
UNIT 9

Structure

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9.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall give you further practice in reading comprehension by

- i) giving you an autobiographical passage to read ‘All you Need is Paper’ by Ruskin Bond, and
- ii) giving a glossary of difficult words and questions on comprehension. We have also set exercises on the use of selected items of vocabulary. In the section on grammar and usage we shall discuss the use of articles.

We shall also ask you to write an essay using arguments for and against a proposition. After completing this unit you should be able to

- read and appreciate simple autobiographical passages
- use the article correctly
- write a short essay involving arguments for and against a proposition.

9.1 READING COMPREHENSION

9.1.1 Study Guide

The aim of this section is to help you to read with understanding and to expand your vocabulary.

There is a reading passage, followed by a glossary. You should first read the whole passage silently and rapidly to get the main points. Then you should read it again, carefully and at a slower pace, to get all the details. You should also consult the glossary for the meanings of unfamiliar words, besides trying to guess the meanings of words and phrases from the contexts in which they occur.

After you have read and understood the passage, you must answer all the comprehension questions. Your answers should then be checked with the answers given by us at the end of the unit.

9.1.2 Passage for Reading

From Ruskin Boud's 'All You Need is Paper'

[The Statesman, 23 January, 1998]

- 1 As I write, a bright yellow butterfly flits in through the open window and settles on my writing pad. It takes me back to the little flat in Dehra Dun, where the adventure of being a writer really got under way.
- 2 I had grown used to living on my own in small rooms furnished with other people's spare beds, and chairs. I had grown used to the print of Constable's Blue Boy on the wall, even though I had never cared for the look of that boy. But those London bed-sitters had been different. Whether in Hampstead, Belsize Park, Swiss Cottage or Tooting, they had been uniformly lonely.
- 3 One seldom encountered any other lodgers, except when they came to complain that my radio was too loud; and the landlady was seen only when the rent fell due. If you wanted company, you went out into the night. If you wanted a meal, you walked down the street to the nearest restaurant or snack bar. If you wanted to kill time, you sat in cinema. If you wanted a bath, you went round to the nearest public bathing rooms where, for 2 shillings and 6 pence, you were given a small cake of soap, a clean towel and tub of piping hot water. The tub took me back to my childhood days in Jamnagar where I would be soaped and scrubbed

by a fond ayah; but there was no fond ayah in London. And rooms with attached baths were rare—and expensive.

- 4 In contrast, my room over the Rajpur Road was the very opposite of lonely. There was the front balcony, from which I could watch the activity along the main road and the shops immediately below me. I could also look into the heart of a large peepal tree, which provided shelter to various birds, squirrels and other small creatures. There were flats on either side of mine, served by a common stairway—and blocked, at night, by a sleeping cow, over whom one had to climb. It would move for no one. And there were quarters at the back, occupied by servants' families or low-income tenants.

Where should I begin ?

- 5 I suppose my most colourful neighbour was Mrs. Singh, an attractive woman in her 30s, who smoked a hookah. She came from a village near Mainpuri. Her husband was a sub-inspector in the police. They had one son, Anil, a lollipop-sucking brat without any charm. But Singh often regaled me with tales of the supernatural from her village, and I did not hesitate to work some of them into my own stories.
- 6 At twilight, sitting on her string cot and puffing at the hookah, she would launch into an account of the various types of ghosts that one might encounter; churels, the ghosts of immoral women, who appeared naked with their feet facing backwards; ghosts with long front teeth who sucked human blood; and ghosts who took the form of snakes and animals. I was keen to meet a churel, as I thought she would be rather attractive; but all the girls in Dehra had their feet facing forward.
- 7 One species that I found particularly interesting was the Munjia (supposedly the disembodied spirit of a Brahmin youth who had died before his marriage) who takes up his abode in the branches of a lonely peepal tree.
- 8 When the Munjia is annoyed, he rushes out of the tree and upsets tongas, bullockcarts and cycles. Mrs. Singh said she'd even been in a bus that had been overturned by a Munjia. She warned me that anyone passing beneath a peepal tree at night must be careful not to yawn without covering his mouth or snapping his fingers in front of it. If he forgets to take this precaution, the Munjia dashes down his throat and presumably ruins his digestion.
- 9 Summer nights I slept on the balcony, in full view of our own peepal tree; but apparently it was not lonely enough for a Munjia, and I suffered

from no ill effects, Anil, who would sometimes insist on sleeping beside me, slept with his mouth open and frequently swallowed moths, termites and other winged creatures, and as his digestion was immune to this fare, it must also have been immune to the attentions of a Munjia.

