

Unit 4 | ART AND LITERATURE

LESSON

Art and Literature | A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

PREPARATORY TASK

1. What do you know about A.P.J. Abdul Kalam?
2. Do you have a favourite book, or a favourite author? What do you like about this book/author?
3. Do you think films can inspire people? Has any film inspired you?
4. Do you think engineers and scientists have any interest in art and literature? Can those with a background in engineering contribute to society in the field of arts?

INTRODUCTION

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (1931–2015) was the eleventh President of India, serving his term between the years 2002 and 2007. Popularly known as the ‘missile man of India’, he was an outstanding aerospace engineer, a progressive mentor, innovator and visionary, as well as a popular president. He was conferred numerous awards, including the Padma Bhushan and the Bharat Ratna. Despite his many achievements in the field of science, he was known for his simplicity and humility. He brought in an air of informality to his laboratory and believed in fostering a team spirit.

The extract below is from Kalam’s book *Indomitable Spirit*. It talks of the importance of art and literature in moulding one’s life, emphasising how these have the power to fill our minds and souls with joy.

READING PASSAGE

Art helps life to survive

Our planet Earth has witnessed the birth of many great human civilisations at different periods of time, but only a few of them managed to survive. The ones that did were those which had the capacity to see the future and the ability to adapt to the dynamics of change. This ability is the function of the thinking capacity created by literature, poetry and, other dialectical inputs. Ancient philosophers, and in later years, scientists, technologists, economists and sociologists, all in unison, enriched the various human civilisations. Our Indian civilisation accepted and absorbed the dynamic changes of multicultural impact. That is how we have a society of a billion people of multi-cultures, multi-languages and multi-religions with unity of mind. Thanks to our thinkers, we see the tradition-producing epics such as *Mahabharata* and classics like *Thirukkural*, *Kabirvani* and *Narayaneeyam* continuing to survive and flourish over the centuries.

dynamics: forces or processes that produce change inside a group or system

dialectical: discovering the truth of ideas through healthy discussion and logical argument

in unison: simultaneously

dynamic: characterised by force, action, change or progress

Books—our eternal companions

Coming into contact with a good book and possessing it is an everlasting enrichment of life. A good book becomes a permanent companion. Sometimes, books are born before us, they guide us during our life journey and continue to do so for many generations.

At the age of twelve, Albert Einstein experienced a wonder in the form of a little book on Euclidean plane geometry given to him by his mentor Max Talmud. Through this book Einstein came into contact with the **realm** and concept of pure thought and learnt how to explore universal truths, without any expensive laboratories or equipment, limited only by the power of the mind.

My favourite books

The most commonly asked questions during my interaction with the youth are: Which are your favourite books? Which book are you currently reading? .

Though I cherish reading almost all books, there are three that I have enjoyed the most. One is *Light From Many Lamps* edited by Lillian Eichler Watson. I had bought this book in 1953 from an old bookstore in Moore Market, Chennai, and it has been my close friend and companion for more than five decades. It has been so much used that it has had to be bound and re-bound many times. Whenever I face a problem, I turn to this book and it helps wipe away my tears. When happiness overwhelms me, the book again softly touches the mind and brings about a balanced thinking. I realised the importance of the book again, when a friend of mine who is in the **judiciary** recently presented me with a new edition of the same book. He told me that the best thing he could give me was this book. Maybe fifty years from now the same book may take a new **avatar**!

The second book which I **venerate** is Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural*. It provides an excellent code of conduct for life, and the author's thinking which extends beyond the narrow concept of a nation, language, religion, and culture indeed elevates the human mind.

The third book is *Man the Unknown* by Dr Alexis Carrel, a doctor turned philosopher and a Nobel laureate. This book highlights how, in an **ailment**, both the mind and the body need to be treated as the two are integrated. You cannot treat one and ignore the other. In particular, children who dream of becoming doctors should read this book. They will learn that the human body is not a mechanical system; it is an intelligent and integrated organism made of psychological and physiological systems with an **intricate** and sensitive feedback system.

The importance of authors

Authors of books play a very important role in human life. A good book from an author is a source of great knowledge and wealth for many generations. Sometimes a book may not inspire readers during the author's lifetime but the importance of the book's message becomes more clear with the passage of time when its value is realised by society. Then the book starts shining. Of course, there are some classics which shine continuously for many generations.

realm: a general area of knowledge, interest or thought

judiciary: the system of law courts that administer justice

avatar: a new personification of a familiar idea

venerate: to treat someone or something with great respect

ailment: illness, bodily disorder or disease

physiological: relating to the functioning of organisms

intricate: complex

Jayakanthan, the Tamil author bestowed with the 38th Jnanpith award says, 'Going past you (reader) is my (author's) success.' Providing a route for the reader to traverse and go beyond himself or herself is a measure of literature's success.

I cherish Jayakanthan's view of life as explained in the introduction to one of his collections of essays titled *Oru Ilakkiyavadhiyan Arasial Anubavangal*, which means *A Literary Person's Political Experiences*, in which he says: 'Has not the time arrived for our freedom fighters and socialist thinkers with knowledge and courage to get together and sacrifice to create a new independent society? When will that time come? The literary mind has a passionate longing for it.' This is similar, in a small way, to a situation in which Jayakanthan says: 'In my writing in literature, even if I am made an outcaste, I will continue to work in the realm of literature, looking for change, as it happened with Jagath Guru Adi Sankaracharya, accepting Dattatreya as Guru. It is not my wish, but it is God's will.'

What a beautiful and moving statement. When I read this statement, tears welled up in my eyes because, though I see despair and fatalism all around, faith is challenging them. That is how literature elevates the mind and authors act as conscience keepers of the society.

The galaxy of our thinkers and writers can facilitate the creation of enlightened leaders amongst our youth. Through their writings, they can inspire our younger generation on the capacity for greatness of heart and spirit of mankind and remind them of the need for indomitable spirit with which they can conquer any signs of weakness and despair. This is not a duty cast on the authors, but it is their privilege that they can help mankind endure adversities and succeed in life.

A country is rich because of the natural wealth, biodiversity and its people. But the crowning glory of the nation is its thinkers, who lead the society ahead of its time, and make society accept the change.

Children and students should be encouraged to follow the advice, 'Give one hour a day exclusively for book reading, you will become a knowledge centre in a few years.' People should make it a habit to give books as gifts especially to the youth. These actions will enrich our youth and assist them in transforming our society into a knowledge society.

Music, dance and drama

We have a rich civilisational heritage of more than five thousand years blending literature, music, dance and drama. The experience of seeing the artists perform makes me wonder whether music and dance can be used as instruments for ensuring global peace and act as a binding force. In recent years, terrorism has taken a heavy toll of many innocent lives. Is there any alternative solution other than the military, economic and judicial approach to end this problem? I am convinced that music and dance can be one of the important tools for containing terrorism.

bestow: to give something as an honour

traverse: to travel

outcaste: someone who is not accepted by the people he or she lives among

despair: a state in which all hope is lost or absent

fatalism: the belief that all events are controlled by fate and human beings cannot change them

conscience: one's own sense of right conduct

galaxy: a splendid group of famous people

facilitate: to make easier

indomitable: possessing a strong will power; impossible to subdue or defeat

privilege: a benefit or right reserved exclusively by a particular person or group

adversity: a state of misfortune, distress or great suffering

crowning glory: the best and most noteworthy aspect

toll: loss or damage incurred through a conflict, disaster or accident

Music and dance elevate you to a different plane altogether and give you a breeze of happiness and peace. Music and dance can emanate only when the artists themselves are at peace and in a happy state of mind. In this state they become an elegant example of propagators of peace and happiness.

