

Identifying Topics and Main Ideas

Understanding the *topic* or the larger conceptual framework of a textbook chapter, an article, a paragraph, a sentence or a passage is a sophisticated reading task. Being able to draw conclusions, evaluate, and critically interpret articles or chapters is important for overall comprehension in college reading. Textbook chapters, articles, paragraphs, sentences, or passages all have topics and main ideas. The *topic* is the broad, general theme or message. It is what some call the subject. The *main idea* is the “key concept” being expressed. *Details*, major and minor, support the main idea by telling how, what, when, where, why, how much, or how many. Locating the topic, main idea, and supporting details helps you understand the point(s) the writer is attempting to express. Identifying the relationship between these will increase your comprehension.

A paragraph is a group of sentences related to a particular topic, or the central theme. Every paragraph has a key concept or main idea, which is the most important piece of information the author wants to tell you about the concept of that paragraph.

A writer will state his/her main idea clearly somewhere in the paragraph. That main idea may be stated at the beginning of the paragraph, in the middle, or at the end. The sentence in which the main idea is stated is the *topic sentence* of that paragraph.

The first thing you must be able to do to get at the main idea of a paragraph is to identify the topic—the subject of the paragraph. Think of the paragraph as a wheel with the topic being the hub—the central core around which the whole wheel (or paragraph) spins. Your strategy for topic identification is simply to ask yourself the question, “What is this about?” Keep asking yourself that question as you read a paragraph, until the answer to your question becomes clear. Sometimes you can spot the topic by looking for a word or two that repeat. Usually, you can state the topic in a few words.

Application

Read the following paragraph and underline the stated main idea. Write down in your own words what you are able to conclude from the information.

The rules of conduct during an examination are clear. No books, calculators or papers are allowed in the test room. Proctors (监考人) will not allow anyone with such items to take the test. Anyone caught cheating will be asked to leave the room. His or her test sheet will be taken. The incident will be reported to the proper authority. At the end of the test period, all materials will be returned to the proctor. Failure to abide by these rules will result in a failing grade for this test.

Compound I

A COMPOUND word is made up of two or more words that together express a single idea. For English, compounding is perhaps the most powerful word building process. There are three types of compounds. An *open compound* consists of two or more words written separately, such as *salad dressing*, *Boston terrier*, and *April Fools' Day*. A *hyphenated compound* has words connected by a hyphen, such as *age-old*, *mother-in-law*, *force-feed*. A *solid compound* consists of two words that are written as one word, such as *keyboard* or *typewriter*.

A compound may be used in any grammatical function, particularly as a noun, an adjective and verb.

Compound Nouns

Syntactic relation	Examples	
subject + v.	headache 头痛	heartbeat 心跳
v. + object	pickpocket 扒手	cut glass 刻花玻璃
n. + n.	raindrop 雨点	tablecloth 桌布
phrasal verbs	walkout 罢工	takeoff 起飞
verbal n. + n.	dining room 餐厅	writing desk 书桌
n. + abstract verbal n.	daydreaming 白日梦	sun-bathing 日光浴
n. + agential n.	baby-sitter 临时保姆	factory-worker 工人

Sorting Work

Find words to complete the chart below.

Syntactic Relation	Examples	
subject + v.		
v. + object		
n. + n.		
phrasal verbs		
verbal n. + n.		
n. + abstract verbal n.		
n. + agential n.		

Word Building

Express the following in one compound word.

- someone who writes songs
- someone who cleans windows
- the race for arms
- the star in the morning
- a mine for gold
- to bathe in the sun
- as cheap as dirt
- tanned by the sun

