

Reading Comprehension

The Mood Of The Writer
Determining The Main Thought
Context Clues To New Vocabulary
How The Writer Develops His Ideas
Recalling And Interpreting Specific Details
Exposition

Determining Previous Content And Anticipating Conclusions
Review And Summary

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From "The Anatomy Of Language" by Morris Schreiber

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From "The Anatomy Of Language" by Morris Schreiber

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TECHNIQUES IN READING COMPREHENSION

I. THE MOOD OF THE WRITER.

Reading a good book or a great literary passage is a stay at a grand hotel. The fee is modest, the accommodations, excellent, the opportunities for renewal, limitless.

If you wish to read well, to comprehend what you read, to enrich your knowledge and experience in the light of what you have read, you must learn your way around the hotel. There are many entrances—and there are many keys.

To every well-written paragraph there is a master key—a phrase, a clause, a topic sentence which will open every door to that paragraph and will lead you to the central thought or the heart of the paragraph. Every SENTENCE in that paragraph is a *supporting* sentence—a room key to help you unlock additional doors to meaning.

Different writers have different ways of opening the door and asking you in. Some do it with a challenging statement such as Charles Lamb does in his poignant essay "New Year's Eve" when he writes: "Every man hath two birthdays." "Two birthdays?" you echo wonderingly, your curiosity immediately aroused. Victor Hugo does the same in his novel "Ninety-Three" when he states paradoxically, "Nothing is more gentle than smoke, nothing more frightful." At once you are moved to read on.

Some writers ask questions when they unfasten the door such as Logan Pearsall Smith, when he inquires, "What shall I compare it to, this fantastic thing I call my Mind?" in his essay "All Trivia,"—or Christopher Morley when he asks, "Which one of us has not sat in some anteroom and watched the inscrutable panels of a door that was full of meaning?" in his essay "On Doors." Other writers push back the bolts forcefully, with strong emotion, such as William Allen White in his stirring and sad essay, on the death of his daughter, Mary White, when he writes: "The Associated Press reports carrying the news of Mary White's death declared that it came as the result of a fall from a horse. How she would have hooted at that!"—or J. Donald Adams when he asserts, "How much words have in common with money!" in his New York Times column "Speaking of Books."

Still others open *without* emotion, with a fact or principle or generalization, and then calmly discuss the issue they have raised—as Arnold Bennett does in his essay, "How to Live on Twenty-four Hours a Day" when he says: "A man may desire to go to Mecca. His conscience tells him that he ought to go to Mecca."—or Joseph Wood Krutch in "The Twelve Seasons" when he states a scientific observation: "Many observers have commented on what seems to be the fact that fear plays a much smaller part than we should think it must in the life of an animal who lives dangerously."

All these ways of opening the door—challengingly, questioningly, emotionally, or in a matter-of-fact way—are excellent clues to the mood of the author and what he has to offer you inside. To understand him and what he has to present try to adopt the *same* mood and put yourself in his place.—How would YOU have reacted under similar circumstances? Were you ever faced with such a situation? Do you agree with what he says? What are *your* opinions on the matter? Such identification with the author and his mood, problems, and opinions will greatly help you in reading comprehension.

Now STOP THE RECORD and turn to Exercise 1 in your booklet in the section on Reading Comprehension. In this exercise are FOUR reading selections in which writers open in varying moods. Study these passages. Then see how accurately you can describe the *mood* of each writer.

...As you read, ask yourself HOW YOU WOULD HAVE ACTED HAD YOU BEEN FACED with the same situation.

(BAND)

(See Supplement to this lesson, SECTION I.)

II. DETERMINING THE MAIN THOUGHT

Some writers open the door promptly, admit you, and get down to business quickly, stating their main idea or topic for discussion in the very first sentence which they utter. Examples of such prompt openings are Heywood Broun's description of his hero in his humorous essay, "The Fifty-first Dragon," when he states: "Of all the pupils at the knight school Gawain le Coeur-Hardy was among the least promising"—or Lizette Woodworth Reese's characterization in her essay "My Mother" when she writes, "Whenever I think of my mother, I think of gardens and daffodils."

These writers mince no words. They state their business *directly* at the very start.

Other writers *delay* a little before they ask you in, making you cool your heels outside for a while. Even when you are settled, they lead up to their main thesis slowly, keeping you speculating for a while before they advance their main argument. An example of this calculated delay is to be found in Helen Keller's provocative essay "Three Days to See," in which she discusses our general apathetic attitude toward the precious passage of time for five full paragraphs before she states her *main* theme in these words: "The same lethargy, I am afraid, characterizes the use of all our faculties and senses. Only the deaf appreciate hearing; only the blind realize the manifold blessings that lie in sight."

Another example of a warm-up period before getting down to the main topic is John Kendrick Bangs' opening in his essay "My Silent Servants." He describes various types of people for whom he feels sorry before he describes an individual about whom he is undecided. This is how he does it: "I am sorry for many kinds of folk. I am sorry for the distressed, the depressed, and the oppressed, whosoever they may be, or wheresoever

found. I am sorry for the man of high aspiration thwarted at every point by the insurmountable steepes in the path of achievement. But when I find a man who has the means to build up a library in his own home, yet into whose home come only the most inconsequential of books, I don't know whether I am sorry for him or not." Although his introduction is less lengthy than Miss Keller's in "THREE DAYS TO SEE," it is no less intriguing. Note, though, that he, too, makes you wait a while before opening the door.

Thus we see that in our stay at Grand Hotel we must adapt ourselves to the whims and habits of each writer. Some make friends with you immediately; others are no less friendly, but take a longer time to offer their hand or even show it. In other words, the TOPIC SENTENCE or CENTRAL THOUGHT is not always obvious or directly in the foreground, but is often kept in reserve.

A good way to determine whether you have found the author's central thought is to think of a short title for the selection *while* you are reading it. This *title* should be short and succinct. It should convey the essence of the paragraph. It should be a *summary* title. When you finish reading, *compare* your title with those titles or summaries of the main thought usually included in multiple-choice questions in reading comprehension to see whether your title approximates one of them.

For example, you read the following passage from Arnold Bennett's essay, "How to Live on Twenty-four Hours a Day":

"A man may desire to go to Mecca. His conscience tells him that he ought to go to Mecca. He fares forth, either by the aid of Cook's or unassisted; he may probably never reach Mecca; he may drown before he gets to Port Said; he may perish ingloriously on the coast of the Red Sea; his desire may remain eternally frustrate. Unfulfilled aspirations may always trouble him. But he will not be tormented in the same way as the man who, desiring to reach Mecca, and harried by the desire to reach Mecca, never leaves Brixton.

"It is something to have left Brixton. Most of us have not left Brixton. We have not even taken a cab to Ludgate Circus."

As you read the preceding passage, you formulate a tentative title for it such as "Deeds, not Words." You then examine the four multiple-choice answers which also state the central idea of the passage. They are:

1. A Delayed Trip to Mecca
2. The Stay-at-Home
3. Words Cannot Attain Mecca
4. Greener Pastures

Note that the summary title which you have tentatively formulated—"Deeds, not Words." is closest to ANSWER NO. 3—"Words Cannot Attain Mecca." The other choices, while they relate to the central thought of the passage, relate to only one or two aspects of it. They are *not* as *all-inclusive* or *comprehensive* as the correct answer: "Words Cannot

Attain Mecca." This fact also illustrates another very important principle in reading comprehension: In deciding on a title or summary which best expresses the main idea of the passage, do not be misled by partial or incomplete statements of the main thought. LOOK FOR THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE TITLE which includes all aspects of the passage.