Music unites. And what better proof do we need than Carnatic music! Its trinity sang their kritis in Telugu and Sanskrit in Tanjore district; Purandaradasa sang in Kannada, Annamacharya in Telegu and Arunagirinathar in Tamil. But for music lovers, the language never mattered. Music establishments at Travancore in Kerala, Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu and Mysore in Karnataka—all of them dazzled like gems in a necklace. The thread of music united these beads. Music itself is a great communication and language can never be a barrier.

Uday Shankar, who is regarded as the father of modern dance in India, gave an altogether new and wholesome definition to Indian dance and music. He was able to appreciate the wonderful variety and scope of expression afforded by different classical and folk-dance forms of our country and incorporate them into a unique artistic expression resulting in an enriched dance vocabulary of the highest level of excellence. A veritable pioneer of renaissance in Indian arts during the 1930s and 1940s, he was instrumental in introducing Indian dance forms and music to the Western world, earning for them worldwide acclaim, respect and admiration. That Uday Shankar did not have any formal training in any of the schools of classical dance and yet could carve a niche for himself in the world of art is eloquent testimony to the fact that he was a born genius.

During my visits to different parts of the country I saw that the rural folk and the tribal communities nurture great love for music and dance. Many a time they just need the slightest opportunity to break into song and dance. This helps not only in smoothening out the rough edges of their tough countryside life but also in preserving, propagating and developing our age-old cultural traditions. The evolution of our music, dance and theatre has been woven by the rural folk into the very history of our nation. The intermingling of diverse streams which make up our composite culture has fully enriched our tradition of artistic expression and should be actively encouraged.

emanate: to flow or come from

propagator: Someone who propagates (i.e., transmit or cause to spread)

vocabulary: (art) the system of techniques and symbols that serves as a means of expression

veritable: (intensifier used to emphasise a statement or comparison) actual

pioneer: someone who helps to open up a new line of research, technology or art

renaissance: a rebirth or revival (of learning and culture)

instrumental: acting as a means or aid to something

acclaim: enthusiastic approval

niche: a position particularly well suited to the person who occupies it

eloquent: speaking readily, clearly, and effectively

testimony: something that serves as evidence

nurture: to help develop and grow; to provide nourishment and care for

rough edges: small imperfections

woven: past participle of weave (to make or construct by interlacing elements into a whole)

intermingle: to mix together

diverse: many and different

composite: consisting of separate interconnected parts

Drama has been a great form of entertainment for **invigorating** the minds of people. It can be a powerful medium for delivering messages and planting imaginative ideas and thoughts. This form of art has been under great pressure due to cinema, TV and multimedia, which have their own role. But we need to recapture many of our ancient drama forms, and the rich traditional stories embedded in them.

The power of films

People from the film industry have the ability to make the audience laugh, make them cry, and even make them angry, inspire them and at times also depress them. They can touch the emotions of the viewer and create an impression in his mind temporarily or at times even for a long period. Such is the power of a film.

Art elevates the spirits

Recently, I happened to study a book called *Articulations: Voices from Contemporary Indian Visual Art*. I was searching through the book to find out what is the unique quality of the great community of visual art and painting. What is their medium? What is the relationship between the society and the artists? Is there any connectivity between the medium of the artist, such as ink and brush, and society?

When M.F. Hussain says paintings are the output of the society, it means: if the society is a **mediocre** society, you will get mediocre paintings, if the society is intellectual and prosperous, the paintings will reflect the situation. Going through *Articulations*, I realised that every painter and artist is a unique personality in search of beauty out of every event which enriches him. While R.K. Laxman loves to paint crows as they stand out against any background, K.K. Hebbar is inspired by the rhythmic movement of lines. I tend to agree with one of the artists who says that the artists should have 'partnership with the known, the unknown will express itself'.

Sometime back I composed a poem titled 'Life Tree' in Tamil and translated it into English. The message in the poem was about celebration of life. While composing it, I never thought that a poem could be given visual life, beauty and creativity. Around that time a young artist called Manav came and stayed at Rashtrapati Bhawan to **picturise** the natural beauty of the Mughal Gardens. He stayed with his family for two weeks and created beautiful canvases bubbling with life. I could see in his paintings the beauty of the flowers, smell the fragrance of the flowers, and taste the honey in the flowers. When he came across my poem 'Life Tree', he fell in love with it and spent seven days in the beautiful environment of the Mughal Gardens transforming 'Life Tree' into a speaking tree.

What a beautiful creation! For the first the time I realised how painting and poetry **intertwine** in the imagination of a painter, leading to the birth of a new creation. That new creation touches your heart, soothes your feelings and transmits beauty and peace of the combined art into every artistic person and showers happiness in his or her mind and soul.

invigorating: exciting and interesting

embedded: inserted or enclosed as an integral part of a surrounding whole

mediocre: moderate to inferior in quality

picturise: to represent in a picture

intertwine: to twist, entwine together; to interlace

Prosperity and art

The prosperity of any nation depends directly on the creativity of its artists and writers. You would remember from your history lessons the fact that during the golden period of any empire there was always a large number of artists and writers supported by the kings and courts.

Students of art and literature are important contributors to transforming India into a developed nation. They will find **ample** job opportunities in the arena of creative entertainment and management which are the areas where future society would be spending enormous amounts of time and money. They can also act as an effective **interface** between the people and the policy makers as well as between the people and the scientists and technologists.

Art is a **benign** expression of the **innate** beauty in nature. Be it a cartoon, sculpture or literary composition, it elevates the beautiful spirit of life for everyone to see and enjoy. Such a spirit silently but eloquently conveys the message of love, humour, affection and peace.

Art helps to bring out the beauty of life in its noblest forms and takes it on to a higher, better and more civilised plane, **imparting** meaning and depth to human existence, justifying and **vindicating** the purpose for which life was evolved. What more can you ask for, what more can you look for in a **strife-stricken** world where eternal human values are being mercilessly trampled upon and the beauty of life lost in relentless **materialistic** pursuits.

READING COMPREHENSION

A. Answer the following questions in about 50 to 100 words each.

1. How has Indian civilisation managed to survive the different forces of change?
2. What are Kalam's favourite books, and how have these influenced him?
3. Why should children be encouraged to read books?
4. What is the power of drama and films on human lives?

B. Answer the following questions in about 250 to 300 words each.

1. What is the importance of art and literature in one's life, according to A.P.J. Abdul Kalam?
2. How do the different arts influence human civilisation?
3. Kalam believed that 'Students of art and literature are important contributors to transforming India into a developed nation'. Do you agree with this statement? Elaborate on your answer.

ample: more than enough in size, scope or capacity

interface: a point where two different things meet and affect each other

benign: kind, pleasant and thoughtful

innate: inborn; natural

impart: to transmit

vindicate: to prove to be right by providing justification or proof

strife: lack of agreement or harmony; conflict

stricken: to be affected by something overwhelming

materialistic: marked by materialism (a desire for wealth and material possessions)

VOCABULARY

Common Abbreviations in English

Given below is a list of abbreviations that are commonly used in English. You may come across these terms frequently in both speech and writing, so you should familiarise yourself with the meanings of these abbreviations. Look these up in a dictionary and note how they are used in context.