Vocabulary & Structure Test

- I. Choose the best answer to fill in the following blanks.
- As we can no longer wait for the delivery of our order, we have to _____ it.
A. postpone B. refuse C. delay D. cancel
 - Not until the game had begun _____ at the sports ground.
A. had he arrived B. would he have arrived
C. did he arrive D. should he have arrived
 - Beer is the most popular drink among male drinkers, _____ overall consumption is significantly higher than that of women.
A. whose B. which C. that D. what
 - So many people _____, the meeting had to be canceled.
A. were absent B. been absent C. had been absent D. being absent
 - I was halfway back to the village where my mother lived _____ Susan caught up with me.
A. when B. while C. until D. though
 - If this kind of fish becomes _____, future generations may never taste it at all.
A. minimum B. short C. seldom D. scarce
 - You would be _____ a risk to let your child go to school by himself.
A. omitting B. attaching C. affording D. running
 - There has been a great increase in retail sales, _____?
A. does there B. isn't there C. hasn't there D. isn't it
 - While crossing the mountain area, all the men carried guns lest they _____ by wild animals.
A. should be attacked B. must be attacked
C. had been attacked D. would be attacked
 - Vitamins are complex _____ that the body required in every small amount.
A. matters B. particles C. materials D. substances
 - The clothes one wears may express his _____ or social position.
A. curiosity B. status C. determination D. significance
 - I'd rather have a room of my own; however small it is, than _____ a room with someone else.
A. share B. to share C. sharing D. to have shared
 - Eating too much fat can _____ heart disease and cause high blood pressure.
A. attribute to B. attend to C. contribute to D. devote to
 - The Car Club couldn't _____ to meet the demands of all its members.
A. assume B. ensure C. guarantee D. confirm
 - Convenience foods which have been already prepared for cooking are _____ in grocery stores.
A. ready B. approachable C. probable D. available

II. Choose the one closest in meaning to substitute the underlined part of each sentence.

1. A question arose while we were talking about the project.
A. set up B. came up C. brought up D. looked up
2. Jane wants to redecorate her office.
A. set up B. work out C. do over D. hang up
3. Do you think such a life style will ever become popular here?
A. straighten up B. catch on C. touch up D. try out
4. What a great idea! Who invented it?
A. thought it up B. let it in C. charged it up D. let it out
5. This paint is scratched. Let's improve it a little.
A. fill it up B. touch it up C. make it up D. bring it up
6. Susan works so hard that she's sure to succeed.
A. give in B. figure out C. turn over D. get ahead
7. When did the company hire them?
A. take them off B. take them on C. work them out D. bring them up
8. A lamp will illuminate this corner nicely.
A. turn on B. blow up C. put up D. light up
9. Jason wanted to be an artist, but he unexpectedly went to medical school.
A. ended up going B. dream up going
C. thinking of going D. figure out going
10. Can someone indicate the mistake in that question?
A. give out B. show off C. point out D. find out
11. _____ is peace and progress.
A. What we all need B. All for our needs
C. All the thing needed D. What that we need
12. It is no use _____ me not to worry about my examination score.
A. you tell B. your telling
C. for you to have told D. having told
13. Special honor should be paid to the senior clerk who is faithful _____ his duty.
A. in B. of C. with D. to
14. Assignment _____ on time will assure you better grades.
A. finish B. finished C. having finished D. to have been done
15. _____ for my absence, I would have lent her a helping hand.
A. Not being B. Had it not been C. Without being D. Not having been

Listening Practice

Section A Conversations

Directions: In this section, you will hear 10 short conversations. At the end of each conversation, a question will be asked about what was said. Both the conversation and the question will be spoken only once. Read the four choices marked A, B, C and D, and decide which is the best answer.

1. A. Review his lessons. B. Go on with the game.
 C. Draw pictures on the computer. D. Have a good rest.
2. A. They don't need any more coffee.
 B. Too much coffee is bad.
 C. It is time for a different kind of coffee.
 D. He wants another pot of coffee.
3. A. Why the man has to go.
 B. What the man left behind.
 C. What was wrong with the class.
 D. Which of the man's answers were incorrect.
4. A. The man is seeing a doctor.
 B. The man is a close friend of the woman.
 C. The man is tired of his work.
 D. The man has been working too hard.
5. A. Read an article on history.
 B. Read more than one article.
 C. Choose a better article to read.
 D. Read one article every time.
6. A. They both had a difficult time writing the term paper.
 B. The man thought the paper was easy.
 C. The woman thought the paper was easy.
 D. Neither of them has finished the assignment.
7. A. In a parking lot. B. On a hill.
 C. At a car service station. D. In a park.
8. A. It was easy.
 B. It was too difficult to comprehend.
 C. He didn't like it.
 D. It is unreasonable because there are too many multiple choices.

