READING STRATEGIES

To read effectively, you may need some strategies to help you deal with the texts. The following seven strategies are useful when you read:

I. Scanning
II. Skimming
III. Locating the main idea
IV. Understanding references
V. Making inferences
VI. Thinking logically
VII. Guessing meaning from contexts

I. **Scanning**

Scanning is very high-speed reading that you do when you are looking for a specific piece of information. When you scan, you have a question in mind. You do not read every word, only key words that will answer your question. Practice in scanning will help you learn to skip over unimportant words so that you can read faster.

**Exercise 1:**
**Instructions:** Scan the travel brochure on the next page and find the answers to the following questions as quickly as you can.

1) Where is Taman Negara National Park?
2) What does “Angkor Wat” mean?
3) Where is Halong Bay?
4) Which beach in the Philippines is on the list of the world’s best beaches?
5) Which beach in Bali is famous for surfing and nightlife?
6) When was Angkor Wat built?
7) How many islands are there at Halong Bay?
8) Which two beaches in Bali do tourists go to for relaxation?
9) For what purpose was Angkor Wat built?
10) Which activity can you enjoy at Cat Ba National Park?

**Tips!** Make use of section headings and capital letters. For example, you only need to scan the Bali section to find answers for questions 5 and 8.
Southeast Asian Travel

Southeast Asia is one of the world’s fastest growing travel destinations. The area offers everything from beautiful tropical islands and pristine beaches to thick jungles, diverse cultures, cuisines, and people. Southeast Asia has some of the best national parks and reserves in the world, an abundance of fascinating World Heritage sites, a variety of spiritual places to visit that represent the religions of the region like Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, and Christianity, and it has a huge supply of beaches and associated activities.

Some of the many exciting Southeast Asian highlights include:

**Taman Negara National Park, Malaysia**
This lush park is located on Malaysia’s east coast. The variety of plants and wildlife are amazing and the scenery includes lazy, winding rivers and roaring waterfalls.

**Angkor Wat, Cambodia**
Angkor Wat, means “City Temple”, and is a complex of ancient temples that is considered the most important architectural site in Southeast Asia. It was built in the 12th century to honor Vishnu, the Hindu god.

**Bali, Indonesia**
Land of the Buddha! Kuta, Ubud, Amed, and Sanur are all worth visiting. For the best surfing and nightlife, head over to Kuta beach. For relaxation, head up to Ubud, or even Amed if you’re really looking for peace and quiet.

**Halong Bay, Vietnam**
Halong Bay is one of the world’s natural wonders made up of at least 3000 islands in the Gulf of Tonkin, Vietnam. This is a World Heritage site that offers breathtaking views, many caves worth exploring, and hiking in Cat Ba National Park.

**The Philippines**
In the Philippines you’ll find beautiful white beaches like Boracay, which is on the list of the world’s best beaches. But there is more to the Philippines than just the beaches. The scenery also includes breathtaking waterfalls and miles of rice terraces.

Source: http://www.pausethemoment.com/2010/12/15/6-highlights-southeast-asia/
Exercise 2
Instructions: Scan the following text about Hun Sen, the Prime Minister of Cambodia, and find the answers to as many questions below as possible in 2 minutes.

1) How many years has Hun Sen been in office?

2) How old was Hun Sen when he became Prime Minister?

3) What does CPP stand for?

4) How long did it take Hun Sen to move from communist leadership to premiership?

5) Who is the longest serving head of government in Southeast Asia? How long has he been in office?

6) How many leaders have held office longer than Hun Sen?

7) Which continent has the highest number of long-serving leaders?

8) How many Cambodians were killed by the Khmer Rouge?

9) When is the next election in Cambodia scheduled?

10) How many government leaders were younger than Hun Sen when they first came to power?

11) When was Cambodia set up as a communist state by Vietnam?

12) Who is the president of the CPP?

13) Where did Hun Sen make a speech on January 12?

14) How old was Hun Sen when he started a political career in the cabinet?

15) How long had Hun Sen been the Deputy Prime Minister when he was nominated for premiership?

TIPS!
Make a mental note of what you are looking for while you scan through the text. For example, for question 1: I’m looking for a number (of years).
PHNOM PENH -- Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen recently marked his 25th anniversary as the Southeast Asian nation's leader. First appointed by the Cambodian National Assembly on January 14, 1985, he became at 33 years old the youngest Prime Minister in the world.