Now STOP THE RECORD and turn to Reading Exercise 2 in your booklet. As you read, look for the following points:

1. What is the MOOD of the writer?
2. What is his central thought?
3. Does he state his central thought directly or lead up to it?

Support your answer.

4. Do you agree with his opinions? Why or why not?

(BAND)

(See Supplement to this lesson, SECTION II.)

III. CONTEXT CLUES TO NEW VOCABULARY

Sometimes, as you read, you may stumble over a word or a phrase which is new to you or the meaning of which you are uncertain.

Such words by themselves may prove difficult for you and slow down your reading comprehension. However, if you examine the line in which the word appears as well as the lines *before* and *after* it—in other words, THE CONTEXT—you will generally find clues to the meaning of the new word.

To prove the value of this procedure let us try a little experiment.

ON YOUR PAPER number 1 to 4 and write the following words as I dictate them:

1. desuetude
2. solemnizing
3. pretermitted
4. nativity.

Now let us examine these words. "Solemnizing" is a word of average difficulty. So is "nativity." But most of you would have trouble with such rarer words as "desuetude" and "pretermitted,"—especially "pretermitted"—unless I used them in a sentence.

However, when you find them in a reading selection, in CONTEXT, with sentences before and after to help you fathom their meaning, you will have much less difficulty in determining what they mean.

Now listen to the following passage in which the four words appear. It is the opening paragraph of the selection "NEW YEAR'S EVE"—by Charles Lamb, the famous essayist:

"Every man hath two birthdays: two days, at least in every year, which set him upon revolving the lapse of time, as it affects his mortal duration. The one is that which in an especial manner hetermeth *his*. In the gradual *desuetude* of old observances, this custom of *solemnizing* our

proper birthday hath nearly passed away, or is left to children, who reflect nothing at all about the matter, nor understand anything in it beyond cake and orange. But the birth of a New Year is of an interest too wide to be *pretermitted* by king or cobbler. No one ever regarded the First of January with indifference. It is that from which all date their time, and count upon what is left. It is the *nativity* of our common Adam."

From the context clues in the passage the meaning of each of the four words should now be clearer to you.

Take the first word—"desuetude." Examining the line, "In the gradual DESUETUDE of old observances, this custom of solemnizing our proper birthday hath nearly passed away," gives an excellent clue to the meaning of DESUETUDE, as something no longer practised. The actual dictionary definition of DESUETUDE is "a falling into disuse." Our definition was, therefore accurate.

The second word "solemnizing" is preceded by words such as "observances" and "custom" and is followed by "birthday." The word "solemn" we know conveys the idea of something grave or serious. Therefore, the verb form "solemnize"—using the context clue in the word "observances"—should mean to "observe or conduct something in a serious manner or with formal dignity." Consulting the dictionary, we find that the official definition of "solemnize" is to "observe with pomp or ceremony." Obviously, our context clues have been of great help in arriving at the right definition.

The third word is "pretermitted." Despite the apparent difficulty of defining this word, you will note that the very sentence in which it appears tells you that the celebration of the New Year is far too significant an event to most people to be pretermitted—in other words—*neglected* by anybody—cobbler or king. Checking with our dictionary, we find the official definition "to pass by, omit or neglect." Again, our context clues have helped.

The last word, "nativity," referring to January 1, is described in the previous sentence as a point from which we, Mankind, reckon the start of time and the remainder left to us. Since the Scriptures reckon time from the appearance of Adam, the first man, we can compute it from his *nativity*, or birthday. Our dictionary defines "nativity" as "birth or the circumstances attending it." Again, our context clues have proved of great value.

Thus, we see that new or difficult vocabulary terms may often be analyzed and understood through a study of the line in which the term or word itself appears or the lines which precede or follow it.

(BAND)

IV. HOW THE WRITER DEVELOPS HIS IDEAS

Once you have determined the meaning of new or difficult words and have found the master key to the central thought, you are well on your way

to a pleasant stay at Grand Hotel. But sometimes the central thought eludes you. In such cases you must use the ROOM KEYS, the SUPPORTING DETAILS to unlock additional clues to meaning.

What are these supporting details?

—Those details by which a writer develops or builds up his arguments.

How does he develop his arguments?

In many ways:

One way is to use the deductive method. The author opens with a general statement, as one does in a proposition in geometry. He then offers a series of observations to support and prove his thesis. William Lyon Phelps does this in his essay on baseball entitled "The Great American Game," in which he opens with a general statement, "Baseball is truly an American game." This is his central thought. He then offers the following points to support this main thesis:

"It is native and has never really flourished elsewhere. In its speed, skill and brevity it seems particularly adapted to our high nervous tension. It lasts about as long as a theatre play and resembles that form of entertainment in more ways than one. The mystery of hero and villain is discovered in about two hours, sometimes at the rate of a thrill a minute. Frequently, the unexpected happens. Victory suddenly emerges from the very core of defeat."

A second way is to reverse the process, using the *inductive* method. In this a writer cites a series of facts or details *first*, building up to a *general statement* at the end. Elbert Hubbard does this very skilfully in his famous essay "A MESSAGE TO GARCIA." Citing in detail how General Garcia, an important figure in the Spanish-American War, was located by the courage and ingenuity of a man named Rowan, the writer *sums up* his supporting facts with a GENERALIZATION at the END, saying,

"By the Eternal! there is a man whose form should be cast in deathless bronze and the statue placed in every college of the land. It is not book-learning young men need, nor instruction about this and that, but a stiffening of the vertebrae which will cause them to be loyal to a trust, to act promptly, concentrate their energies: do the thing—"Carry a message to Garcia."

A third way in which writers develop their ideas is to use *comparison* or *contrast*. J. Donald Adams does this when he opens an essay with the line: "How much words have in common with money!" He then DEVELOPS AND SUPPORTS this idea by showing HOW words can be compared with money—as follows:

"....They, too, are counters of exchange; like money (words) are inflated and debased, put in circulation and withdrawn; they accumulate interest, they are coined, they grow smooth and blurred with usage; they are hoarded and they are spent lavishly; they can be counterfeit; they

jingle and they ring true; they convince and they seduce, they are accepted too often at their face value, and they lend themselves easily (or I would not be writing these particular words) to speculation."

A *fourth* way is to cite *illustrations and examples* to support their argument. After calling baseball a game in which "Victory suddenly emerges from the very core of defeat," William Lyon Phelps delves into baseball history and cites dramatic examples of games in which near defeat was turned into victory. Sometimes a writer also uses a story, a fable, or an anecdote to good effect to illustrate and develop his point.

A *fifth* way is to back their thesis with the force of *authority*. Robert Holliday in his essay "On Carrying a Cane" justifies his belief in the custom by citing the names of the eminent people in history who did carry canes, including George Washington and Thomas Carlyle.

