# THE EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO LITERARY TEXTS ON READING COMPREHENSION AND VOCABULARY RETENTION: LITERATURE - MAJORS VS. TRANSLATION - MAJORS

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## Abstract

This study attempts to examine the impact of reading literary texts on vocabulary retention of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). Some Iranian undergraduate students (n=140) randomly selected from among senior students of English literature and English translation participated in this investigation. The results of one-way ANOVAs brought to light the fact that exposure to a plethora of literary material does not necessarily bring about any significant gain in literature majors' comprehension of literary or nonliterary texts. Even so, as reading literary texts improves the retention of vocabulary items, a literature-based methodology for teaching vocabulary is recommended

**Keywords:** extensive reading; literature; reading comprehension; vocabulary acquisition

## INTRODUCTION

Given the centrality of vocabulary learning in promoting second language (L2) acquisition, language teachers are recommended to develop students' lexical knowledge via utilizing pedagogical techniques which are likely to facilitate learning vocabulary items. For example, it is advisable that L2 practitioners be aware of those teaching techniques that best contextualize word meanings (Picken, 2007). In addition, they should try to foster students' genuine interest in vocabulary which, in turn, might make for the expansion of their L2 lexicon (Paran, 2006). In the light of the foregoing account, a warranted question may arise as what factors might contribute to L2 learners' vocabulary acquisition. The study reported in this article sought to address this issue by exploring whether and how exposure to an abundance of literary texts helps EFL learners expand their knowledge of English vocabularies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and thus provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. It has been established that "lexical competence is at the heart of communicative competence" (Meara, 1996, p. 35). Without an acceptable amount of vocabulary and some strategies to acquire and master new vocabulary items, learners do not achieve up to their potential and are hence discouraged from making most of such language learning opportunities as listening to radio, listening to native speakers, using language in different contexts, or watching television (Laufer, 1986; Nation, 1990).

Nevertheless, vocabulary and its role have been prone to changes in language teaching approaches and methods (Stubbs, 2001).

## The Influence of Teaching Methodologies on Vocabulary Teaching

One of the corollaries of early approaches to Communicative Language Teaching (hereafter, CLT) was a paucity of focus on the lexical items, the building blocks of language. While traditional language teaching methods underlined the study of vocabulary items with lists, drills, and flash cards, at a certain period of time vocabulary and its teaching was neglected, or as Zimmerman (1997, p. 5) puts it, "undervalued."

In the wake of authentic and natural classroom activities and tasks, no attention was paid to the teaching of vocabulary. Moreover, as a consequence of CLT's emphasis on the role of teachers as facilitators, teachers were growingly reluctant to assume directive roles to attract students' attention to lexical items. Closing years of the twentieth century, however, witnessed a rebirth of a systematic focus on lexical forms of language across different proficiency levels and contexts (Stubbs, 2001). This emphasis ranged from very direct, explicit teaching of vocabulary, as in Michael Lewis' (1993, 1997) Lexical Approach, to more implicit, indirect approaches in which vocabulary items were embedded in communicative tasks.

Today, vocabulary teaching plays a more central role in language curriculum development (Hiebert & Kamil, 2009). Today, instead of providing students with long, boring vocabulary lists to be memorized, vocabulary items are presented in meaningful, contextualized language. In other words, today lexical forms are treated communicatively.

## Implicit vs. Explicit Vocabulary Acquisition

Nation (1996) argues that extensive reading, if accompanied by providing large quantities of suitably graded input, provided across a range of genres and topics, and supported by some language-focused activities, is an essential, worthwhile strand of a language course. Incidental vocabulary learning occurs when the mind concentrates elsewhere, e.g., on understanding a text or using language to get one's ideas across.

Vocabulary researchers share the view that, as second language speakers, we have not been explicitly taught the majority of words that we happen to know. Furthermore, beyond a certain level of proficiency in a second or foreign language, vocabulary is mostly learned implicitly (Decarrico, 1998). It should be noted, however, that explicit learning is thought to be necessary in the initial stages of language learning, the reason being that unless a high percentage of words on a page are known, it is very difficult to guess the meaning of new words from context. According to Decarrico (1998), a two to three thousand word base is considered a minimum threshold that makes incidental learning useful in reading authentic texts. Multiple exposures to a word is a key factor for incidental learning to take place. In fact, lack of exposure is a common problem facing language learners. One useful strategy to tackle this problem is to expose students to extensive reading, sometimes termed book flood approaches, whereby reading is done consistently over a certain span of time (Woodinsky & Nation, 1988).

