501
Reading Comprehension Questions

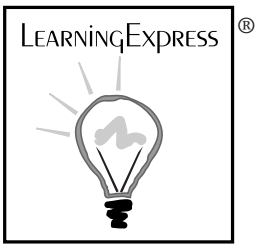
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501

Reading Comprehension Questions

4th Edition



NEW YORK

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For more information or to place an order, contact LearningExpress at:
2 Rector Street
26th Floor
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Contents

Introduction		**vii**
Chapter 1	**Vocabulary**	**1**
Chapter 2	**Analogies**	**19**
Chapter 3	**Main Ideas, Themes**	**31**
Chapter 4	**Topic Sentences**	**39**
Chapter 5	**Short Passages**	**49**
Chapter 6	**Nonfiction and Information Passages**	**87**
Chapter 7	**Reading Charts and Graphs, Understanding Directions**	**127**
Chapter 8	**Analyzing and Interpreting Poems**	**147**
Chapter 9	**Philosophy and Literature**	**161**
Chapter 10	**Longer Passages**	**171**

Introduction

Are you having trouble with reading comprehension questions on tests? Do you want to know how to improve your reading ability or pass placement tests in school or work? If so, then this book is for you. Read on to find out why.

Maybe you already like to read and want to use this book to sharpen your skills for an important test. If so, that's fine. In fact, you can skip this part of the Introduction—or skip the Introduction entirely—and go straight to the questions.

But maybe you're one of the millions of people who have trouble with reading, especially with reading carefully while reading quickly. If so, this Introduction will give you some direction.

First, know that you're not alone. It's a fact that some people relate more easily to numbers or to working with their hands. Still, no other general skill is used more regularly—in work, play, and just plain living—than reading. The good news is that reading well is a skill that can be developed with practice. This book will help, but something else will help even more: If you're serious about developing your reading comprehension skills, go to the library or a bookstore and pick out books on subjects you find fascinating.

For instance, if your interests are in skydiving, biking, golf, scuba diving, race cars, camping, woodworking, or even the stock market, use that as a

starting point, and choose a book. The subject will undoubtedly draw you in because you are already interested. Begin to read. You will find that as you focus on the subject matter, you will already know some of the information. But chances are you will discover something new as you read, and you can connect this with your prior knowledge. Eventually, your store of information becomes quite admirable. Repeat the process over and over again. As you do, you will improve your reading comprehension skills, and it won't even seem like a chore.

A Look at Our Book

The first five sections cover the basics—from vocabulary to topic sentences. *501 Reading Comprehension Questions, 4th Edition* begins with vocabulary because that's what you need to read—the essential building blocks. You will find vocabulary questions that test your ability to find definitions and context clues. Next, the analogy questions take you a step further. When answering analogy questions, you will learn to develop your ability to compare and contrast, find similarities and differences, and relate parts to whole pieces. Just in case you're wondering why this is important, you should know that the skills you develop from these short exercises in word play will assist you when you are reading longer passages.

As the book progresses, you will be asked to read short, interesting paragraphs to find main ideas and topic sentences. Once you are comfortable with these basic skills, proceed to the passages in the last five sections. This is where you will use your skills to tackle longer passages.

The last five sections begin with one- to two-paragraph passages. Questions following these passages ask you to identify details and facts, choose the main idea, make inferences, or analyze and interpret the text. The passages, both fiction and nonfiction, get longer as you progress through the book, and they all have varied subjects.

Some are about computers, geology, or geography, while others are about poems, philosophy, literature, or art. You will even find some charts and graphs. You may want to take notes as you read. This technique of interacting with the text is good to use anytime you read or when you take a test that includes reading comprehension.

The answers to every question are at the back of the book. Each answer is fully explained, so if you have trouble with a particular question, you will be able to figure out how to arrive at the correct answer.

