

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION

Olaosun Ibrahim (Ph.D), Olarewaju E. M. & Odekunle O. A.

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Edited by

OLAOSUN IBRAHIM (Ph.D)
OLAREWAJU E. M.
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DEDICATION

To
Dr. (Pastor) Isaac Olarewaju;
Mrs Halimat Olaosun;
And
Mrs Olukemi Odekunle

For enduring several forms of deprivation in the course of
writing, compiling, and editing the book.

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We are thankful to God, the source of all the wisdom that goes into the writing and production of this book. Thanks to all the authors from whose ideas our contributors have drawn. Bode, Bayo and Bunmi must also be acknowledged for assisting in the compilation. We are also grateful to Ashy and Babs for their invaluable contributions.

FOREWORD

The development in electronic modes of communication such as the telephone and the internet has a lot of downbeat effects on effective use of English in English as Second Language (ESL) environments. These modes of communication do not only reduce the reading and writing activities of English language users but also make them take for granted, the question of correctness when using the language. Even in formal examination conditions, many Nigerian students, for instance, write "short-cut", ungrammatical expressions, typical of, but permissible in computer-mediated communication. This phenomenon is devastating to the future education of this country and there is a vital need to tackle it in time.

English Language and Communication Skills for Tertiary Education is therefore specially designed to "rehabilitate" the passive users of English which digital technology has turned the present generation of English users in this part of the world into. The book examines the essential basic skills of language (listening, reading, speaking and writing) and the strategies for developing the skills. It also discusses the basic grammar topics, which constitute the hallmark of effective production and reception of English in social and academic situations.

The merit of this book lies in its presentational style: the modular style of presentation adopted, moves the book away from the usual complex theorizing, which typifies many academic writings. This modular style make the authors reach out well to their audiences, which include tertiary education students as well as students in professional institutions.

After painstakingly reading this twenty-module book, I am convinced that it is well conceived and well delivered. I therefore recommend it as a manual for use in the Use of English programmes of tertiary institutions.

Idowu Odebode, (PhD)

PREFACE

It is no longer news that the English language is a global language. It is also not news that the language that has the utmost utilitarian values in the world today is the English language. Giving these facts about the language, English as Second Language (ESL) users all over the world cannot but learn to use it effectively in their social and academic communications.

In view of the fact expressed above, *English Language and Communication Skills for Tertiary Education* is put together with the intention to help English as second language users from this part of the world use the language competently in their work places, at homes, in market places, at political meetings, religious gatherings and, most importantly, in their academic engagements.

The book has two major parts: The first part, targeting the general users of English for general communications, treats the basic communication skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing. The second part, targeted at academic users, examines basic topics in grammar (tense, aspect and concord, direct and indirect speech construction, grammatical units: morphemes, words, phrases and clauses, question tags, etc.), study skills, mechanics of writing (punctuation), the use of dictionary, the use of library and topics in special uses of language, such as figures of speech and literary devices, collocation and idioms and lexical semantics.

Contributors to the book are experienced specialists and teachers of English at colleges of education, polytechnics and universities in Nigeria. Guided by their teaching experiences, all the contributors invoke a typical classroom setting in their style of presentation. Each module is unified and clearly focused by consisting of carefully structured parts: the first introduces the topic and state, in achievable terms, the expected learning outcomes or objectives; the second develops the content and the third concludes and evaluates the reader, based on the objectives stated in the first part.

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MODULE SIXTEEN

READING COMPREHENSION AND SUMMARY SKILLS

OLATUNJI, Samson Olusola

Introduction

Comprehension and summary skills are highly essential to the success of a student for academic as well as all-round exploits. That is why candidates' knowledge of the exercises is tested in major language examinations. Thus in this module, we shall be discussing the importance of the two related skills, how to acquire them, and how to practise them.

Objectives of the Module

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

- i. explain the concept of "comprehension";
- ii. explain the principles of successful reading comprehension;
- iii. discuss the skills of effective comprehension; and
- iv. acquire the skills to treat any given comprehension exercise correctly.
- v. explain the term, "summary";
- vi. explain the rationales for summary exercises; and
- vii. acquire the skills to do any summary task successfully.

1. What is Comprehension?

Comprehension simply means "understanding". To comprehend is to understand. Babalola (1999:178) sees comprehension as the "power to understand". It is success at accessing the writer's or speaker's thoughts from a written or spoken text. This means there can be listening comprehension as well as reading comprehension. Nanewotor and Abiona (1990:69) explain comprehension as "the art of reading, understanding, and answering questions on a given passage".