**The Book Flood Approach to Vocabulary Acquisition**

Learning vocabulary through the book flood approach can benefit students across different proficiency levels (Coady & Huckin, 1997). In this approach, the reading material is presented in the form of graded readers. Simplified reading materials can help students gradually build up their lexical knowledge until they are capable of processing more authentic materials. Low-proficiency learners can draw on graded readers to get access to a large amount of high-frequency input. For intermediate students just on the threshold of reading authentic texts, it may be appropriate to read a variety of authentic texts on the same topic so that the texts will provide students with multiple exposures as topic-specific vocabulary is repeated throughout. On the other hand, advanced students should be provided with a wide range of authentic texts, because meeting a word in different contexts expands what is known about it, hence improving the quality of knowledge with additional exposures helping to consolidate the word in memory (Schmitt, 2000).

It might be concluded that extensive reading is a major source of incidental learning and a number of studies have confirmed the positive effects of extensive reading activities (Chun & Plass, 1996; Day *et al.*, 1991; Hulstijn, Hollander, & Greidanus, 1996; Knight, 1994; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006). The selection and assignment of texts to students for extensive reading is an absolutely crucial decision to make. In this regard, literature can be a potentially invaluable, rich source of meaning-focused input. Literary texts are, no doubt, capable of providing students with real-life, authentic samples of language, hence fostering authenticity.

**The Use of Literature in Teaching L2 Vocabulary**

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the study of literature in relation to language (Picken, 2007). There is renewed awareness that literature has a valid place in general language learning. Many educators have acknowledged the academic, intellectual, cultural, and linguistic benefits of the study of literature (Paran, 2006). Using literature with English language learners provides a rich source of pedagogical activities (Lazar, 1990, 1999; Saeedi *et al.*, 2011). Literature is used to improve both the literary and the linguistic competence of students. Widdowson (1975, p. 80) contends that "literature should be viewed as discourse." Students' aim should be to learn how the language system- the structures and vocabulary of English- is used for communication. Literature and language teaching should be linked and made mutually supportive and reinforcing (Elliot, 1990, Widdowson, 1995).

Besides, EFL learners will indeed increase their active vocabulary as a result of exposure to language. The kind of exposure English department students should have is what Krashen (1989) refers to as comprehensible input or (i+1) input; language which contains linguistic items that are slightly beyond their linguistic competence. And it is precisely such input, particularly when combined with interaction, which is believed to promote language learning in general and vocabulary learning in particular (Laufer, 1991). Furthermore, EFL teachers have generally agreed that literature helps build vocabulary. The vocabulary used in written English and especially in literature is many times larger than the vocabulary in ordinary speech (Shen, 2002, Widdowson, 1995).

Summarizing the goals of using literature in EFL classes, Goatly (2000) argues that literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage and complex and exact syntax. In fact,

literature, with its extensive and connotative vocabulary and its complex syntax, can expand all language skills. Literature gives evidence of the richest variations of vocabulary discrimination.

According to Elliot (1990), reading literature is the most pleasant route to the command of language because it is in literature that the student is most likely to find words used in the widest range of contexts. Literature provides students with an incomparably rich source of authentic material in a wide range of registers. Literature may be used as an aid to the development of lexical richness (Elliot, 1990).

In a well-known article on the use of literature in language teaching, Edmondson (1997), however, claims that the field of language teaching is generally characterized by speculation, assertion and counter-assertion. Others have also agreed that there is more advocacy than evidence to be found in this field. Hanauer (2001), for example, claims that there is very little actual empirical data relating to the use of literature and that current arguments both for and against the use of literature in the classroom are only loosely based on empirical evidence (see Hall, 2007; Parvaresh, 2008; Parvaresh *et al.*, 2012).