How to Use Our Book

This book is best used to build your critical reading and thinking skills, but you might want to support it with some other LearningExpress Skill Builders books. When it comes to perfecting your reading comprehension, don't ignore any of the other language skills. You will find *Writing Skills Success in 20 Minutes a Day*, *Vocabulary and Spelling Success in 20 Minutes a Day*, *501 Logic and Reasoning Problems*, and *1001 Vocabulary and Spelling Questions* to be indispensable guides. In any case, the more you use the language and understand the building blocks, the easier and faster you will breeze through those reading comprehension passages that you find on most tests.

Working on Your Own

If you are working alone to brush up on the basics and prepare for a test in connection with a job or school, you will want to develop a time schedule and know your learning style. Since everyone reads differently, the number of words or pages you can cover in a given time period may be more or less than one section of this book. That's okay. Just spend 20 minutes—more or less—reading the material and going through the exercises. Don't worry about how much material you're covering. It's important that you're practicing, and chances are that your speed will improve as you go through the book. Your job is to find your pace.

Then, know your learning style. Do you learn best in a quiet room, or do you need music in the background? Whatever the case may be, find the location that best suits you. Do you need to take notes to remember facts and details? Have a pen, pencil, highlighter, and notebook ready. Are you at your best early in the morning or late at night? Pick the best time, get comfortable, and begin.

Tutoring Others

501 Reading Comprehension Questions, 4th Edition will work well in combination with almost any basic reading or English text. You will probably find it most helpful to give your student(s) a brief lesson on the topic (main idea, fact/detail, inference, etc.), and then have them spend the remainder of the class or session reading the passages and answering the questions. When you finish, take some time for a brief review session.

Stress the importance of learning by doing. Carry a book into class or work and talk about what you've read so far. Let people know that reading is enjoyable, and they may just use you as a role model!

Suggested Reading List

This section wouldn't be complete without a list of some great books to read. Reading about reading and answering test questions is fine, but the best way to improve your reading ability is to read. This list is compiled by category. Help yourself. Choose one from the list, pick it up at a local bookstore or library, open the cover, and enjoy.

Autobiography/Memoir

Angela's Ashes by Frank McCourt
Autobiography of Malcolm X by Malcolm X
Black Boy by Richard Wright
The Diary of Anne Frank by Anne Frank
Having Our Say by Sarah L. and Elizabeth Delany
The Heroic Slave by Frederick Douglass
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou
Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books by Azar Nafisi

Coming of Age

The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger
The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros
A Separate Peace by John Knowles

Detective/Thriller

Agatha Christie's murder mysteries
"Alphabet" series (*A is for Alibi*) by Sue Grafton
The Client by John Grisham
Sherlock Holmes by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
The Shining by Stephen King
Watcher by Dean R. Koontz

Fantasy

The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien
On a Pale Horse by Piers Anthony
The *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling

Historical/Social Issues

The Clan of the Cave Bear by Jean M. Auel
The Color Purple by Alice Walker
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon
Everything is Illuminated by Jonathan Safran Foer
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee
The Lord of the Flies by William Golding
Of Mice and Men and *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
Schindler's List by Thomas Keneally
The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd
White Teeth by Zadie Smith

Inspirational/Spiritual

Care of the Soul by Thomas Moore
The Five People You Meet in Heaven by Mitch Albom
The Purpose-Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For? by Rick Warren
A Simple Path by Mother Theresa
The Tao of Pooh and *The Te of Piglet* by Benjamin Hoff
The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying by Sogyal Rinpoche

Mythology

Mythology by Edith Hamilton
The Power of Myth by Joseph Campbell
American Indian Myths and Legends by Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz

Poetry

The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry: Second Edition edited by Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair

Science Fiction

1984 by George Orwell
Fahrenheit 451 and *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury
Jurassic Park by Michael Crichton
The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula Le Guin
This Perfect Day by Ira Levin
Stranger in a Strange Land by Robert Heinlein

Science/Medicine

Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking by Malcolm Gladwell
Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner
The Lives of a Cell by Lewis Thomas
Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of all Time by Dava Sobel
Mortal Lessons by Richard Selzer