It should be noted that comprehension goes beyond just the ability to answer questions on a spoken or written passage correctly. This is because it is possible for a test-wise student to detect where the answer to a question is in a passage and just write same down with a little modification and score a fair point.

During a reading comprehension exercise, the reader is actively involved in a sort of meaning negotiation with the writer. The greater the number of the constituent words in the passage that the reader finds familiar, the wider the scope of comprehension. However, one does not have to wait until one has looked up every word from the dictionary before one can hope to comprehend a reading passage. This is because there are various strategies that can be employed to decode written messages as shall be explained later in this section.

It needs be emphasised that comprehension is said to have taken place only when one has been able to recall, interpret or explain the content of a spoken or written text in one's appropriately chosen words to reflect as much as possible what plausibly represents the encoder's original thoughts.

1.1. Why Comprehension Exercises?

Where purpose is not discovered, abuse is inevitable. Psychologists too are in agreement that when people are adequately informed about the rationales behind a task, such a task is approached with highly potent and productive enthusiasms. So, any time and space occupied with letting students know the purpose of comprehension exercises cannot be rightly judged a waste.

Firstly, very good reading comprehension skills enable students go through schooling with great ease. In the words of Ologhobo (2004: 70), "reading takes a major part of the student's study time. His good performance at the university is directly related to a good reading ability". No wonder then that major examining bodies like the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination (NECO) as well as a host of others at various levels lay unmistakable emphasis on reading comprehension by allotting it a weightier percentage of marks than some other sections of their language examination.

Secondly, a good reading comprehension ability would engender listening comprehension as well, and this is highly essential and most frequently required in our day-to-day (even minute-to-minute) interpersonal and social interactions. It is, however, unfortunate that most people do not know what it means to listen actively.

Thirdly, such ability would facilitate mastery of the learning contents and activities in other subjects and courses as the teachers that are ever available to the students (i.e. textbooks and notebooks) are in written or printed formats. A student that is able to extract meanings from written or printed texts is the one that always has many teachers at their best very near to consult for explanation.

Fourthly, resulting from the first two are the multidimensional advantages of good comprehension skills that could manifest in peaceful co-existence, avoidance of social frictions and quick, easy resolution of conflicts, facilitation of cooperative attitudes and progress and so on. This shows that if comprehension skills (listening and reading) are properly and adequately nurtured, the benefits transcend formal examinations. The advantages are all-pervasive.

2. Principles and Practical Steps in Mastering a Comprehension Passage

2.1. The Principles

The word "principle" is formed from two words: "prince", which could mean "first", "chief", "important", "essential", etc. and "ciple", which means "follow", "be guided", "be mentored", "be led", etc. The principles of good reading comprehension exercise are, therefore, the essential guidelines that one must follow in order to succeed at any reading comprehension task. No candidate can flout any of the principles without grave consequences.

The principles are:

- i. Take note of what exactly a question requires that you do. It is not enough to just understand the content of a passage, an understanding of how an answer must be structured to

match the form a question takes is of very much decisive importance. Does the question ask who, how, where, what, which, or when? For example, let us suppose that the following is a sentence in a passage:

When Ade realized that it was getting dark, he ran back home.

Let us further suppose that one of the questions on the passage is, "Why did Ade run back home?" Note that the question requires the reason for Ade's running back home, but not the time of the event. It would, therefore, be wrong to include "when" in one's answer. But the expected answer could include, "because (it was getting dark, etc)". If the question requires the purpose of running back home, then "so that...." would be appropriate in the answer.

- ii. Make sure that there is no grammatical/expression error in your answers. Any example of such errors robs candidates of valuable marks. Consider each answer well before writing it to avoid wrong tenses, meaning-altering errors of spellings, concord rules violations, and so on. If any of such errors is found, in scoring the answer, half-a-mark is deducted as penalty.

- iii. Avoid mindless wholesale lifting of a sentence that contains elements of the required answer from the passage. Only the part of a sentence that answers a question could be taken while any portion that does not have to do with the answer should be avoided like a plague because it can rob one of the whole mark apportioned to the right answer to the concerned question. Let us consider the following sentence from a passage:

When it was time to start the examination, Chioma moved closer to Bayo because she wanted to copy the latter's work as she had not prepared for the exercise.

Question: Why did Chioma move closer to Bayo?

To answer the above question, "She wanted to copy the latter's work" is the only relevant part of the sentence. So, whoever lifts the whole sentence from "When it was..." to "prepared for the exercise" has displayed gross ignorance of what comprehension means and automatically loses the mark at stake.

