

ESL/COMPASS Reading Sample Questions

Level 1 *Item Type: Recognizing the main idea of a picture*

Look at the picture.



Which sentence describes the picture?

- A. The people are sitting together under a tree.
- B. The family is standing in the rain.
- C. The family is walking together in the park.
- D. The men are running in the park.

Level 2 *Item Types: (1) Inferring meanings of words; (2) Locating explicit details*

Read the paragraph about the emporium in Galveston.

Shoppers enter the **emporium**, which is on the ground floor, through the original 14-foot doors. You can eat a sandwich inside while sitting on a wooden seat at an umbrella-covered table, or you can buy meats and cheeses by the pound for a picnic on the beach. There is also a wide selection of Texas foods, beers, chocolates, books, baskets, and specialty coffees and teas. A wine room features Texas, U.S., and international wines.

Adapted from Ann Gallaway, "A Present from the Past." ©1994 by Texas Highways.

1. In the passage, what does the highlighted word "emporium" mean?

- A. Store
- B. Beach
- C. Bar
- D. Hotel

2. What can you buy at the emporium?

- A. 14-foot doors
- B. Wooden seats
- C. Meats and cheeses
- D. Ground floors

Level 3 *Item Types: (1) Recognizing main ideas; (2) Locating explicit details;*
(3) Inferring meanings of words

Read the definitions from two different dictionaries.

Radburn layout In town planning and urban studies, a planned urban layout, developed by Clarence Stein, applied in Radburn, New Jersey, USA in 1928, which separates pedestrians from cars and trucks by arranging "superblocks" of housing, shops, offices, schools, etc., around a central green. Each superblock has its outer roads, off which come service cul-de-sacs. The central green or pedestrian space has pedestrian access only, either by underground passages or **surface** walks.

Adapted from Audrey N. Clark, *Longman Dictionary of Geography*. ©1985 by Longman, Inc.

Radburn layout A style of residential layout pioneered at Radburn, New Jersey (USA) between 1928 and 1933 and later widely adopted in the planning of postwar housing areas in Britain, particularly in new towns and expanded towns. Its main features include the separation of pedestrian and car traffic, housing facing onto open space and gardens and with car access to the rear, loop roads, and cul-de-sacs. In the British postwar new towns, the Radburn principles were clearly evident in the detailed plans of neighborhood units.

Adapted from John Small and Michael Witherick, *A Modern Dictionary of Geography*. ©1995 by E. Arnold.

1. Based on the two passages, the most important feature of the Radburn layout is the
- A. use of underground passages.
 - B. separation of car and pedestrian traffic.
 - C. building of houses so that they face the street.
 - D. use of cul-de-sacs for pedestrians.
2. Which information appears in both dictionaries?
- A. The plan was developed by Clarence Stein.
 - B. The plan was widely used in Britain.
 - C. The plan made use of cul-de-sacs.
 - D. The plan included underground passages.
3. As it is used in the first paragraph, the highlighted word "surface" means
- A. the part of something that you can see.
 - B. a smooth area, like a tabletop.
 - C. outward appearance.
 - D. at the level of the ground.

Level 4

Item Types: (1) Applying concepts in the passage to new situations; (2) Recognizing the main idea of a paragraph; (3) Locating explicit details; (4) Inferring the meaning of words or phrases; (5) Inferring style, tone, intended audience

Read the passage about psychology.

Social Influence

Of the many influences on human behavior, social influences are the most pervasive. The main influence on people is people. When we hear the term social influence, most of us think of deliberate attempts of someone to persuade us to alter our actions or change our opinions. The television commercial **comes to mind**. But many of the most important forms of social influence are unintentional, and some of the effects we humans have on one another occur by virtue of the simple fact that we are in each other's physical presence.

In 1898 a psychologist named Triplett made an interesting observation. In looking over speed records of bicycle racers, he noticed that better speed records were obtained

when cyclists raced against each other than when they raced against the clock. This observation led Triplett to perform the first controlled laboratory experiment ever conducted in social psychology. He instructed children to turn a wheel as fast as possible for a certain period of time. Sometimes two children worked at the same time in the same room, each with his own wheel; at other times, they worked alone. The results confirmed his theory: Children worked faster in coaction, that is, when another child doing the same thing was present, than when they worked alone.

Soon after Triplett's experiment on coaction, it was discovered that the mere presence of a passive spectator (an audience rather than a coactor) was sufficient to facilitate performance. This was discovered accidentally in an experiment on muscular effort and fatigue by Meumann (1904), who found that subjects lifted a weight faster and farther whenever the psychologist was in the room. Later experiments have confirmed this audience effect.

It appears that coaction and audience effects in humans are caused by the individual's "cognitive" concerns about competition and the evaluation of performance that others will make. We learn as we grow up that others praise or criticize, reward or punish our performances, and this raises our drive level when we perform before others. Thus, even the early studies of coaction found that if all elements of competition are removed, coaction effects are reduced or eliminated. Similarly, audience effects are a function of the subject's interpretation of how much he is being evaluated.

Adapted from Ernest R. Hilgard, Richard C. Atkinson, and Rita L. Atkinson, *Introduction to Psychology*. ©1975 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

1. Which of the following would be an example of the coaction effect?
 - A. A woman works harder when her boss is in the room than when she is alone.
 - B. Bob's two children finish their homework faster when he is watching them than when he is not.
 - C. Players on the team work harder when they exercise together than when they each exercise alone.
 - D. Joe and his two friends work more slowly when they are together than when each is alone.

2. What is the main idea of the last paragraph?
 - A. How people grow up determines their adult behavior.
 - B. Competition and evaluation increase the coaction and audience effects.
 - C. People praise and criticize children as they grow up.
 - D. Competition and evaluation are not related to the coaction and audience effects.

3. According to the passage, Triplett's experiment of 1898

- A. supported his theory of coaction effect.
- B. challenged his theory of coaction effect.
- C. showed that cyclists race harder against each other than against the clock.
- D. showed the connection between coaction effect and audience effect.

4. As it is used in the passage, what does the highlighted phrase "comes to mind" mean?

- A. Is a problem
- B. Affects our thinking
- C. Creates confusion
- D. Is an example

5. Where would you most likely find this passage?

- A. In a business letter
- B. In an instructional manual
- C. In a college textbook
- D. In a book review