Abbreviation	Meaning
a.k.a.	also known as
a.m.	before noon (from the Latin phrase <i>ante meridiem</i>)
a/c	account
a/o	account of
AGM	annual general meeting
AOB	any other business
approx.	approximately
ASAP	as soon as possible
ATM	automated teller machine
attn	for the attention of
AWOL	absent without official leave
BCE	Before Common Era
c/o	care of (on letters, this means 'at the address of')
cc	copy to
CE	Common Era
CEO	chief executive officer
cf.	compare (from the Latin word <i>confer</i>)
CFO	chief financial officer
Co.	company
COD	cash on delivery
COO	chief operating officer
dept	department
DIY	do it yourself
DOB	date of birth
e.g.	for example (from the Latin phrase <i>exempli gratia</i>)
EGM	extraordinary general meeting
ETA	estimated time of arrival
et al.	and others (from the Latin phrase <i>et alia</i>)
etc.	and so on (from the Latin phrase <i>et cetera</i>)
ETD	estimated time of departure
FAQ	frequently asked questions

FDI	foreign direct investment
FIR	first information report
FYI	for your information
GDP	gross domestic product
GMO	genetically modified organism
GMT	Greenwich Mean Time (the time in London)
GNP	gross national product
GST	goods and services tax
HR	human resources
i.e.	that is (from the Latin phrase <i>id est</i>)
ID	identification
Inc.	incorporated
IOU	I owe you
IPO	initial public offer
IQ	intelligence quotient
Jr	junior
K	thousand
lb	pound (the unit of weight)
Ltd	limited
misc.	miscellaneous
mo.	month / per month / monthly (depending on context)
N/A	not applicable
NB	please note well (from the Latin phrase <i>nota bene</i>)
no. / nos.	number / numbers
NRI	non-resident Indian
OBC	other backward class
OTT	over-the-top (refers to the delivery of content over the internet)
p.a.	every year (from the Latin phrase <i>per annum</i>)
p.m.	after noon (from the Latin phrase <i>post meridiem</i>)
p.p.	per pro (used before signing in a person's absence)
p.s.	postscript (a note added to a letter after the signature)
PA	personal assistant
PAN	permanent account number
PFA	please find attached
PIN	personal identification number
PLC	public limited company
PR	public relations
PTO	please turn over
qty	quantity

R&D	research and development
RBI	Reserve Bank of India
re.	in the matter of / regarding / concerning
ROI	return on investment
RSVP	please reply (from the French phrase <i>répondez s'il vous plaît</i>)
SC/ST	scheduled caste and/or scheduled tribe
Sr	senior
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
TBA	to be announced
TBD	to be decided
tbsp	tablespoon
tsp	teaspoon
USP	unique selling proposition
VAT	value added tax
VIP	very important person
viz.	namely / in other words (from the Latin word <i>videlicet</i>)
VP	vice president
w.r.t.	with regard to / with reference to

GRAMMAR

Avoiding Clichés in Communication

A cliché is a remark that has been repeated so often that it has become almost meaningless. The list of clichés is very long. Here are just a few examples:

<i>all intents and purposes</i>	<i>heated debate</i>	<i>stick out like a sore thumb</i>
<i>fact of the matter</i>	<i>paradigm shift</i>	<i>cutting edge</i>
<i>new lease of life</i>	<i>bite the bullet</i>	<i>low hanging fruit</i>
<i>all said and done</i>	<i>in this day and age</i>	<i>synergise</i>
<i>few and far between</i>	<i>path of least resistance</i>	<i>think outside the box</i>
<i>par for the course</i>	<i>choke with emotion</i>	<i>throw under the bus</i>
<i>baptism by fire</i>	<i>level playing field</i>	<i>when push comes to shove</i>

The overuse of clichés results in writing and speech that feels 'stale' because the mind of the reader/listener is so used to these expressions that it no longer engages with the images that the expressions conjure. Therefore, these phrases are not very effective. People often use clichés unthinkingly—hence the use of clichés betrays a lack of originality, sincerity, and effort.

Now that you have learned what clichés are, and why they are ineffective, try and spot them in your own writing. Rephrase sentences that rely on clichés. Replacing clichés involves thinking about what it really means, and then conveying that meaning in your own words. For example, *at this moment in time* can be re-written more simply as *now*.

This leads us to another point about clichés: they are often used to merely add to the length of a piece of writing. Such expressions don't contribute much value to the communication process, and should be cut out.

Given below are a few examples of how clichéd expressions can be re-written. Note how this involves re-casting the sentences slightly or changing a few words to suit the context of what is being communicated. Since clichés can be vague in certain contexts, re-writing clichéd expressions can often make your meaning more precise.

Sentence with cliché	Re-written sentence
The police said that they would leave no stone unturned in their efforts to catch the culprit.	The police said that they would <i>do everything possible</i> to catch the culprit.
We need to think outside the box to find a solution to this problem.	We need to <i>think more imaginatively</i> to find a solution to this problem.
She doesn't have the bandwidth to take on more projects.	She doesn't have the <i>time and energy</i> to take on more projects.
They took a long time to get the ball rolling.	They took a long time to <i>begin</i> .

EXERCISES

A. Spot the cliché in the following sentences and then re-write the sentence to avoid the cliché. Note that when re-constructing the sentences, there is no one correct answer; but be careful to not change the original sentence altogether.

1. Leading the team is no bed of roses.
2. Injustice makes my blood boil.
3. At work, she was always ready to go the extra mile.
4. He had to toe the line to keep his job.
5. Yesterday's World Cup quarter-final match was one for the books. Everyone expected it to be a slam dunk for India, but Kenya stepped up to the plate and showed that they were ready to play hardball. The dark horse didn't pull any punches; on the other hand, as the match wore on, the favourites failed to keep their eye on the ball. Ultimately, last year's champions bit the dust as Kenya knocked it out of the park and advanced to the semi-finals.

B. Have a classroom discussion on the most overused phrases and expressions you come across in print and broadcast media (including the internet). Divide the class into groups. Each group should list at least three clichés that have not been mentioned in the list given at the start of this lesson.

Avoiding Redundancies in Communication

We often tend to write like we think: in a long-winded, rambling, and semi-structured manner. However, this kind of circumlocutory writing makes for poor writing style. Redundancy in writing is the use of words, phrases or sentences that needlessly repeat what has already been said. Unnecessary repetition sometimes distracts or confuses the reader, often makes a passage less interesting, and usually dilutes the impact of the text. Being concise is an important quality a good writer ought to cultivate. Do not waste your reader's time: get to the point, and keep things simple.

Look at the pair of sentences below. The first sentence contains many redundant phrases (underlined in red). The second sentence, a re-written version of the first, is both shorter and easier to understand.

- ✗ In the light of the fact that the product is not of a satisfactory nature, the consensus of opinion is that it is incumbent upon us to postpone the launch until later.
- ✓ Because the product is unsatisfactory, the consensus is that we should postpone the launch.

Redundancies creep into our writing when we:

- use verbose expressions instead of simple words (e.g., notwithstanding the fact that instead of although; concerning the matter of instead of about)
- use abstract or vague expressions that add no meaning (e.g., we are in a position to begin instead of we can begin)
- use modifying words that are not necessary (e.g., absolutely critical instead of critical; shouted loudly instead of shouted)
- use nouns in place of verbs (e.g., she made reference to instead of she referred to)
- spell out the last word of an abbreviation (e.g., ATM machine: the *M* stands for *machine*; PIN number: the *N* stands for *number*)

Here are some ways in which you can be concise in your writing—

- Stay focused on what you want to say: do not add irrelevant ideas.
- Restructure your lines: A series of short sentences that present a complex idea might be combined to express the same idea in a compact manner. Compare the paragraph below to the sentence that follows it.

