



Reading Sample Questions

Reading Text 3: Harry Potter was the last great pre-internet phenomenon: Read the text and answer the questions.

It was just a book back then. There were no queues. No grown adults in costumes, waving wands. No blockbuster movies, no video games. All those years ago, the first Harry Potter book was published, having previously been **rejected** by 12 publishers. The legend goes that Bloomsbury chief executive Nigel Newton published Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone because his daughter had enjoyed reading the manuscript. 500 million copies later, and a lot of people are rich.

No one can predict what our next big cultural **phenomenon** will be. What we do know, is that it won't ever be like that again. Harry Potter was the last great collective obsession of the analogue age. It came from a time before binge-watching, before memes, before Amazon Prime. We used to do this thing called "waiting". Our online, on-demand culture has changed habits so fundamentally that it's remarkable to think that a significant number of those 500 million readers went to a bookshop to get their copies.

In fact, those trips to the bookshop are really the things I remember. The shops opened at midnight so the reading could start within seconds. No book has come close to that level of anticipation. But now you don't have to go anywhere to get things fast, you can just order them online.

When I think about 11-year-old me, sitting in my bedroom, getting excited by it all, that excitement is what I think about the most. I don't really remember the Harry Potter stories. How did they end? I have no memory. I mostly remember the things that happened around them. The early books came out when I was at prime Harry Potter readership age. And, like millions of my generation, the books became an unexpected friend throughout my teenage years. When the final book was released, I was 16. The day before it was released, my first ever boyfriend **broke up** with me. I was so sad and couldn't eat or sleep. At midnight, my dad took me to the shop to wait in line for the final Harry Potter book. It was the only thing that cheered me up. I woke up the next day reading until my eyes were sore.

Some of the excitement of Harry Potter now seems stupid. JK Rowling's editors have described secret meetings, where manuscripts were handed over in supermarket bags before being put into a safe. Rowling's legacy may now be controversial, but in 2011, she was named as one of Britain's national treasures, alongside Paul McCartney and David Attenborough.

I feel nostalgic for Harry Potter as the last pre-internet phenomenon, which we won't see again. It wasn't just the anticipation, the trip to the bookshop – but the lack of noise. The experience was quieter, more **personal**. No screens. No spoilers. No online tweets from the author. Five hundred million people might have read it. But most of the time, it was just you and a book.



Questions:

1. In the first paragraph, the word rejected is closest in meaning to:
a) Accepted
b) Refused
c) Taken
d) Chosen
2. In the final paragraph, the word phenomenon is closest in meaning to:
a) Event
b) Genius
c) Winner
d) Time
3. In the fourth paragraph, the word broke up is closest in meaning to:
a) Destroyed
b) Got together
c) Mended
d) Separated
4. In the final paragraph, the word personal is closest in meaning to:
a) Private
b) Public
c) Rude
d) Shared
5. According to the text, why did Nigel Newton publish Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone?
a) Because his daughter wrote it
b) Because 12 other publishers wanted it
c) Because his daughter read it and liked it
d) To make him rich
6. According to the text, what time did the bookshops open?
a) 12 pm
b) Online
c) 12 am
d) Midday



7. According to the text, how old was the author when the last Harry Potter was released?
a) 11 years old
b) She doesn't say
c) One million years old
d) 16 years old
8. According to the text, what was the only thing that cheered the author up after her boyfriend broke up with her?
a) Reading until her eyes hurt
b) Waiting in line for the final book to be released
c) Seeing her dad
d) Eating and sleeping
9. The author says that Harry Potter was the last pre-internet phenomenon.
10. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the following sentence? "The early books came out when I was at prime Harry Potter readership age."
a) The author was at the perfect reading age when the first Harry Potter books were released
b) The author was at the perfect reading age when the final Harry Potter came out
c) The author was Harry Potter's number one fan
d) The author was not at the prime readership age when Harry Potter was released
11. What does the author mean when she refers to the "analogue age"?
a) The analogue age refers to a time after the digital age (pen and paper, record players, polaroid cameras)
b) The analogue age refers to a time before the digital age (pen and paper, record players, polaroid cameras)
c) The analogue age is something that will happen in the future
d) The analogue age means binge-watching and memes
12. Five hundred million Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone books were sold.
13. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the following sentence? "I woke up the next day reading until my eyes were sore. "
a) I read all night until my eyes hurt
b) The next day I woke up early and read until my eyes hurt
c) My eyes were sore from not sleeping
d) My eyes hurt because I went to bed early



14. Which of the following can be inferred about the author's opinion on her past experience from the paragraph and the sentence? "The experience was quieter, more personal. No screens. No spoilers."

- a) The author thought that the experience was more peaceful with fewer distractions
- b) The author thought that the experience was quieter but with lots of screen time and spoilers
- c) The author thought that the experience had too many spoilers
- d) The author thought that the experience had too many distractions

15. Which of the following Latin cg is TRUE, according to the passage? (Make sure you read the WHOLE PASSAGE)

- a) In 2011, JK Rowling put her manuscript in a supermarket bag
- b) In 2011, JK Rowling had a secret meeting
- c) In 2011, JK Rowling was selected to be one of Britain's national treasures
- d) In 2011, JK Rowling wasn't named as one of Britain's national treasures

16. Which of the following is NOT TRUE, according to the passage? (Make sure you read the WHOLE PASSAGE)

- a) The author says that you need to go to the bookshop to get things fast
- b) The author says that you can get things very quickly without leaving the house
- c) The author says that you can order things online rather than going anywhere
- d) The author says that you don't need to go anywhere to get things fast



Reading 2 - Be Cheerful on the Outside:

“The surest sign of wisdom is a constant cheerfulness,” wrote the philosopher Michel de Montaigne. “Be cheerful,” commands Prospero in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Yet the impact of cheerfulness, and the power it gives us to get through difficult moments in our lives, is hard to define and easy to disregard, even as we **strive** to be happy. And that is one of the reasons Timothy Hampton, a professor in comparative literature, decided to write a book about it, exploring how “cheerfulness” functions as a theme in the works of great philosophers and writers from Shakespeare to Jane Austen, and how it is **portrayed** in everything from 16th-century medical books to the Boy Scout handbook.

