# Reading Skills 1-2

**Skill # 1 > Understanding vocabulary from context. Choose the best answer.**

## Passage 1

**Smog**

The oxidation of exhaust gases is one of the primary sources of the world's pollution. The brown haze that is poised over some of the world's largest cities is properly called *photochemical smog*; it results from chemical reactions that take place in the air, using the energy of sunlight. The production of smog begins when gases are created in the cylinders of vehicle engines. It is there that oxygen and nitrogen gas combine as the fuel burns to form nitric oxide (NO), a colorless gas. The nitric oxide is forced out into the air through the vehicle tailpipe along with other gases.

When the gas reaches the air, it comes into contact with available oxygen from the atmosphere and combines with the oxygen to produce nitrogen dioxide ($NO_2$), which is a gas with a brownish hue. This nitrogen dioxide plays a role in the formation of acid rain in wetter or more humid climates and tends to decompose back into nitric oxide as it releases an oxygen atom from each molecule; the released oxygen atoms quickly combine with oxygen ($O_2$) molecules to form ozone ($O_3$). The brownish colored nitrogen dioxide is partially responsible for the brown color in smoggy air; the ozone is the toxic substance that causes irritation to eyes.

**1. The word 'poised' in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** interacting **b.** sitting **c.** blowing **d.** poisoning

**2. The phrase 'take place' in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** occur **b.** put **c.** are seated **d.** position themselves

**3. The word 'forced' in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** obliged **b.** required **c.** pushed **d.** commanded

**4. The word 'hue' in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** color **b.** odor **c.** thickness **d.** smoke

**5. The phrase 'plays a role' in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** makes fun of **b.** moves about in **c.** acts part in **d.** serves a function in

## Passage 2

**Autism**

Autism is a developmental disorder that is characterized by severe behavioral abnormalities across all primary areas of functioning. Its onset is often early; it generally makes itself known by the age of two and one-half. It is not a single disease entity but is instead a syndrome defined by patterns and characteristics of behavior; it, therefore, most likely has multiple etiologies rather than a single causative factor. Autism is not fully understood and thus is controversial with respect to diagnosis, etiology, and treatment strategies.

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**6. The word 'primary' in the passage is closest in meaning to**

**a.** elementary **b.** main **c.** introductory **d.** primitive

**7. The word 'onset' in the passage is closest in meaning to**

**a.** placement **b.** arrangement **c.** support **d.** beginning

**8. The word 'syndrome' in the passage is closest in meaning to**

**a.** concurrent set of symptoms **c.** mental breakdown

**b.** feeling of euphoria **d.** repetitive task

**9. The word 'etiologies' in the passage is closest in meaning to**

**a.** symptoms **b.** patterns **c.** causes **d.** onsets

**10. The phrase 'with respect to' in the passage could be best replaced by**

**a.** with dignity toward **c.** irrespective of

**b.** in regard to **d.** out of politeness for

## Passage 3

### Parasitic Plants

Parasitic plants are plants that survive by using food produced by host plants rather than by producing their own food from the Sun's energy. Because they do not need sunlight to survive, parasitic plants are generally found in umbrageous areas rather than in areas exposed to direct sunlight. Parasitic plants attach themselves to host plants, often to the stems or roots, by means of haustoria, which the parasite uses to make its way into the food channels of the host plant and absorb the nutrients that it needs to survive from the host plant.

The world's heaviest flower, a species of rafflesia, is a parasite that flourishes among, and lives off of, the roots of jungle vines. Each of these ponderous blooms can weigh up to 15 pounds (7 kg) and can measure up to 3 feet (1m) across.

**11. The word 'umbrageous' in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** moist **b.** well-lit **c.** shaded **d.** buried

**12. 'Haustoria' in paragraph 1 are most likely**

**a.** offshoots from the parasite **c.** fruits from the host plant

**b.** seeds of the host plant **d.** food for the parasite

**13. The phrase 'make its way into' in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** develop **b.** penetrate **c.** outline **d.** eat

**14. The word 'ponderous' in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** smelly **b.** hidden **c.** mature **d.** heavy

**15. The word 'across' in paragraph 2 could be best replaced by**

**a.** in diameter **b.** at distance **c.** inside and out **d.** on the other side

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# Passage 4

*Paragraph*

## Edna Ferber

1 Edna Ferber (1887–1968) was a popular American novelist in the first half of the twentieth century. She embarked on her career by working as a newspaper reporter in Wisconsin and soon began writing novels. Her first novel, *Dawn O'Hara, the Girl Who Laughed,* was published in 1911, when she was only twenty-four years old.

