

# READING DRILLS

FOR SPEED AND COMPREHENSION

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快 速  
阅 读  
练 习

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Starting Time: Minutes 16 Seconds 48

Magic, or conjuring, is a form of entertainment that is based on pretending to do things which are impossible. The magician is a specially trained actor. He tries to make the audience believe that he has the power to do things which are against the laws of nature.

Magic shows are entertaining as long as the audience does not discover how the tricks are done. The magician always tries to keep his tricks a secret.

The magician usually depends on his skill with his hands, on his knowledge of psychology, and sometimes, on mechanical devices. Since magic tricks are meant to fool people, the use of psychology is important. The magician must keep people from noticing all the movements of his hands and from thinking about the secret parts of his equipment. He must also lead the audience to draw false conclusions. The magician's success depends on the fact that many things seen by the eye do not register on the mind.

Two basic magic tricks are making objects seem to appear and making objects seem to disappear. A combination of these two tricks makes for some interesting effects. For example, the magician puts a small ball under one of several cups. The ball then seems to jump from one cup to another or to change color. What actually happens is that the magician, employing quick hand movements or a mechanical device, hides one ball. While doing this he talks to the audience and waves a brightly colored cloth with one hand. The audience is too busy

watching the cloth and listening to the magician's words to notice that his other hand is hiding the ball.

Another favorite trick is to cut or burn something, and then make it appear whole again. What actually happens is that the magician makes the cut or burned object disappear by quickly hiding it while the audience watches something else. Then he "magically" makes it appear whole again by displaying another object that has not been cut or burned.

There are a number of so-called "mindreading" tricks in which the magician purports to tell a person what he is thinking about. For some of these tricks the magician has a person write down his thoughts. Then the magician secretly obtains the paper. Another "mind-reading" technique is to have a trained helper blindfold the magician. Then the helper has the audience hand him various objects. The helper can tell the magician what the objects are without mentioning their names, by using keywords or code words as he talks to the magician. This trick may take the magician and his helper many months to learn.

A magician's powers are really quite limited, but he makes people believe that he can do almost anything by changing or combining several tricks.

Tricks in which the magician apparently cuts people in half or makes them disappear are called illusions. The word illusion derives from the fact that mirrors are often used to perform these tricks. A famous illusion trick is to saw a woman in half. The woman is put into a long box with her head sticking out of one end and her feet sticking out of the other end. The magician takes an ordinary wood saw and cuts the box into two halves. The audience is shocked, thinking that perhaps

he has killed the woman. A few moments later, however, the magician puts his "magic" cape over the box and the woman comes out. The woman that the audience say being cut in two was only an image in a mirror---an illusion.

Conjuring is as popular today as it was in ancient times. Records show that over 2,000 years ago magic performances were being given in ancient Egypt, India, Rome, China and Greece. These early magicians only performed for small groups of people on a street corner or for a king and his friends. The magicians in those days used only small objects that they could carry with them or borrow, such as cups, pebbles, knives, and string.

Early conjurers frequently wore a large apron with many pockets in which they could carry their props. The bag-like apron served as identification and as a place to hide things while performing. Conjurers also carried a small folding table on which to perform their tricks.

About 1400, more elaborate tricks were invented which used larger equipment, such as boxes and barrels with false bottoms. Under these false bottoms the magician could hide a bird, rabbit, plant, or whatever he wanted to make appear suddenly. From one barrel he could make several different liquids pour forth while he told the audience that he was changing the entire contents of the barrel by magic. People of that time knew very little about mechanical devices, so it was easier for the magician to deceive them.

Some conjurers made enough money to buy a donkey, a horse, or even a horse and wagon so that they could carry bigger equipment. Conjurers also began to rent halls or empty stores so that they could give their shows indoors. Some conjurers used a large room in a local inn to give their performances. Others had

a large van that could be opened in the rear to make a stage.

The most successful magicians would move only three or four times a year. They decorated their stages with lots of equipment, but used only a small part of it in each show. In this way they could entice the same people back over and over again. Some of their equipment was of no use at all. It was only used to decorate the stage and impress the audience.