A *sixth* way is to support their thesis with an apt and *pertinent quotation*. If you have difficulty finding the meaning of a passage, a quotation used by a writer to support or illustrate what he has to say is often a good clue. Joseph Wood Krutch, writing on the nature of fear in animals in his essay "THE TWELVE SEASONS," quotes Shakespeare in "Julius Caesar" to strengthen his own ideas: This is the passage:

"Many observers have commented on what seems to be the fact that fear plays a much smaller part than we should think it must in the life of an animal who lives dangerously. Terror he can know, and perhaps he knows it frequently. But it seems to last only a little longer than the immediate danger it helps him to avoid, instead of lingering, as in the human being it does, until it becomes a burden and a threat. The frightened bird resumes his song as soon as danger has passed, and so does the frightened rabbit his games. It is almost as though they knew that 'COWARDS DIE MANY TIMES BEFORE THEIR DEATHS; THE VALIANT NEVER TASTE OF DEATH BUT ONCE.'"

(The meaning of the quotation is that thinking of danger and worrying about it may in the long run cause more mental and physical anguish than the danger itself. This gives us an excellent clue to the meaning of the passage: Since animals rarely fall prey to such psychological terror, each new danger that confronts them can be faced by itself, and once overcome, dismissed from their mind.)

A *seventh* way to develop a central thought is to show a *cause and effect* relationship. In "Landfalls and Departures" Joseph Conrad describes the *effect* of the coming landing of the ship upon its captain: "When about to make the land, the spirit of the ship's commander is tormented by an unconquerable restlessness. It seems unable to abide for many seconds together in the holy of holies of the captain's stateroom; it will go out on deck and gaze ahead through straining of eyes, as the appointed moment comes nearer."

Here *the cause* is the approaching landing; *the effect*, the captain's nervous tension, excitement, and emotional turmoil.

TO REVIEW: To get to the heart of the author's meaning look for *the special methods or techniques* which he employs to *state his central thought* and *develop* it. Some of the special methods which writers employ are:

1. Stating their theme in a *general* way and then developing it in detail—the DEDUCTIVE method.
 2. Leading up to their theme by citing pertinent facts or details, THEN stating their main idea —the INDuctive method.
 3. Using comparison and contrast.
 4. Giving concrete illustrations and examples—or sometimes telling appropriate anecdotes, fables and stories—to bolster their thesis. Many good clues to meaning are to be found here.
 5. Citing authorities for their statements.
 6. Strengthening their statements with appropriate quotations.
- and
7. Showing a cause and effect relationship.

Now STOP THE RECORD and examine the seven reading selections in Exercise 3. As you read each passage, try to determine *which special method* of the seven just described the writer uses to state and develop his central thought.

(BAND)

(See Supplement to this lesson, SECTION III.)

V. RECALLING AND INTERPRETING SPECIFIC DETAILS

In the previous parts of this lesson we discussed several important GUIDES TO READING COMPREHENSION. These were:

1. Determining the mood of the writer.
2. Locating his central idea.
3. Finding how he supports and establishes this idea—through facts, evidence, and details.

It is these details and the POWER TO RECALL and INTERPRET THEM PROPERLY which are often the basis of test questions in reading comprehension.

As you read, try to note all pertinent supporting details. Fix them in your memory. Then be ready to summon up the right ones when you are asked WHICH BEST PROVE A CERTAIN POINT.

To test your power to recall specific details and to interpret them properly I shall read a short passage from an essay called "The Jungle Sluggard" by the famous naturalist and explorer, William Beebe. It describes an unusual animal called the sloth. After I have read it, I shall ask several questions bearing on facts and details about the sloth. Listen carefully as I read, concentrating particularly on *the supporting details*:

"A gun fired close to the ear of a sloth will usually arouse not the slightest tremor; no scent of flower or acid or carrion causes any reaction; a sleeping sloth may be shaken violently without awakening; the waving of a scarlet rag, or a climbing serpent a few feet away brings no gleam of curiosity or fear to the dull eyes; an astonishingly long immersion in water produces discomfort but not death. When we think what a constant struggle life is to most creatures, even when they are equipped with the keenest of senses and powerful means of offense, it seems incredible that a sloth can hold its own in this overcrowded tropical jungle."

Now here are five questions on specific details of the passage:
See how many you can answer:

1. What violent noise failed to rouse the sloth?
2. Mention two sharp odors which also had no effect.
3. What test did the explorer perform while the sloth slept?
4. What dangerous enemy only a few feet away failed to disconcert the sloth?
5. What effect did immersion in water have on the sloth?

This *next* question on the passage concerns your ability to take the information you have just gathered on the sloth and interpret and apply it properly: Here is the question: "The term 'slothful' has often been employed to characterize a lazy or indolent person. In view of what you have just read about the sloth in the preceding passage, do you feel that the adjective 'slothful' has been fairly derived?" (BAND)

If you achieved a perfect score on the questions on the preceding passage, you were concentrating intensely as you listened. This same intensity of listening concentration is what you must bring to your READING of a complex passage full of many details.

If the passage is a *descriptive* one—such as the one you have just heard on the sloth—open all your *senses* to it. Note the appeal to SIGHT, SOUND, TASTE, TOUCH, SMELL.

To test yourself on your SENSORY PERCEPTIONS divide your paper into five columns, heading them as follows: 1. Sight 2. Sound 3. Taste 4. Touch 5. Smell. Now play the passage about the sloth again. This time listen only for words or phrases that APPEAL TO THE SENSES. After you have listened to the passage once more, write as many words or phrases which appeal to the different senses as you can in the appropriate column:

(BAND)

You should have the following answers:

SIGHT: Scarlet rag waving...Seeing a serpent.

SOUND: Firing of a gun.

TASTE: None

TOUCH: Shaking of the sleeping sloth in a violent manner.

SMELL: Scent of flower, acid, or carrion.

That was a *descriptive* passage. If the passage is a *narrative* one, look for what journalists all the fundamental five W's:

The first W.	WHO	Who was involved?
The second W.	WHAT	What happened?
The third W.	WHERE	Where did it happen?
The fourth W.	WHEN	When did it happen?
The fifth W.	WHY	Why did it happen?

To these you may well add two additional points:

HOW? .. "How did it happen?" and "In what order or sequence?"

This last point will help you fix the details even more firmly in your mind. As you read, note the *time* element, that is, the CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER in which the events happened.

Test yourself now on the following narrative passage. Remember to look for such key details as WHO? WHAT? WHY? WHERE? WHEN? HOW? and IN WHAT ORDER? The passage is from Heywood Broun's humorous satire on knights and dragons. It is entitled "THE FIFTY-FIRST DRAGON."

"Toward morning Gawaine seemed resigned to his career. At day-break the Headmaster saw him to the edge of the forest and pointed him to the direction in which he should proceed. About a mile away to the southwest a cloud of steam hovered over an open meadow in the woods and the Headmaster assured Gawaine that under the steam he would find a dragon. Gawaine went forward slowly. He wondered whether it would be best to approach the dragon on the run as he did in his practice in the South Meadow or to walk slowly toward him, shouting 'Rumplesnitz' all the way.

