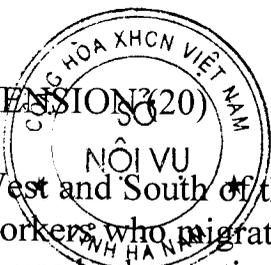


READING COMPREHENSION (20)



C1. Agriculture in the West and South of the United States has traditionally been supported by migrant workers, who migrate or move from area to area according to the crops that need harvesting. Many Chinese, Filipino, and Mexican immigrants became migrant workers when they first arrived in the United States. Often they had problems with the English language or no skills that they could immediately use in the new country. A person looking objectively at the living conditions of these workers might say that their way of life was little better than slavery. They were housed in substandard conditions, received wages far below the minimum, and had no medical or insurance benefits. The migrant workers had no labour unions that could bargain for better wages, better hours, or improved working conditions. They had no money and no power with which to bargain with their employers.

#####

C2. England's highest main-line railway station hangs on to life by a thread. Deserted and unmanned since it was officially closed in 1970, Dent, situated high in the hills of Yorkshire, wakes up on six summer weekends each year, when a special charter train unloads walkers, sightseers and people who simply want to catch a train from the highest station to its platforms. But even this limited existence may soon be brought to an end. Dent station situated on the Settle to Carlisle railway line, is said to be the most scenic in the country. But no amount of scenic beauty can save the line from the British Rail's cash problems. This year, for the sake of economy, the express trains which used to pass through Dent station have been put to another route. It is now an open secret that British Rail sees no future for this railway line. Most of its trains disappeared some time ago. The problem is a worn out system and an almost total lack of cash to repair it.

#####

C3. In 1723, there arrived in Philadelphia a penniless young man, eager for work and for knowledge. As the years passed, this man, Benjamin Franklin, contributed greatly to his city and to his country. Became a printer and a publisher, and a learned man in many subjects, he also helped to spread learning by establishing a public library and by founding the American Philosophical Society, which is an important academy of great scholars to this day. Franklin initiated many improvements in the city of Philadelphia, making it one of the world's first cities to have paved and lighted streets as well as a police force and a fire fighting company. He also made many practical inventions such as the Franklin stove, which was a very efficient heater, and the lightning rod to protect building in electric storms. His scientific work with electricity earned Franklin world fame.

#####

C4. When you are being interviewed for a job, remember that it's normal for many people to be nervous, particularly in such a stress-producing situation. There are plenty of jobs - indeed, probably most - where a little nervousness isn't looked at askance. It does help to dry a damp brow or a clammy hand just before meeting the interviewer, but otherwise, don't be too concerned about the outward manifestations of your nervousness. Experienced interviewers will discount most physical signs of nervousness. The only one that people have a hard time ignoring is a fidgety hand. Interviewees who constantly twist their hands or make movements that are dramatically distracting are calling to their nervousness. Remember that interviewers talk to people in order to hire, not because they enjoy embarrassing, uneasy applicants. One way to overcome a flustered feeling, or 'butterflies in the stomach', is to note that interviewers want to hire people who have something to offer the company.

#####

C5. When life was rugged and simple, man's needs were few and he could supply them all. As he advanced from lone hunter to farmer and builder and exchanged a solitary existence for the greater comfort and security of community life, he realized he must come to an agreement with his neighbors on a common system of measurement. How can men build a house, or a storage hut, or a temple, unless all the builders use the same basic measurements? The very earliest measurements were for length. The bases for the measures were those most natural- a foot, a palm, a span of the hand. When building alone, man could use his own body. But on community projects a common standard was required. The leader's measurements were taken and marked off on a stick or stone. Crude copies were made from the original and passed out for use. Later the foot gradually evolved to become twelve inches long.

#####

C6. Petroleum products, such as gasoline, kerosene, home heating oil, residual fuel oil, and lubricating oils, come from one source-crude oil found below: the earth's surface, as well as under large bodies of water, from a few hundred feet below the surface to as deep as 25,000 feet into the earth's interior. Sometimes crude oil is secured by drilling a hole through the earth, but more dry holes are drilled than those producing oil. Petroleum products are always measured in 42-gallon barrels. Petroleum products vary greatly in physical appearance: thin, thick, transparent or opaque, but regardless, their chemical composition is made up of only two elements: carbon and hydrogen, which form compounds called hydrocarbons. Other chemical elements found in union with the hydrocarbons are few and are classified as impurities. The various petroleum products are refined from the crude oil by heating and condensing the vapors.