## PRESENT STUDY

The present study seeks to find out whether students' exposure to literary texts is in any way different from their exposure to nonliterary texts. The focus will be on the students' ability to deal with related vocabulary items extracted from these two types of texts. Furthermore, the current study attempts to answer the question of whether students perform differently on reading comprehension tests of literary and nonliterary texts. Accordingly, the following (null) hypotheses were proposed:

$H_{01}$. There is no statistically significant difference between Literature majors and Translation majors in terms of their performance on tests of vocabulary;

$H_{02}$. There is no statistically significant difference between Literature majors and Translation majors in terms of their performance on tests of literary versus nonliterary vocabulary;

$H_{03}$. There is no statistically significant difference between Literature majors and Translation majors in terms of their performance on tests of reading comprehension; and

$H_{04}$. There is no statistically significant difference between Literature majors and Translation majors in terms of their performance on literary versus nonliterary tests of reading comprehension.


## PARTICIPANTS

A total number of 140 Iranian undergraduate students (both male and female) were randomly selected from among senior students of English literature and English translation at different universities in Iran. Eighty seven of the participants were studying English literature and fifty three of them were studying English translation.

## INSTRUMENTATION

Data elicitation in the present study was done through administering a test which comprised two literary and two nonliterary texts. Texts I-IV were taken from Tahririan's (1991) *Developing Reading Proficiency I*, 2004 Iranian nation-wide MA entrance exam for TEFL, the website www.English-zone.com, and the novel *Oliver Twist*, respectively (see appendix). Each text was followed by five reading comprehension and ten vocabulary questions. All questions appeared in multiple-choice format. Vocabulary items were all extracted from the texts. The participants had to choose the alternative which was most nearly similar in meaning to the word in question.

## PROCEDURE

A total number of 140 Iranian undergraduate students (both male and female) were randomly selected from among senior students of English literature and English translation. Eighty seven of the participants were studying English literature and fifty three of them were studying English translation.

Data elicitation in the present study was done through administering a four-part test. The test consisted of two literary and two nonliterary texts. It is worthwhile to note that since the current study was primarily concerned with the potential impact of exposure to literary texts on reading comprehension and vocabulary retention, the use of non-literary texts solely served as a control condition. Texts I-IV were taken from Tahririan's (1991) *Developing Reading Proficiency I*, The 2004 Iranian nation-wide MA entrance exam for TEFL, the website *www.English-zone.com*, and the novel *Oliver Twist*, respectively. Each text was followed by five reading comprehension and ten vocabulary questions. All questions appeared in multiple-choice format.

The test was administered by the course instructors themselves. The participants were asked to answer the questions within the span of their class time. The test administrators were available to answer any questions the participants might have. In order to guarantee the representativeness of the sample, the participants were selected from among the population of senior English students at different universities.

Participants' performance was analyzed in terms of subgroups' performance on sub-tests. Therefore, after the sources of variance were identified, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) technique was used to determine the statistical significance among group means. In so doing, the researchers considered students' performance on the tests as a single variable and compared the means of eight sub-groups on this variable. Consequently, two sources of variance, Factor A and Factor B, were identified and the statistical significance of the difference among group means was examined on the basis of those factors.

As the next step, the researcher considered EFL learners' performance as comprising two elements, i.e., vocabulary and reading comprehension. Therefore, allowing for the source of variance between and within groups, the researcher was able to compute the statistical significance of differences among group means based on a third factor, namely the interaction effect, or Factor A.B. Regarding vocabulary and reading scores as separate dependent variables and group means as an independent variable with several levels, the researcher used two separate two-way ANOVAs to do their analysis.

**FINDINGS**

The descriptive scores of the participants are tabulated in Table 1. As it can be seen in the table, the independent variable is subdivided into 8 groups (levels). The performance of the students of literature as a whole is broken down into 4 groups: their performance on the literary reading test (L-R-L group), on the nonliterary reading test (L-R-N group), on the literary vocabulary test (L-V-L group), and finally on the nonliterary vocabulary test (L-V-N group). Likewise, the performance of the students of translation is considered as comprising their performance on the literary reading test (T-R-L group), on the nonliterary reading test (T-R-N group), on the literary vocabulary test (T-V-L group), and finally on the nonliterary vocabulary test (T-V-N group).