- ✗ R.K. Narayan was well known as a writer. Although of Indian origin, he wrote fiction in English. There was a simplicity in his language that readers loved. His stories were set in realistic locations and featured endearing characters. For these reasons, Narayan was greatly admired among the writers of modern India.
- ✓ R.K. Narayan was a well-known Indian writer of English fiction. The simplicity of his language, his realistic settings, and endearing characters made him one of the most admired writers of modern India.

- Omit extraneous words: Do not use more words than necessary in a sentence, nor more sentences than necessary in a paragraph. The wordier your writing is, the harder it will be for the reader to understand what you are trying to say. Compare the sentences given below.

- ✗ A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who served as the eleventh President of the country of India, was in office from the year 2002 to the year 2007.
- ✓ A.P.J. Abdul Kalam served as the eleventh President of India from 2002 to 2007.

The first sentence uses too many words. The second sentence conveys the same meaning in an economical way.

Sometimes, we do not realise that we are saying the same thing twice. Learn to recognise redundant words and phrases, and rid your writing of them. Given below are a few more examples of how one can prune redundancies. Do not, however, sacrifice clarity for the sake of brevity.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✗ Sunny's cap was red <u>in colour.</u> | ✓ Sunny's cap was red. |
| ✗ Shoaib practised French <u>on a daily basis.</u> | ✓ Shoaib practised French <i>daily.</i> |
| ✗ The enemy was surrounded <u>on all sides.</u> | ✓ The enemy was surrounded. |
| ✗ The oven is <u>located in the immediate vicinity of</u> the stove. | ✓ The oven is <i>near</i> the stove. |
| ✗ <u>An analysis of the process was performed by</u> Ritika. | ✓ Ritika <i>analysed</i> the process. |

EXERCISES

C. *Cross out unnecessary words from the sentences below.*

1. She summarised the report briefly.
2. The announcer was inaudible at the back of the hall and could not be heard.
3. The committee is in the process of reviewing our recommendations.
4. Go and fetch my belongings, please.
5. We must encourage new innovation.
6. The police chased after the thief
7. They should learn to cooperate together.
8. He ordered for two plates of biryani.
9. The person who is responsible for this mess should be fired.
10. The money we have is sufficient enough.

D. *Simplify the following passages. Note that there may be more than one correct way of re-writing these sentences; but be careful not to change the intended meaning.*

1. The meetings of the planning committee are scheduled on a weekly basis. It is necessary that the final decisions taken by the members of the committee must be arrived at in a unanimous manner.
2. I have no queries at the moment right now other than just one question that I want to ask about the time of the meeting. I want to know when will the meeting be beginning.
3. Mr Venkat Aluri is the CEO of Sai Food Products. As far as the matter of safety is concerned, Mr Aluri said that he was not bothered by the news report because his company has a good track record on these matters.

READING

The SQ3R Method

SQ3R is a five-step reading comprehension method that trains your mind to focus on what you are reading in order to better understand and retain information from written material. The abbreviation SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Revise, the steps that constitute the process.

SQ3R was specifically developed as a technique for reading study materials (like textbooks), but is also useful for all kinds of expository, argumentative, or information-dense texts. The sequence of steps in SQ3R is designed to make you read actively, with intention, rather than passively. The purpose of SQ3R is to make effective use of the time and effort spent reading information that needs to be understood, absorbed and recalled.

The SQ3R method is outlined below. The steps in the process should be followed in the given order.

1. **Survey**

- Do not dive in and begin reading immediately—instead, skim through the material first to get a general idea of what it is about.
- Look at (a) the title, (b) headings and sub-headings, (c) tables, graphs, charts, images, and (d) text that is highlighted or set apart (abstracts, objectives, summaries, points to remember, etc.).
- Don't spend too much time on this step: five minutes or less is sufficient.

2. **Question**

- Based on the information you have picked up through your quick survey (as well as your prior knowledge of the subject), ask yourself questions about what you are about to read.
- Examples of questions to ask yourself are: *What is this book, chapter, etc. going to be about? What do I already know about this subject? What is the author's purpose in writing this? Why am I reading this (or, what is my goal)? How will this benefit me?*
- **TIP:** You can convert the heading of each sub-section into a question. For example, after skimming through Unit 4 of this textbook, some questions you could ask yourself about the current section are: *Have I come across the term 'SQ3R' before? What is the SQ3R method? It looks like an abbreviation—what does it stand for? Why is this topic in the 'Reading' section of this chapter? What does it have to do with reading skills?*
- The purpose of this step is to warm up your mind, to prepare and engage your mind, so that it is ready to read in an active (rather than a passive) manner. One is usually more alert than usual when one is looking for something—in this case, answers to the questions you have formulated. You are tricking your mind into activating itself.

3. **Read**

- After you have completed the first two steps, you can finally begin actually reading the material.
- Read the book, chapter, etc. section by section instead of all at once.
- As you read each section, keep in mind the questions you had formulated during the previous step, and look for answers to those questions.
- While reading, more questions may arise in your mind; keep looking for answers to those questions within the current section (and in later sections).
- **TIP:** It would be even better if you could write down all your questions in a notebook.
- Answering these questions as you read will help you engage with the text and identify critical information contained within it.
- The current section may not answer all the questions that spring to your mind: that's okay. Just try and identify the answers that are present in the current part of the text.

4. **Recite**

- When you reach the end of the current section, pause, and repeat (recite) to yourself what you remember from that section.
- Recall the headings, the main points, and the answers to your questions.
- If you can't remember these points, look at the text again, and repeat your attempt to recollect the information.
- **TIPS:** Try reciting the main points out aloud to yourself, or even to someone else (such as a study partner) as though you are explaining it to them (or to yourself). As much as possible, use your own words when doing so, instead of repeating the words of the text verbatim. You can paraphrase and summarise the information. You can create written (or picture or audio) notes. All of these tips will boost your long-term memory of what you have just read.
- Move on to the next section (of the book, chapter, etc.) only after you are successful at this step.

5. **Review**

- After you finish reading the entire material (i.e., after you complete the READ and RECITE stages for each section of the material), it is time to review everything you have learnt.
- Try to recall from memory (a) the main points of the material, and (b) answers to all the questions you had formulated.
- Review (as well as correct, update and expand) your notes. Re-read those parts of the material that you found difficult. Check to see if there are any gaps in your understanding of the material and make a note of those.

The SQ3R method may seem slow at first, but do not feel discouraged. It will save you time and effort in the long run, compared to reading passively and without focus, letting your eyes glaze over the lines. The extra effort involved in the SQ3R method will supercharge your learning.

