

## **COMPREHENSION W.A.S.S.C.E. 2002/2003/2005 RESPECTIVELY**

Read the following passages carefully and answer the questions that follow.

What do young people usually think of? A recent study has revealed that young people, boys and girls in the primary schools are often preoccupied with problems usually associated with adults. Contrary to what most of us would have expected, it was found that these young people are already bothered by issues such as what kind of husband or wife they would marry; what professions they would prefer; the type of car they would drive; and how they would cope with scarcity of money. Surprisingly, most of them are scared by prospects of marital problems, and some seem to take it for granted that divorce is the way out of difficult marriages.

However, it is not surprising that political issues rarely feature among the problems bothering them. They seem to be hardly preoccupied with the thought of who governs them, the kind of government in the country or its political ideology. Nonetheless, quite a good number of them have serious thoughts about becoming ministries, commissioners, governors or presidents. Beyond this, what they would do afterwards does not seem to concern them nor can they define precisely how they would attain these positions.

It appears that children's thought patterns are shaped or, at least, influenced by the environment within which they live. For instance, while most of those from happily married parents think of the kind of spouse to marry, those from polygamous or broken homes tend to envisage marital problems and divorce. Again, children from humble backgrounds, for example, where the parents are farmers, carpenters, mechanics, and those from the rural or semi-urban areas are less ambitious. They usually opt for more conventional professions like teaching and nursing. On the other hand, children from more sophisticated backgrounds tend to opt for the less conventional professions such as aeronautical engineering, accountancy and banking.

From all that has been discussed so far, an obvious lesson is that children should not be exposed to unhealthy ideas and unpleasant thoughts as their aspirations and actions are indeed influenced by their environment.

- a. What is the purpose of the opening question in this passage?
- b. How did the writer obtain the information contained in this passage?
- c. What does the author find surprising about young people's thought patterns as contained in the first paragraph.
- d. What effect does parent's marital experience have on their children's ideas about marriage?
- e. What does the passage say about the children's attitudes to politics?
- f. Who generally influence children in forming their opinions?

- g. "... what they would do afterward ..."
- i. what grammatical name is given to this expression as it is used in the passage?
  - ii. What is its function?
- h. For each of the following words, find another word or phrase which means the same and which can replace it as it is used in the passage.
- i. Revealed;
  - ii. Scared;
  - iii. Concern;
  - iv. Spouse;
  - v. Humble;
  - vi. Profession.

2. Michael was elated. What had happened was very rare in the history of the company. He was less than two years old as an employee there, but here he was, being favoured more than the older employees. He could not believe his luck, and it was still like a dream to him.

But it was no dream at all! On that Monday morning, his boss had summoned him and as this was quite unusual, he felt a little trepidation as he went to answer the call. The man had regarded him solemnly as he sat before him and calmly asked about his job.

"It's going on quite well, sir."

"I hope there are no problems in your department."

"None at all, sir. The job is quite interesting and challenging."

"Well, I'm happy to hear that," replied the boss. "A training programme is being arranged to enhance staff efficiency and you have been recommended by your departmental head for the training. You will be leaving with the others in a week's time. Have you an international passport?" "Yes sir, I do," Michael stuttered. "Very good. Get ready for the United States for a six-month course. Congratulations."

The information was so stunning that it made Michael's head red. Soon the news spread in the company and he instantly became a hero. Nevertheless some of his colleagues began to see him as an interloper who came to steal what rightly belonged to them. For how could he be nominated with less than two years' service to his credit, when they had spent more than double that number of years in the company's employment? It was not fair at all!

Michael commenced his preparation in earnest. He had a few things to dispose off – his refrigerator, his fourteen – inch colour television and his old car. There was no point in retaining all these. In the first place there would be nowhere to keep them, as he would have to give up his flat. Moreover, he would be able to afford better ones by the time he came back from his trip abroad.

On the day of departure, Michael had the greatest shock of his life. He got to the airport only to find out that he could not travel with the others. The training institute abroad had planned for only three people, and Michael, being the least experienced of the four workers nominated had to be dropped. That was a bombshell! He fainted the moment he heard the sad news.

- a. Why did Michael think that he was dreaming?
  - b. “It was not fair at all!” What was not fair?
  - c. State the opinions which Michael’s co – workers formed about him after his nomination.
  - d. Give **two** reasons why Michael planned to dispose of some of his belongings.
  - e. What do you think made Michael faint when he heard that he could not ravel?
  - f. “... to enhance staff efficiency...”
    - i. What grammatical name is given to this expression as it is used in the passage?
    - ii. What is its function?
  - g. “That was a bombshell.” What figure of speech is contained in this expression?
  - h. For each of the following words, find another word or phrase which means the same and which can replace it as it is used in the passage:
    - i. Elated;
    - ii. Summoned;
    - iii. Trepidation;
    - iv. Solemnly;
    - v. Instantly;
    - vi. Interloper.
3. Among the giraffes, zebras and gazelles that roam the vast African savanna, perhaps the most remarkable creature is the ostrich. Standing

about 2.5 meters tall and weighing up to 155 kilograms, the ostrich is the largest bird in existence. No one can fail to be awed and fascinated by the bird's great height, powerful legs and beautiful fluffy feathers.