Table 1  Descriptive statistics for all groups

| Group | N | Mean | SD | Minimum | Maximum |
|-------|-----|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| L-R-L | 87 | 9.6782 | 3.9752 | .00 | 18.00 |
| L-R-N | 87 | 11.4483 | 4.0656 | .00 | 18.00 |
| T-R-L | 53 | 10.5660 | 3.1956 | 4.00 | 16.00 |
| T-R-N | 53 | 11.3585 | 2.6537 | 2.00 | 18.00 |
| L-V-L | 87 | 12.3218 | 3.2403 | 6.00 | 20.00 |
| L-V-N | 87 | 11.2069 | 2.9100 | 4.00 | 17.00 |
| T-V-L | 53 | 9.5472 | 3.0607 | 3.00 | 15.00 |
| T-V-N | 53 | 9.4151 | 2.8314 | 5.00 | 16.00 |

As shown in Table 1, Literature majors got the maximum mean score (M=12.321) on the literary vocabulary test (L-V-L group). On the other hand, the minimum group mean (M=9.415) belongs to Translation majors on the nonliterary vocabulary test (T-V-N group). However, it can be deduced from the table that, on the whole, Literature majors got fairly better mean scores on both literary and nonliterary vocabulary tests while Translation majors had a better performance on both literary and nonliterary reading comprehension tests.

In order to determine the statistical significance of the observed differences between group means, i.e., to analyze the effects of the single independent variable with several 8 levels on the dependent variable, a one-way ANOVA was used. The results of computations have been presented in Table 2. As shown in the table, there is a statistically significant difference between means.

Table 2  One-way ANOVA for all groups

| Source | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 566.194 | 7 | 80.885 | 7.186 | .000* |
| Within Groups | 6212.978 | 552 | 11.255 | | |
| Total | 6779.171 | 559 | | | |

*Sig at p<.01

Table 3 represents the descriptive statistics for one of the dependent variables, i.e., vocabulary. As shown in the table, compared with Translation majors, Literature majors (LIT group) had a better performance on both literary (M=12.321) and nonliterary (M=11.206) vocabulary tests. In other words, it can be said that Literature majors (LIT group) outperformed Translation majors (TRA group) on the vocabulary tests. However, LIT group's mean on the literary vocabulary test was slightly better than the one on the nonliterary vocabulary test.

Table 3  Descriptive statistics for vocabulary

| Text | Group | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| LIT | LIT | 12.3218 | 3.2403 | 87 |
| | TRA | 9.5472 | 3.0607 | 53 |
| | Total | 11.2714 | 3.4388 | 140 |
| NON | LIT | 11.2069 | 2.9100 | 87 |
| | TRA | 9.4151 | 2.8314 | 53 |
| | Total | 10.5286 | 2.9999 | 140 |

To assess the statistical significance of the observed differences between group means, a two-way ANOVA was used. The results of the calculations have been presented in Table 4.  As shown in the table, the first source of variance was within-groups variance (LIT-NON), i.e., literary and nonliterary vocabulary tests. However, the mean difference stemming from this factor (Factor A), i.e., literary versus nonliterary vocabulary tests (LIT-NON), was not statistically significant. As for Factor B, i.e., Literature majors' versus Translation majors' performance (LIT-TRA), which relates to between-groups variance, the calculated F-ratio shows that the mean difference was statistically significant. The third factor, namely interaction effect (Factor A.B) was, in turn, not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be argued that Factor A.B did not play a statistically significant role.

Table 4  Two-way ANOVA for vocabulary

| Source | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LIT_NON | 25.608 | 1 | 25.608 | 2.788 | .096 |
| LIT_TRA | 343.399 | 1 | 343.399 | 37.384 | .000* |
| LIT_NO LIT_TRA | 15.908 2535.264 | 1 | 15.908 | 1.732 | .189 |
| Error | | 276 | 9.186 | | |
| Total | 36200.000 | 280 | | | |

*Sig at p<.01

The researchers have presented the descriptive statistics concerning the other dependent variable, i.e., reading comprehension, in Table 5. As displayed in the table, on the average, Translation majors (with the group mean of 10.566) performed better than Literature majors (with the group mean of 9.678) on the literary reading comprehension test.

Table 5  Descriptive statistics for reading comprehension

| Text | Group | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| LIT | LIT | 9.6782 | 3.9752 | 87 |
| | TRA | 10.5660 | 3.1956 | 53 |
| | Total | 10.0143 | 3.7127 | 140 |
| NON | LIT | 11.4483 | 4.0656 | 87 |
| | TRA | 11.3585 | 2.6537 | 53 |
| | Total | 11.4143 | 3.5865 | 140 |

Comparing variation between LIT and TRA groups in terms of their performance on the nonliterary reading sub-test, the researchers were able to conclude that there was a slight difference between the two groups.