EXERCISE

- A. *Apply the principles of the SQ3R method when reading the following passages. Remember to go step by step, as outlined in this lesson: skim; formulate questions before reading in detail; read carefully to answer your questions; check your comprehension.*

The Colour of Flavour

Colour is added to food for a number of reasons. People associate certain colours with certain food. We expect plain cornflakes to be a certain shade of light brown and chocolate cornflakes to be a darker, richer shade of brown. We also tend to assume that food with certain colours have certain associated qualities. For example, when buying apples, you would probably pick up an apple that is bright red than one which has a dull red shade because we assume that the former will be fresh, ripe, juicy, tasty and healthier than the latter. The colour of food even influences its perceived flavour. When manufacturing food, its natural pigments are often lost due to chemical processes. Therefore, the colours which we assume the food should have are then artificially restored to it. Most processed food items (especially junk food) are actually colourless or have dull, pasty shades. Adding colour to drinks, candies, etc., make them seem more appetising (think of the array of brightly coloured sweets in sweet shops during festivals such as Diwali, or the neon hues of carbonated drinks which we gulp down in summer). Besides, in nature, fruits and vegetables do not have a uniform colour; there are always variations in natural colour. For example, oranges from the same orchard may be different shades of the colour orange, even if they are all ripe. In order to ensure that the oranges are uniformly the same colour, a layer of artificial dye might be added to the fruit. It also makes the oranges more 'attractive' and marketable (since the consumer assumes that a brighter colour means a riper, juicier fruit). This is true for some other fruits and vegetables too. Poultry farmers have been known to feed food colouring to their chickens to enhance the colour of egg yolk.

Food prepared in restaurants contains a lot of red and yellow food colouring in order to add to the aesthetic presentation of the food. In restaurants abroad, where Indian food is becoming very popular, it is a common perception that the redder the 'curry' is, the better it tastes (and more 'authentically Indian' it is). It has been reported that packaged spices like red chilli powder and turmeric often contain other powdered substances to enhance their colours. Jalebis and other sweets often contain large amounts of food colouring. Food colouring is used not just commercially, in packed foods and restaurant chains, but also at home (for example, in preparing biryani). Interestingly, it is also used for non-food products such as cosmetics, medicines, soaps, shampoos and moisturisers, to name a few.

We belong to a visual culture: bright colours are more appealing and attractive to us. This is why even the packaging of processed food contains bright primary colours. Whether we admit it or not, colour is an important (if subconscious) factor when choosing one product over another.

Food colouring may be natural or artificial (synthetic). Natural colouring agents are derived from fruits and vegetables (and in some cases, from animals or insects). Examples of natural food dyes are annatto (reddish-orange), chlorophyllin (green), paprika (red), turmeric (yellow) and butterfly pea (blue). Artificial dyes are chemically synthesised (usually from organic compounds such as hydrocarbons of petroleum). Some common synthetic dyes are brilliant blue FCF (blue), erythrosine (pink), tartrazine (yellow), and sunset yellow FCF (orange). When preparing food, colouring agents are used either by themselves or in various combinations of natural and synthetic colours.

Given the prevalence of colouring agents in the food we consume, we ought to be aware of the ways these substances affect us. Studies have demonstrated the adverse effects of synthetic dyes. Many countries have banned certain dyes and officially allow only a few select synthetic dyes to be used in food. However, regulations are often difficult to enforce, especially in a country like India. Even permitted artificial colouring is known to have many undesirable effects. They can cause problems in pregnancy and lead to birth defects. They have been known to cause allergic reactions, hyperactivity, behavioural problems and organ damage. Researchers have also associated colouring agents with asthma, insomnia and nervous disorders, and say that they might pose other long-term health risks. Some dyes are even believed to be carcinogenic, meaning they contain cancer-causing agents. One must remember that artificial colouring agents do not occur naturally, but are man-made chemical compounds. Since food colouring is mostly found in junk food and other products consumed primarily by children and young adults, these age groups face the greatest risk. In short, food colouring does not serve any purpose apart from cosmetically 'enhancing' the appearance of food while causing harm to our bodies.

Paper Manufacturing

Paper is a substance used universally for writing and packaging. Formed from wood pulp or plant fibre, paper is used chiefly for written communication. The earliest paper was papyrus, made from reeds by the ancient Egyptians.

Modern papermaking methods, although significantly more complicated than the older ways, are developmental improvements rather than entirely new methods of making paper. The raw materials used for paper manufacturing are wood fibre from saw mills, recycled newspaper, vegetable matter, recycled cloth, bamboo, straw, sugarcane and flax. The use of cloth in the manufacturing process produces high-quality paper. Today, a large proportion of cotton and linen fibres are used in the mix to create excellent papers for special uses.

The first step in the paper manufacturing process is the making of pulp. The ingredients are dissolved in water and chemicals to create the pulp. A screen-like material is passed through the mixture and the pulp settles on this. The excess water is evaporated, leaving behind a layer of paper.

There are many environmental concerns associated with the manufacture of paper. The number of trees and other vegetation cut down in order to make paper is enormous. Paper companies insist that they plant as many new trees as they cut down. However, environmentalists contend that the new trees are much younger and smaller, and cannot therefore replace the value of older trees. The chemicals used in paper manufacturing, including dyes, inks, and bleach, are harmful to the environment when released into nearby water supplies.

Silk Production

The secret to silk production is the tiny creature known as the silkworm, which is the caterpillar of the silk moth *Bombyx mori*. It feeds solely on the leaves of mulberry trees. Only one other species of moth, the *Antheraea mylitta*, also produces silk fibre. This is a wild creature, and its silk filament is about three times heavier than that of the cultivated silkworm. Its coarser fibre is called tussah.

The life cycle of the *Bombyx mori* begins with eggs laid by the adult moth. The larvae emerge from the eggs and feed on mulberry leaves. In the larval stage, the Bombyx is the caterpillar known as the silkworm. The silkworm spins a protective cocoon around itself so it can safely transform into a chrysalis. In nature, the chrysalis breaks through the cocoon and emerges as a moth. The moths mate and the female lays 300 to 400 eggs. A few days after emerging from the cocoon, the moths die and the life cycle continues.

The cultivation of silkworms for the purpose of producing silk is called sericulture. Over the centuries, sericulture has been developed and refined to a precise science. Sericulture involves raising healthy eggs through the chrysalis stage when the worm is encased in its silky cocoon. The chrysalis inside is destroyed before it can break out of the cocoon so that the precious silk filament remains intact. The healthiest moths are selected for breeding, and they are allowed to reach maturity, mate, and produce more eggs.

Generally, one cocoon produces between 1,000 and 2,000 feet of silk filament, made essentially of two elements. The fibre, called fibroin, makes up between 75 and 90%, and sericin, the gum secreted by the caterpillar to glue the fibre into a cocoon, comprises about 10 to 25% of silk. Other elements include fats, salts, and wax. To make one yard of silk material, about 3,000 cocoons are used.

- B. *Optional exercise: Apply the SQ3R method to re-read the essay at the beginning of Unit 3: 'Lessons from Online Learning' by F. Haider Alvi, et al.*

WRITING

Essay Writing

An essay is a long, self-contained piece of composition on a particular topic. The four main types of essays are:

Descriptive essays

These are essays that describe some object or place or person. The features of the subject are discussed, and one may choose to focus on certain specific aspects. An example would be an essay on your college campus or one on a place that you have visited.

Narrative essays

As the name itself suggests, the aim of the narrative essay is to narrate or report an event. The arrangement is by the order in which the events occurred. The narration must be carried to a natural conclusion which satisfies the reader's curiosity. The essay may narrate episodes from history, legend, or someone's biography; an event such as an election or a basketball match; or an incident such as a miraculous escape or a train accident.