10 Mrs. Singh once told me of the night she had seen the ghost of her husband's first wife. the ghost had lifted Anil, then a few months old out of his cradle, rocked the baby in her arms for a little while, and announced that she was glad the child was a boy—a sentiment not shared by those who knew the 11-year-old.

11 Mrs. Singh taught me the following mantra, which I was to recite whenever I felt threatened by ghosts or malignant spirits :

Bhut, pret, pisach, dana,

Choo mantar, sab nikal jana,

Mano, mano, Shiv ka kehna

which, roughly translated, goes :

“Ghosts and spirits assembled here,

Great Shiv is coming—flee in fear!”

If I was working at my desk, and saw Anil approaching I would recite it under my breath. It may have worked on bhuts and prets, but it had no effect on Anil.

12 Where, then, were the noble young friends I had written about in my first semi-autobiographical novel? Well, Somi's family had moved to Calcutta, and Kishen's to Bombay, Dehra, then, was not a place for young men in search of a career. As soon as they finished school or college, they usually took wing. The town was a sleepy hollow, a great place to be educated, but a poor place in which to earn a living.

13 There were others to take their place—teenagers struggling to do their matric or intermediate, or young men at college, aspiring for their Art or Science degrees. College was a bit of a dead end. But those who had their schooling in Dehra, and then moved on, usually did well for themselves.

14 Take just two from the Dilaram Bazaar. Gurbachan was an average student, but after doing his Intermediate he went to stay with an uncle in Hong Kong. Ten years later, he was a Superintendent in the Income-Tax Department. And then there was Narinder. Always having to take tuitions to scrape through his exams. But he spoke English quite well and he had a flair for business. Today, he owns the largest wholesale wine business in the UK. And As he doesn't drink himself. it's profit all the way.

- 15 These boys, and other like them, came from middle-class families. It was impossible then to foresee what life held in store for them. And it wasn't always happy endings. Sudheer, a charming young scamp, went on to become the assistant manager of a tea estate in Jalpaiguri and was killed by the tea garden labourers. Kishen, as a boy, was not the stuff that heroes are made of; but at forty, he died while trying to save a child from drowning.
- 16 My own future was a little easier to predict. In a sense, I had already arrived. At 20 I was a published author, although not many people had heard of me ! And although I wasn't making much money then, and probably never would, it was the general consensus among my friends that I was an impractical sort of fellow and that I would be wise to stick to the only thing that could do fairly well—putting pen to paper.
- 17 I couldn't drive a car. I fell off bicycles. I couldn't repair an electrical fault. My efforts to buy vegetables in the mandi were the cause of great merriment. And my attempts at making a curry sent everyone into paroxysms of laughter. It's true that I added a tablespoon of sugar to the aloo gobi that I attempted to cook, I thought it improved the flavour. Gujaratis would have approved. But it had no takers in Dehra apart from myself.
- 18 On the plus side, I could type, draft job applications for all and sundry, help lovesick students write passionate letters to girls, make my own bed (something I'd learnt at boarding school) walk great distances and pay for the chaat and tikkias was consumed near the clock tower.
- 19 I held the tikkia-eating record, having on one occasion put away no less than thirty of these delicious potato patties. Naturally, acute indigestion followed, and it was months before I could face another tikkia.