Short Stories

Any short story by Ernest Hemingway or O. Henry
Girls at War by Chinua Achebe
Interpreter of Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri
The Stories of Eva Luna by Isabel Allende
Ten Top Stories edited by David A. Sohn

War

All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque
Hiroshima by John Hersey
The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane

1

Vocabulary

Understanding the words used to construct sentences is the best way to begin practicing for a reading comprehension test. Using a dictionary is, of course, the best way to define a word. Get into the habit of using a dictionary as you work through this book. Make it part of your basic study materials, and keep it right beside you as you go through this book.

But if you're in a testing situation and you are not allowed to use one, rely on the context clues in the sentence. The term *context clues* means that other words in the sentence "give away" or give clues to the definition. For example, sometimes you will find synonyms (words that mean the same thing) or antonyms (words that mean the opposite), or details that lead you to identify the vocabulary word in question. Once in a while, you will find a group of words set off by commas (called an appositive), which gives you a very clear definition of the word.

CONTEXT

The words, phrases, and sentences surrounding an unfamiliar word. The context can help you make an educated guess about a new word or phrase.

The answers to this section begin on page 15.

Read the following sentences and try to choose the best definition for the italicized word by searching for context clues in the sentence.

1. The designer window treatments in her house, installed 17 years ago, were *outmoded*.
- **a.** unnecessary
- **b.** pointless
- **c.** out-of-date
- **d.** worthless

2. The spies conducted a *covert* operation.
- **a.** dangerous
- **b.** foreign
- **c.** hidden
- **d.** illegal

3. The baseball player's malice toward the referee was revealed in his *spiteful* remarks to the media, which almost ruined the referee's career.
- **a.** vindictive
- **b.** crazy
- **c.** rude
- **d.** unpleasant

4. Although Zachary is much too inexperienced for the managerial position, he is a willful young man and *obdurately* refuses to withdraw his application.
- **a.** foolishly
- **b.** reluctantly
- **c.** constantly
- **d.** stubbornly

5. His neighbor's *superficial* remarks trivialized the property line dispute and infuriated Malcolm.
- **a.** enraged
- **b.** petty
- **c.** insulting
- **d.** misleading

6. She showed a *blatant* disregard for the rules.
- **a.** obvious
- **b.** hidden
- **c.** last-minute
- **d.** rebellious

7. Her fashion sense was usually described as *flamboyant*, but on the night of the party, Tanya's outfit was uncharacteristically modest.
- **a.** impeccable
- **b.** showy
- **c.** sloppy
- **d.** unassuming

8. Mr. Powers was so *gullible* that he believed even the most outlandish excuses of his insincere employees.
- **a.** intelligent
- **b.** naïve
- **c.** dishonest
- **d.** critical

9. You cannot become a certified teacher without completing the *prerequisite* student-teaching assignment.
- **a.** required
- **b.** optional
- **c.** preferred
- **d.** advisable

10. Charles, aware of his susceptibility to gum disease, is *diligent* about flossing.
- **a.** uncomfortable
- **b.** excited
- **c.** thorough
- **d.** ambivalent

11. Even though she'd read her supervisor's memo four or five times, she still found his rambling message *ambiguous*.
- **a.** profound
- **b.** inspiring
- **c.** ridiculous
- **d.** unclear

12. Excited about winning the award, Marcia walked up to the podium and delivered an *animated* acceptance speech.
a. abbreviated
b. courteous
c. reserved
d. lively

13. The *intermittent* rain soaked the garden many different times during the day.
a. protracted
b. periodic
c. incredulous
d. light

14. I got a *vicarious* thrill watching you on the diving board.
a. shared
b. unpleasant
c. adventurous
d. evil

15. After several small brushfires at the campground, officials felt the need to *augment* the rules pertaining to campfires.
a. criticize
b. retract
c. consider
d. expand