2 Her big break came with the novel *So Big* (1924), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Literature. The main conflict in the novel is between a mother who places a high value on hard work and honor and a son who repudiates his mother's values, instead preferring the easier path to fortune and celebrity. Like many of Ferber's novels, this novel features a tenacious female protagonist with strong character who struggles to deal with ethical dilemmas about the importance of status and money.

3 Probably the best known of Ferber's novels was *Show Boat* (1926), which tells the story of a Southern woman married to a charismatic but irresponsible man who leaves her with a daughter she must take great pains to support. In 1927, the novel was made into a musical that has endured to the present.

4 Other well-known novels by Ferber include *Cimarron* (1930) and *Giant* (1952), both of which were made into movies. These were epic novels about the settlement and growth of the West, centering on strong female lead characters who marry men lacking the same strength of character.

**16. The phrase 'embarked on' in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** took a trip **b.** started out on **c.** improved upon **d.** had an opinion about

**17. The word 'break' in paragraph 2 could be best replaced by**

**a.** rupture **b.** revelation **c.** opportunity **d.** rest

**18. The word 'places' in paragraph 2 could be best replaced by**

**a.** locates **b.** puts **c.** recites **d.** positions

**19. The word 'repudiates' in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** refuses to accept **b.** lives up to **c.** makes the best of **d.** tries to understand

**20. The word 'protagonist' in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** arch enemy **b.** voracious reader **c.** skilled worker **d.** lead character

**21. The phrase 'take great pains in' in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** work diligently **c.** accept unequivocally

**b.** recognize hurtfully **d.** hurt agonizingly

**22. The word 'endured' in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** lasted **b.** tested **c.** waited **d.** limited

**23. The word 'epic' in paragraph 4 could be best replaced by**

**a.** lengthy narrative **c.** emotionally romantic

**b.** detailed non-fictional **d.** rousing western

**24. The phrase 'centering on' in paragraph 4 could be best replaced by**

**a.** circling around **b.** pointing to **c.** focusing on **d.** arranging for

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**Skill # 2 > Recognize referents. Choose the best answer.**

## Passage 1

**Animal Congregation**

Many types of animals combine the advantages of family association with those conferred by membership in still larger groups. Bees congregate in hives; some fish move in schools; ants gather in mounds; wolves live in packs; deer associate in herds. The main
*Line* advantage of membership in a mass community is the safety that it provides. A large group
*(5)* of prey may be easier for a predator to find at any given point than is a small one, and a predator may think twice before taking on such a group; if a predator does decide to challenge a large group, it may merely encounter a confusing mass of moving bodies and possibly may not succeed in its primary goal.

**1. The word 'those' in the passage refers to**

**a.** types **b.** animals **c.** advantageous **d.** groups

**2. The phrase 'it' in line 4 refers to**

**a.** advantage **b.** membership **c.** community **d.** safety

**3. The word 'one' in the passage refers to**

**a.** group **b.** prey **c.** predator **d.** point

**4. The word 'it' in line 7 refers to**

**a.** predator **b.** group **c.** mass **d.** goal

## Passage 2

**Chromium Compounds**

*Paragraph*

*1* Most chromium compounds have brightly colored hues, and as a result they are widely used as coloring agents, or pigments, in paints. In addition to having a pleasing color, a paint must protect the surface to which it is applied and be easy to apply in a thin, uniform coat.

*2* All paints consist of two parts. One is a powder of solid particles that is the source of the color and the opaqueness and is known as the pigment. The other, called the binder, is the liquid into which the pigment is blended. The binder used in some paints is made from oily solvents such as those derived from petroleum resources. When applied, these solvents evaporate, leaving deposits of pigment on the surface.