Modern magic did not really start until the 1800s. Its father is considered to be Jean Houdin, a Frenchman, who developed rules for conjuring. Houdin was also a highly skilled mechanic and watchmaker. Today modern magicians can perform feats of magic that would have been impossible years ago because they now have better mechanical equipment and greater knowledge of audience psychology.

COMPREHENSION: Answer the questions without looking back at the passage. When finished, correct your answers by checking with the answer key on page 197. Find your words per minute by looking in the chart on page 185. Enter both scores on graphs provided at the end of this book.

1. The magician pretends to do things which
  - a. people like.
  - b. are impossible.
  - c. are secret.
  - d. make people laugh.
2. An important part of a magic trick is that
  - a. it does not take too long.
  - b. it has a combination of interesting effects.
  - c. the audience doesn't discover how it is done.

- d. bright colored cloth is used.
3. If a magician cuts something, such as a cloth, he usually makes it appear whole again by
- displaying a duplicate.
  - using special glue.
  - not really cutting it.
  - showing you only the part not cut.
4. In the 1400s some of the favorite new tricks used
- cups and balls.
  - cloth and knives.
  - mind reading.
  - false bottoms.
5. A mark of a magician's success was that
- he used big equipment.
  - he didn't move often.
  - he performed in an inn.
  - his tricks involved illusions.
6. Psychology is an important part of magic tricks because
- magicians are psychologists.
  - there is no such thing as magic.
  - it tells you how much people see.
  - there is a special branch of psychology devoted to magic.
7. The audience draws false conclusions because
- the magician is smart.
  - they are led to believe them by the conjurer.
  - they like to be deceived.
  - there could be no other explanation.
8. After reading this article, you would conclude the mind reading
- couldn't really work.
  - requires much concentration.
  - requires a special talent.

- d. could work only for some people.
9. What is one valid conclusion you can draw from this article?
- Magicians are now extinct.
  - People today don't like to be fooled.
  - Magic is only for children.
  - It is more difficult to be a magician today than it was 400 years ago.
10. Another good title for this article would be
- "Magic Is a Lost Art".
  - "How to Fool Your Friends."
  - "The First Actors."
  - "An Introduction to Conjuring."

CLZOE TEST: The following passage, taken from the selection you have just read, has words omitted from it. Fill in the blank without looking back at the passage. When finished, correct your answers by checking with the answer key on page 179.

A. Subject Matter Words Missing

Some conjurers made enough \_\_\_\_\_  
 1  
 to buy a donkey, a horse, or even a horse and \_\_\_\_\_  
 2  
 so that they could carry \_\_\_\_\_ equipment.  
 3  
 Conjurers also began to \_\_\_\_\_ halls or  
 4  
 empty stores so that they could give their shows  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . Some conjurers used a large  
 5  
 \_\_\_\_\_ in a local inn to give their  
 6  
 performances. Others had a large van that \_\_\_\_\_  
 7

be opened in the rear to make a \_\_\_\_\_ 8

The most \_\_\_\_\_ 9 magicians would move

only three or four \_\_\_\_\_ 10 a year.

B. Structure Words Missing

Magic, \_\_\_\_\_ 1 conjuring, is a form of entertainment that is based \_\_\_\_\_ 2

pretending to do things which are impossible. The magician is \_\_\_\_\_ 3 specially trained

actor. He tries to make \_\_\_\_\_ 4 audience

believe that he has the power \_\_\_\_\_ 5 do

things which are against the laws \_\_\_\_\_ 6

nature. Magic shows are entertaining as long \_\_\_\_\_ 7

the audience does \_\_\_\_\_ 8 discover how

the tricks are done. The magician always tries \_\_\_\_\_ 9

keep his tricks \_\_\_\_\_ 10 secret.

VOCABULARY: The following words have been taken from the selection you have just read. Put a mark before the best meaning or synonym for the word as used in the selection.

1. conclusions,

"He must also lead the audience to draw false conclusions."



- a. false hopes
- b. strange judgments
- c. wrong judgments
- d. quick reactions

2. register,

"...many things seen by the eye do not register on the mind."

