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# ENGLISH COMPREHENSION AND LANGUAGE EXERCISES FOR HONG KONG



ENGLISH  
COMPREHENSION AND LANGUAGE  
EXERCISES

For Hong Kong





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ENGLISH  
COMPREHENSION AND  
LANGUAGE EXERCISES

for

Hong Kong



L. G. MARSH



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## PREFACE

A sound knowledge of English can only proceed from the close study of the written and spoken word. The 30 extracts contained in this book have been chosen primarily because of their interest to students in Hong Kong. They are purposely short and concise. The teacher will note that there is no inflation of style and no obscurity of meaning. Questions and exercises which follow are mainly objective, thus directing the student entirely to a study of the extracts themselves, and are well within the ability of most students studying English in Hong Kong.

The dictionary section is comprehensive and students are advised to refer to it frequently in completing the exercises in this book.





## I. GANDHI

In the villages of India Gandhi had become a familiar figure. He now wore the simple loin-cloth of white hand-spun and hand-woven cotton. In cold weather a cotton shawl covered his shoulders. His head was shaven, making him look bald and older than he was. He wore spectacles and no teeth—for, though he had an artificial set, he considered it vanity to wear them except during meals! But he had a wonderful smile which charmed people; and, while others called him 'Mahatma', all his friends—who were numbered in thousands—called him simply 'Bapu' ('Daddy').

### A. This passage describes Gandhi. This is what it tells us:

*Gandhi lived in India. He wore a cotton loin-cloth. In cold weather he also wore a shawl. He was bald, toothless and bespectacled. Although he was known as 'Mahatma', all his friends called him 'Bapu' ('Daddy').*

### B. Read 'A' and answer these questions. Always answer in complete sentences. (The first one is done for you.)

1. What clothes did Gandhi wear?

*Gandhi wore a loin-cloth and a shawl.*

2. What three words describe Gandhi?
3. How was Gandhi known?
4. What did his friends call him?

### C. Read the extract about Gandhi and answer these questions:

1. Where was Gandhi a familiar figure?
2. What was Gandhi's loin-cloth made from?
3. How was Gandhi's loin-cloth made?
4. What did he wear in cold weather?
5. What made Gandhi look older than he was?
6. When did Gandhi wear his teeth?
7. Why did he not wear his teeth except during meals?
8. What charmed people about Gandhi?

## D. Research questions

**Can you find out the following things about Gandhi?**

1. When did he live?
2. What was Gandhi's great achievement?
3. What were his methods?

There are two ways of finding out the answers to these questions:

1. Look up the facts in reference books, history books, magazines, old newspapers.
2. Ask as many people as you can. Other people may have read about Gandhi and can tell you a lot of interesting things about him. You will then be able to tell other people.

## E. Word study

familiar

shaven

artificial

vanity

charmed

bespectacled

toothless

considered

**Complete the following sentences by filling in the blank spaces with ONE word chosen from those above:**

1. He ..... the question and then gave his reply.
2. His face is ..... but I do not remember his name.
3. He walks with a limp because he has an ..... leg.
4. Her greatest fault was ..... because she was always thinking about her looks.
5. When the ..... old woman grinned, she showed her gums.
6. She ..... me with her wonderful smile.
7. His ..... face reminded us of his short sight.
8. His head was ..... because his religion did not permit him to grow his hair.

## 2. THE RICE PULLER

There was once a Chinese farmer named Lu. People often called him Lu Always-in-a-hurry because he was a very impatient man and wanted to get things done in a hurry. If his wife went to the village he demanded that she hurry back as quickly as possible and if his sons worked in the field he insisted that they worked twice as fast as some of the other farmers.

One day Lu heard some other farmers talking about their rice. They were saying how high their rice had grown and how fine the crop would be that year.

One of them said that his rice was already four inches high.

Lu listened for a few moments and then hurried back to his farm. Straight away he measured the height of his rice.

It was not four inches high. It was not even three inches high.

Lu thought about this in bed that night and then he had a wonderful idea.

He got out of bed and rushed down to the fields. By the light of the moon he took hold of one of the rice stalks and gently gave it a little pull.

'Ah, that's better,' he said to himself.

Then he went round pulling all the other stalks until morning came and he had finished pulling all the rice stalks in his fields.

Tired out, he went back to bed, satisfied that his rice was now more than four inches high.

The next day he went into his fields to look at his rice.

What he saw saddened him, for all the rice stalks lay withered and dead in the morning sun.

And so in China today people often say to someone who is in too much of a hurry, 'Don't be a rice-puller.'

### A. Answer these questions:

1. Why did people call the farmer 'Lu Always-in-a-hurry'?
2. What did Lu hear other farmers talking about?
3. When Lu arrived back at his farm, what did he do?
4. What was Lu's wonderful idea?
5. What happened to the rice stalks?
6. What sort of a person is often called 'a rice-puller'?

**B. Write this story in not more than 150 words.**

**C.** In this story we read about Lu measuring the height of his rice. If we want to know the height of something we say, 'How high is ..... ?' or 'How tall is ..... ?' If we want to know how wide something is, we say 'How wide is ..... ?'

**Complete the following sentences in which you ask a question about measurement or distance:**

How long is ..... ?

How narrow is ..... ?

How wide is ..... ?

How short is ..... ?

How thick is ..... ?

How far is ..... ?

How high is ..... ?

**D. Word study**

impatient

insisted

measured

height

stalks

satisfied

saddened

withered

**Complete the following sentences by filling in the blank spaces with ONE word chosen from those above:**

1. He shows that he is ..... by shouting at the driver and telling him to go faster.
2. The plant looks ..... because it has had no water.
3. I have ..... the window because I need to put in some new glass.
4. The ..... of the door is eight feet.
5. The teacher is not ..... with my progress in English.