Note that it is also expedient to replace "the latter's work" with "Bayo's work" if your answer does not already contain the name. So, the correct answer could be:

- a. *Chioma moved closer to Bayo in order to be able to copy the latter's work;* or
- b. *She wanted to copy Bayo's work;* or
- c. *She moved closer to him because she wanted to copy his work.*

Note that any other sentence structure that expresses any of the above will score.

- iv. Where another word/expression is expected to be given to replace a word/expression in the passage, consider all options that come to your mind critically to pick the one that fits in perfectly. This requires that you note whether the word is a noun (singular or plural), an adjective, a verb (singular, plural, present, past, participle), or an adverb. For example, let us consider the following sentence:

- a. *Onyeama fathers many indigent students in the school.*
- b. *Jack can fell that tree in ten minutes.*

To supply a good and correct replacement for "fathers" in the above context, a candidate would need to first identify the word as a verb in the particular context, as opposed to its traditional noun class. This means that any word/expression that is not a verb cannot score. Furthermore, if the original word is a present tense verb, supplying a past tense synonym would be blunderous. So, it is wrong to supply "kept" as a replacement for "saves" where "keeps" may be acceptable. In the same vein, "fell" as used in the above sentence is not a past tense verb but

present tense. So, a present tense verb that means "cut" is appropriate.

Also of great importance is the wisdom in supplying only one word/expression where requested. If a candidate supplies two or more synonyms where only one is required and unfortunately one of the supplied answers is wrong, the candidate will have no mark for the correct one(s). Let us suppose that **Candidate A** supplies ten synonyms for "flabbergasted", out of which nine are correct and fit in perfectly. The one that is incorrect destroys the scoring chances of the correct nine. If, on the other hand, all the ten are correct, the candidate will have the same mark(s) as another candidate that supplies only one correct synonym. So, there is no point supplying another.

- v. Candidates' knowledge of grammatical units is also tested in the comprehension exercises. This makes a demand on candidates' ability to recognize the different word classes, phrases, and clause structures as well as their grammatical functions in contexts. A rigid labeling of structures is not advisable here. A candidate must be mindful of the syntactic position as well as the syntactic function of a word or stretch of words before stating its grammatical name and function.

In some public examinations (WASSCE, NECO/SSCE, etc.), a correct identification of grammatical name attracts 1 mark while a correct statement of grammatical function attracts 2 marks. However, while it is possible to score the 1 mark for grammatical name alone, one cannot get any mark for correct statement of grammatical function if one has already missed the grammatical name.

Let us consider the need to be careful in labeling a grammatical structure with these practical examples of extracts from a passage:

- i. *The boys in the hall are fighting.*
- ii. *The boys are fighting in the hall.*

Note that though the two sentences (i) and (ii) have exactly the same constituents and in the hall is the same structure underlined in both, the underlined phrase has different grammatical names and functions in the two different contexts though it remains a prepositional phrase by composition in both sentences. In sentence (i), in the hall is:

(a) an adverbial phrase by grammatical name; and functions grammatically as

(b) qualifying the noun "boys".

But in sentence (ii), it is:

(a) an adverbial phrase by grammatical name; and functions grammatically as

(b) modifying the verb "fighting".

Thus, you have to approach this aspect with caution in order not to throw away the marks at stake.

Also note that in stating the grammatical function of a structure, such technical terms as "modifies" or "qualifies" are mandatory; such a layman expression as "it tells us more about...." is not acceptable. For example, consider the following sentence:

The boy who stole your money died yesterday.

The underlined, "who stole your money" is an adverbial phrase by grammatical name and it "qualifies the noun **boy**". Any candidate that states that it "tells us more about the noun **boy**" has missed the mark.

vi. A good knowledge of the commonest figurative expressions like simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia, and idiomatic expressions is necessary for comprehension to take place. Therefore, such expressions are often required to be identified from comprehension passages. A deep knowledge of such expressions in their technical complexities is not needed, but there is a minimum, level of their mastery that is expected from an average user of the English language for communicative purposes.

vii. Limit your answers to the information contained in or can be inferred from the passage before you. Any answer that

cannot be identified in the passage, no matter how accurate and true, will not score. Let us suppose that all the information given expressly or implied in a comprehension passage point to a particular person as the one that stole some money. You have had the privilege of reading the whole story from which the passage has been extracted and you know that it was not the prime suspect but another person, in fact not suspected at all, that did it. It would be a blunder to introduce this piece of privileged information in any of your answers.