“Cheerfulness is a psychological and emotional resource, a way of approaching actions and situations,” says Hampton. Cheerfulness differs from happiness, he says, because you have some control over it. “You can make yourself cheerful – I can tell you to cheer up and you know what that means. But you can’t make yourself happy. Happiness is something you don’t have any control over.” Cheerfulness is not optimism, he says, and it’s not positivity or hopefulness, either. “It’s ephemeral. It comes and goes. It’s a resource of the self, an uptick in one’s emotional wellbeing that raises your energy levels briefly. It’s not something that is easy to pin down – we don’t really recognise it, unless we’re doing it.” For example, it doesn’t necessarily show on your face, he explains, the way stronger emotions do. “But when you do something, I can tell if you are cheerful, I can see the cheerfulness coming through in your actions.”

Most importantly, it is an accessible emotion, even in moments of extreme hardship. “I spent much of my early life in proximity to people who had suffered physical handicaps and been in accidents,” Hampton says, “and for whom getting through the day was very difficult. And cheerfulness, I realised, is a resource – you can make it, manage it and put it into action. And that seemed to me to be a really precious and interesting thing that we don’t think about as much as we should.”

Hampton decided to find out whether cheerfulness was an emotion people have been thinking about for centuries and if the way we think about it has changed. The idea that cheerfulness can spread from the exterior to the interior is common in books and essays about cheerfulness, he says, as is the idea that cheerfulness can spread from person to person, and build feelings of community and fellowship. “The philosopher Hume, for example, calls cheerfulness a flame or a contagion. He says when a cheerful person comes into a room where everybody is subdued, cheerfulness **swoops** around the room and envelops everyone. So there’s a sense that cheerfulness becomes something that’s bigger than any of us and is linked to our relationships to each other.”

So how do we “aim at cheerfulness”? Hampton thinks the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson provides good advice when he writes that no one can truly be a poet, unless they are cheerful, because poets “delight in the world, in man, in woman, for the lovely light that sparkles from them”. Hampton suggests that to be cheerful, “take delight in the world... For Emerson, the key to cheerfulness was an acceptance of the beauty of the world.” For Shakespeare, it’s a deliberate decision to “look on all things well”, while for Montaigne the state of cheerfulness “is like things above the moon, always clear and **serene**”.

**Questions:**

1. The word 'strive' in the text is closest in meaning to:

- a. Make a great effort;
- b. Attempt;
- c. Try to do something half-heartedly;
- d. Disregard.

2. The word 'portrayed' in the text is closest in meaning to:

- a. Depicted;
- b. Drawn;
- c. Detailed;
- d. Discovered.

3. The word 'swoop' in the text is closest in meaning to:

- a. To permeate the air;
- b. To move rapidly through the air;
- c. To cover all surfaces;
- d. To spring into being.

4. The word 'serene' in the text is closest in meaning to:

- a. Pure white;
- b. Very bright;
- c. Always present;
- d. Tranquil.

5. Why did Professor Hampton decide to write a book about cheerfulness?

- a. Because he's a professor of comparative literature;
- b. Because Shakespeare wrote about it;
- c. Because most people don't pay it any attention;
- d. All of the above reasons.

6. According to Professor Hampton, what's the main difference between cheerfulness and happiness?

- a. You can't control cheerfulness;
- b. You can control cheerfulness;
- c. It's better to be happy;
- d. It's better to be cheerful.



7. How does Professor Hampton describe cheerfulness?

- a. Long lasting;
- b. Easy to pin down;
- c. Always obvious;
- d. Something that makes us feel better.

8. What made Professor Hampton realise that cheerfulness is a resource?

- a. It's an emotion that people have been thinking about for centuries;
- b. He had seen it in action when he was younger;
- c. He spent time with people who were cheerful in difficult circumstances;
- d. It's really precious.

9. According to the text, which of the following is NOT true?:

- a. Cheerfulness can spread from the outside to the inside;
- b. Cheerfulness can spread from person to person;
- c. Cheerfulness is linked to our relationships with each other;
- d. Cheerfulness cannot help a subdued person.

10. Complete the following sentence with one word only:

Ralph Waldo Emerson was a _____ .

11. Which sentence below most accurately summarises the main message of the whole text?:

- a. Cheerfulness is a resource we can conjure up for ourselves when we need it;
- b. Professor Hampton wrote an important book about cheerfulness;
- c. Cheerfulness was discovered by Shakespeare;
- d. A lot of people are happy, even during times of extreme hardship.

12. Complete the following sentence with one word only:

According to Montaigne, constant cheerfulness is the surest sign of _____.

13. According to the text, is the following statement true or false?: The theme of cheerfulness appears in a book by Jane Austen.



14. According to the text, is the following statement true or false?: Cheerfulness is the same as optimism.

15. According to the text, how do we achieve cheerfulness?

- a. Take delight in the world;
- b. Look on all things well;
- c. Accept the beauty of the world;
- d. All of the above.

16. What can be inferred from the following sentence?: "and how it is portrayed in everything from 16th-century medical books to the Boy Scout handbook".

- a. Cheerfulness is written about in a wide range of books.
- b. The idea of cheerfulness is very old.
- c. Cheerfulness is closely linked to the state of our health.
- d. Scouts were instructed on how to be cheerful.