16. As soon as the details of the election were released to the media, the newspaper was *inundated* with calls—far too many to be handled effectively.
a. provided
b. bothered
c. rewarded
d. flooded

17. The doctor got to the *crux* of the issue.
- **a.** outline
- **b.** opposite
- **c.** crucial point
- **d.** unhealthy

18. When people heard that timid Bob had taken up skydiving, they were *incredulous*.
- **a.** fearful
- **b.** outraged
- **c.** convinced
- **d.** disbelieving

19. The technical department enthusiastically hired Ms. Long because she was *proficient* in the use of computers.
- **a.** sincere
- **b.** adequate
- **c.** competent
- **d.** skilled

20. Even under tremendous public pressure, the planning committee would not commit itself wholeheartedly to the proposal and gave only *tentative* approval to the waterfront development plan.
- **a.** provisional
- **b.** ambiguous
- **c.** unnecessary
- **d.** total

21. The preacher used a *euphemism* for an unpleasant subject.
- **a.** ugly picture
- **b.** substituted word
- **c.** homeless person
- **d.** visual aid

22. Since the townspeople were so dissatisfied, various methods to *alleviate* the situation were debated.
a. ease
b. tolerate
c. clarify
d. intensify

23. That perfume always *evokes* pleasant memories.
a. angers
b. erases
c. calls up
d. confuses

24. The attorney wanted to *expedite* the process because her client was becoming impatient.
a. accelerate
b. evaluate
c. reverse
d. justify

25. The suspect gave a *plausible* explanation for his presence at the scene, so the police decided to look elsewhere for the perpetrator of the crime.
a. unbelievable
b. credible
c. insufficient
d. apologetic

26. He based his conclusion on what he *inferred* from the evidence, not on what he actually observed.
a. predicted
b. imagined
c. surmised
d. implied

27. The neighborhood-watch group presented its *ultimatum* at the town board meeting: Repave the streets or prepare for protests.
a. earnest plea
b. formal petition
c. solemn promise
d. non-negotiable demand

28. The editor of the newspaper needed to be sure the article presented the right information, so his review was *meticulous*.
a. delicate
b. painstaking
c. superficial
d. objective

29. The general public didn't care about the trial and was *apathetic* about the verdict.
a. enraged
b. indifferent
c. suspicious
d. saddened

30. The doctors were pleased that their theory had been *fortified* by the new research.
a. reinforced
b. altered
c. disputed
d. developed

31. The captain often *delegated* responsibility to his subordinates, so as to have time to do the important tasks himself.
a. analyzed
b. respected
c. criticized
d. assigned

32. The news about toxic waste dumping *aroused* the anger of many viewers of the news broadcast.
a. informed
b. appeased
c. provoked
d. deceived

33. The athlete was *adroit* at handling the ball.
a. clumsy
b. large
c. obnoxious
d. skillful

34. The new shipping and receiving building is an *expansive* facility, large enough to meet our growing needs.
a. obsolete
b. meager
c. spacious
d. costly

35. The attorneys were now certain they could not win the case, because the ruling had proved to be so *detrimental* to their argument.
a. decisive
b. harmful
c. worthless
d. advantageous

36. My brother drives us crazy by *crooning* in the shower.
a. hooting
b. bellowing
c. crying
d. shouting

37. Mark seems very *pensive* today.
a. writing
b. hostile
c. cooped-up
d. thoughtful

38. The air in the rainforest was *humid*, making the heat seem even more smothering than before.

a. hot
b. damp
c. hazy
d. volatile

39. The balloon, loose from its string, rose up into the sky, a shiny purple *sphere*.

a. circle
b. globe
c. ovoid
d. nodule

40. After the storm caused raw sewage to seep into the ground water, the Water Department had to take measures to *decontaminate* the city's water supply.