Like the camel, the ostrich is tolerant of high temperatures and thrives in desert country. It also has long luxuriant eyelashes which protect its large eyes from the dust of the bushveld. Its legs are long and sinewy and its feet are strong and fleshy. Seeing the ostrich strutting about in the open plains, observers are amazed at its agility and endurance.

The ostrich is omnivorous, feeding on almost anything that creeps or crawls. It also dines on insects, snakes, rodents, roots and most vegetation. Because of its great size and weight, it cannot fly. However, its muscular legs are powerful enough to make it one of the fastest creatures on earth. Running across desert country, it can attain speeds of up to 65 kilometers an hour! This extraordinary swiftness and its long-distance stamina enable it to outrun many of the fastest four-legged predators with ease.

The eggs of the ostrich are the largest in the world and can weigh up to 1 – 5 kilograms each. Prized for its size and delicious taste, each egg is the equivalent of 25 hens' eggs. The shell is hard and glossy and has glazed porcelain – like finish. The empty shell is sometimes used as a container by Bushmen for storing water.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, ostrich feathers became highly valued by fashion – conscious Europeans. Yet, hunting the ostrich was not easy, since the bird has very keen eyesight and swiftly flees from danger. Consequently, the ostrich was in no danger of extinction at that time.

But in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, armed with modern weapons, hunters slaughtered ostriches by the millions. And today the noble ostrich has become an endangered species.

- a. Give **three** reasons why the ostrich egg is considered valuable.
- b. How does the ostrich survive attack by predators?
- c. What common characteristics of birds does the ostrich lack?
- d. Why did the Europeans value ostrich feathers?
- e. “The eggs of the ostrich ...”
  - i. What is the grammatical name given to this expression?
  - ii. What is its function as it is used in the sentence?
- f. What is the writer's attitude to the ostrich?

- g. For **each** of the following words, find another word or phrase that means the same and can replace it as it is used in the passage.
- i. Vast;
  - ii. Remarkable;
  - iii. Fascinated;
  - iv. Thrives;
  - v. Outrun;
  - vi. Extinction

4. Chief Ibezim and the District Officer were good friends. Ibezim was the Chief Priest of Ani, the earth goddess, in Ndiuzo, and although the District Officer was stationed in far – away Umueke and the Chief Priest by his calling should not travel out of Ndiuzo, their friendship remained as solid as a rock..

They became friends after Ibezim had testified before the District Officer in the land dispute between Ndiuzo and Umueke. He was the only man to testify against his own people in that dispute, and had struck the District Officer as an honest man who was telling the truth.

This was what earned Ibezim the admiration and friendship of the District Officer. Consequently, the District Officer advised him to send his son to the new school and the new religion that held out so much promise of positive change in the future. And when the system of indirect rule necessitated the appointment of a warrant chief at Ndiuzo, the District Officer also promptly thought of his honest friend as the most suitable candidate.

On the other hand, Ibezim’s testimony in the land dispute earned him the wrath of many of his own people. They not only held him responsible for their loss of the disputed land but also resented his friendship with the District Officer and his patronage of the new education and religion, which were threatening to erode the old ways of the land. So, when the District Officer wanted Ibezim at Umueke, and he sought to confer with his people on what to do, his detractors quickly turned their backs on him and left alone in his dilemma. Some even secretly hoped that he was going to be arrested and detained.

After a long period of hesitation, Ibezim finally decided to break with tradition and go to Umueke. The times were changing and he was sure the earth goddess would understand and condone his going away from the village.

When he came back, those who had wished him the worst got the shock of their lives. They now had a new Warrant Chief to rule over them!

- a. What had earned Chief Ibezim the District Officer's friendship?
- b. State **two** ways in which Ibezim benefited from the friendship with the District Officer.
- c. Give **two** reasons why the villagers were unhappy with Chief Ibezim.
- d. State the dilemma in which Chief Ibezim found himself.
- e. "... Ibezim finally decided to break with tradition ..."  
What tradition is meant here?
- f. "When he came back ..."
  - i. What grammatical name is given to this expression?
  - ii. What is its function as it is used in the sentence?
- g. "... as solid as a rock"  
What figure of speech is contained in this expression?
- h. For **each** of the following words, find another word or phrase that the same and can replace it as it is used in the passage:
  - i. Calling;
  - ii. Consequently;
  - iii. Promptly;
  - iv. Wrath;
  - v. Detractors;
  - vi. Condone.

