on New Year's Day?**

**Q4) Where did the author do his exercise?**

**Q5) How did the author's family members treat his resolution?**

**Q6) Find a word in the passage similar in meaning to**

- a. 'attentively'
- b. 'happen again and again'

**Q7) Why is it a basic mistake to announce our resolutions to everybody?**

**Q8) Why, according to the writer, most of us fail in our efforts for self-improvement?**

**Answers**

**A1)** (iii) Making resolutions

**A2)** (i) eleven minutes

**A3)** The writer could not carry out his resolutions on New Year's Day because he was partying all night on New Year's Eve and he couldn't wake up in the morning to exercise.

**Q4)** The author exercised in his living room.

**Q5)** The author's family seemed to be quite amused by his resolution. They trooped into the living room to see him twist his body and threw taunts and jibes at him which the author found very unsettling.

**Q6) Find a word in the passage similar in meaning to**

- a. assiduously
- b. recur

**Q7)** It is a basic mistake to announce our resolutions to everybody because we come across as foolish to everyone when we are unable to accomplish them.

**Q8)** Most of us fail in our efforts at self-improvement because our schemes are too ambitious and we never have time to carry them out.

## 7. Literary Passage

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said:—Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown  
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed.  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"  
Nothing beside remains: round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

### Questions

**Q1) The poem is set in \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a. The wilderness
- b. An ancient land
- c. A palace
- d. A desert

**Q2) The expression on the face of the statue is one of \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a. Admiration
- b. Anger
- c. Despair
- d. Contempt

**Q3) Find words from the passage that mean**

- i. Face
- ii. Mock

**Q4) What was the sculptor able to read well?**

**Q5) 'The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.'** Whose hand and heart has the poet called in this line?

**Q6) 'Nothing beside remains.'** What does the narrator mean when he says these words?

**Q7) What is your impression of Ozymandias as a king after reading the poem?**

**Q8) Identify the figure of speech in the line *The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed.***

## Answers

**A1)** The poem is set in a desert.

**A2)** The expression on the face of the statue is one of contempt.

**A3)**

- i. Face: Visage
- ii. Mock: Sneer

**A4)** The sculptor was able to read the feelings of Ozymandias and sculpt them perfectly on his statute.

**A5)** The sculptor's hands and heart are being called in the respective line. The sculptor must have copied the inner feelings of Ozymandias while making the statue.

**A6)** When time comes, everything has to meet its end. Thus, the trunkless legs and a shattered visage is all that one can see of the once grand statue in the vast desert.

**A7)** The poem suggests that Ozymandias may have been a cruel and an angry king who was a tyrant who ruled with an iron fist.

**A8)** The figure of speech in the line *The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed* is synecdoche, part for the whole.



## 8. Literary Passage

Lying in bed, Swami realized with a shudder that it was Monday morning. It looked as though only a moment ago it had been the last period on Friday; already Monday was here. He hope that an earthquake would reduce the school building to dust, but that good building Albert Mission School had withstood similar prayers for over a hundred years now. At nine o'clock Swaminathan wailed, "I have a 5 headache." His mother said, "Why don't you go to school in a bullock cart?"

"So that I may be completely dead at the other end? Have you any idea whit it means to be jolted in a cart?"

"Have you nay important lessons today?"

"Important! Bah! That geography teacher has been teaching the same lesson for over a year now. And we have arithmetic, which means for a whole period we are going to be beaten by the teacher Important lessons!"

And Mother generously suggested that Swami might stay at home.

At 9:30, when he ought to have been lining up in the school prayer hall, Swami was lying on the bench in Mother's room. Father asked him, "Have you on school today?"

"Headache," Swami replied.

"Nonsense! Dress up and go."

"Headache."

"Loaf about less on Sunday and you will be without a headache on Monday."

Swami knew how stubborn his father could be and changed his tactics. "I can't go so late to class."

"I agree, but you 'll have to; it is your own fault. You should have asked me before deciding to stay away."

"What will the teacher think if I go so late?"

"Tell him you had a headache and so are late."

"He will beat me if I say so."

"Will he? Let us see. What is his name?"

"Mr. Samuel."

"Does he beat the boys?"