9. A. He got a one-way plane ticket.
B. He went the wrong direction on a one-way street.
C. He made an improper turn.
D. He slowed down at the wrong time.
10. A. It was late when he called the woman.
B. It was late, so he didn't call the woman.
C. It was late, but he still called the woman.
D. It wasn't late, so she called the man.

Section B Passages

Directions: In this section, you will hear 3 short passages. At the end of each passage, you will hear some questions. After you hear a question you must choose the best answer from the four choices marked A, B, C and D.

Questions 1 to 3 are based on the passage you have just heard.

1. A. Anxious and worried.
B. Proud and excited.
C. Nervous and confused.
D. Inspired and confident.
2. A. His father scolded him severely.
B. His father took back the six dollars.
C. His father made him do the cutting again.
D. His father cut the leaves himself.
3. A. One can benefit a lot from working with his father.
B. Manual laborers shouldn't be looked down upon.
C. One should always do his job earnestly.
D. Teenagers tend to be careless.

Questions 4 to 6 are based on the passage you have just heard.

4. A. He ran a village shop.
B. He worked on a farm.
C. He worked in an advertising agency.
D. He was a gardener.
5. A. It was stressful.
B. It was colorful.
C. It was peaceful.
D. It was boring.
6. A. His desire to start his own business.
B. The crisis in his family life.
C. The decline in his health.
D. The dream of living in the countryside.

Questions 7 to 10 are based on the passage you have just heard.

7. A. Count money.
B. Read and write.
C. Draw moving objects.
D. Hunt and farm.
8. A. Teachers came to children's homes.
B. Children acquired the information they needed by direct experience.
C. Children taught one another in small supervised groups.
D. Parents instructed their children in the "Three Rs".
9. A. A new dependence on people far away and the use of money.
B. The introduction of a new alphabetical and numerical system.
C. Outmoded methods of farming and ineffective means of transportation.
D. Larger family units and greater financial hardships.
10. A. The various means of survival taught by parents in contemporary society.
B. The importance of history instruction in the first schools.
C. The increasingly complex skills subsequently taught in schools.
D. The problems evolved in the construction of new schools.

Section C A Passage

Directions: In this section, you will hear one passage. After you hear the passage, answer the following questions.

1. What are the three groups of English learners according to the passage?

2. What is the characteristic of the students who want to learn special English for their work or professional life?

3. Why isn't it easy for teachers to decide how to teach specialized English?

4. What else do teachers need in order to teach special language?

5. What are the most popular ESP courses in Britain?

Reading Comprehension

Directions: Read the following passage and choose the best answer from the four given choices marked A, B, C and D to each question following the passage.

Questions 1 to 5 are based on the following passage.

According to a recent survey, employees in many companies today work longer hours and take shorter vacations than employees did in 1979. It seems that Americans are working harder today than ever before. A management adviser, Bill Meyer, decided to find out the answer to the question. For three days, he observed an investment banker hard at work. Meyer wrote down everything the banker did during his long workday; the banker worked 80 hours a week. At the end of the three-day period, Meyer reviewed the banker's activities with him, and discovered that the man spent 80 percent of his time doing busy work.

Apparently, many people believe that the more time a person spends at work, the more he or she accomplishes. However, the connection between time and productivity is not always positive. In fact, many studies show that after a certain point, anyone's productivity and creativity are to decrease. Furthermore, it's not always easy for individuals to realize that their performance is decreasing.

Part of the problem is understandable. When employers evaluate employees, they often consider the amount of time on the job in addition to job performance. Employees know this. Consequently, they work longer hours and take less vacation time than they did nine years ago. Although many working people can do their job effectively during a regular 40-hour-work week, they feel they have to spend more time on the job after normal working hours so that the people who can promote them see them.

1. The survey shows employees in many U.S. companies today _____ than employees did in 1979.
A. take longer vacations
B. live a better life
C. work longer hours
D. work harder
2. In order to find out the truth, Bill Meyer _____.
A. talked to an investment banker
B. watched an investment banker hard at work
C. helped an investment banker with his work
D. praised an investment banker for his working hard

3. According to the passage, the relationship between time and productivity _____.
- A. is always positive
B. is not always positive
C. should never be positive
D. should always be positive
4. How much time did the banker spend doing busy work?
- A. All of his time.
B. 70 percent of his time.
C. 80 percent of his time.
D. 90 percent of his time.
5. According to the passage, employers evaluate employees by considering _____.
- A. the amount of time on the job
B. their job performance
C. the working time and job performance
D. their work attitude and job efficiency

Questions 6 to 10 are based on the following passage.