**5. The word 'they' in paragraph 1 refers to**

**a.** pigments **b.** colored hues **c.** coloring agents **d.** chromium compounds

**6. The word 'it' in paragraph 1 refers to**

**a.** a pleasing color **b.** paint **c.** the surface **d.** a thin, uniform coat

**7. The word 'that' in paragraph 2 refers to**

**a.** a powder **b.** solid particles **c.** the source **d.** the color

**8. The word 'which' in paragraph 2 refers to**

**a.** powder **b.** paint **c.** liquid **d.** pigment

**9. The word 'those' in paragraph 2 refers to**

**a.** some paints **b.** oily solvents **c.** petroleum resources **d.** deposits of pigment

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## Passage 3

**New World Epidemics**

A huge loss of life resulted from the introduction of Old World diseases into the Americas in the early sixteenth century. The inhabitants of the Americas were separated from Asia, Africa, and Europe by rising oceans following the Ice Ages, and, as a result, they were isolated by means of this watery barrier from numerous virulent epidemic diseases that had developed across the ocean, such as measles, smallpox, pneumonia, and malaria. Pre-Columbian Americans had a relatively disease-free environment but also lacked the antibodies needed to protect them from bacteria and viruses brought to America by European explorers and colonists. A devastating outbreak of disease that strikes for the first time against a completely unprotected population is known as a virgin soil epidemic. Virgin soil epidemics contributed to an unbelievable decline in the population of native inhabitants of the Americas, one that has been estimated at as much as an 80 percent decrease of the native population in the centuries following the arrival of Europeans in the Americas.

**10. The word 'they' in the passage refers to**

**a.** the inhabitants **b.** epidemic disease **c.** rising oceans **d.** the Ice ages

**11. The word 'that' in the passage refers to**

**a.** a disease-free environment
**b.** this watery barrier
**c.** virulent epidemic disease
**d.** the ocean

**12. The word 'them' in the passage refers to**

**a.** pre-Columbian Americans
**b.** the antibodies
**c.** bacteria and viruses
**d.** European explorers and colonists

**13. The phrase 'one' in the passage refers to**

**a.** a virgin soil epidemic
**b.** an unbelievable decline
**c.** the population of native inhabitants
**d.** the arrival of Europeans

## Passage 4

*Paragraph*

**Horatio Alger, Jr.**

*1* Horatio Alger, Jr. (1832–1899) was the author of more than 100 books for boys in the second half of the nineteenth century that focused on the theme of success coming to those who work hard to achieve it. The son of a minister, Alger came from a prominent Massachusetts family. He graduated with honors from Harvard in 1852 and graduated from the Cambridge Divinity School eight years later. He served as a minister for a short time before moving to New York City in 1866 to devote his time to writing inspirational books for boys.

*2* In many of his books, he wrote about the poor and homeless children of the slums of New York City, seeing them as unfortunate pawns of society who, if only given the opportunity, could improve their lot. A general plotline that he followed often was of a poor boy who managed to achieve a respectable and successful life by working hard and taking advantage of opportunities presented. Though his writing style was characterized by simplicity and repetition, it was well received by his target audience; his books were enormously popular, selling millions of copies well into the first few decades of the twentieth century.

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**14. The word 'that' in paragraph 1 refers to**

**a.** author **b.** books **c.** boys **d.** half

**15. The word 'it' in paragraph 1 refers to**

**a.** the second half **b.** XIX century **c.** 100 **d.** success

**16. The word 'them' in paragraph 2 refers to**

**a.** books **b.** children **c.** slums **d.** pawns

**17. The word 'who' in paragraph 2 refers to**

**a.** slums **b.** society **c.** pawns **d.** opportunity

**18. The word 'it' in paragraph 2 refers to**

**a.** style **b.** simplicity **c.** repetition **d.** audience

# Test Reading Skills 1-2

*Paragraph*

## Coral Colonies

*1* Coral colonies require a series of complicated events and circumstances to develop into the characteristically intricate reef structures for which they are known. These events and circumstances involve physical and chemical processes as well as delicate interactions among various animals and plants for coral colonies to thrive.