"The problem was decided for him. No sooner had he come to the fringe of the meadow than the dragon spied him and began to charge. It was a large dragon and yet it seemed decidedly aggressive in spite of the Headmaster's statement to the contrary. As the dragon charged, it released huge clouds of hissing steam through its nostrils. It was almost as if a gigantic teapot had gone mad. The dragon came forward so fast and Gawaine was so frightened that he had time to say 'Rumplesnitz' only once. As he said it, he swung his battle-ax and off popped the head of the dragon. Gawaine had to admit that it was even easier to kill a real dragon than a wooden one if only you said 'Rumplesnitz.' "

Now see whether you can answer the following questions:

1. Who supervised Gawaine's carrying out of his mission?
2. When did Gawaine begin his task?
3. Where and under what did he find the dragon?
4. What were Gawaine's thoughts as he approached the dragon?
5. Why does the author compare the dragon's charge to that of a teapot gone mad?
6. How did Gawaine vanquish the dragon?
7. Retell the story in your own words in the EXACT CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER in which the events happened.

8. Gawaine killed his fiftieth dragon without having *time* to say the magic word. Surprise at this fact overwhelmed him. When he faced his FIFTY-FIRST DRAGON, he had lost his courage and was killed and eaten by the beast. WHAT SYMBOLIC MEANING DO YOU DERIVE FROM THIS STORY? HOW WOULD YOU APPLY THIS MEANING TO THE INTERPRETATION OF A PROBLEM IN YOUR OWN LIFE?

(BAND)

(SEE YOUR BOOKLET FOR ANSWERS AND SUGGESTIONS)

Another type of writing is to be found in EXPOSITION. The essay, in which the writer expounds or sets forth a point of view, is a common type of exposition, as we learned in Lesson XIII. on Composition. In other types of exposition the author may explain how to make and do things.. describe an experiment...describe travel or exploration...compare and contrast things...make a survey...evaluate a situation...write an editorial...or review a play, book, or movie.

In such passages, besides the minimum ability to find the main thought and cite supporting details *additional powers are tested*:

Among these are:

1. Your ability to see relationships and interrelationships
2. Your ability to tell what came before and what will probably come after
3. Your ability to draw inferences
4. Your ability to apply what you have read to a new or different situation.

In interpreting narrative and descriptive writing some of these qualities are tested. But in interpreting expository writing there is particularly great stress on your ability to *assume, infer, deduce* —in short, to use REASONING POWER.

...As you listen to the following passage by Charles S. Brooks on the role of the essayist, taken from his delightful travel book "HINTS TO PILGRIMS," look for the following:

1. The central idea of the author
2. The way in which he uses striking illustrations to develop his ideas
3. What Brooks regards as the place of the essayist in the literary world.

Here is the passage:

"An essayist is not a *mighty* traveler. He does not run to grapple with a roaring lion. He desires neither typhoon nor tempest. He is content in his harbor to listen to the storm upon the rocks if now and then by lucky chance, he can shelter someone from the wreck. His hands are not red with revolt against the world. He has glanced upon the thoughts of many men; and as opposite philosophies point upon the truth, he is modest with

his own and tolerant of the opinions of others. He looks at the stars and, knowing in what a dim immensity we travel, he writes of little things beyond dispute. There are enough to weep upon the shadows; he, like the dial, marks the light. The small clatter of the city beneath his window, the cry of peddlers, children chalking their games upon the pavement, laundry dancing on the roofs and smoke in the winter's wind—these are the things he weaves into the fabric of his thoughts. Or sheep upon the hillside—if his window is so lucky—or a sunny meadow, is a profitable speculation. An essay, therefore, cannot be writ hurriedly upon the knee."

Now try to answer the following questions on the passage:

QUESTION 1. The title that best expresses the main idea of this passage is:

- a. The Essayist in Isolation
- b. A Slice of Life
- c. Reflection and Opinion
- d. Nature Is the Best Teacher.

ANSWER: The best title is c. "Reflection and Opinion." The essayist studies and reflects on what Matthew Arnold has called: "The best that has been thought and said in the world," adds observations based on his own experience, and from this blend produces personal opinions of his own. Details which support this answer are found in the following lines from the passage: "The small clatter of the city beneath his window, the cry of peddlers, children chalking their games upon the pavements, laundry dancing on the roofs and smoke in the winter's wind—these are the things he weaves into the fabric of his thoughts."

...Also the line: "He has glanced upon the thoughts of many men." supports the idea of reflection.

QUESTION 2. According to the writer, which of the following subjects would *not* be proper material for an essayist?

- a. Going on a Holiday
- b. Superstitions I Still Cling To
- c. How to Win Friends
- d. The French Revolution

ANSWER: d. The French Revolution. This is too vast, comprehensive, and stormy a topic for an *essayist* to try to treat. Lines which support this answer are: 1. "The essayist writes of little things beyond dispute." 2. "He does not run to grapple with a roaring lion. He desires neither typhoon nor tempest."

QUESTION 3: The *mood* of the essayist should *rarely* be:

- a. Gay b. Melancholy c. Personal d. Contemplative.

ANSWER: B. He should rarely be MELANCHOLY.

The lines which support this answer are: "There are enough to weep upon the shadows. He, like the dial, marks the light."

Let us also consider the other multiple-choice answers to see what an essayist SHOULD be or do: That an essayist should generally be *gay* is indicated by the line, "He like the dial, marks the light." That an essayist should have a *personal* touch or tone in a quiet, unobtrusive way is found in the lines, "And as opposite philosophies point upon the truth, he is modest with his own." That an essayist should be *contemplative* is shown by the thought that, after absorbing all the beauties of the universe that he can, an essayist should sit down and slowly store them in his heart before venturing to write. For, as we note in the closing line of the selection, the author maintains:

"An essay, therefore, cannot be writ hurriedly upon the knee."

-- Note what we have done with this passage: Not only have we
--found the *main idea* of the author that an essay is a
short, incisive, personalized treatment, the result of
sober reflection and experience, on a topic neither too
vast nor too controversial --

--we have also found *supporting evidence* for these
ideas.

and...Most important of all, we have exercised our most important
tool in reading comprehension—our REASONING POWER:

The author does *not tell you directly* that the essayist should concern himself with lighter and more familiar topics than a novelist or biographer. He says: "The essayist is not a mighty traveler. He does not run to grapple with a roaring lion. He desires neither typhoon nor tempest." YOU, THE READER, must look at these lines and from these concrete word-pictures DEDUCE or INFER that the lighter or more familiar subject is the province of the essayist.

NOR DOES THE AUTHOR TELL YOU DIRECTLY that essays should only be written after careful and quiet reflection. YOU, THE READER, must deduce this from such a line as: "An essay cannot be writ hurriedly upon the knee."

Another WORD OF CAUTION: Do not *read into* your interpretation ideas that are *not* actually stated. They may APPEAR to be there. You may wish they were there. But REMEMBER: You can only work with what you are given—and try to interpret it—WHETHER YOU AGREE WITH THE AUTHOR OR NOT.

...And now...To TEST YOUR ABILITY to infer, deduce, and reason STOP THE RECORD and turn to READING EXERCISE 4 in your booklet. After you have finished each reading selection, answer the questions which follow it. Then, COMPARE YOUR ANSWERS with those given in the booklet.

(BAND)

(See Supplement to this lesson, SECTION IV.)