Henry Ford, the famous US inventor and car manufacturer, once said, “The business of America is business.” By this he meant that the US way of life is based on the values of the business world.

Few would argue with Ford’s statement. A brief glimpse at a daily newspaper vividly shows how much people in the US think about business. Business news can appear in every other section. Most national news has an important financial aspect to it. Welfare, foreign aid, the federal budget, and the policies of the Federal Reserve Bank are all heavily affected by business. Moreover, business news appears in some of the unlikeliest places. The world of arts and entertainment is often referred to as “the entertainment industry” or “show business”.

The positive side of Henry Ford’s statement can be seen in the prosperity that business has brought to US life. One of the most important reasons why so many people from all over the world come to live in the US is the dream of a better job. Jobs are produced in abundance because the US economic system is driven by competition. People believe that this system creates more wealth, more jobs, and a materially better way of life.

The negative side of Henry Ford’s statement, however, can be seen when the word business is taken to mean big business. And the term big business—referring to the biggest companies, is seen in opposition to labor. Today, many of the old labor disputes are over, but there is still some employee anxiety. Downsizing—the laying off of thousands of workers to keep expenses low and profits high—creates feelings of insecurity for many.

6. The US is a typical country _____.
 - A. where all businesses are managed scientifically
 - B. which encourages free trade at home and abroad
 - C. which normally works according to the federal budget
 - D. where people's chief concern is how to make money

7. The influence of business in the US is evidenced by the fact that _____.
 - A. most newspapers are run by big businesses
 - B. even arts and entertainment are regarded as business
 - C. Americans of all professions know how to do business
 - D. even public organizations concentrate on working for profits

8. According to the passage, immigrants choose to settle in the US, dreaming that _____.
 - A. they will make a fortune overnight there
 - B. they can be more competitive in business
 - C. they can start profitable businesses there
 - D. they will find better chances of employment

9. Henry Ford's statement can be taken negatively because _____.
 - A. there is a conflicting relationship between big corporations and labor
 - B. there are many industries controlled by a few big capitalists
 - C. public services are not run by the federal government
 - D. working people are discouraged to fight for their rights

10. A company's efforts to keep expenses low and profits high may result in _____.
 - A. a rise in workers' wages
 - B. improvement of working conditions
 - C. reduction in the number of employees
 - D. fewer disputes between labor and management

Give brief answers to questions 11 to 15 based on the information from the passage.

We can see how the product life cycle works by looking at the introduction of instant coffee. When it was introduced, most people did not like it as well as “regular” coffee, and it took several years to gain general acceptance (introduction stage). At one point, though, instant coffee grew rapidly in popularity, and many brands were introduced (stage of rapid growth). After a while, people became attached to one brand and sales leveled off (stage of maturity). Sales went into a slight decline when freeze-dried coffees were introduced (stage of decline).

The importance of the product life cycle to marketers is this: different stages in the product life cycle call for different strategies. The goal is to extend product life so that sales and profits do not decline. One strategy is called market modification (修正). It means that marketing managers look for new users and market sections. Did you know, for example, that the backpacks that so many students carry today were originally designed for the military?

Market modification also means searching for increased usage among present customers or going for a different market, such as senior citizens. A marketer may reposition the product to appeal to new market sections.

Another product extension strategy is called product modification. It involves changing product quality, features, or style to attract new users or more usage from present users. American auto manufacturers once changed styles dramatically from year to year to keep demand from falling.

According to the passage, when people grow fond of one particular brand of a product, its sales will _____ 11 _____.

The first paragraph tells us that a new product is _____ 12 _____.

Marketers need to know which of the four stages a product is in so as to _____ 13 _____.

The importance of the product life cycle to marketers is _____
_____ 14 _____.

The author mentions the example of “backpacks” to show the importance of _____
_____ 15 _____.