*2* The basic element in the development of coralline reef structures is a group of animals from the *Anthozoa* class, called stony corals, that is closely related to jellyfish and sea anemones. These small polyps (the individual animals that make up the coral reef), which are for the most part only a fraction of an inch in length, live in colonies made up of an immeasurable number of polyps clustered together. Each individual polyp obtains calcium from the seawater where it lives to create a skeleton around the lower part of its body, and the polyps attach themselves both to the living tissue and to the external skeletons of other polyps. Many polyps tend to retreat inside of their skeletons during hours of daylight and then stretch partially outside of their skeletons during hours of darkness to feed on minute plankton from the water around them. The mouth at the top of each body is surrounded by rings of tentacles used to grab onto food, and these rings of tentacles make the polyps look like flowers with rings of clustered petals; because of this, biologists for years thought that corals were plants rather than animals.

*3* Once these coralline structures are established, they reproduce very quickly. They build in upward and outward directions to create a fringe of living coral surrounding the skeletal remnants of once-living coral. That coralline structures are commonplace in tropical waters around the world is due to the fact that they reproduce so quickly rather than the fact that they are hardy life-forms easily able to withstand external forces of nature. They cannot survive in water that is too dirty, and they need water that is at least 72° F (or 22° C) to exist, so they are formed only in waters ranging from 30° north to 30° south of the equator. They need a significant amount of sunlight, so they live only within an area between the surface of the ocean and a few meters beneath it. In addition, they require specific types of microscopic algae for their existence, and their skeletal shells are delicate in nature and are easily damaged or fragmented. They are also prey to other sea animals such as sponges and clams that bore into their skeletal structures and weaken them.

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4 Coral colonies cannot build reef structures without considerable assistance. The many openings in and among the skeletons must be filled in and cemented together by material from around the colonies. The filling material often consists of fine sediments created either from the borings and waste of other animals around the coral or from the skeletons, shells, and remnants of dead plants and animals. The material that is used to cement the coral reefs comes from algae and other microscopic forms of seaweed.

5 An additional part of the process of reef formation is the ongoing compaction and cementation that occurs throughout the process. Because of the soluble and delicate nature of the material from which coral is created, the relatively unstable crystals of corals and shells break down over time and are then rearranged as a more stable form of limestone.

6 The coralline structures that are created through these complicated processes are extremely variable in form. They may, for example, be treelike and branching, or they may have more rounded and compact shapes. What they share in common, however, is the extraordinary variety of plant and animal life-forms that are a necessary part of the ongoing process of their formation.

**1. The word 'they' in paragraph 1 refers to**

**a.** coral colonies
**c.** intricate reef structures
**b.** events and circumstances
**d.** chemical processes

**2. The word 'that' in paragraph 2 refers to**

**a.** the basic element
**c.** a group of animals
**b.** the development of coralline reef structures
**d.** the *Anthozoa* class

**3. The phrase 'an immeasurable number' in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** an exact integer **b.** a huge quantity **c.** a surprising total **d.** a changing sum

**4. The word 'minute' in paragraph 2 could be best replaced by**

**a.** tiny **b.** light **c.** timely **d.** soft

**5. The phrase 'once-living' in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** aging **b.** dead **c.** growing **d.** solitary

**6. The word 'hardly' in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** difficult **b.** fragile **c.** scarce **d.** rugged

**7. The word 'They' in paragraph 3 refers to**

**a.** coralline structures
**c.** skeletal remnants
**b.** upward and outward directions
**d.** external forces of nature

**8. The word 'them' in paragraph 3 refers to**

**a.** sea animals
**c.** skeletal structures
**b.** sponges and clams
**d.** many opening

**9. The word 'borings' in paragraph 4 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** dull pieces **b.** strange creations **c.** living things **d.** powdery remnants

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**10. The word 'ongoing' in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** mobile **b.** continuous **c.** increasing **d.** periodic

**11. The phrase 'break down' in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to**

**a.** cease functioning **b.** interrupt **c.** descend **d.** decompose

**12. The word 'that' in paragraph 6 refers to**

**a.** variety **b.** life-forms **c.** part **d.** process

**13. The phrase 'their' in paragraph 6 refers to**

**a.** coralline structures

**b.** complicated processes

**c.** rounded and more compact shapes

**d.** plant and animal life-forms

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