Hun Sen's journey from a communist leader to an elected head of government spans a quarter of a century of civil war, domestic and international upheaval, a negotiated peace and transition to democracy through which he and his Cambodia's People's Party (CPP) have imposed themselves as the country's deliverers of stability and order.

By retaining the helm in Cambodia's fractious politics for 25 years, he now stands among a unique category of leaders, ranking as the 11th longest ruling leader in the world. In Southeast Asia, only the Sultan of Brunei, the number one longest serving government leader since assuming office in 1967, has been in power longer than Hun Sen. Of the other nine longer serving leaders, five are heads of governments in Africa and four are from the Middle East.

Hun Sen reflected on his long political career and humble beginnings in a speech at the National Institute for Education in Phnom Penh on January 12. "I became [foreign] minister when I was 27 years old, Deputy Prime Minister when I was 29 years old and Prime Minister at 33 years old," Hun Sen said of his appointments in the People's Republic of Kampuchea – the communist state set up by Vietnam in 1979 after it toppled the Khmer Rouge, whose bloody regime caused the death of about 1.7 million Cambodians.

The prime minister went on to talk about his political future, confirming his intention to run in the next election in 2013. "The party conference announced my candidacy for the future prime minister and ... last week Chea Sim [president of the CPP] also reconfirmed my nomination for the premiership," Hun Sen said before taking aim at opposition parties.

"Please do not try to limit the mandate of the premiership. You want the mandate limited because you are worrying you will lose to me," he said, while also reminding the audience he still had another three and a half years in office under the mandate of the last election, which his party, the CPP, won with a two-thirds legislative majority.

From the article entitled To live and die with Hun Sen by Paul Vrieze
II. Skimming

Skimming is another high-speed reading technique that can save you time and help you get through a text quickly. You skim to get the general sense of a passage, not specific details. When you skim, you should not read the whole text. Your eyes should move very quickly over the lines and you should read only the parts of the text that will help you answer the questions.

The following passage about skimming shows the parts of a text that are usually most helpful. These parts often give you the writer’s ideas or opinions. However, every text is different. When you are skimming, you need to be flexible. What you read will depend on the question you are asking and the way the passage is written. The following passage gives you an example of how to skim.

Writers usually introduce their topic and their ideas about the topic right at the beginning of a text. Read the first paragraph carefully. It will give you some idea of what the writer is going to say and how the passage will be organized. This will help you decide what else to skim for.

If the text is long, you might also read the second paragraph. Sometimes the first paragraph is only an introduction and the second paragraph contains more useful information about the whole text.

After that, you should look at the beginning of each paragraph. Maybe read a few words in the middle and note if there are lots of names or dates. Usually, a topic sentence is at the beginning. But sometimes it may be at some point after the beginning.

Skip some paragraphs if they do not seem important.

However, you should read the last paragraph carefully. The author may summarize the important points at the end or come to a conclusion. These are the general rules about skimming and this is all the text you need to read when you skim!
Exercise 3
Instructions: Work as quickly as you can – skim the passage about Aung San Suu Kyi and answer the questions that follow.

Aung San Suu Kyi went from a devoted Oxford housewife to the champion of Burmese democracy - but not without great personal sacrifice.

The daughter of a great Burmese hero, General Aung San, who was assassinated when she was only two, Suu was raised with a strong sense of her father's unfinished legacy. In 1964 she was sent by her diplomat mother to study Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Oxford, where her guardian, Lord Gore-Booth, introduced her to Michael Aris. He was studying history at Durham but had always had a passion for Bhutan – and in Suu he found the romantic embodiment of his great love for the East. But when she accepted his proposal, she struck a deal: if her country should ever need her, she would have to go. And Michael readily agreed.

For the next 16 years, Suu Kyi was to sublimate her extraordinary strength of character and become the perfect housewife. When their two sons, Alexander and Kim, were born she became a doting mother too, noted for her punctiliously well-organised children's parties and exquisite cooking. Much to the despair of her more feminist friends, she even insisted on ironing her husband's socks and cleaning the house herself.