Furthermore, even if the information contained in the passage is wrong or obsolete, do not attempt to correct the anomaly. For example, if the passage says there are only nine planets in the solar system, do not introduce any correction though you are aware of the fact that many more planets have been discovered. The afore-discussed skills will be useful in answering questions of different types that are commonly asked in comprehension exercises. Such types of questions are:

(a) Recall Questions:

These require simply identifying and remembering pieces of information supplied in certain sentences in a passage. One does not need to read between the lines or think hard before getting answers to them. All that is required is the ability to understand the passage, especially the sentences that contain the answers, even at the literal level. It is even possible for a test-wise candidate that does not understand the passage well to get the correct answer to a recall question by identifying the key words in the question that appear in the given passage. Consider the following paragraphs for example:

Ikechukwu did not eat akpu on his first day in Lagos. He had been looking forward to eating some of the "oyinbo" delicacies that he had heard Kelechi, his classmate

describe repeatedly. "Can I have hamburger with some coffee?"

"I thought the best food to offer an Igbo man should be akpu", said Bola in unbelief. "But I'm surprised to see you are a white man Igbo". They both laughed.

"I will eat akpu tomorrow. After all, it doesn't go bad in days", replied Ikechukwu. He remembered how his friend, Bala, lost his own girlfriend named Magajia by exposing his ignorance and poverty level to her unwisely. "Where are your parents and siblings?" he quickly changed the topic.

"They've all travelled. Was that not the reason we fixed your visit for today?"

"Your eyes are like the brightest sun that ever shone", commented Ikechukwu softly as he squeezes Bola's left hand tenderly. Bola smiled uncertainly.

When it was time to eat, Ikechukwu, though extremely hungry, ate slowly as he had seen rich men do on some occasions. *I am a bloody chameleon*, he thought and smiled.

Recall Questions:

- i. Why didn't Ikechukwu go for akpu?
- ii. What did he want to eat?
- iii. When would Ikechukwu eat akpu?

These types of questions can even be answered in single words or phrases or sentences. The answer to Question 'i' could be written as:

He/Ikechukwu was eager to taste "oyinbo" delicacies.

To Question ii, one could write:

He wanted hamburger with coffee. Or hamburger with coffee.

To Question iii,

He would eat akpu the following day or simply 'the following day' could do.

(b) Questions Requiring Inferences:

Answers to these types of questions are to be arrived at by critically considering the underlying meanings of a number of interconnected pieces of plain information given in a passage. The answer cannot be seen at the surface meaning levels of the words and sentences in the passage. This means the answer is not directly supplied in the passage; it has to be critically and creatively thought out using the information supplied therein. Consider the following questions:

- i. What was the relationship between Ikechukwu and Bola?
- ii. Why did Ike hide the reason for not opting for akpu from Bola?

You would observe that the answers to the two questions above are not expressly stated in the passage; one has to reason them out based on the premise of the information provided about Bala and Magajia. So, the plausible and acceptable answers are:

- i. Bola was Ikechukwu's girlfriend.
- ii. He did not want to lose Bola's love through an unwitting revelation of his poverty and ignorance.

(c) Questions on grammatical Structures and Functions

The knowledge of candidates on grammatical structures like adverbials, adjectivals, nominals, etc. is tested. From the short piece on Ikechukwu, we could have the following:

...that he had heard Kelechi, his classmate describe repeatedly.

- i. What is the grammatical name for the above as used in the passage?
- ii. What is its grammatical function?

A candidate who has adequate knowledge of English grammar could score all the marks at stake, normally 1mark for (i) and 2marks for (ii) by simply writing:

- i. Adjectival clause

- ii. It qualifies the noun "delicacies"

(d) Questions on figurative expressions:

A question is normally asked to make candidates identify and give literal meanings of such figurative expressions as idiomatic expressions, simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia, etc. An example from our passage is:

I am a bloody chameleon....

- i. What figure of speech is the above?
ii. What does it mean?

Answer:

- i. Metaphor
ii. He was exhibiting a fake life pretending to be like other people.

(e) Questions on Vocabulary Mastery

These require substitution of selected vocabulary items with others that can replace them in the context of a given passage. e.g.

Write a word or group of words that means almost the same (synonym) and can replace each of the following as used in the passage:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| i. delicacies | ii. exposing |
| iii. ignorance | |
| iv. tenderly | v. extremely |

The expected responses to the items include:

- i. food ii. revealing; showing iii. unawareness;
iv. lovingly; caringly; affectionately; gently
v. exceedingly; exceptionally; enormously .