9.1.3 Glossary

2. Spare : extra to what is needed or used.
 Constable's Blue Boy : A famous painting by English Artist, J. Constable, of a boy in blue dress.
 bed-sitter : room used for both living and sleeping in Hampstead, Belsize Park, Swiss Cottage, Tooling : different London localities.
3. encounter : meet
 lodger : a person who pays to live in somebody's house
 Kill time : spend the time pleasantly but not in a useful way, especially when waiting for something
 shillings, pence : English coins before decimal

system was introduced—4 pennies (pence) made 1 shilling, 16 shillings made 1 pound.

piping hot : very hot

scrub : rub strongly

5. 'brat : (contemptuous) child
regale : entertain with stories etc.
6. puff : an amount of smoke, steam etc. that is blown out
hookah : a pipe used especially in Arab Countries for smoking tobacco. Its long flexible tube passes through a container of water which cools the smoke as it is drawn through it.
7. disembodied : separated from the body
abode : a house; a home : one's place of abode (ie where one lives)
8. rush : to go or come with great speed; a sudden rapid movement forward
yawn : to take a deep breath with the mouth wide open usually when one is tired or bored.
presumable : it may be supposed
9. apparently : according to what one has read or heard ; as it seems.
swallow : to cause or allow especially food or drink to go down the throat
terminate : to come to or bring to an end
immune : that cannot be harmed by a disease or an illness, either because of protective treatment or through the body's natural resistance.
10. cradle : a baby's small bed which can be pushed from side to side.
tock : to move gently backwards and forwards or from side to side.
11. malignant : showing a strong desire to harm people
12. semi-autobiographical : partly the story of a person's life written by that person
took wing : to fly up or away
11. Dilaram Bazaar : a locality in Dehra
scrape through : to get bare pass marks in examination
flair : a natural ability to do well
15. scamp : a child who enjoys playing tricks and causing trouble
16. consensus : a general agreement about a matter of opinion
17. mandi : Hindi word for market
Paroxysms : a sudden attack or violent expression of laughter, anger etc.
flavour : taste and smell, especially of food
18. draft : a rough preliminary written version
all and Sundry: each and all; every one; all types of people
19. Put away : eat or drink
Patties : an item of food made of little pie or pasty : oyster patties

9.1.4 Exercises in Comprehension

In this section, we shall concentrate on two important aspects of intensive reading : factual or literal comprehension and inferential or interpretative comprehension. Factual comprehension, as you may know, involves the ability to extract largely factual information from a reading passage, information which is quite explicitly stated. Inferential comprehension involves the ability to read between the lines, that is, the skill of understanding information that is not explicitly given in the passage.

Exercise 1

Answer the following questions by choosing the best alternative under each :

- 1 Why did the author find his London bed-sitter different from his Dehradun flat ?
 - a) The London room was more comfortable.
 - b) It was lonely.
 - c) He felt homesick in the room.
- 2 What could he see from the front balcony of the Dehradun ?
 - a) The hills of Dehradun
 - b) The houses across the street
 - c) A large peepal tree
- 3 Who was the most interesting person among his neighbours ?
 - a) A young friend whose uncle lived in Hongkong.
 - b) A very naughty boy call Anil.
 - c) A lady who told him ghost stories.
- 4 What kind of a spirit is the Munjia ?
 - a) It is the spirit of a young unmarried girl.
 - b) It is ghost who throws things at people.
 - c) It is the spirit of a young Brahmin bachelor.
- 5 What kind of a first novel did the author write ?
 - a) It was a romantic story.
 - b) It used facts of his own life.
 - c) It was a supernatural story.
- 6 What kind of a town was Dehradun ?
 - a) It was a busy, prosperous town.
 - b) It provided good schools for education.
 - c) It was a health resort for seasonal tourists.
7. What was the only one thing the author could do well ?
 - a) He could make friends very easily.
 - b) He could write well.

- c) He was good at his studies.
- 8. Why did his friends laugh at him ?
 - a) Because he fell off bicycles
 - b) Because he was afraid of shosts
 - c) Because he could not cook
- 9. Why was he popular among friends ?
 - a) He could tell good stories.
 - b) He was a neat, disciplined person.
 - c) He paid for the snacks his friends ate.
- 10. The author and friends had a tikkia eating competition. What happened as a result?
 - a) The author won a big bet.
 - b) He grew sick.
 - c) His friends spent all the money he had.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by choosing the best alternative under each. Think carefully before you make your choice.