#####

C7. An English man living near Sheffield recently had a most unlucky day's fishing. He was standing on a low bridge when he had the misfortune to knock his tin of bait into the river. Leaning over the side of the bridge, he tried to hook the tin and pull it out of the river. As he did so, his car keys fell out of his pocket and disappeared in the water. Feeling thoroughly annoyed with himself and his luck, the fisherman lent over the bridge to try to see where his keys had gone. As he did so, the bridge collapsed and he fell into the river. This was the last straw. The fisher crawled out of the river and went back to his car. There he discovered that he had locked the doors and could not get in. His anti-thief had immobilized his car. There was nothing left for him to do but walk sadly home.

#####

C8. Banking and banks are very important for the functioning of the modern world. Without banks the way we use money would not work. Banks enable people to save money, borrow money and to pay for things with ease and security. Each country in the world has its own well known banks that have branches in nearly every city so that they are convenient for people to use. People often have to visit the local branch of the bank when they want certain services. There are also some very big multinational banks that have branches in most countries in the world. As well as the local branches that are in most cities, each bank will also have a head office. This is where all central tasks are performed that let the local braches function. The people that work in the branches will be the bank manager, the person in charge, and various tellers who work behind the bank counter and help the customers. There will also likely be security guards to protect the money, workers and customers.

#####

C9. When most people are ill with a non-life threatening condition they will most often see a General Practitioner, a GP, also called a Family Doctor. These doctors generally work in the local community in surgeries rather than in hospitals, so they are convenient for people to see for a consultation. However, other GPs can work in a very wide range of areas, such as in hospitals, in education and for insurance companies. As the name suggests, GPs are doctors that do not have a specialty, such as a brain surgeon or cancer specialist: they are able to diagnose and treat all the possible diseases and problem that one of their patients might have. They can treat and manage most illnesses and perform some minor surgeries in their practice. Then for more serious cases they will refer the patient to a specialist that will work in a hospital.

#####

C10. Most people celebrate the New Year, and many of them do that by attending a party. Some parties may be small while others will be quite big.

Some parties will be at a person's home while other might be outside in a city center. The simplest and smallest New Year parties are those that a single family will have in their own house. This is where the parents and children will just spend time together. Some years a family will spend time like this and then in other years they will go to other types of parties. Often the family at a house party will eat a meal together and then wait for midnight. While waiting they play games, watch television, or talk to each other. Another type of party will be where someone will invite a group of friends to their house for a celebration. This will be a bit of a bigger party, and depending on the size of the house ten to thirty people may attend. Often the people who come to the party will each bring something to share that everyone can eat.

#####

C11. Sometimes mail arrives at the post office, and it is impossible to deliver the mail. Perhaps, there is an inadequate or illegible address and no return address. The post office cannot just throw this mail away, so this becomes "dead mail". This "dead mail" is sent to one of the U.S. Postal Service's dead mail offices in Atlanta, New York, Philadelphia, St. Paul, or San Francisco. Seventy five million pieces of mail can end up in the dead mail office in one year.

The staff of the dead mail offices have a variety of ways to deal with all of these pieces of dead mail. First of all, they look for clues that can help them deliver the mail: they open packages in the hope that something inside will show where the package came from or is going to. Dead mail will also be listed on a computer so that people can call in and check to see if a missing item is there.

However, all of this mail cannot simply be stored forever; there is just too much of it. When a lot of dead mail has piled up, the dead mail offices hold public auctions. Every three months, the public is invited in and bins containing items found in dead mail packages are sold to the highest bidder.

#####

C12. Of the six outer planets, Mars, commonly called the Red Planet, is the closest to Earth. Mars, 4,200 miles in diameter and 55 percent of the size of Earth, is 34,600,000 miles from Earth, and 141,000,000 miles from the Sun. It takes this planet, along with its two moons, Phobos and Deimos, 1.88 years to circle the Sun, compared to 365 days for the Earth.

For many years, Mars had been thought of as the planet with the man-made canals supposedly discovered by an Italian astronomer, Schiaparelli, in 1877. With the United States spacecraft Viking I's landing on Mars in 1976, the man-made canal theory was proven to be only a myth.

Viking I, after landing on the soil of Mars, performed many scientific experiments and took numerous pictures. The pictures showed that the red color of the planet is due to the reddish, rocky Martian soil. No biological life was found, though it had been speculated by many scientists. The Viking also monitored many weather changes including violent dust storms. Some water

vapor, polar ice, and permafrost (frost below the surface) were found, indicating that at one time there were significant quantities of water on this distant planet. Evidence collected by the spacecraft shows some present volcanic action, though the volcanoes are believed to be dormant, if not extinct.