Expository essays

The purpose of an expository essay is to explain or analyse a subject, or to define or interpret a term or concept. Its aim is to inform the reader. Expository essays can be written on a wide variety of subjects, e.g., 'healthy eating', 'quantum computing', 'the UN and its activities'.

Argumentative (or discursive) essays

The aim of an argumentative essay is to convince your reader that the position you have taken on a subject is right. When writing an essay of this kind, you must state your position in clear terms, bring in evidence to support your stance, and present your arguments in a logical manner. For example, the topic for a discursive essay could be 'The mother tongue as the medium of teaching at the college level'. These essays are also known as reflective essays.

In order to understand the difference between these types of essays, think about how a single topic—say, earthquakes—could be treated in a variety of ways. A descriptive essay might describe the scenes that present themselves to the eye in the aftermath of a major earthquake. A narrative essay, on the other hand, would relate the incidents that took place during a particular earthquake. An expository essay would talk about what earthquakes are, why they occur, how they are studied, and give examples of recorded earthquakes. An argumentative essay might discuss your personal opinion on the best ways to minimise the impact of earthquakes.

HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY

Beginning a long piece of composition can sometimes seem like a daunting task. Given below are a few useful points to remember when writing any extended written composition.

- Understand the topic, and be clear about your aim before you start writing. Begin by thinking deeply about the topic which you are going to write on. Look up information in books or on the internet if you need to do research, and make a note of relevant points.
- Write down the main points that you wish to make in your essay, and arrange them into a suitable order. If it is to be a long essay, write down a few sub-points under each main point. This will provide an outline which you can flesh out in the next step.
- Now that you have a blueprint for your essay in the form of an outline of main points and sub-points, it is time to expand these points into full sentences and paragraphs to create the actual essay.
 - Structure your essay so that it has a clear beginning, middle and end. Tips on how to write a good beginning (introduction) and a good ending (conclusion) are given below. The middle (or the 'body') of the essay is where your ideas get detailed.
 - Present your ideas as a set of paragraphs. Paragraphing helps readers understand and process your ideas in meaningful units of thought. Think of paragraphs as the building blocks of your essay.
 - Be careful that you do not bring in irrelevant ideas or points that undercut the argument you are making. Stay focused on the position you take all through the essay, and avoid the temptation to discuss related issues. An essay should not be loosely structured or rambling, and every part should contribute to its total meaning.
- After expanding the outline, always read through your draft of the essay and revise it. Double-check facts and spellings. Pay special attention to clarity and grammatical correctness.

WRITING INTRODUCTIONS

A good beginning sets the tone for the rest of your work. Your introduction should be interesting enough to make the reader want to continue reading the rest of your essay.

You could start most descriptive, expository and argumentative essays by simply introducing the reader to the essay's subject and/or your purpose.

- If, for example, you are writing an essay on social media, you could begin by stating what is meant by the term ‘social media’.
- If you wish to illustrate the working of an induction motor, you could begin by defining an induction motor, and then stating that you will explain how one works.
- For argumentative essays, you could begin by stating your position on the topic (for or against).

Another technique is to give a very brief outline of the main points you are going to cover in your composition. This works well for argumentative essays, as it gives the reader a clear mental blueprint to follow as you flesh out your argument, but it would also work for expository essays.

Introductions can be made attention-grabbing with some sort of hook statement. You could start with...

- a question, e.g., *Why is social media so addictive?* Questions are an easy way to draw the reader’s attention to the topic you wish to discuss.
- a quote, e.g., *An American comedian once said, “Social media is anti-social”*. Explain the quotation’s relevance to the theme of your essay (if it is not already obvious).
- a statistic, e.g., *The average internet user spends at least 3 hours on social media every day*. The source of the statistic should ideally be mentioned in the essay (in the same sentence or as a footnote).
- an anecdote, i.e., a short but interesting personal story. Beware of making the anecdote too long, and make sure that it is of direct relevance to the essay’s theme.

In narrative essays, you could even begin in the middle or the most exciting part of the narration—and then go back to the start in the body of the essay. This is another example of a good hook that immediately pulls the reader in.

TIP: If you’re finding it difficult to begin writing your essay with the introduction, you could instead begin by expanding the outline points in the body of the essay first, and *then* come back and write the introduction. If you begin by writing the introduction first, remember to re-read it when you finish writing the complete essay, to check if the introduction needs to be revised.

WRITING CONCLUSIONS

The end of your work is as important as the beginning. Let us look at a few techniques to help you write a suitable conclusion.

In narrative essays, provide a satisfying end to the story you set out to tell. In other types of essays, mention your final thoughts on the matter by providing recommendations, opinions, and solutions.

A good way to end is to leave the reader with something to think about:

- In expository and descriptive essays, you could talk about what the future holds with regard to the subject of the essay.
- Remind your reader about (or reflect on) the significance of the topic.
- If you have been discussing a problem in a discursive or an expository manner, recommend a solution, or warn of the consequences of not resolving the problem.
- Make use of quotations or statistics that can drive home the point you’re trying to make.
- If you began your essay with an attention-grabbing hook, try revisiting that question, quotation, statistic or anecdote if you can now draw some deeper, additional insight from it in the light of the completed essay.

Argumentative and expository essays can be brought to a close by restating or rephrasing the theme of your essay. You could also quickly review or sum up the main points, and. However, avoid a long-winded recap of everything you have already said in the rest of your work. For instance, you could conclude a book review with a brief summary of why you liked or disliked the book—but do not go back to talking about the plot, the setting, the narrative style, etc. Remember: if you choose to conclude with a summary, use fresh language. Using the same words and phrases that you have used earlier would make your writing boring.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Give emphasis to the main idea in the essay by directly stating it, or by placing it in a prominent position (for example, in the beginning or end), or by giving more space to it.
- To ensure that your essay is balanced, the points included in it must be given the treatment they deserve according to their importance. For example, avoid making your introduction so long that there is a delay in your getting to the main point.
- Your arguments should be ordered in a logical sequence. Make sure that the link between all your points is clear, and that they all lead logically to your conclusion. Use connecting words (such as *firstly*, *furthermore*, *to conclude*, etc.) to link paragraphs with supporting arguments, to connect a general statement with an example or a fact, or to indicate to the reader that you are concluding your essay.
- Most essays are written in a formal style. Use complete sentences and avoid colloquial expressions and slang.

SAMPLE STRUCTURE OF ESSAYS

Say, for example, you had to write a descriptive essay on a house. Here is how you might go about it.

- Paragraph 1* General introduction—size, location, etc.
- Paragraph 2* Rooms and their location and purpose
- Paragraph 3* Details of the rooms
- Paragraph 4* Open spaces, for example verandas and gardens
- Paragraph 5* Concluding remarks

The following outline may be used to write an argumentative essay.

- Paragraph 1* Introduction (issue under discussion), position taken by you, opposite views
- Paragraph 2* Argument 1, with supporting examples/evidence
- Paragraph 3* Argument 2, with supporting examples/evidence
- Paragraph 4* Argument 3, with supporting examples/evidence
- Paragraph 5* Conclusion, summing up, reinforcement of position taken in Paragraph 1

EXERCISES

- A. Given below are outlines for two essays: (1) 'Machine civilisation', and (2) 'A visit to a museum'. Use the points provided to expand any one of the two outlines into a complete essay of about 500 words. Feel free to add, delete or change the given points, or to modify the outline provided.