"He is very violent, especially with boys who come late. Some days ago a boy was made to stay on his knees for a whole period in a corner of the class because he came late, and that after getting six cuts from the cane and having his ears twisted. I wouldn't like to go late to Mr. Samuel's class"

"If he is so violent why not tell your headmaster about it?"

"They say that event the headmaster is afraid of him. He is such a violent man."

And then Swami gave a lurid account of Samuel's violence; how when he started caning he would not stop till he saw blood on the boy's hand, which he made the boy press to his forehead like a vermillion marking. Swami hoped that his father would be made to see that he couldn't go to his class tale. But Father's behaviour took an unexpected turn. He became excited. "What do these people mean by beating our children? They must be driven out of service. I will see."

The result was he proposed to send Swami late to his class as a kind of challenge. He was also going to send a letter with Swami to the headmaster. No amount of protest from Swami was of any avail: Swami had to go to school.

By the time he was ready Father had composed a long letter to the headmaster, put in an envelope and sealed it.

"What have you written, Father?" Swaminathan asked apprehensively.

"Nothing for you. Give it to your headmaster and go to your headmaster and go to your class."

Swami's father did not know the truth, that actually Mr. Samuel was a very kind and gentle man.

## **Questions**

- Q1)** What did Swami wish for on a Monday morning? Why was his wish unlikely to be answered?
- Q2)** Which sentence tells us that Swami's father was completely unsympathetic to his son's headache?
- Q3)** In what way was Swami's response different from his father's?
- Q4)** Why did Swami give a colourful account of Mr. Samuel to his father?
- Q5)** In what way did Father's behaviour take an unexpected turn?
- Q6)** What was Swami finally ordered to do by his father?

## **Answers**

- A1)** On a Monday morning, Swami wished that an earthquake would reduce the school building to dust. His wish was unlikely to be answered because the building withstood similar prayers for over a hundred years now.
- A2)** The sentence, "Loaf about less on Sundays and you will be without a headache on Monday." tells us that Swami's father was completely unsympathetic to his son's headache.
- A3)** Unlike his father, Swami's mother was concerned about his health as well his education. She questioned him about his headache and if he had any important lessons that day.
- A4)** Swami gave a colourful account of Mr Samuel to his father in order to escape going to school on a Monday morning.
- A5)** After the account of Mr Samuel, Swami's father suddenly became excited and decided to challenge the teacher by purposefully sending his son late to school. He also decided to write to the headmaster about the matter.
- A6)** Swami was finally ordered to go to school late with a letter for the headmaster written by his father.

## 9. Discursive Passage

In these trying times, when buying ordinary foodstuff can burn a hole in our pockets, comes the news that can actually help us save some hard cash when we go out to shop the next time. According to a Stanford University study, a first of its kind in the world, there is no evidence to suggest that there are more nutritional benefits from expensive organic food than those grown by conventional methods. The researchers add that there is no difference in protein and fat content between organic and conventional milk and the vitamin count is similar in both types. The only benefit is that organic foods are not contaminated with pesticides, but then, before you chew on that plate of organic okra with roti made from organic wheat, they are not 100% pesticide-free either. In India, organic food has been growing at 20–22% and the export market is valued at `1,000 crore. Obviously, the study is not good news for that sector and for people who are big on organic food.

In India, eating organic food is more of a style statement than due to health worries because the stuff is expensive. But people who can, do indulge in not only organic vegetables but even organic eggs laid by 'happy hens', who are allowed to roam around freely, whereas 'unhappy hens' are kept in coops. Then there are companies that have installed music channels in their cowsheds and the milk from those sheds is sold at a marked-up price since it has more nutritional value because the animals are happy thanks to lilting 24 × 7 music. We don't know yet of any farmer using music to improve his crop quality, but then you never know: plants are known to respond to music.

Why such pickiness about food? These days, the huge number of TV shows and articles that we see and read on food provide bread and butter for the specialists. But instead of decoding food, its sources and what has gone into growing it, isn't it much better to enjoy what's on the plate?

### Questions

(a) According to a Stanford University study, organic food in relation to conventional food is \_\_\_\_\_.