Then one quiet evening in 1988, when her sons were 12 and 14, as she and Michael sat reading in Oxford, they were interrupted by a phone call to say Suu's mother had had a stroke. She at once flew to Rangoon for what she thought would be a matter of weeks, only to find a city in turmoil. A series of violent confrontations with the military had brought the country to a standstill, and when she moved into Rangoon Hospital to care for her mother, she found the wards crowded with injured and dying students. Since public meetings were forbidden, the hospital had become the centre-point of a leaderless revolution, and word that the great General's daughter had arrived spread like wildfire.

When a delegation of academics asked Suu to head a movement for democracy, she tentatively agreed, thinking that once an election had been held she would be free to return to Oxford again. Only two months earlier she had been a devoted housewife; now she found herself spearheading a mass uprising against a barbaric regime.

In England, Michael could only anxiously monitor the news as Suu toured Burma, her popularity soaring, while the military harassed her every step and arrested and tortured many of her party members. He was haunted by the fear that she might be assassinated like her father. And when in 1989 she was placed under house arrest, his only comfort was that it at least might help keep her safe.

For the next five years, as her boys were growing into young men, Suu was to remain under house arrest and kept in isolation. She sustained herself by learning how to meditate, reading widely on Buddhism and studying the writings of Mandela and Gandhi. Michael was allowed only two visits during that period. Yet this was a very particular kind of imprisonment, since at any time Suu could have asked to be driven to the airport and flown back to her family.
But neither of them ever contemplated her doing such a thing. In fact, as a historian, even as Michael agonised and continued to put pressure on politicians behind the scenes, he was aware she was part of history in the making. He kept on display the book she had been reading when she received the phone call summoning her to Burma. He decorated the walls with the certificates of the many prizes she had by now won, including the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize. And above his bed he hung a huge photograph of her.

The 1995 visit was the last time Michael and Suu were ever allowed to see one another. Three years later, he learnt he had terminal cancer. He called Suu to break the bad news and immediately applied for a visa so that he could say goodbye in person. When his application was rejected, he made over 30 more as his strength rapidly dwindled. A number of eminent figures – among them the Pope and President Clinton – wrote letters of appeal, but all in vain. Finally, a military official came to see Suu. Of course she could say goodbye, he said, but to do so she would have to return to Oxford.

The implicit choice that had haunted her throughout those 10 years of marital separation had now become an explicit ultimatum: your country or your family. She was distraught. If she left Burma, they both knew it would mean permanent exile – that everything they had jointly fought for would have been for nothing. Suu would call Michael from the British embassy when she could, and he was adamant that she was not even to consider it.

For many years, as Burma’s human rights record deteriorated, it seemed the Aris family’s great self-sacrifice might have been in vain. Yet in recent weeks the military have finally announced their desire for political change. And Suu’s 22-year vigil means she is uniquely positioned to facilitate such a transition – if and when it comes – exactly as Mandela did so successfully for South Africa.

Adapted from 'The untold love story of Burma’s Aung San Suu Kyi' by Rebecca Frayn

Questions

1) What is this passage about?

2) Does this passage give a positive or a negative impression of Aung San Suu Kyi? How can you tell?

3) What can you tell about Aung San Suu Kyi as a person?
III. Locating the Main Idea

One useful way to understand the main idea of a paragraph is to start by identifying the paragraph’s **topic**. **A paragraph’s topic is the subject under discussion.** When identifying the topic of a paragraph, remember that it should be general enough to cover the material in the paragraph, but not so general that the label could apply to many paragraphs.

*Let’s look at this paragraph to illustrate.*

Beginning in the late tenth century, many new cities and towns were founded, particularly in northern Europe. Usually, a group of merchants established a settlement near some fortified stronghold, such as a castle or monastery. Castles were particularly favored since they were usually located along major routes of transportation or at the intersection of two such trade routes; the lords of the castle also offered protection. If the settlement prospered and expanded, new walls were built to protect it.

What is this paragraph about? The opening sentence tells us that it is about “cities and towns” in “Europe” in the “late tenth century.” But, is it about **all** towns in tenth-century Europe? No. As the opening sentence establishes, it is about the **founding of new towns**. The rest of the paragraph contains specific details about how (by merchants) and where (near castles and trade or transportation routes) the new towns were established. The paragraph’s topic is the **founding of new towns in late tenth-century Europe**.