1. In the little Dehradoon flat, the author
 - a) lived alone for the first time
 - b) was busy finishing his studies
 - c) could observe his neighbours closely
 - d) began his career and a writer with all his energy.
2. In London, if he wanted a meal
 - a) he cooked in a small kitchen
 - b) he went to a neighbour's flat
 - c) he asked his landlady
 - d) he walked to a restaurant.
3. In Dehradoon, the stairway of his apartment house was blocked at night
 - a) by a watchman
 - b) by wooden barriers
 - c) by a sleeping cow
 - d) by dogs
4. The author wanted to meet the kind of ghost which
 - a) sucked human blood
 - b) dashed down people's throat
 - c) turned carriages upside down
 - d) were young women with feet backward.
5. Boys who did their schooling in Dehradoon
 - a) also wanted to do B.A. from its colleges
 - b) found jobs there
 - c) found it difficulty to earn their living
 - d) went to the big cities and did well.
6. One of the author's friends who was a poor student.
 - a) migrated to Hongkong
 - b) found a very good job
 - c) did very well in his university examination
 - d) became owner of a prosperous business abroad.
7. The author's young friends in Dehradoon belonged to

- a) rich families in cities like Bombay or Calcutta
 - b) the farmer families in the villages around Dehradun
 - c) the business community in Dehradun
 - d) middle class families in the town
8. At twenty, the author was
- a) well known as a writer
 - b) well off from the sale of his books
 - c) a published author
 - d) uncertain about his choice of a writing career
9. He was not a sportsman because
- a) his health was bad
 - b) he was afraid of cars or cycles
 - c) he was too lazy to try
 - d) he was impractical
10. He had learnt at his boarding school how to
- a) type
 - b) write job applications
 - c) make his own bed
 - d) repair electrical faults.

Exercise 3

There are twenty statements below. Only ten of them are correct, according to the passage. Read the statements carefully and pick out the ten correct ones.

1. The author moved to London after staying in Dehradun for sometime.
2. It was in Dehradun that the author began to devote all his energy to his career as a writer.
3. The Dehradun flat was quiet, secluded, and he could view nature alone and undisturbed.
4. He was very fond of his neighbour's little boy and fed him lollipops.
5. He found Mrs. Singh's ghost stories interesting because he could use some details in his own stories.
6. He learnt that ghosts of immoral women were churels and they lived in peepal trees.
7. Ghosts living in peepal trees could overturn cycles and other carriages.
8. He wrote about his Dehradun friends in his first novel.
9. It was not easy to find jobs in Dehradun.
10. His friend Kishen's family had moved to Bombay to provide him with good schooling.

11. The schools in Dehradun were better than the colleges.
12. One of his friends went to work for his uncle's prosperous wine business abroad.
13. All his friends lived happily afterwards.
14. One of his friends did a brave deed in later life.
15. The Writer's Career showed signs of success when he was twenty.
16. The Writer's first novel was very popular.
17. His friends thought he was right in choosing writing as a career.
18. His friends appreciated his cooking.
19. He was generous with his friends.
20. He could never resist eating tikkias in his life.

9.2 VOCABULARY

In this exercise you will practice some useful words that appeared in the passage, by using them in a piece of connected writing.

Exercise 4

Fill in the blanks with words taken from the list given here :

colourful	bed-sitter	unpractical
disembodied	apparently	regaled
malignant	wholesale	autobiographical
flair	scamp	consensus

The author preferred his little flat in Dehradun to his London _____. In Dehra, he had some _____ neighbours. He could also watch the busy street and shops. His neighbour Mrs. Singh _____ him with ghost stories from her native village. She told him that the Munjia was the _____ spirit of a Brahmin and lived in peepal trees. The author slept close to a peepal tree but _____ the Munjia did not bother with him. Mrs. Singh also taught him a mantra to save him from _____ spirits. In Dehradun he had many young friends about whom he wrote in his _____ novel. One of them who had a _____ for business later built a profitable _____ business in the U.K. Another, who later became a tea estate assistant manager had been a charming young _____. The general _____ about the another was that he was too _____ and could only write well.

9.3 GRAMMAR AND USAGE

Articles

In this section you will learn the use of articles.

a and an are called indefinite articles, and the is called the definite article.

Look at the following sentences :

1. Yesterday I met an old man in Delhi.

An old man here does not refer to any particular person, it is preceded by the indefinite article an (an is used before a vowel sound and a before a consonant sound).