5. The elephant is not only the largest land animal but also one of the most intelligent creatures. In size, the African elephant when full grown is about twice the height of a man and about as many times the full length of a horse. Pound for pound, it would yield more than seven times as much meat as a full grown cow would. On account of its size and strength, the Indians have found a way of making it carry as many as eight people, all seated comfortably.

It is not surprising that the elephant is one of the most intelligent creatures, considering the fact that it has a very massive brain. It is amazing how well organized an elephant family could be. Studies have shown that the mother elephant takes as much care of her baby as a human female does. Wherever the family is moving to, you would see the baby elephant walking right under its mother's body and, between her legs, imitating her majestic movement. If a young elephant strays away

from the group, which is very rare, the rest of the family would stop moving and get back the errant baby into its position, usually after giving is a corrective thrashing with the trunk.

It is thought that elephants do have a sort of language in which they discuss and take common decisions. Two incidents should bear this out. In India when the railways were being newly constructed, a group of elephants which had hitherto run away each time a train was approaching, gathered one day and attacked this new invader of their territory. Gathered on one side of the rail line, they ran collectively and gave it a powerful head – butt. They succeeded in derailing the train although some of them broke their skulls in the attack.

Then there was the experience of some safari hunters in East Africa some decades ago. One of a group of three elephants was shot. The other two, taken by surprise, contemplated the unprovoked aggression for a moment and then ran away. Moments later, joined by four others, they came back and descended on the hunters, charging everybody in a mad rage. The man who shot the elephant was pierced to death with a tusk but the others fled. The elephants bent their heads, perhaps as a final salute to their comrade. Then they felled several young trees to cover the dead body and silently marched away. Elephants certainly do reason and act jointly.

- a. State **two** characteristics of the elephant highlighted in the passage.
- b. Mention **two** comparisons used by the writer to illustrate the elephant's huge size.
- c. What did the Indian elephants take the locomotive train to be?
- d. What does the elephants' joint attack on the train prove?
- e. What was the consequence of the elephants' attack on:
  - i. The train?
  - ii. The elephants?
- f. *If a young elephant strays away from the group ...*
  - i. What grammatical name is given to this expression as it is used in the passage?
  - ii. What is its function?
- g. What is the writer's attitude to the elephant?
- h. For each of the following words or phrases, find another word or phrase which means the same and which can replace it as it is used in the passage:
  - i. On account of;

- ii. Massive;
- iii. Errant;
- iv. Sort;
- v. Contemplated;
- vi. Comrade.

6. The term “globalization” has found its way into the world’s active vocabulary. While some condemn it as the mother of the world’s ills, others hail it as the panacea for most of the world’s problems.

What exactly is globalization? It is the growing worldwide interdependence of people and countries.. This interdependence has increased dramatically in the past decade or so largely because of rapid developments in technology, and has produced a series of consequences – economic, political, cultural and environmental.

Like many human achievements, globalization has both advantages and disadvantages. It offers enormous opportunities to eradicate poverty in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, because of the increase in prosperity that it has brought about. The average family in the world today has three times more income than was the case years ago. Indeed the greatest benefit of this economic integration is that it will make countries more reluctant to go to war as it removes the incentives for war and increases the cost. Also more interaction among people has the potential for improving global solidarity.

Despite these positive results, many people still fear that the harmful effects of globalization outweigh its benefits. Probably the greatest concern about globalization is the way it has widened the gap between the haves and the have-nots. While global wealth has undoubtedly increased, it has become concentrated in fewer hands and fewer countries than before. Although wages continue to rise in wealthy countries, the impoverished ones have actually had a decline in average income over the past ten years. People are also anxious about their jobs, which become more uncertain as global mergers and intense competition force companies to reduce their operations. Hiring and firing workers according to the current needs of the markets makes sense for a company concerned with increasing its profit, but it wreaks havoc on people’s lives.

The globalization of the money markets has introduced another disturbing factor. International investors may sink huge sums of money into developing countries but later withdraw their money suddenly when

the economic outlook worsens. Such massive withdrawals can plunge one country after another into economic crises. Understandably then, globalization engenders hopes as well as fears.

- a. What, according to the passage, aided the development of globalization?
- b. What does the writer claim would be the greatest advantage of economic globalization?
- c. Give **two** reasons why people are worried about globalization.
- d. What does the writer say about wages in the rich and poor nations?
- e. "... the mother of the world's ills, ..."
  - i. What figure of speech is this expression?
  - ii. What does it mean?
- f. "The globalization of the money markets ..."
  - i. What grammatical name is given to this expression as it is used in the passage?
  - ii. What is its function?
- g. For each of the following words, find another word or phrase which means the same and can replace it as it is used in the passage:
  - i. Panacea;
  - ii. Series;
  - iii. Enormous;
  - iv. Impoverished;
  - v. Anxious;
  - vi. Intense.