a. refine
b. revive
c. freshen
d. purify

41. Please say something that will *edify* the audience.

a. perplex
b. annoy
c. instruct
d. amuse

42. The volcano lies *dormant* now, but we feel sure that it will erupt again within the year.

a. inactive
b. slack
c. elevated
d. inattentive

43. Because of his disregard for the king's laws, the prince was punished by being *banished* from the kingdom.
a. apart
b. kidnapped
c. exiled
d. spirited

44. I *relinquished* my place in line to go back and talk with my friend Diane.
a. defended
b. yielded
c. delayed
d. remanded

45. He *juxtaposed* the book's ideas with current events, showing us how they related.
a. caused confusion
b. bend and fold
c. placed side-by-side
d. threw away

46. The thief *jostled* me in a crowd and was thus able to pick my pocket.
a. mugged
b. bumped
c. assailed
d. hindered

47. While we traveled in Italy, we stayed in an inexpensive *hostel*.
a. inn
b. compound
c. home
d. four-star hotel

48. My friend asked me to lie for her, but that is against my *philosophy*.
- **a.** principles
- **b.** regulations
- **c.** personality
- **d.** introspection

Choose the best vocabulary word for questions 49–51.

49. We had no idea who the special guest speaker would be, because the organizers of the event were so _____.
- **a.** animated
- **b.** secretive
- **c.** talented
- **d.** emotional

50. Cindy had some _____ about marrying George, because he was sometimes violent.
- **a.** enthusiasm
- **b.** ignorance
- **c.** trepidation
- **d.** urgency

51. He asked his wife to _____ the situation after she had offended the neighbor.
- **a.** rectify
- **b.** exacerbate
- **c.** ruminate
- **d.** extend

Questions 52 and 53 are based on the following paragraph.

> Rhesus monkeys use facial expressions to communicate with each other and to enforce social order. For example, the "fear grimace," although it looks ferocious, is actually given by a _____ monkey who is intimidated by a _____ member of the group.

52. What is the meaning of the underlined word *grimace* as it is used in the passage?

a. wrinkle
b. contortion
c. shriek
d. simper

53. Which pair of words, if inserted into the blanks in sequence, makes the most sense in the context of the passage?

a. calm . . . aggressive
b. dominant . . . subordinate
c. confident . . . fearless
d. subordinate . . . dominant

SYNONYMS

Words that mean the same thing, or nearly the same thing. A few examples:

change, alter	happy, cheerful
cuddle, caress	overweight, obese
combine, unite	talkative, chatty

Questions 54 and 55 are based on the following paragraph.

> In prolonged space flight, besides the obvious hazards of meteors, rocky debris, and radiation, astronauts will have to deal with muscle atrophy brought on by weightlessness; therefore, when they return to Earth, they face a protracted period of weight training to rebuild their strength.

54. What is the most likely meaning of the underlined word *debris* as it is used in this passage?

a. fragments
b. decay
c. bacteria
d. alien life

55. The underlined word *atrophy*, as used in the paragraph, most nearly means

a. pain.
b. wasting.
c. weakening.
d. cramping.

Question 56 is based on the following paragraph.

> Most of the women in the orchestra wore conventional black skirts and white shirts during concerts and had their hair neatly pulled back. Robin, with her brightly colored clothing and unusual hairstyles, was considered quite eccentric.

56. What is the meaning of the underlined word *eccentric* as it is used in the sentence?

a. unconventional
b. joyful
c. unreliable
d. proud

Questions 57, 58, and 59 are based on the following paragraph.

> Donna's memo caused much contention around the office last week. She may have meant well, but her usually caustic tone offended almost everybody. She has become a consistent nuisance at work, and probably should be fired.

57. Based on the tone of the passage, which of the following words best describes the author's attitude toward Donna?

a. exasperated
b. admiring
c. patronizing
d. isolated

58. The underlined word *caustic*, as used in this passage, most nearly means

a. cause and effect.
b. reoccurring.
c. biting.
d. unclear.

59. What is the meaning of the underlined word contention as it is used in this passage?

a. theorizing
b. discord
c. gossip
d. calm