C13. America Online is one of the big names on the internet, and unlike many other digital companies, it actually makes a profit. But the company which its rivals call the "Cyber-cockroach" was launched only in 1992. Before that it was a small firm called Control Video Corporation, and it made video games. Then Steve Case, a former Pizza Hut marketing executive arrived and took the company online. Innovative, fast moving, and user-friendly, America Online appeals to people who want to surf the internet, but who do not have a lot of experience. For the same reason "techies", people who think they are more expert with computers, look down on America Online and its users. Recently America Online (or AOL, as it calls itself) joined with Time Warner - a multi-million dollar movie and magazine company - to create a multimedia giant.

Now, AOL has begun to expand abroad. In many European countries, including the United Kingdom, it is hard to buy a computer magazine that does not have a free AOL introductory offer. The company also puts advertisements onto the television, and employs people to hand out its free introductory disks at places like train stations. As the internet gets faster, AOL is changing. With many homes getting high-speed connections through fibre optic cables or the new ADSL technology, the "Cyber-cockroach" will have to show that, like real cockroaches, it can survive in almost any environment.

#####

C14. In addition to providing energy, fats have other functions in the body. The fat-soluble vitamins, A, D, E, and K, are dissolved in fats, as their name implies. Good sources of these vitamins have high oil or fat content, and the vitamins are stored in the body's fatty tissues. In the diet, fats cause food to remain longer in the stomach, thus increasing the feeling of fullness for some time after a meal is eaten.

Fats add variety, taste and texture to foods, which accounts for the popularity of fried foods. Fatty deposits in body have an insulating and protective value. The curves of the human female body are due mostly to strategically located fat deposits. Whether a certain amount of fat in the diet is essential to human health is not definitely known. When rats are fed a fat-free diet, their growth eventually ceases, their skin becomes inflamed and scaly and their reproductive systems are damaged. Two fatty acids, linoleic and arachidonic acids, prevent these abnormalities and hence are called essential fatty acids. They are also required by a number of other animals, but their roles in human beings are debatable. Most nutritionists consider linoleic fatty acid an essential nutrient for humans.

#####

C15. If you want to give someone the nod in Bulgaria, you have to nod your head to say “no” and shake it to say “yes” – the exact opposite of what we do! In Belgium, pointing with your index finger or snapping your fingers at someone is very rude.

In France, you shouldn't rest your feet on tables or chairs. Speaking to someone with your hands in your pockets will only make matters worse. In the Middle East, you should never show the soles of your feet or shoes to others as it will be seen as a grave insult. When eating, only use your right hand because they use their left hands when going to the bathroom.

In Bangladesh, the ‘thumbs-up’ is a rude sign. In Myanmar, people greet each other by clapping, and in India, whistling in public is considered rude.

In Japan, you should not blow your nose in public, but you can burp at the end of a meal to show that you have enjoyed it. The ‘OK’ sign (thumb and index finger forming a circle) means “everything is good” in the West, but in China it means nothing or zero. In Japan, it means money, and in the Middle East, it is a rude gesture.

#####

C16. Hong Kong is very close to an area called the Ring of Fire. The Ring of Fire covers a distance of 4 kilometers around the edge of the Pacific Ocean. More earthquakes and volcanoes occur in this area than anywhere else in the world. The name does not refer to real fires, but to areas just the surface of the Earth, that may move suddenly. When these areas do move, they cause earthquakes. Many areas of Asia, such as Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines and Indonesia, are affected by earthquakes and volcanoes. People in these countries may experience landslides, mudslides, liquid rock, ash and tidal waves as a result. Fortunately, these natural disasters do not happen very often. Hong Kong is actually 600 kilometers away from the Ring of Fire. Occasionally however, we can feel the effects. The biggest earthquake to be felt here occurred in 1918 in Shantou, China. It measured 7.3 on the Richter Scale. This scale is used to measure the strength of earthquakes. Anything higher than 6.0 is very dangerous. People in Hong Kong sometimes notice the effects of earthquakes and volcanoes. In January 1986, for instance, some buildings started shaking. This was from an earthquake near Yangjiang in Guangdong, which measured 5.1 on the Richter Scale. On average, Hong Kong is shaken by two or three earthquakes a year. In June 1991, Mt Pinatubo in the Philippines erupted. Many people were killed and the area around the volcano was badly damaged. Waves of very hot ash and liquid rock forced people to run away from the area. They were not able to go back until many months afterwards. Volcanic material spread over a very large area. Even in Hong Kong, people noticed ash in the air. Luckily, the effects of these natural disasters on Hong Kong are very minor.