### 3. THE TOBACCO PLANT

Siromati Raja's daughter was so ugly that no man would marry her. As she grew older she saw how all the world lived happily in pairs; animals, birds, insects and human beings. Her father tried hard to find her a husband, but in vain.

At last she said to her father, 'No one will marry me. I do not want to go on living.'

And she lay down and died.

The Raja was broken-hearted. A great funeral pyre was prepared and soon only a few ashes remained of the daughter's body.

The girl's spirit went to Mahapurub. 'Ask for anything you want', he said.

'In my life no one desired me. Now make me into something that everyone will want.'

'Very well,' said Mahapurub, and he gave life to the ashes of the dead girl. In time the ashes grew into a plant.

A goatherd passed that way and saw the plant. 'This looks fresh and good,' he thought. He broke off a leaf and smelt it. It was a good smell. He took some of the seeds from the plant and sowed them until he had many plants.

Then one day he put a leaf from one of the plants in his mouth and it tasted good. He put some dried leaves in a bowl and burned them so that a wonderful smoke came from them. At last he put a burning leaf in his mouth and smoked it.

The plant was tobacco and gradually many men came to desire the leaves of the tobacco plant so that the girl that no one wanted truly became something that many wanted all over the world.

#### A. Answer these questions:

1. Why would no man marry the Raja's daughter?
2. What happened to the daughter's body after she died?
3. What did Mahapurub say to her spirit?
4. What was her reply?
5. What happened to her ashes?
6. What did the goatherd do with the plant?
7. What did the goatherd do with the leaves of the plant?
8. What was the plant called?
9. How did the girl's wish come true?

**B. Give three reasons why people like to smoke:**

Begin each sentence like this:

*People like to smoke because .....*

**Give three reasons why young people should not smoke:**

Begin each sentence like this:

*Young people should not smoke because .....*

**C. Tobacco is a crop. Give a list of other crops which are not foods and say what use they are.**

**D. Word study**

ugly  
funeral  
dried

truly  
marry  
prepared

happily  
tasted  
gradually

**Complete the following sentences by filling in the blank spaces with ONE word from those given above:**

1. He ..... the curry and complained that it was not very good.
2. A speech should be .....
3. The ground ..... quickly after the rain fell.
4. .... we reached the top of the mountain, although it took us nearly all day.
5. We sometimes finish a letter by writing—'Yours .....

*Ugliness* is the noun form of *ugly*.

**Find the noun form of:**

tasted, dried, prepared, truly, marry.

#### 4. THE TIGER'S WHISKER

A young woman named Yun Ok went one day to the house of a hermit who made magic potions.

'Please will you help me', she said, 'my husband does not love me any more. He does not speak to me. He does not hear me.'

'What can I do?' asked the hermit.

'Will you please make for me a magic potion to give to my husband so that he will love me again,' she said.

The hermit thought for a few moments. Then he said: 'For this potion I shall need the whisker of a living tiger. Bring me the whisker of a living tiger and I shall be able to do as you ask.'

'But how can I get the whisker of a living tiger?' asked Yun Ok. 'This is indeed very difficult. A tiger is a dangerous animal.'

'If you wish for your husband to love you again, you will succeed', replied the hermit.

Yun Ok went away.

Then one night when her husband was asleep, she crept from the house with a bowl of rice and went to a place on the mountainside where she knew a tiger lived.

She approached the tiger's cave, but stopped a distance from the entrance to the cave and then called to the tiger to come and eat the rice.

The tiger did not come.

The next night Yun Ok went to the tiger's cave. Again she offered a bowl of rice. Again the tiger did not come.

Every night after this Yun Ok went to the cave and each time she went a little nearer, and each time the tiger watched her from his cave.

After many visits to the cave, the tiger became accustomed to her, and one night he went carefully towards her and ate the rice which she held out for him. While he ate the rice she spoke gently to him.

The next night he ate the rice again and allowed her to rub his head after he had eaten.

This happened every night so that the tiger was not angry even when, many months later, she snipped off one of his whiskers.

The next morning she went to the hermit's house with the tiger's whisker.

'I have brought the tiger's whisker,' she said. 'Now you can make for me the magic potion.'



The hermit took the whisker and looked at it. Then he turned and threw it in the fire.

Yun Ok was very surprised.

'Why did you do that?' she asked.

'Tell me,' replied the hermit, 'how you obtained the whisker.'

So Yun Ok told him how each night she had got a little closer to the tiger, how she had spoken to him gently and how she had given him food and rubbed his head.

'You were very patient with the tiger. You won his confidence and his love,' said the hermit.

'But it is all for nothing now,' cried Yun Ok, 'because you have burnt the tiger's whisker and you cannot make the potion.'

'Indeed, that is not true,' replied the hermit. 'The whisker is not needed. Tell me, is a man more dangerous than a tiger? Can you not do with your husband as you have done with the tiger? Go now. With patience and kindness you can win back the love of your husband.'

**A. Answer these questions:**

1. Why did Yun Ok go to the hermit?
2. What did Yun Ok ask the hermit to do?
3. What did the hermit tell her to do?
4. How did Yun Ok snip off one of the tiger's whiskers?
5. What did the hermit do with the whisker when she gave it to him?
6. What was the advice the hermit gave to Yun Ok?

**B. Write the following in INDIRECT SPEECH (sometimes called REPORTED SPEECH): (The first one is done for you.)**

1. 'Please will you help me,' she said.  
*She asked if he would help her.*
2. 'What can I do?' asked the hermit.
3. 'I have brought a tiger's whisker,' she said.
4. 'Why did you do that?' she asked.
5. 'Tell me, is a man more dangerous than a tiger?' asked the hermit.