2.2. Practical Steps in Successful Comprehension Exercises

- i. Read the passage very fast for the first time. The purpose of this first reading is to have a general overview of the content, which is to be able to answer the question, "What is the passage about?"
ii. Read all the questions on the passage to guide the next reading.

- iii. Using the general ideas of the questions, read the passage a second time, at a slow pace this time. During this reading, you may be using a pencil to mark off particular portions that contain answers to the questions.
- iv. Begin to answer the questions one after the other as you read much more slowly than before.

Sample Passage

Read the following passage and answer the comprehension questions that follow:

"On arrival at the church premises in company of my Chief Bridesmaid and the Bridal Train in a convoy of dazzling cars, I quickly stepped out and moved towards my parents who had been waiting impatiently for quite some time. My father, a time-consciousness freak that he is, had been disturbed by the delay. I saw his look of annoyance and apprehension replaced by that of happiness as my convoy entered.

"He had started walking towards me when he shot a look at my almost bare breasts. Another quick look down-ward, he saw that my gown was seven inches above the knees. The embarrassment, fury, question and condemnation written on his face were unmistakable as he stopped abruptly and gaped at me. I was terrified by his fiery look. At the same time, I was amused because I thought that I had won the day. I had the illusion that my father's hands were tied and there was nothing he could do about the situation.

"But alas! I was mistaken. My father poked the first finger of his left hand at me in his habitual way of showing that a person is not worthy of his right hand. *If you think I can identify with you, dressed like a harlot*, he growled, *you must be beside yourself*. With that, he went to his car without looking back and drove off.

"My mother who had caught up with him was beside him while addressing me, was transfixed. She had known her husband too well to try to persuade him against his stern decision. In our dejection, we both began to make frantic effort to get somebody to

stand in for my father, but no man was ready to do so. Some of my uncles had left with my angry father. The few that remained behind were either full of indignation or afraid of what my father would say, should they volunteer to act in that capacity.

"All this while, a crowd of people had started milling round us. While some youthful men as well as some unscrupulous randy oldies were feasting their eyes hungrily on my largely exposed luscious body and those of my shameless entourage, many others were indignant at the unprecedented show of impudence.

"Things happened fast. The service eventually started. It was time for the Bride and the Bridal Train's procession. We had scarcely sat down when the head of the officiating ministers, obviously furious and astonished, stood up. He ordered us to stand up. He then rained fire and brimstones of condemnation on us for our gross indecency. To cap it all, he decreed that Bridal Train members and I go and cover our bodies properly before he could perform any solemnization rites.

"We had to borrow scarves and headgears from some of our sympathetic guests to cover the nakedness with which we had hoped to oppress them, especially the male-folk among them.

I am a servant of the living God, a steward of God's manifold grace. In constant consciousness and expectation of the day I will stand before my Lord and Master. I must refuse to allow unrepentant harlots in the church, not to talk of performing any solemnization rites for them. it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of our God who is a Consuming Fire. Rev. Elijah Elisha, the Head officiating Minister, had said in the midst of his holy and bitter railing.

"There were interjections of *Oh! Oops! Yes! Right! Ah!* and so on in the audience. My, did I weep on that unforgettable day!"

From Sola Olatunji's *The Rescue Mission*

- (a) Who accompanied the narrator to the church premises? (Recall Question)
- (b) Why was the lady's father disturbed? (Recall Question)

- (c) What made the lady's father's happiness short-lived? (Recall Question)
- (d) What illusive opinion did the lady have about what her father's reaction to the situation would be? (Recall Question)
- (e) Why did most of the narrator's uncles go with their brother? (Inferential Question)
- (f) How did the Head Officiating Minister react to the ladies' indecency? (Inferential Question)
- (g) ... because I thought that I had won the day
 - i. What is the grammatical name for the above as used in the passage?
 - ii. What is its grammatical function?
- (h) Give another word/expression that has nearly the same meaning as and can replace each of the following as used in the passage:
 - i. convoy ii. freak iii. fiery
 - iv. frantic v. stern vi. indignant

Suggested Answers

- a. Her Chief Bridesmaid and the bridal train followed her.
- b. His daughter had not shown up on her wedding day.
- c. His daughter's near-nudity/shameless dressing made his joy short-lived.
- d. (The thought was that) there was nothing her father could do to punish her.
- e. They supported their brother.
- f. He reacted with (righteous) indignation/ He railed at them for their indecency.
- g. i. adverbial clause of reason. ii. It modifies the adjective "amused".
- h. i. group ii. enthusiast iii. angry; burning
- iv. frenzied; disorganized; uncoordinated
- v. harsh; forbidding; austere; severe
- vi. annoyed; angry,

3. What is Summary?

Summary can be described as the condensed form of a longer text or a passage. It is a sub-skill of language which requires one to reproduce what one has decoded in as few of one's own words as possible. The tradition in the old days was to ask candidates to re-write a lengthy passage in a given number of sentences. But to make the task simpler, candidates are now asked leading questions, the answer to which would form a summary of the original passage.