2. The man standing there is a friend of mine.

Here I am referring to a particular man, one who is standing there. So I use the definite article the. As I have a number of friends and this man is one of them, I have used the indefinite article a before friend.

Exercise 5

Fill in the blanks with a, an and the

- _____ butterfly reminded the author of his Dehradun flat.
- Anil swallowed _____ moths because he slept with his mouth open.
- The author wanted to be _____ writer from his young days.
- _____ ayah used to soap and wash him when he was a little boy.
- _____ cow slept on the stairs at night.
- Mrs. Singh was _____ attractive women.
- In London he bathed in _____ public baths.
- From his balcony, he could see _____ large peepal tree.
- Mrs. Singh had once seen _____ ghost lift up her child.
- _____ schools in Dehradun provided good education.
- Gurbachan Singh was _____ average student.
- He became superintendent in _____ Income Tax Department.
- His friend Sudhir became _____ manager of a tea estate.
- Kishen was not heroic as _____ boy.
- He added _____ little sugar to his curry.

9.4 WRITING

In this section, you will learn to write an essay using arguments for and against a proposition. In an argumentative essay you have to use facts much

more than imagination. The aim is to try persuade or convince your reader to agree with your point of view.

The essential part of your preparation for this type of essay is the selection and organization of facts as also their presentation. For your presentation to be effective and convincing, it is important (a) to be fair to the other point of view, and (b) to depend on known or accepted facts alone. It is not wise to invent a fact to prove your point.

Exercise 6

Capital Punishment means punishment by death according to law. Whether it should continue is a matter hotly debated in India and other countries. Let us suppose that you have been asked to write a 500-word essay on 'should Death Penalty be abolished'? for your local English newspaper. Here are some ideas for and against the proposition to help you write the essay.

For/Yes

1. Death penalty is based on the savage principle of vengeance and retaliation.
2. In countries where capital punishment has been abolished or suspended, capital crime has not increased.
3. Therefore the 'deterrent' argument is not sound : the death penalty has never protected anyone.
4. Overcrowding, slums, poverty, broken homes : these are the factors that lead to crime.
5. Crime can therefore be reduced only by the elimination of social injustices.

Against/No

1. Criminals are a threat to society. This must be done away with.
2. 'Life' sentence does not mean what it says. After ten years or so of good conduct, the criminal can return to society and has the freedom to live on the proceeds of his crime.
3. So, those who escape capital punishment are not necessarily reformed after a spell in prison. They often return to a life of crime.
4. People hold liberal views at the expense of others. Were the victims consulted before the suspension or abolition of the death penalty in some countries ? No, they were dead.

9.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have given you practice in

- Reading and understanding an autobiographical passage by Ruskin Bond
- Using some of the words occurring in the passage
- Using the articles correctly
- Writing a short essay using arguments for and against a proposition.

9.6 KEY WORDS

^largument : reasoned discussion

^laspect : a particular part

^lautobiography : story of a person's life written by himself/herself

^lcapital punishment : punishment by death

^ldefinite article : The

^lessay : a piece of writing, usually short, on any subject

^lexplicit : clearly and fully expressed

^lindefinite article : a, an

^linference : conclusion based on facts or reasoning

^linterpretative : making the meaning clear

^lpassage : a short extract from a speech or a piece of writing.

9.7 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Exercise 1

- | | |
|-------|--------|
| 1. b) | 6. b) |
| 2. c) | 7. b) |
| 3. c) | 8. c) |
| 4. c) | 9. c) |
| 5. b) | 10. b) |

Exercise 2

- | | |
|-------|--------|
| 1. d) | 6. d) |
| 2. d) | 7. d) |
| 3. c) | 8. c) |
| 4. d) | 9. d) |
| 5. d) | 10. c) |

Exercise 3

2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19

Exercise 4

bed-sitter, colourful, regaled, disembodies, apparently, malignant, autobiographical, flair, wholesale, scamp, consensus, impractical

Exercise 5

- | | |
|--------|---------|
| 1. A | 9. a |
| 2. the | 10. The |
| 3. a | 11. an |
| 4. An | 12. The |
| 5. A | 13. The |
| 6. an | 14. a |
| 7. The | 15. a |
| 8. a | |