Once you have identified the topic of the paragraph, you can locate the main idea sentence by looking for a statement which contains some ideas/opinions about the topic. This sentence, however, must be broad enough to include all other ideas in the paragraph. The main idea must make the rest of the paragraph meaningful. It is the one idea that ties all of the other details together.

*A main idea sentence (MIS) has two parts, usually called the topic (T) and the controlling idea (CI). If you like math, think of it as an equation: MIS = T + CI*

The main idea is often found in the first sentence of a paragraph; however, you may find it in other locations; that is, in the last sentence, in the middle sentence, split between the first and the last sentences or not stated in the paragraph at all.

Study the sample paragraphs on the next page and notice the locations of the main idea and its relationship with the other sentences in the paragraph.
A. Main idea in the first sentence

_You no doubt have an image of who you are: this is your self-concept._ It consists of your feelings and thoughts about your strengths and weaknesses, your abilities and limitations. Your self-concept develops from at least three sources: (1) the image of you that others have and that they reveal to you, (2) the comparisons you make between yourself and others, and (3) the way you interpret and evaluate your own thoughts and behaviors.

B. Main idea in the last sentence

The _open self_ represents all the information that both you and others know about yourself. The _blind self_ represents all the things that you don’t know about yourself that others do know. The _hidden self_ contains all that you know of yourself and of others that you keep secret. The _unknown self_ represents truths about yourself that neither you nor others know. _Thus, your self-awareness is how much you know about yourself according to the model of the four selves._

C. Main idea in the middle sentence

When you think you’re a failure, you’re more likely to act like a failure. When you think you are successful, you are more likely to act like a success. When you feel good about yourself – about who you are and what you are capable of doing – you will perform better. _Self-esteem is very important because success breeds success_. Increasing self-esteem will, therefore, help you to function more effectively in school, in interpersonal relationships, and in careers.

D. Unstated main idea (implied)

Sometimes the main idea is not stated in any particular sentence but each sentence contains details that lead to a common idea. In order to arrive at the main idea, you have to read every sentence and figure out what they have in common.

People in the United States disclose more than those in Great Britain, Germany, Japan, or Puerto Rico. American students also disclose more than students from nine different Middle East countries. Singaporean-Chinese students consider more topics to be taboo and inappropriate for self-disclosure than their British colleagues. In Japan it is considered undesirable to reveal personal information whereas in much of the United States it is not only considered desirable, it is expected.

From the above paragraph, you can notice that all of the sentences are about “self-disclosure.” Also, you can see that the subject of each sentence is people from different countries and cultures. Each sentence talks about how much people from different cultures are willing to tell about themselves. If you put all this information together, you can come up with a main idea sentence such as **“People from different countries have different degrees of self-disclosure.”**
Exercise 4
Instructions: Write the main idea of the following paragraphs.

1. Luang Prabang has both natural and historical sites. Among the natural tourism sites are the Kuang Si Falls and Pak Ou Caves. Tourists may also ride elephants. At the end of the main street of Luang Prabang is a night market where stalls sell shirts, bracelets and other souvenirs. The Haw Kham Royal Palace Museum and the Wat Xieng Thong temple are among the most well-known historical sites. Along with the magnificent temples, a significant part of the old town's appeal is the many French provincial style houses.

Main idea = ________________________________________________________________

2. Food sits at the very center of Vietnamese culture: for every significant holiday on the Vietnamese cultural calendar, all the important milestones in a Vietnamese person's life, and indeed, most of the important day-to-day social events and interactions - food plays a central role. Special dishes are prepared and served with great care for every birth, marriage and death, and the anniversaries of ancestors' deaths. More business deals are struck over dinner tables than over boardroom tables, and when friends get together, they eat together. Preparing food and eating together remains the focus of family life.

Main idea = ________________________________________________________________

3. Singapore has four official languages: English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil. English is the common language of the nation and is the language of business, government and the medium of instruction in schools. Public organizations in Singapore conduct their businesses in English, and official documents written in a non-English official language such as Chinese, Malay or Tamil typically have to be translated into English to be accepted for submission. The Singapore Constitution and all laws are written in English, and translators are also required if one wishes to address the Singaporean Courts in a language other than English. However, English is the native tongue for only one-third of all Singaporeans, with roughly a third of all Singaporean Chinese, a quarter of all Singaporean Malays and half of all Singaporean Indians speaking it as their native tongue.