3.1. Why Summary?

The need to summarise arises in different situations of our normal daily living. Summary takes a good percentage of total marks for a language test in public examinations in Nigeria. Therefore, it is an important aspect of the communication skills that must be developed.

4. Principles and Practical Steps in Good Summary Writing

All the principles and practical steps earlier discussed for comprehension exercises are relevant to summary writing. A very important addition, which is the most distinguishing factor between comprehension exercises on one hand and summary on the other, is the brevity or conciseness – economy of words. To achieve this all-important objective, consider taking the following steps:

- i. Do a first reading slowly for a general idea about the content.
- ii. Do a second reading slowly to have a greater knowledge of content.
- iii. Read the given questions on the passage.
- iv. Do a third reading to mark off the sentences containing the answers.
- v. Do a final reading during which the actual answering takes place.

Note: These suggestions are particularly helpful for beginners. Experienced readers can do a good summary of what they read even at first reading.

Identifying the Answers

Identify the topic sentence in any paragraph that contains an answer. A well written paragraph would normally contain an idea expressed concisely in one of the constituent sentences. Such is regarded as the topic sentence. All other sentences in the paragraph only expatiate on the meaning of the topic sentence. Read this passage for example.

Chief Konga was extremely rich. The grandeur of his personal office and the eye-popping beauty of his house would leave no one in doubt about his affluence. He had a fleet of posh cars from which he used to choose according to the colour of his attire and the importance of the occasion. The well kept appearance of his retinue of wives, all full time housewives, and his numerous children spoke volumes about his super-rich financial status.

You should not have any problem identifying the first sentence in the above paragraph as the topic sentence. Every other sentence only serves to expand or develop the topic sentence. The topic sentence can be found at a paragraph's beginning, middle, or end. You may experiment with the paragraph on Chief Konga. Begin to move *Chief Konga was extremely rich* (which the topic sentence) to different spots in the paragraph. You will discover that it still flows smoothly.

After extracting the topic sentence, the next step is to trim down the sentence and adapt it to the form required by the question. In trimming down the sentence,

- i. do away with examples and illustrations. For example, suppose the topic sentence that contains an answer to a question is "He did not like fraudulent people who lie against fellow human beings, steal other people's properties, and betray their countries of origin". You are

required to simply write, "He disliked dubious/fraudulent people".

- ii. remove any word that can be deleted without destroying the important meaning of the sentence. The inclusion of a single extraneous word in a correct answer would cost a candidate half of the mark allotted the question. So, if a correct answer attracts six marks originally, the candidate loses three marks gallantly. In some extreme cases, the inclusion of such an unwanted word can make the candidate loses all of the marks.
- iii. do not use a preamble except you are confident that such preamble flows grammatically into the items that follow. Consider the following example and identify why it is wrong;

Mr Cook was annoyed with his wife because of the latter's

- 1. *She was disobedient.*
- 2. *She was too fearful.*
- 3. *She did not keep her husband informed*

The foregoing structures do not flow into one another. So, even if they are the correct answers, the candidate can at most get half of the marks available. That is even if they do not contain other errors.

But a candidate who writes the following would score the whole mark because the preamble has unity with each of the items that follow it:

Mr Cook was annoyed with his wife because of the latter's:

- 1. *Disobedience;*
- 2. *Fearfulness;*
- 3. *Failure to keep her husband informed.*

Since such level of syntactic expertise and accuracy are required, a wise candidate would opt for sentences with simple structures without preambles e.g.