VI. DETERMINING PREVIOUS CONTENT AND ANTICIPATING CONCLUSIONS.

Another important test of your reasoning power is your ability to examine a passage taken out of context and then to determine what PRECEDES the passage and what FOLLOWS IT:

For example, if you read a passage describing what a deep-sea diver learned about the non-aggressive reactions of an octopus to a human being in his first encounter with one in the ocean depths, what would you assume had been discussed in the PRECEDING paragraph? The following possibilities:

1. The diver's OWN misconceptions about an octopus up to that point,
2. The misconceptions of *other* people.

If you combine *both* of these possibilities, you have the correct answer. Captain Cousteau, in his book "The Silent World," tells us that Victor Hugo's highly imaginative picture of the octopus in one of his novels had made the captain's divers picture it erroneously as a frightful and dangerous monster.

This is reasoning about WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE. Another problem one finds in tests of reading comprehension is TO ANTICIPATE or FORE-TELL *what will come next or how the passage will end*. Let us now examine a passage with this aim in mind. It is from an essay called "THE LIFE OF DREAM" by Mary Colum. In it she compares dreams and reality. Note how she does this as I read the passage:

"Even the most meanly gifted of human beings have a life of dream, though it be the narrowest, most limited dream, a dream of marrying the boss' daughter or being the head of the office. But, whatever it may be, while it lasts, it takes up a great deal of each life, sometimes to the extent of nearly obliterating the life of external reality. It is one of the objects of art to mould this life of dream, to shape it into forms that will enable men and women to achieve greater consciousness, a profounder communication with life, stronger feelings, subtler intelligences, more noble imaginations. Why so many writers should disparage the existence of a dream-life and why a certain type of critic should regard it as having less dimension than the exterior life, is hard to understand. But the widespread development of an uninspired and decadent realism and a flat, impoverished materialist philosophy has brought about a concentration on exterior life and the routine of exterior life, to the discrediting of all forms of interior life."

In this passage she praises the life of dream and shows that it is important to every human being. She ends, however, by saying that the temper of our grimly realistic age has done much to make people scoff at the world of dreams.

What do you think comes next? Note that the writer has gone to great lengths to show *how vital and important the life of dream is to Man-kind*. She will probably not easily abandon this position. Despite the attacks of the realists, she may try to justify it in the scheme of things.

LET US NOW CHECK OUR HYPOTHESIS:

Here is the passage that *follows* the one we are studying:

"Yet just as surely as time is composed of night and day, life is composed of dream and external reality, and the advancement and happiness of man depend not only on the elevation of his everyday life, but on the elevation of his dream life."

Our hypothesis was largely correct. The writer states that there is room for BOTH a dream life and a life of reality in the daily world of Man.

--Admittedly, surmising what has gone before and predicting what will come after are difficult procedures. They represent a particularly strong challenge to one's reasoning power.

To help you to answer questions of this kind more effectively, three suggestions are offered:

1. First, reread the passage to get its meaning as a whole.
2. Study the *opening and closing sentences of the paragraph* for clues to what has gone before and what may come after, respectively.
3. As you read a short story or a novel, stop at a critical point in the narrative and *try to anticipate the next event*. WRITE YOUR ANSWER OUT. Then, continue reading to see how closely you have come to the actual solution. Practice with *narrative* writing of this type will strengthen your skill in handling similar problems in the more difficult form of *exposition*, particularly the essay.

(BAND)

VII. REVIEW AND SUMMARY

AND NOW TO SUMMARIZE:

To train yourself to read well and to comprehend what you have read, look for the following clues to meaning and to the reinforcement of meaning:

1. The MOOD of the writer. —Do you sympathize with it? Have you ever felt the same way? Under what circumstances? Do you agree or disagree with his opinions? Why.

2. His MAIN OR CENTRAL MESSAGE. — How soon does he state it? How does he lead up to it? What *title* would you give to his theme or message?

3. His METHOD OF DEVELOPMENT. — Does he work DEDUCTIVELY—stating a thesis and then the FACTS to support it? or INDUCTIVELY?—stating the *facts* and *then* drawing his conclusions?

—Does he bolster his evidence with illustrations, examples, facts, anecdotes, authorities, quotations?

—Does he use comparison and contrast to sharpen his treatment?

—Does he show a cause and effect relationship, showing how one thing leads to another?

4. His USE OF WORDS.

—If there are words that are unfamiliar to you, study them for CONTEXT CLUES which may help you determine their meaning.

5. APPLYING WHAT YOU HAVE READ —How has the writer enriched your experience?

—How has he given you new insights and new perspectives into the world of both literature—and life?

TECHNIQUES IN READING COMPREHENSION

I. EXERCISE 1---The Mood in Which the Writer Opens

1. (From "The Great Letter Writer,"—excerpt from BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS, by Lytton Strachey, page 251, "NEW TREASURE CHEST," ed., J. Donald Adams)

"The great letter writer must be an egotist. Only those who are extremely interested in themselves possess the overwhelming pertinacity of the born correspondent. No good letter was ever written to convey information, or to please its recipient; it may achieve both these results incidentally; but its fundamental purpose is to express the personality of the writer. This is true of love letters no less than of others. A desperate egotism burns through the pages of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse; and it is easy to see, in spite of her adoring protestations, that there was one person in the world more interesting to Madame Sévigné than Madame de Grignan. Walpole's letters, with all their variety of appeal, are certainly a case in point. They may be read for many reasons, but the final, the attaching reason is the revelation which they contain of a human being."

ANSWER: The writer opens with a *challenging statement*, "The great letter writer must be an egotist." Assuming that a letter writer must be a self-centred person immediately arouses the reader's curiosity and stimulates him to seek clarification.

2. (From "The Insects,"—excerpt from "AN ALMANAC FOR MODERNS, by Donald Culross Peattie, page 361, "NEW TREASURE CHEST.")

"The summer world is the insect world. Like it or not that is how it is. There are few insects that ever find the day too hot.

"Of all the rivals of mankind for dominance on this earth no other creatures large enough to be seen with the naked eye have held out successfully save the insects. When we clear the forest, we rid ourselves of the forest insects, only to make way for the field insects. Man sows his crop—and what comes up? A host of long-faced, armor-plated locusts who eat him out of house and home. We strike at them, but it is like striking at the sea. Whatever way we turn we find the insects there before us, in water, in air, on the earth and under it."

ANSWER: The writer opens in an *unemotional, matter-of-fact way*: "The summer world is the insect world." He then develops this theme showing the vastness and the extensiveness of the insect world, its infinite capacity for replacing itself and Man's basic inability ever to remove insect life from the earth.

3. (From "The Individual,"—excerpt from "OF FLIGHT AND LIFE," by Charles A. Lindbergh, 1948, page 380, "NEW TREASURE CHEST.")

"What effect can a single individual have in these cataclysmic times—one man or woman among hundreds of millions, seemingly helpless as a sparrow in the path of a tornado?

"The answer lies in that quality with which man only, of all earthly life, is gifted. In each man is a spark able to kindle new fires of human progress, new light for the human spirit. This ember may be dormant through centuries of darkness or it may be fanned to flames by the winds of a crisis, sweeping over the earth, bringing others to life with its light and warmth. When enough of these fires are burning, they create a new dawn of spiritual understanding; the flame of a great people is formed."