Main idea = ________________________________________________________________

4. Due to its long history as a tributary state of China, as well as several periods of Chinese occupation, Vietnamese culture is heavily influenced by that of Southern China, with Confucianism forming the basis of Vietnamese society. The Vietnamese language also contains many loan words from Chinese, though the two languages are unrelated. Buddhism remains the single largest religion in Vietnam, though like in China but unlike in the rest of northern Southeast Asia, the dominant school of Buddhism in Vietnam is the Mahayana School.

Main idea = ________________________________________________________________
IV. Understanding Reference

A. Pronoun

Writers use pronouns instead of repeating the same word or name many times. Pronouns can be singular or plural. This means they can replace a single name/idea or a group of names/ideas.

Example:

Modern technology has dramatically changed the way we view the world. With air travel, satellite communications, and computers, it seems a much smaller place these days.

The word ‘it’ refers to ‘the world’.

Exercise 5

Instructions: Write down what each underlined pronoun refers to.

The Problem of Old Computers

Approximately 10 million computers are thrown away each year! Because most unwanted computers are sent to a dump, (1) they have caused a problem. The computer industry and the government are working on ways to solve (2) it. (3) They have concluded that there must be changes in the way computers are built. (4) They must be made in ways that will allow their parts to be recycled. (5) These include the electronic parts, the glass screen of the monitor, and pieces of the printer.

(1) they = ___________________________  (4) They = ___________________________
(2) it = ___________________________  (5) These = ___________________________
(3) They = ___________________________

A new company has started to recycle computer parts. When old computers and computer parts are received at the company, (1) they are carefully broken down into parts. (2) These include circuit boards, bits of aluminum, gold, and electronic chips. Sometimes it takes an hour to break an old personal computer down into its parts. Eventually, (3) they are all carefully sorted. Then the company sells (4) them to the many customers (5) it has found for used parts.

(1) they = ___________________________  (4) them = ___________________________
(2) These = ___________________________  (5) it = ___________________________
(3) they = ___________________________
B. Substitution (Synonyms)

Writers make their writing interesting and enjoyable to read by using a variety of words. They may use different words or phrases to name the same thing. It is important to remember that even though two different words are used, they refer to the same thing.

Example:

- Many Estonians have country homes on the nearby island of Saaremaa in the Baltic Sea. They visit their simple cottages often and plant large gardens there.

  The word ‘cottages’ refers to homes.

- A pedicab is a small cab that is pulled by a bicycle. This human-powered transportation has been popular in Asian countries for many years.

  The phrase ‘human-powered transportation’ refers to pedicab.

Exercise 6

Instructions: Circle the word or phrase which has the same meaning as the underlined word/phrase in each of the following sentences.

VIETNAM

1. During its history, Vietnam was invaded by China, France and the U.S. Nevertheless, this Southeast Asian nation still boasts patriotism and a rich cultural heritage.

2. The Vietnamese are especially proud of their historic capital city. The old quarter of Hanoi dates back to the 11th century.

3. Hanoi’s peaceful ‘Van Mieu’, or Temple of Literature, is Vietnam’s oldest educational institution. The Confucius inspired university was established for the education of mandarins.

4. Around the central courtyard of Van Mieu stand 82 stone tortoises. These beautiful ancient sculptures were built to honor the men who received doctorates in triennial examinations.

5. Every year, the celebration of the Lunar New Year, ‘Tet’, is held near Hoan Kiem Lake. This festival is a centuries-old tradition much enjoyed by everyone, locals and tourists included.

6. While most tourists neglect Vietnam’s fourth-largest city in favor of nearby Huế and Hoi An, Danang has considerable charm in its own right.

7. Another tourists’ favorite is Saigon which was renamed Ho Chi Minh City following its fall in 1975. However, the old name is still used by both Vietnamese and foreigners, especially when referring to the most central part of the city.

8. The Vietnamese love a good cup of coffee. In the central market of Saigon, many small shops offer samples of this favorite beverage, individually brewed with a small metal French drip filter, and served with condensed milk.

Source: Lonely Planet ‘Vietnam’
V. Making Inferences

The process of putting pieces of information together so that they make sense is called **making an inference**. In other words, when you “infer” something, you are drawing an unstated conclusion from the information that you already have.