- 1. *His wife / She was disobedient.*
- 2. *His wife / She was too fearful.*
- 3. *His wife / She did not keep her husband informed.*

- iv. It should be noted that in answering a summary question, unlike in a comprehension exercise, every answer must be

in a complete sentence. In fact, examiners do graciously remind candidates about this through the way they structure their questions i.e. *In three/four/five sentences, one sentence for each, state...*

Sample Passage

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions after it:

Electioneering in the Republic of Nairegi is a terrible eyesore. Successive regimes have made attempts at correcting the anomaly but such interventionist efforts have been revealed to be half-hearted. Their "do-or-die" spirit and "by-all-means" mindset come to the fore as their election periods have always been characterized by political assassinations, unpardonable and glaring blackmails, ballot boxes hijacks, election results falsification, use of state security operatives to coerce voters. Political analysts and commentators have observed quite a number of factors responsible for poor electioneering in the country.

The power of incumbency is used to the advantage of ruling parties over others. The party of a serving governor or president naturally has an undue advantage over other parties. There is, however, gross abuse of the advantage of incumbency in Nairegi where a serving governor or president uses the resources of state to rig elections for himself or one of his anointed stooges. The use of the police to harass hapless prospective voters to either run for their dear lives or vote against their wishes is common story there. They want to perpetuate themselves in power in order to prevent objective probe of their gross misconducts while in the political offices.

Reports by several international organisations reveal that over 78% of Nairegis live below the poverty line of one dollar per day. Acute poverty thus renders a lot of them ready to sell their voting rights or, worse still, make themselves available for electoral malpractices in exchange for morsels of food. This further compounds the problems of the few idealists among them.

A great philosopher of the classical age was said to have advocated that no illiterate be allowed in a democratic society.

This is because a few political opportunists can easily sway innumerable illiterates and thus ride on the latter's ignorance to undeserved power. After all, democracy is a game of numbers. Nairegi, being a predominantly illiterate entity, is a practical proof of the philosopher's wisdom. No wonder successive governments try subtle means of keeping the general public perpetually illiterate.

A general gross moral decadence among Nairegis also contributes to electoral catastrophes. Individual electoral officers are easily bought over to announce doctored election results. Members of the judiciary sell judicial affirmation of unjustifiable election results to the highest bidders. Worse still, they would not blush. After all, nobody would ask them how they got so much money.

A few Nairegis remain uncorrupted. They are not ignorant either. But, unfortunately, they have lost faith completely in their nation. They have, after very strong reasoning about past events, foreclosed the possibility of their country's redemption. Past elections have failed woefully and their politicians are obviously unrepentant. In fact, the political class goes from bad to worse by the day. They have concluded that nothing can ever work for Nairegi, even if it has worked well elsewhere.

1. In five sentences, one sentence for each, state the factors identified by the writer as being responsible for electoral malpractices in Nairegi.

Suggested Answers

1. Political office holders struggle to remain in power for selfish reasons.
2. Acute poverty makes many Nairegis sell themselves for electoral malpractices.
3. Ignorance prevents many Nairegis from protecting their political rights.
4. The electoral arbiters are corrupt.
5. The uncorrupted Nairegis have lost hope on their nation's political redemption.

Summary of the Module

This module has been able to:

- i. explain the concept of "comprehension";
- ii. explain the principles of a successful reading comprehension;
- iii. discuss the rules guiding correct comprehension;
- iv. explain the term, "summary";
- v. explain the rationale for summary exercises and;
- vi. treat sample comprehension and summary passages

Evaluation of the Module

Read the following passages and answer the questions on them.

Passage A

"Love" is a word that is on the lips of many people in our world today but, unfortunately, not in their hearts. It is the theme of the lyrics of most hip-hop, reggae, raga, pop-funk, blues, secular, spiritual, local, and even international music, to mention but a few. It is the major or sole preoccupation of most creative works and critical essays of authors like poets, novelists, and playwrights. Sculptors and other artists also display love with their crafts. But ironically, most people have little or no correct or complete idea of what the word actually means. It is thus worthwhile to consider most people's concepts of love.

Consider a strikingly handsome rich young man who met a breathtakingly beautiful woman for the first time. The man got fascinated by the woman's beauty, wealth and intellect. The lady too was swept off her feet by the man's handsomeness, achievements career-wise, his wealth and general charisma. That same day, when they had hardly known each other, they professed their love for each other. In the next forty hours, they had chatted on the telephone several minutes running into several hours on several occasions. On the fourth day, they ended up in bed for a session of rounds of rumpy pump. But they did not know that the love they felt for each other was the type called infatuation based on sheer physical attraction and sex appeal.

Love could also be platonic. This usually does not begin as love at first sight. The people concerned are brought together by circumstances of work or any other common interest in normal living. The longer they stay together, the more they discover more things that make them fonder of each other. They are urged on by the fact that their relationship is mutually beneficial. But neither of them harbours any thought of sleeping with the other.