- i. less nutritious
- ii. more nutritious
- iii. very conventional
- iv. as nutritious

(b) The study will not be welcomed by \_\_\_\_\_.

- i. farmers of conventional food
- ii. makers of pesticides
- iii. all sectors
- iv. exporters of organic food

(c) We can save some hard cash by \_\_\_\_\_.

- i. buying organic food
- ii. not buying organic food
- iii. going to the shop
- iv. not buying food with pesticides

- (d) Music channels are installed in the cowsheds because the \_\_\_\_\_.
- i. cows give more milk
  - ii. milk is sold at a higher price
  - iii. milk becomes more pure
  - iv. workers become happy
- (e) In the second paragraph, the author's attitude to the people who eat food sourced from 'happy' animals is that he \_\_\_\_\_.
- i. is happy with them
  - ii. is unhappy with them
  - iii. is laughing at them
  - iv. wants crops to be grown similarly
- (f) One benefit of organic food is that \_\_\_\_\_.
- i. it is fashionable to eat
  - ii. only rich people can afford it
  - iii. it is less contaminated with pesticides
  - iv. even poor people can afford it
- (g) The word 'contaminated' means \_\_\_\_\_.
- i. adulterated
  - ii. for adults
  - iii. containing
  - iv. not healthy

### Answers

- a) as nutritious
- b) exporters of organic food
- c) not buying organic food
- d) milk becomes more pure
- e) is laughing at them
- f) it is less contaminated with pesticides
- g) containing

## 10. Factual Passage

Kausani is situated at a height of 6,075 feet in the Central Himalayas. It is an unusually attractive little town. It covers just about 5.2 sq. kms. It lies to the north of Almora in Uttarakhand's picturesque Kumaon region.

Kausani provides the 300-km wide breathtaking view of the Himalayas. It is the most striking aspect of this place. Snow-capped peaks are spread in a stately row. They stare at you in silvery white majesty. The most famous peak on view is Nanda Devi, the second highest mountain in India. It is situated at a height of 25,645 feet and 36 miles away as the crow flies. The other famous peaks on view are Choukhamba (23,420 feet) and Trishul (23,360 feet). Then there are also Nilkhamba, Nandaghunti, Nandaghat and Nandakot. On a clear day, the blue of the sky makes a splendid background to these peaks. At sunrise and at sunset, when the colour changes to a golden orange, the scene gets etched in your memory.

When Gandhiji visited this place in 1929, its scenic beauty held him spellbound. He named it the 'Switzerland of India'. He prolonged his two-day stay to fourteen days, making time to write a book, 'Anashakti Yoga'. The place where he was staying was originally a guest-house of the tea estate. It was renamed "Anashakti Ashram" after the book.

Kausani is the birthplace of Sumitranandan Pant, India's poet laureate. Its natural surrounding inspired many of his poems. Its tea gardens mingle with dense pine forests and fruit orchards. The area is also host to many fairs and religious ceremonies. If Uttaranchal is the abode of gods, Kausani is God's own backyard. There is no traffic, no one is in a hurry. If serenity could be put on a canvas, the picture would resemble Kausani.

### Questions

**Q1)** Why, do you think, is Kausani known as 'God's own backyard'?

**Q2)** How did Kausani influence Sumitranandan Pant?

**Q3)** How can we say that Gandhiji was greatly charmed by the natural beauty of Kausani?

**Q4)** What is the most striking aspect of Kausani?

**Q5)** Find words from the passage which mean

- a. splendid
- b. acclaimed

**Answers**

**A1)** Kausani is known for its majestic beauty and serenity. The cool climate and the natural beauty of the surrounding give the place a divine feel; therefore, it is known as 'God's own backyard'.

**A2)** The natural surroundings of Kausani inspired Sumitranandan Pant to write poems.

**A3)** It is said that the beauty of the place left Gandhiji spellbound and it inspired him to name it the 'Switzerland of India'. He also extended his stay from two days to fourteen days. Therefore, we can conclude that Gandhiji was greatly charmed by the natural beauty of Kausani.

**A4)** The 300-km wide breathtaking view of the Himalayas provided by Kausani is its most striking aspect.

**A5)**

- a. breathtaking
- b. laureate