- a. easily avoid
- b. really interest
- c. hardly interest
- d. seem to impress

3. purports,

"...the magician purports to tell a person what he is thinking about."

- a. to force
- b. to pretend
- c. to attempt to hide
- d. to claim

4. technique,

"Another 'mind-reading' technique..."

- a. continued deception
- b. method of performance
- c. unusual position
- d. quick move

5. limited,

"A magician's powers are really quite limited, but he makes people believe that he can do almost anyth thing..."

- a. easily stopped
- b. difficult to develop
- c. confined to certain things
- d. unable to be learned

6. apparently,

"Tricks in which the magician apparently cuts people in half...are called illusions."

- a. to attempt to
- b. to distract
- c. to seem to
- d. to fail at

7. derives,

"The word illusion derives from the fact that mirrors are often used..."

- a. comes from a source
- b. comes from an untruth
- c. is difficult to understand
- d. cannot be explained

8. props,

"...a large apron with many pockets in which they could carry their props."

- a. something to lean on
- b. objects or devices
- c. strong supports
- d. mechanical devices

9. deceive,

"People of that time knew very little...so it was easier ... to deceive them."

- a. to deliberately lie to
- b. to mislead
- c. to betray
- d. to influence badly

10. entice,

"In this way they could entice the same people back..."

- a. to mislead
- b. to cheat
- c. to invite
- d. to lure

The word entice has an interesting origin. It is derived from a Latin word *titio* which means firebrand. The word we have today is a modification of the old French *enticier*, to incite. The suffix *ment* added to *entice* gives us the state of being enticed.

## Set 1.3 Glass

For thousands of years, people thought of glass as something beautiful to look at. Only recently have they come to think of it as something to look through. Stores display their goods in large glass windows. Glass bottles and jars that hold food and drink allow us to see the contents. Glass is used to make spectacles, microscopes, telescopes, and many other extremely useful and necessary objects. Spectacles, or glasses, are used by people who cannot see perfectly or by people who want to protect their eyes from bright light. Microscopes make tiny things larger so that we can examine them. Telescopes make objects that are far away appear much closer to us.

Glass was discovered a very long time ago. The Roman historian Pliny describes one discovery this way: the crew of a Phoenician boat landed at the mouth of a river in Syria. The crew could not find any stones to support their kettle, so they used lumps of nitre, a sodium compound, from the ship. When the heat of the fire melted the nitre, it mixed with the sand under it and the mixture became liquid glass. After this discovery the glass factories at Tyre and Sidon became quite famous, and the Phoenicians learned how to blow glass.

The Egyptians also knew how to make glass thousands of years ago. The glass they made was green because the sand contained iron. They found they could change the color by adding other minerals to the sand.

The Greeks were not famous for their glass-making. They seemed more interested in making pottery. However,

the Romans made large amounts of glass and began using it for windows. They made dishes and cups out of glass, and they decorated their palaces with glass mosaics (pictures made by putting together small bits of colored glass).

The Romans took the art of glass-making to the lands they colonized in Europe and the near East. During the Middle Ages, Constantinople (Istanbul) was an important glass center, when the Venetians took control of Constantinople, they sent many of the expert glass-makers back to Venice, and Venice became very famous for its glass. The Venetians made their glass on the island of Murano, near Venice, for two reasons: to prevent the hot fires from spreading to the city and to keep the process a secret. The glassmakers were not allowed to divulge their knowledge of glassmaking to other cities or countries. Those who did were punished or killed.

The Venetians developed a kind of glass that was so clear it could be made into lenses. Using this special glass it was possible to make spectacles and other optical instruments. In the seventeenth century, Venetian artists were taken to Paris to make mirrors for the Palace of Versailles, built by King Louis XIV.

In former centuries glass was shaped by blowing through a long pipe into a ball of very hot, soft, molten glass. The air could make the glass thick or thin and give it different shapes. The final shaping was done with special tools. Sometimes the glass was reheated several times before it was finally worked into the desired shape. Today, compressed air machines and molds are used to blow and shape glass.

In the present century, safety glass was invented

for use in modern cars and planes. Safety glass is made by placing a layer of plastic between two layers of plate glass. When the outside layer of glass is broken, the pieces do not scatter and injure people. Some glass of this type is strong enough to resist bullets.