In order to come up with a conclusion as to the statistical significance of the observed group mean differences, the researchers used a two-way ANOVA test, the results of which have been displayed in Table 6.

Table 6  Two-way ANOVA for reading comprehension

| Source | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LIT_NON | 108.140 | 1 | 108.140 | 8.116 | .005* |
| LIT_TRA | 10.489 | 1 | 10.489 | .787 | .376 |
| LIT_NON LIT_TRA | 15.740 | 1 | 15.740 | 1.181 | .278 |
| Error | 3677.713 | 276 | 13.325 | | |
| Total | 35984.000 | 280 | | | |

*Sig at p<.01

Regarding the first source of variance (Factor A), the estimated F-ratio was higher than the critical value of F-ratios. Therefore, the difference between group means due to Factor A, i.e., within-group variation, was statistically significant. As for the second source of variance, Factor B or between-group variance, the calculated F-ratio was quite smaller than F critical values. Hence, the variation of group means on the reading tests due to Factor B was not statistically significant. Likewise, considering the third source of variance, Factor A.B or the interaction effect, the estimated F-ratio was lower than the critical F-ratios. As such, it can be inferred that this factor did not exert any statistically significant effect on EFL learners' performance on the reading comprehension tests.

**DISCUSSION**

Drawing on the afore-mentioned statistical analyses, the researchers seem to be able to deal with the null hypotheses the study sought answers to. Only 1 out of 4 formulated null hypotheses can be rejected. When discussing the data in table 4, the researchers inferred that there was no statistically significant difference among participants in terms of their performance on tests of vocabulary. In other words, Factor (A), variance within groups, is not a statistically significant factor contributing to group mean differences. Therefore, the kind of vocabulary test, i.e., literary versus nonliterary, is not a statistically significant source of variance among means. Yet, there is a statistically significant difference between Literature majors and Translation majors in terms of their performance on tests of vocabulary. Therefore, Factor (B), i.e., participants' major, is a significant factor in comparing group mean differences. As was noted above, Literature majors outperformed Translation majors on both literary and nonliterary vocabulary tests.

The second null hypothesis, is, however, not rejected since the interaction effect, Factor (A.B), does not seem to cause any statistically significant difference among group means. Therefore, the interaction of the variation between groups and within groups does not play any statistically significant role in comparing group mean differences. For this reason, it can be deduced that there is no statistically significant difference between Literature and Translation majors regarding their performance on literary as opposed to nonliterary vocabulary tests. The analysis of variance also suggests that there is a statistically significant difference among participants with regard to their performance on tests of reading comprehension. Therefore, Factor (A), the kind of reading comprehension test (literary versus nonliterary), should be considered as a statistically significant source of variance.

As for the third null hypothesis, the results of the ANOVA test foster the idea that there is no statistically significant difference between Literature majors and Translation majors in terms of their performance on tests of reading comprehension. Therefore, Factor (B), the participants' major, is not a statistically significant source of variance among group means. In other words, the third null hypothesis is not rejected.

Factor (A.B) does not bring about any statistically significant difference among group means either. Therefore, the fourth null hypothesis is not rejected. It can be deduced that the interaction between literary versus nonliterary factor (Factor A) and Literature versus Translation factor (Factor B) is not a statistically significant source of variance.

**CONCLUSION**

This study was primarily aimed at exploring the impact of EFL learners' exposure to literary texts on their reading comprehension and vocabulary retention. The major contribution this study makes to the existing literature is the discovery that exposure to literary texts does not imperatively bring about any significant gain in the comprehension of literary or nonliterary texts. However, given the positive effects of reading literary texts on the retention of vocabulary items, exposure to vocabulary items in the context of literary texts can, in point of fact, build up Literature-major's vocabulary knowledge.

This study has some implications for language pedagogy. To begin with, a literature-based methodology for teaching vocabulary is recommended. This does not mean that only literary texts should be used. Teachers may present vocabulary items by using literary texts and then extend them to nonliterary ones in order to make students familiar with all kinds of materials. Implementation of this approach, of course, requires intensive training, both in terms of appropriate design of learning tasks and in terms of operational procedures. Moreover, perhaps the most significant pedagogical implication to be drawn from this research is that learning vocabulary in context, particularly literary contexts, should be emphasized.