ANSWER: Colonel Lindbergh opens in a *QUESTIONING MOOD*. He speculates on whether any single human being is powerful enough to alter the course of the turbulent and war-torn world of the 20th Century.

He concludes that the times make the man—that when a serious crisis threatens, there will emerge men with enough strength of character and inspiration to rouse others both to defense and constructive action.

4. (From "The Open Mind"—excerpt from "THE NOTEBOOKS," by Samuel Butler, included in the anthology "THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, ed. by J. Donald Adams, page 104.)

"Cursed is he that does not know when to shut his mind. An open mind is all very well in its way, but it ought not to be so open that there is no keeping anything in or out of it. It should be capable of shutting its doors sometimes, or it may be found a little draughty."

ANSWER: The writer opens in a *HIGHLY EMOTIONAL MOOD*, "Cursed is he that does not know when to shut his mind." The title "The Open Mind" is a satirical one. He is impatient at those whose minds are receptive to everything. He feels that there are times when Man must firmly close the door against outside pressures, opinions, and stimuli if he wishes to enjoy peace of mind.

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II. EXERCISE 2---

Examine the following passages and answer the following questions based on them:

1. State the MOOD of the author.
2. State the CENTRAL THOUGHT of the passage.
3. Does the author state his central thought DIRECTLY—or does he LEAD UP TO IT?—Support your answer.

1. (Excerpt from "THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY," by Aldous Huxley—in THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, p. 329)

"The twentieth century is, among other things, the Age of Noise. Physical noise, mental noise, and noise of desire—we hold history's record for all of them. And no wonder, for all the resources of our almost miraculous technology have been thrown into the current assault against silence. That most popular and influential of all recent inventions, the radio, is nothing but a conduit through which prefabricated din can flow into our homes. And this din goes far deeper, of course, than the ear drums. It penetrates the mind, filling it with a babel of distractions—news items, mutually irrelevant bits of information, blasts of corybantic or sentimental music, continually repeated doses of drama that bring no catharsis, but merely create a craving for daily or even hourly emotional enemas."

ANSWER: 1. MOOD—An *emotional* one, displaying great anger.

CENTRAL THOUGHT:—Science and technology, which have produced such miraculous inventions, have in the field of communication created a modern tower of Babel—particularly in their distorted use of the marvelous invention of radio.

3. The central thought is stated DIRECTLY in the first sentence.

2. (From "A CUP OF SKY," by Donald Culross Peattie, quoted in THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, page 364).

"The earth holds a silver treasure, cupped between open bed and tenting sky. Forever the heavens spend it, in the showers that refresh our temperate lands, the torrents that sluice the tropics. Every suckling root absorbs it, the very soil drains it down; the rivers run unceasing to the sea, the mountains yield it endlessly, in bubbling spring and far last slim cascade that flings away forever its bright similitude of life. Yet none is lost; in vast convection our water is returned, from soil to sky, and sky to soil, and back again, to fall as pure as blessing. There was never less; there could never be more. A mighty mercy on which life depends, for all its glittering shifts water is constant."

ANSWER: 1. MOOD: Unemotional, quiet, and reflective.

2. CENTRAL THOUGHT: The water cycle, ever replenishing the precious supply without loss, is one of Nature's greatest miracles.

3. The author LEADS UP to his main argument. The central thought is not specifically stated *until the third sentence of the paragraph*: "Yet none is lost; in vast convection our water is returned, from soil to sky, and sky to soil, and back again, to fall as pure as blessing!" The opening sentence: "The earth holds a silver treasure, cupped between open bed and tenting sky," alludes to the miracle of water without actually identifying it.

3. (From "ONCE AROUND THE SUN," by Brooks Atkinson, quoted in THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, page 322).

"We imagine that we want cautious government. Since we as a nation do not trust government, we imagine that we want government kept on the level of clerking, safe and unimaginative. But cautious government cannot keep abreast of the needs of the people, which are dynamic always. The modern world with its high mobility and quick communications requires enterprise and boldness. Even our current concepts of freedom in our own country have hardly been fulfilled, and certainly not for all our people. The people are entitled to the benefits of modern knowledge, not in some future life, but now, while they are still alive. Science, industry, business are all bold and energetic; government cannot cautiously lag behind. There is a calculated risk in everything. There has been a calculated risk in every stage of American development. The nation was built by men who took risks—pioneers who were not afraid of the wilderness, business men who were not afraid of failure, scientists who were not afraid of the truth, thinkers who were not afraid of progress, dreamers who were not afraid of action. When there is no risk, but only prudence, the American way of life may be regarded as finished. For progress in liberal institutions, as well as in material things, takes courage, drive, and conviction."

ANSWER: 1. MOOD: After an UNEMOTIONAL OPENING, "We imagine that we want cautious government," the writer states his ideas in a vigorous, forthright way.

2. CENTRAL THOUGHT: This is stated in the last sentence, "For progress in liberal institutions, as well as in material things, takes courage, drive, and conviction." This main argument is held in abeyance until the very end. The author LEADS UP TO IT by pointing out that although "we imagine that we want cautious government," it is the *daring* individuals not only in government but also in science, industry, and business who have made "progress in liberal institutions" possible.

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III. EXERCISE 3--- SPECIAL METHODS USED TO STATE AND DEVELOP THE CENTRAL THOUGHT

Examine the following passages and state the special methods which the author uses to STATE and DEVELOP his CENTRAL THOUGHT:

1. (From "LEAF AND TENDRIL," by John Burroughs, quoted in THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, p. 79)

"I am bound to praise the simple life, because I have lived it and found it good. When I depart from it, evil results follow. I love a small house, plain clothes, simple living. Many persons know the luxury of a skin bath—a plunge in the pool or the wave unhampered by clothing. That is the simple life—direct and immediate contact with things, life with the false wrappings torn away—the fine house, the fine equipage, the expensive habits, all cut off. How free one feels, how good the elements taste, how close one gets to them, how they fit one's body and one's soul! To see the fire that warms you or, better yet, to cut the wood that feeds the fire that warms you; to see the spring where the water bubbles up that slakes your thirst and to dip your pail into it; to see the beams that are the stay of your four walls and the timbers that uphold the roof that shelters you; to be in direct and personal contact with the sources of your material life; to want no extras, no shields; to find the universal elements enough; to find the air and the water exhilarating; to be refreshed by a morning walk or an evening saunter; to find a quart of wild berries more satisfying than a gift of tropic fruit; to be thrilled by the stars at night, to be elated over a bird's nest or a wild flower in spring—these are some of the rewards of the simple life."

ANSWER:

METHOD OF DEVELOPMENT: *Deductive*.

The author, starting with a *general statement* on the virtues of the simple life, supports his thesis with *specific details* as to how he himself lived in such a fashion.

2. (From "MINCE PIE," by Christopher Morley, quoted in ESSAYS OLD AND NEW, edited by Essie Chamberlain, published by Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1935...Page 77)

(From the essay, "ON DOORS")

"There are many kinds of doors. Revolving doors for hotels, shops, and public buildings. These are typical of the brisk, bustling ways of modern life. Can you imagine John Milton or William Penn skipping through a revolving door? Then there are the curious little slatted doors that still swing outside denatured barrooms, and extend only from shoulder to knee. There are trapdoors, sliding doors, double doors, stage doors, prison doors, glass doors. But the symbol and mystery of a door resides in its quality of concealment. A glass door is not a door at all, but a window. The meaning of a door is to hide what lies inside; to keep the heart in suspense."