Here is a postcard from a friend. The postcard was damaged so you can’t read the postmark or the first line. Read the postcard and discuss the questions that follow with your classmates.

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Bella Swan
14 Palomino St.
Juarez, TX 78216
USA

Beautiful, charming place. Not much of a nightlife in this area though. I wish there was at least a night market. Everyone here is friendly and polite. We’re surprised that they all speak good English. Now we’re heading south back to the capital city. The scenery is just lovely. You should see Jacob with his camera! He’s taken hundreds of pictures. It’s sad that we have to leave the Land of Smiles in a few days but it will be good to return home and see you again.

Miss you.
Edward
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- Which country did the sender go to on vacation? How can you tell?

- How can you tell that the sender is not in the USA?

- What can you tell about the writer who sent the postcard and the person he is traveling with?
Success at making inferences depends on the background knowledge and the facts given in the text. Logical reasoning will help you to make inferences about ideas or concepts that the author has not directly stated. Thus, while you are reading, look at the important details and think of them as clues or evidence that will support your inferences or conclusions.

Look at the example below to try to find clues in the facts given and use these to make inferences.

**Situation:** Mike is a student in Professor Brown's biology class. Class starts at 9 a.m. It is now 9.15 a.m. and Professor Brown is speaking to the class. Mike opens the door and walks into the classroom.

**Clues:**
- Mike is a student in Professor Brown's biology class.
- Class starts at 9 a.m.
- Mike walks into the classroom at 9.15 a.m.

**Inference:** Mike is late for class.

**Exercise 7**
**Instructions:** Study the facts from each situation. Underline the clues to help you make a logical inference or draw a reasonable conclusion. Do not read the following passage until you finish the one before.

1. **Situation:** The ticket line for the flight to Kuala Lumpur was long. Ploy was standing in line ahead of Chai. The ticket agent sold Ploy the last ticket.

**Inference:**

2. **Situation:** Chai stood at the window, watching the flight to Kuala Lumpur depart with Ploy on board. He desperately needed to get to Kuala Lumpur that night. However, there were no more flights available until the next morning. Half an hour passed as he sat in the passenger hall of Suvarnabhumi Airport, wondering what to do. Suddenly, Ploy walked down the hall, waving to him.

**Inference:**

3. **Situation:** Ploy explained that one engine of the plane had caught on fire and they were forced to return to Bangkok. The crew was now getting another plane ready to go to Kuala Lumpur. Although the flight to Kuala Lumpur had originally been full, there were many seats available now. Some passengers had missed their connections, while others decided not to fly at all. However, Chai was not afraid.

**Inference:**
VI. Thinking Logically

When you are reading, understanding the words is not enough to understand the whole text. You need to be able to make logical connections between the ideas and information in your reading. This means using the information you already know to reach a conclusion. In other words, you need to think logically.

Exercise 8
Instructions: Choose the best possible ending for the following paragraphs.

1. Imagine a baby about five months old. It can cry and smile, and it can eat and sleep. Do you know a baby can also count at this age? According to new psychological research, a small baby can even add and subtract small numbers of objects. People generally think that these abilities are learned much later, but in fact they are _____________.
   a. not present until adulthood  
   b. learned only by five-month-old babies  
   c. already present in small babies  
   d. very difficult for children to learn

2. In many countries, textbooks for children in elementary school give a false picture of women’s lives. They often show women only as mothers and housewives. The women are seen caring for their families or doing simple tasks around the home. In reality, in many countries, the majority of women work outside the home. They may also have children and do housework, but at the same time, they have jobs. Their lives can be quite complicated as they try to balance their responsibilities at home and at work. Their situation is nothing like the situation shown in the school books. Some educators believe that these books _____________.
   a. help girls prepare for their future  
   b. give girls a good idea of their future  
   c. show women in many complex situations  
   d. do not show enough pictures of women

3. Sociologists and psychologists have argued for centuries about how a person’s character is formed. The argument has long been known as “nature versus nurture,” describing the two main opposing theories. The first theory says that character is formed genetically before birth. According to this theory, nature – through genetics – determines what a person will be like. The other theory says, on the contrary, that a newborn baby has no definite character. The child’s character develops as he or she grows up, and the development of that character is influenced by the child’s family and social environment. Thus, according to the second theory, the most important factors are _____________.
   a. natural and genetic  
   b. scientific and theoretical  
   c. psychological and physical  
   d. cultural and social

When doing this exercise, you need to use critical thinking; that is, you will look for the ways that each ending may or may not make sense in the paragraph. The best ending always follows logically from the information in the paragraph!
VII. Guessing Meanings from Contexts

What do you usually do when you come to a word you do not know while reading?
Do you
a) look it up in the dictionary?
b) ask your teacher?
c) ask a friend?
d) try to guess what it means?