Until World War II, most of the glass used for optical instruments was exported from Europe. However, during the war Americans could not get European glass, and they were forced to make their own. As a result, new kinds of glass were developed that had been previously unknown. These new effects were achieved by mixing other chemical elements with the sand. Some of these new glasses are very strong and can resist many kinds of shocks. Legend has it that a very hard glass, similar to that recently developed, was invented by a Roman who showed his discovery to the Emperor. When the Emperor saw the glass he feared that it would become more valuable than gold and silver, making his treasury worthless. Consequently, he had the glassmaker killed, and the secret was not discovered again for hundreds of years.

Foamglass is made by mixing finely crushed glass with carbon dust. Gas from the heated carbon makes the glass foam up as it melts. When this glass cools, it is black and very light. It floats and it can be sawn or drilled. As is true of all glass, foamglass resists heat, does not burn, does not rot, is not eaten by rats and is not rotted by water.

This kind of glass can be used for floats for fishing nets or for insulating houses to keep them warm in winter and cool in summer. It also can be used for the lining of refrigerators and for the insulators on poles that carry telephone and electric wires. Its

resistance to acids makes it very useful in the making of pipes carrying chemicals that would eat away metals. It is also useful in carrying milk, which might be contaminated by metal pipes. Small drops of glass can be used instead of jewels in many electric instruments, such as those in airplanes.

While many utilitarian uses for glass have been developed, its original aesthetic value has not been forgotten. Bowls and vases of cut glass ornament many homes. The designs are cut into thick glass by wheels that turn extremely fast. Designs are etched into polished glass with acid.

Although in recent years plastics have replaced glass under conditions where glass might be easily broken, there are new uses being developed for glass that were never imagined in the past. Perhaps the greatest advantage of glass is that its constituent parts are inexpensive and can be found all over the world.

COMPREHENSION: Answer the questions without looking back at the passage. When finished, correct your answers by checking with the answer key on page 197. Find your words per minute by looking in the chart on page 185. Enter both scores on graphs provided at the end of this book.

1. How did the Greeks use glass?
  - a. For windows
  - b. For telescopes
  - c. For ornaments.
  - d. They did not use glass.
2. Glass was used for windows by the
  - a. Romans.
  - b. Greeks.
  - c. Egyptians.
  - d. Phoenicians.
3. Venice kept its monopoly on glass by
  - a. keeping invaders out.
  - b. punishing glassmakers who left Venice.
  - c. destroying Constantinople.
  - d. paying glassmakers very well.
4. Safety glass is used for cars and planes because
  - a. it cannot break.
  - b. it cannot crack.
  - c. it resists bullets.
  - d. if it is broken, the pieces do not scatter.
5. Glass is useful in chemical laboratories because
  - a. it does not break easily.
  - b. it is transparent.
  - c. it resists acids.
  - d. it does not get dirty.
6. Glass that could be used for lenses was first developed by



- a. the Phoenicians.
  - b. the French.
  - c. the Venetians.
  - d. the Romans.
7. The Phoenicians discovered glass when
- a. a bag of sand fell into the ashes.
  - b. their nitre combined with the carbon in the sand.
  - c. their nitre combined with the sand.
  - d. their heated carbon spilled into the sand.
8. Egyptian glass was green because
- a. the sand contained iron.
  - b. their nitre contained iron.
  - c. their sand was multi-pigmented.
  - d. green was the royal color of the Nile.
9. The materials used for glassmaking are
- a. expensive and rare.
  - b. inexpensive and easily obtained.
  - c. fragile and difficult to transport.
  - d. simple and easy to combine.
10. Many new types of glass were invented in America because of
- a. the new inventions such as cars and airplanes.
  - b. World War II.
  - c. the discovery of new chemical elements.
  - d. the need for safety glass and microscopes.

CLOZE TEST: The following passage, taken from the selection you have just read, has words omitted from it. Fill in the blank without looking back at the passage. When finished, correct your answers by checking with the answer key on page 197.

A. Subject Matter Words Missing