ANSWER:

METHOD OF DEVELOPMENT: *Deductive-inductive*. The author starts *deductively*, "There are many kinds of doors," but then *INDUCTIVELY* BUILDS UP to his FINAL GENERALIZATION in the last sentence of the paragraph, "The meaning of a door is to hide what lies inside; to keep the heart in suspense." He does this by first discussing various types of doors and their *external* appearance and then evolving the philosophical truth (quoted above) about their *symbolic* or *inner* meaning.

3. (From "THE HUMAN SITUATION," by W. Macneile Dixon, quoted in THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, page 157)

"Life is like the sea, untamed, moody, capricious, perilous. Many a man who has known the sea has sworn and sworn again that once on land he would never more embark upon so inclement, so treacherous, so hateful an element. And few who have so sworn have not heard with aching hearts her call and longed for her bitter and incomparable society. Like life she lays a spell upon them, a spell not resident in her smiles, though smile she can, nor in her calm, though, like life too, she has her seasons of calm, her sheltered lagoons and quiet havens. Men are said to love flattery. The sea never flatters. They are said to love ease. She offers toil. Like life she deals in every form of danger, and many modes of death—famine, thirst, fire, cold, shipwreck. Like life she strips many men of their pretensions and vanities, exposes the weakness of the weak and the folly of the fool. Wherein then lies the fascination, against which the soft Lydian airs cannot with men who are men prevail? It flings a challenge and human nature rises to a challenge. Men are by nature striving creatures, heroically stubborn, as the mind itself

'Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade.' "

ANSWER:

METHOD OF DEVELOPMENT: *Comparison and Contrast*.

By comparing life's unpredictability, dangers, and caprices with those of the sea and citing specific points of comparison, the writer develops his central thought.

4. (From "THE COMMON MAN," by G.K. Chesterton, quoted in THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, page 193).

"There is no better test of a man's ultimate chivalry and integrity than how he behaves when he is wrong; and Johnson behaved very well. He understood (what so many faultlessly polite people do not understand) that a stiff apology is a second insult. He understood that the injured party does not want to be compensated because he has been wronged; he wants to be healed because he has been hurt. Boswell once complained to him in private, explaining that he did not mind asperities when they were alone, but did not like to be torn to pieces in company. He added some idle figure of speech, some simile so trivial that I cannot even remember what it was. "Sir," said Johnson, 'That is one of the happiest similes I have ever heard.' He did not waste time in formally withdrawing this word with reservations and that word with explanations. Finding that he had given pain, he went out of his way to give pleasure. If he had not known what would irritate Boswell, he knew at least what would soothe him. It is this gigantic realism in Johnson's kindness, the directness of his emotionalism, when he is emotional, that gives him his hold upon generations of living men. There is nothing elaborate about his ethics; he wants to know whether a man, as a fact, is happy or unhappy, is lying or telling the truth. He may seem to be hammering at the brain through long nights of noise and thunder, but he can walk into the heart without knocking."

ANSWER:

METHOD OF DEVELOPMENT: *Illustrations and Examples.*

The author develops his main idea that the test of a gentleman is his behavior when he is clearly in error by citing the story of Johnson's method of soothing his famed biographer Boswell when he had unwittingly hurt his feelings.

5. (From "THE MAN VS. THE STATE," by Herbert Spencer, quoted in THE TREASURE CHEST, edited by J. Donald Adams, pub. by E.P. Dutton and Co., 1946, pages 190-191)

"Anyone who studies, in the writings of M.M. Taine and de Tocqueville, the state of things which preceded the French Revolution will see that that tremendous catastrophe came about from so excessive a regulation of men's actions in all their details, and such an enormous drafting away of the products of their actions to maintain the regulating organization, that life was fast becoming impracticable. The empirical utilitarianism of that day, like the empirical utilitarianism of our day, differed from rational utilitarianism in this, that in each successive case it contemplated only the effects of particular interferences on the actions of particular classes of men, and ignored the effects produced by a multiplicity of such interferences on the lives of men at large. And if we ask what then made, and what now makes, this error possible, we find it to be the political superstition that governmental power is subject to no restraints.

"When that 'divinity' which 'doth hedge a king,' and which has left a glamour around the body inheriting his power, has quite died away—when it begins to be seen clearly that, in a popularly governed nation, the government is simply a committee of management; it will also be seen that this committee of management has no intrinsic authority. The inevitable conclusion will be that its authority is given by those appointing it; and has just such bounds as they choose to impose. Along with this will go the further conclusion that the laws it passes are not in themselves sacred; but that whatever sacredness they have, it is entirely due to the ethical sanction—an ethical sanction which, as we find, is derivable from the laws of human life carried on under social conditions. And there will come the corollary that when they have not this ethical sanction they have no sacredness, and may rightly be challenged.

"The function of Liberalism in the past was that of putting a limit to the powers of kings. The function of true Liberalism in the future will be that of putting a limit to the powers of Parliaments."

ANSWER:

METHOD OF DEVELOPMENT: *Support of Authority.*

First, the author cites Taine and De Tocqueville AS AUTHORITIES for his contention that excessive government in the form of the monarchy regulating "the lives of men at large" was a major cause for the French Revolution. He then extends this idea to include Parliaments, which he maintains must also be true to the people's trust if they wish to fulfill the function of true Liberalism.

6. (From "THE ENGLISH WAY," by Pierre Maillaud, quoted in THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, page 400.)

"There is nothing, Sir, too little for such a creature as Man. It is by studying little things that we attain the great art of having as little misery and as much happiness as possible,..."

—Samuel Johnson

"If Dr. Johnson were to reappear among us, he would realize what force his epigram has gained and what torments our world has suffered through its contempt for little things. 'It's the little things that are most important,' an old French mechanic would keep repeating. They are more important indeed because they are real and therefore serious. A politician can trick millions of men into believing in Utopian worlds, but my old mechanic could not trick a plain spark plug into firing unless he had, honestly, cleaned it. If a nation cannot perform its tasks with care and good temper and find entertainment as well as truth in them, no sense of greatness that it may possess will prevent it from being both a failure and a curse."

ANSWER:

METHOD OF DEVELOPMENT: *Quotation.*

As support for his own thesis that a nation's greatness and future growth lie in its de-termination to do the little tasks of life as carefully and conscientiously as the bigger ones, the writer cites Dr. Johnson's *quotation*. The substance of this is that Man, who can be so noble and adaptable, will be a far happier creature if he applies himself more carefully to the so-called "little things of life."

7. (From "ALL TRIVIA," by Logan Pearsall Smith, quoted in THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, page 148).

"As I sat there, hopeless, with my coat and my hat on in my bedroom, I felt that I had no hold on life, no longer the slightest interest in it. To gain all that the world can give I would not have raised a listless finger; and it was entirely without intention that I took a cigarette, and felt for matches in my pocket. It was the act of an automaton, of a corpse that twitches a little after life has left it.

"But when I found that I hadn't any matches, that—hang it!—there wasn't a box of matches anywhere, then, with this vexation, life came flooding back—the warm, familiar sense of my own existence, with all its exasperation, all its charm."