Machine civilisation

- A. *Short historical note*
1. Industrial Revolution to early 19th century
 2. Late 19th century and 20th century
- B. *Features of machine civilisation*
1. Machines and modern industry
 2. Machines in daily life
 3. Machines have made the world smaller
 4. Faster travel
 5. Faster communication
- C. *Advantages of machine civilisation*
1. Higher standard of living
 - a. Luxuries and comforts
 - b. Abundance
 2. Faster travel: by land, air or sea
 3. Leisure and entertainment
 - a. Radio, cinema, television, internet
 - b. Books and magazines
- D. *Disadvantages of machine civilisation*
1. Quality of life has fallen: life has become mechanical
 2. Pollution
 3. Noise
 4. Craze for speed
 5. Dependence on machines

A visit to a museum

- A. *Which museum you decided to visit and why*
1. Location
 2. What is special about it
 3. How you got there
- B. *Your experience there*
1. Art works you saw
 - a. Medieval paintings
 - b. Miniature paintings
 - c. Modernist paintings

2. Sculptures
 - a. Classical
 - b. Ancient Indian
 - c. Modernist
 3. Rare books and manuscripts
 - a. Pali
 - b. Sanskrit
 - c. Telugu
- C. Which part you liked best and why
- D. Your thoughts on the way back

B. Write an expository essay on any one of the following topics.

1. Climate change and its impact
2. Social media: a curse or boon?
3. The benefits of diversity in society
4. The benefits of meditation
5. The role of the youth in nation building

C. Write a narrative or descriptive essay on any one of the following topics.

1. The proudest moment of your life
2. An embarrassing experience
3. What super power would you choose to have, and why?
4. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
5. How you would spend a million rupees?

D. Write an argumentative essay on any one of the following topics. You may choose to write either for OR against the given topic.

1. Television journalism today is just entertainment
2. Technology is ruining our ability to communicate
3. Nursing homes can provide better care for the elderly than their families
4. Violence in cinema promotes violence in society
5. Students should be allowed to carry phones in schools

Précis Writing

A précis is a shortened version of a letter, a passage, a report, an article, a chapter, or a book, written in your own words. The word *précis* (plural form also *précis*) is borrowed from French, in which it means both *summary* (noun) and *precise* (adjective).

THE PURPOSE OF PRÉCIS

The skill of précis-writing is very useful in both academic and work-related situations.

- A précis saves the reader's time. The reader can quickly go over the main points of a piece of writing without having to invest the time to read the entire text. For example, a busy senior executive would find it convenient to read the précis of a document or a series of letters.

- Précis are of great help in checking if a book or an article is of relevance to someone working on a particular subject. Thus, scholars and scientists use summaries of research reports, articles and books to find out if they want to read the original text.
- Many kinds of written and spoken material often contain redundant and irrelevant points. A summary helps focus attention on what is pertinent. For example, newspaper reporters have to summarise speeches, reports and the proceedings of various official committees, because the reader does not need to know everything that was said or done.
- A précis is also a great study aid as one can condense essays, articles or chapters from books for future reference. The act of summarising improves retention and recall of the material to be learnt.

HOW TO WRITE A PRÉCIS

- Writing a précis should start with a careful reading of the text. This may be followed, if necessary, by a quick second reading (especially when the passage is either very complex or packed with ideas and difficult to understand).
- The next step is to identify the subject of the passage and the main points and the sub-points coming under it. Write these down in numbered note form and check the original text again to see whether you have left out any important point.
- Use your notes to write a draft of the précis in your own words.
- Go through your draft and make necessary changes:
 - Cut out repetitions.
 - Omit minor details that are not essential for an understanding of the ideas contained in the original text.
 - Omit examples—except where they are required by the context or help the reader to understand a point better (in which case, limit them to just one or two).
 - Omit sentences in direct speech (or, when essential, change to indirect speech).
 - Omit quotations, tables and diagrams included in the original.
 - The language of a précis should be free from slang and colloquial expressions. It must be simple, concise and direct. Avoid using idiomatic phrases or fixed expressions.
 - Check every sentence to see if it can be made shorter and simpler.
- Now give your précis a suitable heading. The title of your précis should be related to the subject of the passage, and should immediately convey to the reader what the passage is about. This heading should be short, simple and straightforward (instead of literary or figurative).
- Make sure that your word count matches the recommended length of the précis you have to write. If you find that the draft of your précis exceeds the prescribed word limit, condense it further.
- Correct any mistakes you may have made. Finally, make a neat, fair copy of your précis.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- The length of a précis varies, depending on the original text and also the purpose for which it is written.
- Write the précis in your own words, making sure that you have covered all the main points of the original.

- The organisation of the précis should match that of the original by following the order and the importance given to the main points and the sub-points.
- Do not add any detail or comment not found in the original.
- The précis should have the same tone as the original, and should not reflect your attitude towards the subject. The function of précis is to outline what is said in the original passage and not to support or criticise it.

MODEL PRÉCIS

Read the passage below and carefully note the steps taken to summarise it.

There is an enemy beneath our feet—an enemy the more deadly for its complete impartiality. It recognises no national boundaries, no political parties. Everyone in the world is threatened by it. The enemy is the earth itself. When an earthquake strikes, the world trembles. The power of a quake is greater than anything human beings themselves can produce. But today scientists are directing a great deal of their effort into finding some way of combating earthquakes, and it is possible that sometime in the near future people will have discovered a means of protecting themselves.

An earthquake strikes without warning. When it does, its power is immense. If it strikes a modern city, the damage it causes is as great as if it has struck a primitive village. Gas mains burst, explosions are caused and fires are started. Underground railways are wrecked. Whole buildings collapse, bridges fall, dams burst. Gaping crevices appear in busy streets. If the quake strikes at sea, huge tidal waves sweep inland. If it strikes in mountain regions, avalanches roar down into the valleys.

Consider the terrifying statistics from the past. Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, was destroyed entirely and 450 people were killed in 1755. In Peru, 50,000 people died in an earthquake in 1970. In 1968, an earthquake struck Alaska. As this is a relatively unpopulated part, only a few people were killed. But it is likely that this was one of the most powerful quakes ever to have hit the world. Geologists estimate that during the tremors, the whole of the state moved over eighty feet farther west into the Pacific Ocean. Imagine the power of something that can move an entire subcontinent!

This is the problem that faces scientists. They are dealing with forces so immense that human beings cannot hope to resist them. All that can be done is to try to pinpoint just where the earthquake will strike and work from there. At least some precautionary measures can then be taken to save lives and some of the property. (340 words)

The first step is to read through the passage to find its theme, or what the writer is talking about. The theme, or topic, will be the title of your précis.

Next, see how the theme is developed and write down the main points in the form of numbered notes of the following kind:

Terror from earthquakes

- earthquake—the great enemy
- damage done by earthquakes—general
- damage done by earthquakes—particular instances
- task before scientists

Fill out this bare frame with important details to get a fuller outline.