Yet, it would seem that two complementary approaches are also needed: encouraging a substantial quantity of reading and developing guessing skills. Teachers need to motivate the learners who lack the reading habit to do a substantial amount of reading and thereby increase their vocabulary (Schmitt, 2000). Finally, the findings of the present study suggest that teachers draw on literary texts as a means of enhancing vocabulary when preparing reading material since literary texts fulfill both social and referential functions (cf. Saeedi *et al.*, 2011) and may help learners change their negative attitudes (Parvaresh, 2008; also cf. Parvaresh *et al.*, 2012 for EFL discourse and attitude).

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**Appendix**

**Text I**

Pottery reached its zenith between the 800's and the 1300's. Muslim artists developed many techniques that are still used today. For example, they engraved into slip, an earthy coating under the glaze. This technique was imitated by Byzantine and Italian ceramists. Islamic potters also painted with a metallic pigment on a white or blue glaze to produce so-called luster-painting. This difficult technique, practiced in the Middle East and Spain from the 800's through the 1600's, was also taken over by the potters of the Renaissance period in Italy.

Builders used bright tiles decorated with geometric or arabesque designs for wall surfaces and fountains. Outstanding examples of tile work decorate mosque walls, domes, minarets in Isfahan, the capital of Iran in 1600's. Tile work was an ancient Persian art. Pictures of royal life in the 400's B.C. appear on tile facings of palaces in the ancient Persian capital of Susa. Muslim tile work may have developed from pre-Islamic Persia.

**Comprehension check**
1. Tile work perhaps developed….. .
    a) between the 800's and the 1300's
    b) before Islam in Persia
    c) after 400 B.C.
    d) in Isfahan

2. According to the passage, Isfahan….. .
    a) is the capital of Iran
    b) has good examples of tile work
    c) makes domes and minarets
    d) was the capital of Sosa

3. We understand from the passage that….. .
    a) pottery should be older than tile work
    b) tile work should be older than pottery
    c) pottery originally came from Byzantine
    d) tile work is an Islamic art
4. Tile work, according to the passage, is….
    a) often used instead of pottery
    b) the same as luster-painting
    c) mostly used for decoration
    d) rarely seen in palaces

5. The Renaissance period in Italy….. .
    a) must have been after the  1600's
    b) was before the 1600's
    c) was between the 400's and the 1600's
    d) must have been about the time of Christ

**Vocabulary check**

Choose the word or phrase that is most nearly similar in meaning to the word in question.

1. Zenith
      a) real greatness
      b) highest development
      c) artistic status
      d) developmental period

2. Engrave
      a) cut
      b) cover
      c) figure
      d) decorate

3. Coating
      a) cloth
      b) material
      c) curtain
      d) covering

4. Glaze
      a) wide opening
      b) deep cut
      c) shiny surface
      d) flat disc

5. Pigment
      a) colorful light
      b) strong radiation
      c) natural coloring
      d) slight radiation

6. Luster
      a) dullness
      b) colorfulness
      c) beauty
      d) brightness

7. Take over
      a) replace
      b) imitate
      c) repeat
      d) accept

8. Tile
      a) baked clay
      b) metal object
      c) painted dish
      d) wooden craft

9. Fountain
    a) deep well
    b) basement
    c) deep spring
    d) ceiling

10. Royal
    a) noble
    b) faithful
    c) native
    d) truthful


**Text II**

Very commonly we are faced with a choice between several courses of action, all of which have their own pros and cons. This state of affairs- in psychological jargon multiple approach-avoidance conflict- accounts for a great deal of our worrying: worrying, that is, what to do? How do we deal with worries? We can avoid the situations which induce them. We can deny that we have the worry at all. Alternatively, we may repress or "comatose" it. Both are hazardous: the former may lead to free-floating, clinical anxiety, while the latter is a way of saying that many physical afflictions seem to be primarily emotional in origin.

Temporary relief from anxiety can be obtained through engaging in a variety of coping behaviors including many of the commonest items of our behavioral repertoire. Smoking, drinking, sleeping, eating, taking strenuous exercise, day dreaming: all can be used to reduce anxiety when the occasion demands it. It is when they fail that worrying or anxiety threatens to become a clinical problem. It is difficult to decide at what point worrying ceases to be "normal". People get seriously ill, plans go awry. In practice, anxiety is judged to be pathological when it curtails our ability to lead a normal existence.