This world order is generally believed to have been created by a Supreme Being known as *God*. God, we are taught, loves all men so amazingly that He does good to all, the grateful and the ungrateful alike. He loves even the most unlovable and does not withhold His care from the unworthy. This self-sacrificial and unconditional love is known as *agape*. It is the kind of love that God demands that we exercise to all, friends and foes alike.

Our youths need to be well taught about all kinds of love so that they may know the appropriate way to show love the appropriate kind of love the appropriate individuals. Many youths have inadvertently transmitted wrong messages that landed them in big troubles. Many ladies have thrown their pearls to the swine that trampled the precious jewels because they were amateurs or even complete novices in matters of love. And this must be avoided at all cost.

Many youths have also unwittingly given their consent to be used and dumped by smart people who had been consumed by infatuation but no genuine love. But a youth who can identify and interpret the tell-tale signs of infatuation and differentiate it from the characteristics of true love would take well informed caution. So, it is advisable to teach the youths the principles of love in order to avoid being exploited by insincere but merely infatuated wolves who feign love.

Embezzlement of public funds, rape, armed robbery, ritual killing and other vices that are destroying nations are offshoots of lack of love for others. One may not expect much positive change through the activities of governmental and non-governmental organisations because the best of their efforts can be likened to cutting an unwanted tree from the branches. But successfully

teaching our people about love would uproot the vices from their hearts and minds and thus help us attain peace.

- a. Who are the three major categories of artists that proclaim love through their arts?
- b. i. How many types of love are described in the passage?
ii. List them.
- c. What is infatuation?
- d. What two major deficiencies does the writer point out as preventing people from showing true love?
- e. *...swept off her feet*
 - i. What type of expression is the above?
 - ii. What does it mean?
- f. What, according to the passage, is the most effective way to eradicate social vices and bring peace to our society?
- g. *...who had been consumed by infatuation but no genuine love.*
 - i. What grammatical name is the above as used in the passage?
 - ii. What is its grammatical function?
- h. Write a word or group of words that means the same and can replace each of the following as used in the passage:
 - i. ironically ii. strikingly iii. Charisma
 - iv. Rumpy pumpy v. Supreme vi. unwittingly

Passage B

Poverty, deprivation and degradation seem to be synonymous with Africa. In fact, studies have revealed that over seventy percent of the inhabitants of most African countries live below the poverty line put at one dollar per day by the United Nations. This is contrary to the typical experience in any developed country of the world where a citizen cannot be too poor to afford three decent meals per day. The phenomenal poverty rate in African countries is not without identified causes and consequences.

The unprecedented greed of most politicians contributes in no small measure to the impoverisation of their fellow Africans. The wealth accruing from the vast natural resources is shared by few dare-devil politicians that distinguish themselves in all imaginable and even unimaginable atrocities, and have thus instilled the fear of their names in the hearts and minds of other politicians as well as supposed electorate. Such hardened criminals in the garb of well-meaning politicians embezzle and siphon their countries' money with impunity. Over eighty percent of the citizenry is thus left to struggle for and manage with the left-over of the devilish opportunistic "politricksters".

A book of faith says that whoever refuses to work should not expect to be fed. All religions, to which Africans subscribe, whether indigenous or indigenized, preach the law of sowing and reaping. Yet most Africans, in spite of their religiosity, are taken up in the get-rich-quick and come-easy syndrome that has bedeviled the land. Laziness, therefore, subjects a lot of Africans to avoidable abject poverty at the micro level.

Many people, on the other hand, work their fingers to the bones, sweating profusely daily, getting home tired and rendered completely useless. Such people are so fagged out at the end of the day that they even legitimately doubt that they would be able to wake up the following morning. This is their daily routine, their vicious cycle and unfortunate lot. Yet they live from hand to mouth. Why? They are unskilled labourers and are consequently poorly paid.

Among the natural fall-outs from the widespread poverty is malnutrition. Since most families cannot afford nutritious meals, both young and old ones eat poorly and sparingly. This makes them weak and sickly. Diseases thus abound in the unfortunate countries unlike in their fortunate developed counterparts.

Timely medical intervention can rescue a sick person from the claws of untimely death. But this is not the case in most third world countries of the black continent. Many people die daily in preventable circumstances because the impoverished economy prevents their hospitals from being adequately equipped. This has reached so alarming a rate that individuals and organisations from

developed economies of the world are rising to the rescue of Africans

1. In three sentences, one for each, state why may people are poor.
2. In two sentences, one sentence for each, state the consequences of poverty in Africa.

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