Advantages of guessing
- It is fast because you don’t have to interrupt your reading.
- It helps your comprehension because you stay focused on the general sense of what you are reading.
- It helps you remember words within their contexts.
- It allows you to enjoy your reading more because you don’t have to stop often.

When you try to guess the meaning of an unknown word, you use the text surrounding the word—the context—to provide you with clues. Sometimes you can guess the meaning of a word from other words within the sentence but sometimes you may need to read several sentences in order to find the clues.

Exercise 9
Instructions: In the paragraphs below, one word has been replaced with a nonsense word. Use the context to guess what the underlined nonsense word means.

1. All tourists visiting Thailand should first get a svip. They will not be allowed to enter at all without one. Travelers without a svip will be sent back where they came from. A svip can be given on the spot if they arrive by plane or by car. However, they may have to wait a long time for one. This can be avoided by getting a svip before they leave their countries.

What is a “svip”? Answer: ____________________________________________

2. Various kinds of wrooms are available in Singapore. Some are for one trip only, some are for a day, some for three days. The three-day wroom is useful for tourists who want to visit different parts of the city. It allows them unlimited travel for three days on the local buses and underground trains. Wrooms—and timetable for buses and trains—are available at all tourist information centers.

What is a “wroom”? Answer: ____________________________________________

3. In Hanoi, it is wise to get yourself a wup as soon as possible. It is very easy to get lost if you leave the main streets. You can get free wups at a tourist information center, but they are not complete. Better wups can be found in the bookstores. These have more details, and they provide names of all the streets.

What is a “wup”? Answer: ____________________________________________

Guessing will help you get a rough idea about the word while you are reading. Double check with the dictionary before you memorize the meaning and the usage of the word!
Exercise 10
Instructions: Read the following paragraphs and answer the questions about the underlined nonsense word.

1. As the harmful effects of mropping on health have become widely known, many cities and some countries have passed laws that limit where it is allowed. In many places, mropping is no longer permitted in the restaurants and bars. Owners of restaurants and bars were against prohibitory laws because they believed that their businesses would suffer, but that lasted only for the first few months. After that, business returned to normal. The laws have also had another positive effect, apart from making the air cleaner for everyone: More people have given up mropping altogether.

   - What does “mropping” mean?
   - Which words or phrases give a clue to the meaning of “mropping”?
   - What part of speech is “mropping”? How do you know?

2. There’s a misconception that a person who obtains a Ph.D. must be swelch. This can’t be all true. “Swelch” qualities like brilliance and quick-thinking are irrelevant in Ph.D. level studies. Let there be no doubt: brilliance and quick-thinking are valuable in other pursuits. But, they’re neither sufficient nor necessary in doing Ph.D. research. Certainly, being swelch helps. But, it won’t get the job done.

   - What does “swelch” mean?
   - Which words or phrases give a clue to the meaning of “swelch”?
   - What part of speech is “swelch”? How do you know?

3. In many countries, there are electronic signs along roads that zoop drivers about dangers or problems ahead. These may be short-term dangers, such as an accident or bad weather, or longer-term problems, such as roadwork. Studies have shown, however, that drivers do not always notice these signs. To be sure that drivers are zooped about the condition of the road, the highway management service in Scotland has developed a new electronic system that sends messages directly to special electronic systems built into cars. Do these systems work better to zoop drivers than roadside signs? It is too soon to tell. The results of the first studies will be published next year.

   - What does “zoop” mean?
   - Which words or phrases give a clue to the meaning of “zoop”?
   - What part of speech is “zoop”? How do you know?

TIPS!
How to guess meaning from context
✓ Determine the part of speech.
✓ Look at the words that are used with it.
✓ Think about the meaning of the sentence.

Compiled and adapted from: