

**English Language for Competitive Exams**  
**Prof. Aysha Iqbal**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Week - 01**  
**Lecture – 02**  
**Literature and reading comprehension**

Good morning friends. So, this is our second lecture and we are going to continue with our reading comprehension for our course English language for competitive purposes or competitive exams. Now we did a couple of passages last time, and you might recall that they were all from literature to be more specific from Henry James the portrait of a lady. Now competitive exams and I am talking about the international kinds of competitive exams, the text your English language they often derive passages and vocabulary, which may be related to all works of life.

So, it may be very useful if you would cultivate the habit of looking up occasionally; some of these newspapers and magazines and journal. So, writing from these papers and magazines, nature, national geographic economic times, news week business India, time magazine, even Newyork times. So, all these are at least many of these are freely available on the net. So, this would help improve you are reading comprehension abilities and also develop your vocabulary and of course, grammar.

So, these are all interrelated skills we are doing a holistic way of learning the English language not just learning the English language the basics of it, but advanced and higher order language. So, here we go here is a passage, please take a look at it.

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## PASSAGE 1

It was a very small shop, in a shabby basement, in a side-street already doomed to decline; and from the miscellaneous display behind the window-pane, and the brevity of the sign surmounting it (merely “Bunner Sisters” in blotchy gold on a black ground) it would have been difficult for the uninitiated to guess the precise nature of the business carried on within. But that was of little consequence, since its fame was so purely local that the customers on whom its existence depended were almost congenitally aware of the exact range of “goods” to be found at Bunner Sisters.

Please read the passage: it was a very small shop, in a shabby basement, in a side-street already doomed to decline; and from the miscellaneous display behind the window-pane, and the brevity of the sign surmounting it merely “Bunner Sisters” in blotchy gold on a black ground it would have been difficult for the uninitiated to guess the precise nature of the business carried on within. But that was of little consequence, since it is fame was. So, purely local that the customers on whom it is existence depended were almost congenitally aware of the exact range of the “goods” to be found at Bunner Sisters.

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What does the author mean when she refers to those ‘congenitally’ aware of the Bunner sisters?

- A. That the people who know them are told of them at birth.
- B. That the Bunner sisters are known very well locally and need no introduction within the locality.
- C. That these people are told of the range of goods available at Bunner Sisters when they are born.
- D. That sales at Bunner Sisters were only to those so aware.

Let us look at the questions now; look at the questions please look at the slide here what does the author mean when she refers to those congenitally aware of the Bunner sisters. Now a congenitally is your word, a that the people who know them are told of them at birth that the Bunner sisters are known very well locally and need no introduction within the locality that these people are told of the range of goods available at Bunner sisters when they are born, that sales at Bunner sisters were only to those so aware, what could be the right choice.

Now, remember congenitally means by birth, so it has to be the option b. The author here uses the word congenitally, to refer to residence of the area who already know who the Bunner sisters are and what kinds of goods are available at the store. The others options might sound right, but you have to read the question carefully and only answer what it ask, remember that is the way I am secures go all options may be very very close to the exact response; you have to be very careful, you have to look at the apply the process of illumination here.

Now, you have to know that in option c, it is suggested that people are told of the Bunner sisters as soon as they are born which is impossible right. So, c cannot be the answer although it uses the meaning of word congenitally, it is not the right answer and therefore, one has to remember that b is the exact response; and what is b look at the slide again, that the Bunner sisters are known very well locally and need no introduction within the locality. Second question please look at the slide.

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What does the word 'uninitiated' in the passage refer to?

- A. Ignorant
- B. Upstarts
- C. Laymen
- D. Rookie

What does the word uninitiated in the passage refer to? Option a- ignorant, option b- upstarts, option c- layman, and option d- rookie.

Now, all very closely related meanings, but what is an upstarts, what ignorant? Ignorant you know someone who does not have the appropriate knowledge about something, what an who is an upstart? Upstart is someone who as just come up recently in life, and tries to push their way badge their way into everything. So, behaviour is not very well accepted in polite societies, so that is the kinds of people are upstarts. Rookie someone who is absolutely new be should I if I could use the word, an absolute new comer to something. So, rookie; rookie sports man, rookie cop you know someone who has to be trained, do you think these words are appropriate here, what about layman.

So, the best option is option a. The word uninitiated means someone who is ignorant or inexperience to the uninitiated; it is for the knowledge of the uninitiated, they are not ignorant about everything they are not illiterate or uneducated, but in uninitiated about a certain aspect; those who are not in the know of certain things. So, to the uninitiated if I walk into a room and some discussion is already going on then perhaps someone has to brief me up on what is happening there. So, you in such or on such vocations we use the word this is for the uninitiated, people who are not in the know inexperienced or not in the exact term, but in the context so what is being discuss. You should also understand that the word layman refers to those uninitiated into people like, layman are those people

who are not an expert in a particular area; in the context of the passage, we are referring to those who are ignorant.

Now, a next question is I want you to pick out a phrase from the paragraph, which means of negligible significance. Please look at the passage again of negligible significance, what could be the phrase? The answer is I am sure you have derived it of little consequence; of little consequence means of little or no significance and comes close to what the question asked of little significance.

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## PASSAGE 2

The house of which Bunner Sisters had annexed the basement was a private dwelling with a brick front, green shutters on weak hinges, and a dress-maker's sign in the window above the shop. On each side of it modest three stories stood higher buildings, with fronts of brown stone, cracked and blistered, cast-iron balconies and cat-haunted grass-patches behind twisted railings. These houses too had once been private, but now a cheap lunchroom filled the basement of one, while the other announced itself, above the knotty wisteria that clasped its central balcony, as the Mendoza Family Hotel. It was obvious from the chronic cluster of refuse-barrels at its area-gate and the blurred surface of its curtainless windows, that the families frequenting the Mendoza Hotel were not exacting in their tastes; though they doubtless indulged in as much fastidiousness as they could afford to pay for, and rather more than their landlord thought they had a right to express.

Now, let us look at passage 2. The house of which Bunner Sisters had annexed the basement was a private dwelling with a brick front, green shutters on weak hinges, and a dress-maker's sign in the window above the shop. On each side of it modest three stories stood higher buildings, with fronts of brown stone, cracked and blistered, cast-iron balconies and cat-haunted grass-patches behind twisted railings. These houses too had once been private, but now a cheap lunchroom filled the basement of one, while the other announced itself, above the knotty wisteria that clasped its central balcony, as the Mendoza family hotel. It was obvious from the chronic cluster of refuse-barrels at its area-gate and the blurred surface of its curtainless windows, that the families frequenting the Mendoza hotel were not exacting in their tastes; though they doubtless indulged in as much fastidiousness as they could afford to pay for, and rather more than their landlord thought they had a right to express.

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What is the purpose of this passage?

- A. To illustrate the suspect nature of the sisters' establishment
- B. To show the run-down and shabby nature of the sisters' neighbourhood
- C. To highlight the questionable character of the landlord of Mendoza hotel
- D. To show that the families staying at Mendoza hotel were fastidious.

Please look at the passage carefully; note down every word which you find difficult and practise it on your own. Now let us look at the questions, first question what is the purpose of this passage, first or a to illustrate the suspect nature of the sisters establishment, b to show the rundown and shabby nature of the sisters neighbourhood, c to highlight the questionable character of the landlord of Mendoza hotel, and d to show that the families staying at Mendoza hotel were fastidious. Please look at the options again carefully, and the correct answer is option b; why because the intend of the passages is to show the shabby neighbourhood the Bunner sisters live in.

So, the author talks about the other buildings in the area like the hotel, but the focus of the passage remain the sisters house the establishment, and the other buildings are brought up for discussion only to show the general run down nature of the area.

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What is the landlord's opinion of the families staying at the Mendoza Hotel?

- A. That they have pretensions to a respectability they don't possess.
- B. That they are too finicky.
- C. That they pay too much attention to the furnishings in the hotel.
- D. That they are very particular about where they stay.

So, that is why. So, it is not about the hotel, but about a Bunner Sister's establishment, let us look at. At the second question, what is the landlord's opinion of the families staying at the Mendoza hotel? A that they have pretensions to a respectability they do not possess that they are too finicky, that they pay too much attention to the furnishings in the hotel, that they are very particular about where they stay.

Correct option is option a, we have to remember that the author does not talk about the families fastidiousness, this is the landlords opinion and it is the landlords opinion is not this, that the families are fastidious; but the landlord is more interested in that his customers expect too much for what they are paying that they want respectability for low rates. So, b c d are partially correct, but only a sums up the landlords opinion.

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### PASSAGE 3

But other and more serious burdens lay on her startled conscience. For the first time in her life she dimly faced the awful problem of the inutility of self-sacrifice. Hitherto she had never thought of questioning the inherited principles which had guided her life. Self-effacement for the good of others had always seemed to her both natural and necessary; but then she had taken it for granted that it implied the securing of that good. Now she perceived that to refuse the gifts of life does not ensure their transmission to those for whom they have been surrendered; and her familiar heaven was unpeopled. She felt she could no longer trust in the goodness of God, and there was only a black abyss above the roof of Bunner Sisters.

Look at the third passage now. But other and more serious burdens lay on her startled conscience. For the first time in her life she dimly faced the awful problem of the inutility of self-sacrifice. Hitherto she had never thought of questioning the inherited principles which had guided her life. Self-effacement for the good of others had always seemed to her both natural and necessary; but then she had taken it for granted that it implied the securing of that good. Now she perceived that to refuse the gifts of life does not ensure their transmission to those for whom they have been surrendered; and her familiar heaven was unpeopled.

What is the meaning of unpeopled? Please look it up she felt she could no longer trust in the goodness of god, and there was only a black abyss above the roof of Bunner Sisters. A spare a moment and look at the passage carefully, startled conscience inherited principles self effacement.

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What is the intention of this passage?

- A. To illustrate how strong the protagonist's faith in God had been before a black abyss descended on the Bunner sisters.
- B. To delineate the various other burdens on the protagonist's conscience
- C. To show how the protagonist's long-standing belief in sacrifice and humility had suffered an irreversible shock.
- D. To justify the protagonist's later atheism.

Let us look at the question now, what is the intention of this passage? First question a is to illustrate how strong the protagonists faith in god had been before a black abyss descended on the Bunner sisters; b to delineate the various other burdens on the protagonists conscience; c to show how the protagonists long standing belief in sacrifice and humility had suffered an irreversible shock; and d to justify the protagonists later atheism, what could be the correct answer? The correct response is option c; what is option c? To show how the protagonist long standing belief in sacrifice and humility had suffered an irreversible shock, meaning of irreversible that cannot be a reversed.

You should know that while options a and b are partially correct, the intend of the entire passage is to show the collapse of some long standing belief in the protagonist life, not just those to particular points. So, option d does not mean anything at all as the passage itself does not hint at atheism. So, do not derive to your or do not arrive at your own conclusions, it is not there atheism is not there. So, please do not bring it in look at the slide.

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Pick out the line in the above passage that shows how the protagonist had placed faith on the value of self-abnegation

Now, this is the next question pick out the line in the above passage that shows how the protagonist had placed faith on the value of self abnegation. Look at the passage again, the correct choice is the fourth line, self effacement for the good of others had always seemed to her both natural and necessary, but then she had taken it for granted that it implied the securing of that good.

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#### PASSAGE 4

For some minutes longer the conversation moved on at this desultory pace, and then Mr. Ramy, who had been obviously nerving himself for the difficult act of departure, took his leave with an abruptness which would have startled anyone used to the subtler gradations of intercourse. But to Ann Eliza and her sister there was nothing surprising in his abrupt retreat. The long-drawn agonies of preparing to leave, and the subsequent dumb plunge through the door, were so usual in their circle that they would have been as much embarrassed as Mr. Ramy if he had tried to put any fluency into his adieux.

Now, let us move on to passage four. For some minutes longer the conversation moved on at this desultory pace, and then mister Ramy, who had been; obviously nerving

himself for the difficult act of departure, took his leave with an abruptness which would have startled anyone used to the subtler gradations of intercourse. But to Ann Eliza and her sister there was nothing surprising in his abrupt retreat. The long-drawn agonies of preparing to leave, and the subsequent dumb plunge through the door, were so usual in their circle that they would have been as much embarrassed as mister Ramy if he had tried to put any fluency into his adieux.

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Why did Mr. Ramy leave abruptly?

- A. Because he was in a hurry to get home.
- B. Because he had run out of conversation.
- C. Because it was socially mandated that he leave abruptly.
- D. Because in their circles, awkward goodbyes were more common than sophisticated and subtle adieux.

Let us look at the question now, first question. Why did mister Ramy leave abruptly? A because he was in a hurry to get home; B because he had run out of conversation; C because it was socially mandated that he leave abruptly; d because in their circles awkward goodbyes were more common than sophisticated and subtle adieux, and what could be the response? Correct response is option d, we have been coming to this that the sisters Bunner sisters social circle is not very sophisticated.

So, in sophisticated circle it is ritual to take leave, but they do not belong to that circle, in this social circle elegant nice teas were or are really exchanged in goodbyes and they were used to hasty departures in all their friends, that is the meaning and adieu; adieu is the word it is a singular and adieux is a plural goodbyes it is and arcaike kind of word.

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What does the word 'desultory' mean?

- A. Exciting
- B. Nervous
- C. Awkward
- D. Aimless

Second question please look at the question here, the word 'desultory' exciting, nervous, awkward, aimless; look at the context look at the passage again and look at the try to derive the meaning of the word in context. We will go back to the passage, second line and this desultory pace. Now let us look at the options again; exciting, nervous, awkward aimless and the correct answer is d, which is aimless or uninteresting desultory pace aimless, unexciting, uninteresting so.

Thank you very much, and we will be meeting soon for more reading exercises.