ANSWER:

METHOD OF DEVELOPMENT: *Cause and effect relationship.*

The author, depressed and disillusioned with life, is rescued from complete despair by sheer exasperation at reaching for matches to light a cigarette and finding none. CAUSE: Not finding the matches. EFFECT: A return to normalcy.

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IV. EXERCISE 4 — Practice in Reading Comprehension

(Note: Answers will be found after Passage No. 4)

1. (From "THE SUMMING UP," by W. Somerset Maugham, quoted in THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, P. 204).

"I have been called cynical. I have been accused of making men out worse than they are. I do not think I have done this. All I have done is to bring into prominence certain traits that many writers shut their eyes to. I think what has chiefly struck me in human beings is their lack of consistency. I have never seen people all of a piece. It has amazed me that the most incongruous traits should exist in the same person. I have known crooks who were capable of self-sacrifice, sneak thieves who were sweet-natured.**** It is meet not to expect too much of others. You should be grateful when they treat you well, but unperturbed when they treat you ill. 'For every one of us,' as the Athenian Stranger said, 'is made pretty much what he is by the bent of his desires and the nature of his soul!'"

QUESTIONS:

1. The TITLE that best describes this passage is:

- a. The Shape of Man's Soul b. The Whole Cloth c. Variation and Diversity d. The Writer and Character Analysis.

2. All of the following may be inferred from the passage EXCEPT:

- a. Most sneak thieves have some redeeming quality.
b. It is not wise to expect too much from people.
c. The writer has treated aspects of character neglected by other writers.
d. No single individual is ever wholly uniform in nature and temperament.

3. Which of the following are "incongruous traits"?
 - a. Humility and arrogance?
 - b. Self-sacrifice and asceticism.
 - c. Justness and mercifulness.
 - d. Kindness and thoughtfulness?
4. "The Athenian Stranger" maintained that:
 - a. Circumstances largely shape Man's nature.
 - b. Man is largely the product of his heredity.
 - c. Man must control his instincts.
 - d. Education can change Man's attitudes.

2. (From "ALARMS AND DISCURSIONS," by G. K. Chesterton, quoted from THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, page 191.)

"The splendor of furrowed fields is this: that like all grave things they are made straight, and therefore they bend. In everything that bows gracefully there must be an effort at stiffness. Bows are beautiful when they bend only because they try to remain rigid, and sword-blades can curl like silver ribbons only because they are certain to spring straight again. But the same is true of every tough curve of the tree trunk, of every strong-backed bend of the bough; there is hardly any such thing in Nature as a mere droop of weakness. Rigidity yielding a little, like justice swayed by mercy, is the whole beauty of the earth.

"The foil may curve in the lunge, but there is nothing beautiful about beginning the battle with a crooked foil. So the strict aim, the strong doctrine may give a little in the actual fight with facts; but that is no reason for beginning with a weak doctrine or a twisted aim. Do not be an opportunist; try to be theoretic at all the opportunities; fate can be trusted to do all the opportunistic part of it. Do not try to bend, any more than the trees try to bend. Try to grow straight, and life will bend you."

QUESTIONS:

1. The TITLE that best describes the idea of this passage is
 - a. Nature's Flexibility
 - b. Straightness
 - c. The Opportunist
 - d. The Rigidity of Life.
2. The MOOD of the writer is
 - a. strongly moralistic.
 - b. cynical
 - c. exuberant.
 - d. quietly philosophical.
3. The writer feels that trees are most appealing when they:
 - a. Stand upright and majestic.
 - b. Begin to bud.
 - c. Shed their leaves.
 - d. Are most supple.
4. The author believes that people should:
 - a. Constantly practice self-evaluation.
 - b. Compromise when the occasion warrants.
 - c. Uphold the law at all costs.
 - d. Dedicate themselves to acts of charity.

3. (From "A HISTORY OF EUROPE," (Preface), by H.A.L. Fisher, quoted in THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, p. 141)

"Men wiser and more learned than I have discovered in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave; only one great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalizations, only one safe rule for the historian; that he should recognize in the development of human destinies the plays of the contingent and the unforeseen. This is not a doctrine of cynicism and despair. The fact of progress is written plain and large on the page of history, but progress is not a law of nature. The ground gained by one generation may be lost by the next. The thoughts of men may flow into the channels which lead to disaster and barbarism."

QUESTIONS:

1. The TITLE that best describes this passage is:
 - a. The Unpredictability of History.
 - b. Progress and Decline.
 - c. Fatalism as an Historical Philosophy.
 - d. Role of the Historian.

2. The writer maintains that:
 - a. Historical events follow a definite pattern.
 - b. Diplomats would do well to draw parallels from history.
 - c. Progress may sometimes be followed by a setback.
 - d. Other historians are overly cynical.
3. "The play of the contingent" refers to:
 - a. Elements of uncertainty.
 - b. Current events.
 - c. Events that happen in the same year.
 - d. Victory following defeat.
4. From this passage we can infer that:
 - a. The future can be predicted by a study of the past.
 - b. History is ebb and flow.
 - c. Barbarism and disaster are inevitable in the Atomic Age.
 - d. A historian should have no predetermined theories.

4. (From "OUR PLUNDERED PLANET," by Fairfield Osborn, quoted in THE NEW TREASURE CHEST, 1948,...P. 279)

"It may be pointed out that war fare as practiced by man has no parallel in nature. This is to say that within the more highly developed animal populations of this earth there is not now nor has there ever been similar destruction within a species itself. In fact, one has to go to the lowliest forms of animal life, such as certain kinds of ants, to find anything comparable to human warfare. It is a curious fact that mankind appears to justify the killing of his own kind by assuming that it is a "law of nature." There are a lot of current misconceptions about the laws of nature, of which this is one of the most erroneous and fateful. Political ideologies have been based upon it with results that have come near to destroying human civilization. The theory that war is a biological necessity, that it is nature's method of controlling population and assuring the survival of the strong and the elimination of the weak, is inaccurate and insupportable. Within the last century, when wars have been common all over the world, the human population of the earth has almost doubled."

QUESTIONS:

1. The TITLE that best describes this passage is:
 - a. Men vs. Animals.
 - b. The Laws of Nature.
 - c. War and Nature.
 - d. The Inevitability of War.
2. According to the writer, when Man engages in the mass extermination of warfare, he descends to the level of:
 - a. The jungle animals.
 - b. An insect breed.
 - c. Prehistoric monsters.
 - d. The reptiles.
3. "The survival of the strong and the elimination of the weak" as a theory is similar to one advanced by:
 - a. Rousseau. b. Darwin. c. Whitman. d. Burroughs.
4. The author asserts that wars of the twentieth century:
 - a. Have been followed by rapid reconstruction.
 - b. Advanced the cause of democracy.
 - c. Have been marked by appreciable population increases.
 - d. Have resulted in suicidal arms races.

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ANSWERS TO THE PRECEDING FOUR PASSAGES (EXERCISE 4)

PASSAGE 1--

1. c...2. a...3. a...4. b...

PASSAGE 2--

1. b...2. d...3. d...4. b...

PASSAGE 3--

1. a...2. c...3. a...4. d...

PASSAGE 4--

1. c...2. b...3. b...4. c...