Terror from earthquakes

- A. earthquake—the great enemy
 - 1. strikes everywhere
 - 2. very great power
- B. damage done by earthquakes—general
 - 1. in a city
 - a. gas mains burst
 - b. explosions and fires
 - c. underground
 - d. buildings collapse
 - e. bridges and dams fall
 - f. crevices on streets railways wrecked
 - 2. on the sea—huge tidal waves
 - 3. mountain regions—avalanches
- C. damage done by earthquakes—particular instances
 - 1. Lisbon—1755
 - a. city destroyed
 - b. 450 killed
 - 2. Peru—1970: 50,000 killed
 - 3. Alaska—1968
 - a. only a few killed
 - b. entire subcontinent shifted 80 feet into ocean
- D. task before scientists
 - 1. difficult to deal with irresistible forces; can only work
 - a. to pinpoint earthquake-prone areas
 - b. to help people take precautionary measures

Let us use the notes above to write the first draft of the précis, which could be as follows:

The earth itself becomes our enemy when an earthquake strikes. Every country in the world is threatened by the tremendous fury of earthquakes. Their power exceeds all the forces released by humankind. When a city is hit, buildings fall and explosions and fires are started. Underground railways are wrecked. Gaping crevices appear on streets. Bridges and dams fall. Huge tidal waves rise on the sea. Avalanches roar down the mountainsides. An earthquake in Lisbon in 1755 destroyed the city and killed 450 persons. In Peru, 50,000 people died in an earthquake in 1970. The subcontinent of Alaska was pushed 80 feet into the sea in 1968. Faced with such tremendous forces, which cannot be resisted, scientists can only pinpoint earthquake-prone areas and take suitable steps to minimise the harm. (129 words)

This first draft can be condensed further by omitting more details and by pruning the language used. Here is the second draft.

Terror from earthquakes

Earthquakes, whose destructive power exceeds all the forces created by humankind, threaten every country in the world. When a city is hit, buildings fall and explosions and fires are started. Underground railways are wrecked. Wide crevices appear on streets. Bridges and dams fall. Huge tidal waves rise on the sea and avalanches roar down mountainsides. An earthquake in Lisbon in 1755 destroyed the city and killed many. In Peru, 50,000 people were killed in 1970. The subcontinent of Alaska was pushed 80 feet into the sea in 1968. Faced with such irresistible forces, scientists can only pinpoint earthquake-prone areas and take steps to minimise the harm. (106 words)

You can condense it even further if required, as shown below.

Terror from earthquakes

Earthquakes, which strike every part of the earth, possess such great power that they cause extensive damage. Buildings, bridges and railways are wrecked, and explosions and fires are caused, as are dangerous avalanches on mountainsides and huge tidal waves. Earthquakes caused death and destruction in Lisbon (1755) and in Peru (1970). An earthquake shifted the subcontinent of Alaska eighty feet into the sea. Scientists cannot stop earthquakes but they can warn people by pinpointing earthquake-prone areas. (76 words)

EXERCISES

E. Read the following passages and write a *précis* of any two that is about one-third of the original in length. Give each *précis* an appropriate heading.

Passage 1

Very often we begin something with a lot of enthusiasm, but we lose our sense of purpose and direction along the way, and end up leaving things incomplete or poorly done. Motivation is that which propels us towards a goal. It is the reason why we do something, and, indeed, do it well. It is therefore very important to keep oneself motivated.

How does one become motivated—or, more importantly, stay motivated through the course of something? Choose goals, tasks, projects, and occupations that interest you, that you are passionate about. If you are interested in your job, in your field, in your goal, then you will do whatever it takes to be excellent at it. You won't think twice about putting in extra effort and longer hours, or about making necessary sacrifices, if you love what you do.

What if a goal or a task has been thrust upon you, and is not of your choosing? If you can find even one thing about your situation in life, be it at the workplace or at home, to be excited about, then you will find dealing with that situation easier and you will be able to execute necessary tasks to the best of your abilities. Connect the goal or task to something that has meaning for you, something that is relevant to your personal goals or ideals. This will help you stay motivated. Break up larger goals or tasks into smaller ones. Track your progress, and celebrate each milestone. All this will feed your desire to achieve your goal, and thus keep you motivated.

Remember that failures (even repeated failures and setbacks) are inevitable. View setbacks, obstacles and failures as opportunities that teach you how to progress in a better manner. This kind of a positive attitude is essential to motivation. (301 words)

Passage 2

The lion (*Panthera leo*) is one of four big cats in the genus *Panthera*, and a member of the family Felidae. With some males reaching 250 kg in weight, it is the second-largest living cat after the tiger. Wild lions currently exist in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Asia with a critically endangered remnant population in northwest India, having disappeared from North Africa, the Middle East, and Western Asia in historic times. Until the late Pleistocene, which was about 10,000 years ago, the lion was the most widespread large land mammal after humans. They were found in most of Africa, much of Eurasia from western Europe to India, and in the Americas from the Yukon to Peru.

Lions live for around 10–14 years in the wild, while in captivity they can live over 20 years. In the wild, males seldom live longer than ten years as fights with rivals occasionally cause injuries. They typically inhabit savanna and grassland, although they may take to bush and forest. Lions are unusually social compared to other cats. A pride of lions consists of related females and offspring and a small number of adult males. Groups of female lions typically hunt together, preying mostly on large ungulates. The lion is an apex and keystone predator, although they will scavenge if the opportunity arises. While lions do not typically hunt humans selectively, some have been known to become man-eaters and seek human prey.

The lion is a vulnerable species, having seen a possibly irreversible population decline of 30 to 50 percent over the past two decades in its African range. Lion populations are untenable outside of designated reserves and national parks. Although the cause of the decline is not fully understood, habitat loss and conflicts with humans are currently the greatest causes of concern. Lions have been kept in menageries since Roman times and have been a key species sought for exhibition in zoos the world over since the late eighteenth century. Zoos are cooperating worldwide in breeding programs for the endangered Asiatic subspecies.

Visually, the male lion is highly distinctive and is easily recognized by its mane. The lion, particularly the face of the male, is one of the most widely recognized animal symbols in human culture. Depictions have existed from the Upper Palaeolithic period, with carvings and paintings from the Lascaux and Chauvet Caves, through virtually all ancient and medieval cultures where they historically occurred. It has been extensively depicted in literature, in sculptures, in paintings, on national flags, and in contemporary films. (420 words, adapted from *Wikipedia*)

Passage 3

Carnatic music is a system of music commonly associated with the southern part of the Indian subcontinent, with its area roughly confined to the five modern states of India: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. It is one of two main streams of Indian classical music that evolved from ancient Hindu traditions, the other being Hindustani music, which emerged as a distinct form in the 12th century due to Persian and Islamic influences in North India. Although there are stylistic differences, the basic elements of *śruti* (the relative musical pitch), *swara* (the musical sound of a single note), *rāga* (the mode or melodic formula) and *tāla* (the rhythmic cycles) form the foundation of improvisation and composition in both Carnatic and Hindustani music. However, in contrast to Hindustani music, the main emphasis in Carnatic music is on vocal music; most compositions are written to be sung, and even when played on instruments, they are meant to be performed in the *gāyaki* (singing) style.

Although improvisation plays an important role, Carnatic music is mainly sung through compositions, especially the *kṛiti* (or *kirtanam*), a form developed between the 16th and 19th centuries by prominent composers, such as Purandara Dasa and the trinity of Carnatic music, Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri.

Carnatic music is usually performed by a small ensemble of musicians, consisting of a principal performer (usually a vocalist), a melodic accompaniment (usually a violin), a rhythm accompaniment (usually a mridangam) and a tambura which acts as a drone throughout the performance. Other typical instruments used in performances may include the ghatam, the kanjira, the morsing, the veena and the flute. The most outstanding performances and the greatest gathering of Carnatic musicians happen in Chennai. In particular, the six-week-long music season held in the city every December has been described as the world's largest cultural event. (306 words, adapted from *Wikipedia*)