#####

C17. TRAVELLING ABROAD

Why do tourists think that the first thing they should do when they visit a new place is go and see cathedrals, museums and monuments? There are many things I like about travelling, but queuing up to buy museum tickets then having your visit ruined by noisy tour groups is not one of them. The things that make places special are all around the famous buildings, not inside them.

My recent trip to India is a good example of this. By far the most interesting part of it was getting to know people - bicycle-taxi drivers, policemen riding elephants and children trying to earn some money by cleaning shoes. It was all so amazing that I didn't need to do any 'proper' sightseeing.

I also have fantastic memories of Florence. It was a boiling hot day and the queue to the art gallery was at least a kilometer long. Instead of joining it, I sat in a shady square, ate a delicious pizza and listened to a man singing opera songs to only a few listeners. If I had stuck to my original plan I would have missed this experience.

One of the best things about travelling is creating memories to bring home. When I got back home from a holiday in Malaysia, I made some of the dishes I'd tasted in the food market. Maybe my results weren't as good as the real thing, but they reminded me of the places and the people I'd met - far better than anything from a souvenir shop.

#####

C18. When Michelle Yeoh was a girl, she dreamed of being a dancer. Later on, she became a beauty queen. But she isn't famous for these things. She is famous for her amazing work in movies as an actress and stunt performer. Michelle Yeoh was born in Malaysia. As a young girl she enjoyed sports, especially swimming. She liked music and art, too, but she loved dance the most. As a teenager, she went to England to study dance. While studying dance, she injured her back. That's when she started studying acting instead. After Yeoh went back home, she participated in a beauty contest. She won and became Miss Malaysia. Soon after that, she went to Hong Kong to become an actress. While she worked in the movies, she watched the stunt actors. She decided that she wanted to do stunts, too. She spent hours every day at the gym. She learned how to punch and kick. She started doing her own stunts in the movies. Yeoh starred in her first movie in 1979. In her movies, she does most of her own stunts. In one movie, she rode a motorcycle along the roof of a moving train. In another, she jumped off a bridge and onto a moving truck. She became famous around the world when she starred in Tomorrow Never Dies with Pierce Brosnan. In 2000, she starred in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. Michelle Yeoh is one of the most famous stunt actors in the world. Her amazing stunts fascinate people everywhere.

#####

C19. When young people break the law they are put into a special kind of jail. These jails are for juveniles - young people. It can be very dangerous in these jails. Sometimes the juveniles hurt each other when they are there. Some of the young people even kill themselves. Many adults want the violence in jail to stop. A group of people think that there is a better way to help the juveniles in jail. They want to put small groups of them in settings that are more like homes. They think that this will help the young people learn and stay safe. When juveniles are in these special homes they can get help. Counselors can talk to them about crime and try to teach them that it is bad. Hopefully this will help the young people make better choices when they leave. Some states have already tried this plan. They say that it has worked. Other people do not think that the homes are a good idea. They are worried that the violent juveniles will be let go and that they will break the law again. These people want anyone who breaks the law to be punished and put in jail. One man that was in jail when he was young said that he learned bad things there. He was not taught how to make good decisions. He said that he only learned how to become more violent. He does not think jails help juveniles at all. There are many young people in jail. Adults need to decide how best to help them. Most of the juveniles that are put in jail will break the law again when they are released. Some people think that by putting them in small group homes will help the kids become better people.

#####

C20. Doctors have discovered a new way to help sick people who need surgery. Instead of making a large cut into a patient's body to find out what's wrong, doctors now put a long, thin wire with a camera at the end of it through a small hole in the body. Through this camera a picture is shown on a large screen, allowing doctors to take a good look inside the patient's body. If there is a problem that the doctor needs to fix, a surgery can also be done using a similar machine. This machine has a laser light at the end of the wire, which acts like a sharp knife. This allows the doctor to repair or cut away the damaged part of the body. A nurse moves the wire with the camera while the doctor uses the laser light to make the cuts and do the surgery. This kind of surgery is known as 'keyhole' surgery, since the cut is no larger than a keyhole itself. There are a number of good points in using this method. First, since the cut is much smaller, it takes much less time for the wound to close up. This makes it less dangerous for the patient. Second, a shorter stay in hospital is much cheaper. Third, the patient spends a lot less time with the doctor, and the doctor's time is very expensive. But there are a few problems with this kind of surgery. It is not always easy to control the laser light. In some cases the doctor has cut more than he wanted, resulting in the patient losing a lot of blood. Such accidents don't happen very often, however, and as science improves, they are less likely to happen.