But at less intense levels, anxiety and worrying have great value. By worrying we may understand better the origins of the worry and, thereby, stave off a possible breakdown. It may also play a significant part in recovery from bereavement by helping us to come to terms with reality. In everyday life, anxiety energizes us and improves performance of a wide variety of tasks; it also galvanizes us to achieve more. Perhaps the time to get worried is when you are at worrying.

**Comprehension check**

1. According to the passage, complete denial of worry may result in….. .
    a) physical affliction
    b) clinical anxiety
    c) emotional problem
    d) repressed anxiety

2. Considering physical afflictions as emotional in origin is a result of….. .
    a) repressing worries
    b) avoiding anxiety
    c) denying worries
    d) forgetting anxiety

3. It can be inferred from the passage that to reduce anxiety we….. .
      a) should get strenuous exercise
      b) can study the origins of the worry
      c) should repress the worry temporarily
      d) can do anything the occasion demands

4. The passage is most probably about….. .
      a) the effects of anxiety
      b) the origins of anxiety
      c) cons and pros of worries
      d) ways of dealing with worries

5. Based on the passage, which of the following is NOT one of the values of anxiety? It….. .
      a) helps to study the reasons of worries
      b) enables us to lead a normal existence
      c) gives us energy to improve our daily tasks
      d) can, indirectly, reduce the risk of a breakdown

**Vocabulary check**

Choose the word or phrase that is most nearly similar in meaning to the word in question:
1. Jargon
      a) cliché
      b) aspect
      c) terminology
      d) opinion

2. Induce
      a) increase
      b) cause
      c) represent
      d) insure

3. Affliction
      a) manner
      b) characteristic
      c) complex
      d) suffering

4. Repertoire
      a) reservoir
      b) behavior
      c) manner
      d) temper
5. Cease
      a) stand
      b) choose
      c) stop
      d) remain

6. Awry
   a) flat
   b) slow
   c) useless
   d) wrong

7. Curtail
   a) degrade
   b) reduce
   c) damage
   d) reflect

8. Stave off
   a) decrease
   b) cure
   c) prevent
   d) face

9. Bereavement
   a) loss by death
   b) discomfort
   c) misfortune
   d) sickness

10. Galvanize
   a) enable
   b) activate
   c) encourage
   d) arouse

**Text III**

For the next eight or ten months, Oliver was the victim of a systematic course of treachery and deception. He was brought up by hand. The hungry and destitute situation of the infant orphan was duly reported by the workhouse authorities to the parish authorities.

The parish authorities inquired with dignity of the workhouse authorities whether there was no female domiciled in "the house" who was in a situation to impart to Oliver Twist the consolation and nourishment of which he stood in need. The workhouse authorities replied with humility that there was not. Upon this, the parish authorities magnanimously and humanely resolved that Oliver shouldn't be "farmed", or, in other words, that he should be dispatched to a branch-workhouse, some three miles off, where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws rolled about the floor all day without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing, under the parental superintendence of an elderly female, who received the culprits and for the consideration of seven pence- half penny per small head per week.

**Comprehension check**

1. Which period of Oliver Twist's life does the passage describe?
        a) infancy
        b) youth
        c) childhood
        d) adulthood

2. We can understand from the passage that Oliver was brought up….. .
        a) by parish authorities
        b) by juvenile offenders
        c) with care and consolation
        d) in hunger and destitution

3. The parish authorities, according to the passage….. .
        a) brought up Oliver with inconvenience
        b) dispatched Oliver to a branch-workhouse
        c) accepted Oliver very generously
        d) took care of Oliver themselves

4. The branch-workhouse was governed by….. .
        a) 30 juvenile offenders
        b) an elderly female
        c) the parish authorities
        d) the workhouse authorities

5. The writer of the story implies that Oliver was….. .
        a) brought up in the hands of treacherous people
        b) one of the offenders against the poor-laws
        c) one of the victims of poor social conditions
        d) the unwanted child of a destitute family

**Vocabulary check**

Choose the word or phrase that is most nearly similar in meaning to the word in question:

1. Treachery
        a) disloyalty
        b) disgrace
        c) disapproval
        d) disorder

2. Destitute
        a) starved
        b) cruel
        c) miserable
        d) tough

3. Domiciled
       a) appointed
       b) settled
       c) accepted
       d) seated

4. Impart
       a) apply
       b) give
       c) turn
       d) point

5. Consolation
       a) treatment
       b) comfort
       c) consultation
       d) care

6. Magnanimously
       a) mercifully
       b) emotionally
       c) suitably
       d) magnificently

7. Resolve
       a) mention
       b) decide
       c) suggest
       d) justify

8. Juvenile
       a) noisy
       b) naughty
       c) lonely
       d) young

9. Superintendence
       a) impression
       b) agreement
       c) management
       d) acceptance

10. Culprit
       a) servant
       b) refugee
       c) outlaw
       d) immigrant

**Text IV**

The idea that there is neither good nor evil- in any absolute moral or religious sense- is widespread in our times. There are various relativistic and behaviorist standards of ethics. If these standards even admit the distinction between good and evil, it is as a relative matter and not as a whirlwind of choices that lies at the center of living. In any such state of mind, conflict can at best be only a petty matter, lacking true universality. The acts of the evildoer and of the virtuous man alike become dramatically neutralized. Imagine the reduced effect of *Crime and Punishment* or *The Brothers Karamazov* had Dostoevsky thought that good and evil, as portrayed in those books, were wholly relative, and if he had had no conviction about them.

You can not have a vital literature if you ignore or shun evil. What you get then is the world of Pollyanna, goody-goody in place of the good. *Cry, the Beloved Country* is a great and dramatic novel because Alan Paton, in addition to being a skilled workman, sees with clear eyes both good and evil, differentiates them, pitches them into conflict with each other, and takes sides. He sees that the native boy Absalom Kumalo, who has murdered, cannot be judged justly without taking into account the environment that has had part in shaping him. But Paton sees, too, that Absalom the individual, not society the abstraction, committed the act and is responsible for it. Mr. Paton understands mercy. He knows that this precious thing is not evoked by sentimental impulse, but by a searching examination of the realities of human action. Mercy follows a judgment; it does not precede it.

One of the novels by the talented Paul Bowels, *Let It Come Down*, is full of motion, full of sensational depravities, and is a crashing bore. The book recognizes no good, admits no evil, and is coldly indifferent to the moral behavior of its characters. It is a long shrug. Such a view of life is non-dramatic and negates the vital essence of drama.

**Comprehension check**

1. According to the passage, Paton's novel is a great dramatic novel because of Paton's…...
   .
   a) behaviorist beliefs
   b) willingness to make judgments
   c) insight into human behavior
   d) treatment of good and evil as abstractions

2. In our age, according to the passage, the standpoint often taken in the area of ethics is the…... .
   a) relativistic view of morals
   b) belief that good and evil can be equated
   c) greater concern with religion
   d) greater concern with universal standards

3. The phrase "the world of Pollyanna" (line 12) means a situation in which…... .
   a) evil substitutes for good
   b) all is good because evil is ignored
   c) evil becomes preferable to good
   d) everything is viewed pessimistically

4. The author believes that in great literature, good and evil are….. .
   a) truly universal
   b) constantly in conflict
   c) relative terms
   d) dramatically neutralized

5. The native boy in *Cry, the Beloved Country* is viewed by Paton as….. .
   a) a victim of society
   b) a precious thing who acted on impulse
   c) a character who could not be judged justly
   d) an individual ultimately responsible for his actions

**Vocabulary check**

Choose the word or phrase that is most nearly similar in meaning to the word in question:

1. Petty
   a) crucial
   b) unimportant
   c) local
   d) incomplete

2. Virtuous
   a) good-tempered
   b) morally good
   c) well-behaved
   d) rationally flexible

3. Portray
   a) represent
   b) feel
   c) claim
   d) refer

5. Shun
   a) determine
   b) avoid
   c) minimize
   d) forget

6. Pitch into
   a) invite
   b) arouse
   c) challenge
   d) motivate

7. Depravity
   a) virtue
   b) action
   c) evil
   d) scene

8. Crashing
   a) extreme
   b) awesome
   c) wonderful
   d) careless

9. Bore
   a) intolerable thing
   b) showing-off
   c) piercing scream
   d) praising

10. Shrug
   a) carelessness
   b) boredom
   c) attention
   d) appreciate

4. Conviction
   a) agreement
   b) paradox
   c) general truth
   d) firm belief