

TOEFL Reading Sample Paper 03

- A) **Subject:** Reading Comprehension
- B) **Total Questions:** 20 Questions (2 Passages — 10 Questions per Passage)
- C) **Marking Scheme & Rules:**
- **Standard Questions:** 1 Point (Multiple Choice, Insert Text, etc.)
 - **Prose Summary:** 2 Points. This is the final question of each set.
 - **Partial Credit:** Awarded for the Prose Summary (usually 1 point if 2 out of 3 choices are correct).
 - **Negative Marking:** None. 0 points for incorrect answers.
 - **Timing:** Recommended 35 minutes for the entire section.

PASSAGE I: The Creators of Grammar

Paragraph 1: No student of a foreign language needs to be told that grammar is complex. By changing word sequences and adding suffixes, we communicate tiny variations in meaning. Nor is this complexity inherent only to the English language. All languages, even those of so-called 'primitive' tribes, have clever grammatical components. The Cherokee pronoun system, for example, can distinguish between 'you and I', 'several other people and I', and 'you, another person and I'. **Grammar is universal and plays a part in every language, no matter how widespread it is.**

Paragraph 2: To find out how grammar is created, one needs to observe how languages are started **from scratch**. Some of the most recent languages evolved due to the Atlantic slave trade. At that time, slaves from different ethnicities developed a **make-shift** language called a pidgin. [A] Pidgins are strings of words copied from the language of the landowner. [B] They have little grammar, making it difficult for a listener to deduce when an event happened. [C] Interestingly, all it takes for a pidgin to become a complex language is for a group of children to be exposed to it. [D] Children do not simply copy their elders; they adapt words to create a new, expressive language termed a creole.

Paragraph 3: Further evidence can be seen in studying sign languages for the deaf. In 1979, a new government in Nicaragua introduced schools for the deaf. Although children were taught speech in the classroom, in the playgrounds they invented their own sign system. Initially, each child used signs differently, and there was no **consistent** grammar. However, children who joined the school later developed a quite different sign language that was more fluid, compact, and utilized grammatical devices. A new creole was born.

1. In Paragraph 1, why does the writer include information about the Cherokee language?
 - A. To show how difficult it is to learn the Cherokee language.
 - B. To prove that complex grammar was invented by the Cherokees.
 - C. To show how traditional cultures can have complicated grammar structures.
 - D. To demonstrate that English grammar is superior to others.
2. The phrase "from scratch" in Paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to:
 - A. By copying something else
 - B. From the very beginning
 - C. Using written information
 - D. In simple cultures
3. What can be inferred about the slaves' pidgin language from Paragraph 2?
 - A. It was created by the land-owners for the slaves.
 - B. It contained a highly complex system of suffixes.
 - C. It was difficult to understand because it lacked structured grammar.
 - D. It was based on the Cherokee pronoun system.
4. The word "make-shift" in Paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to:
 - A. Complicated and expressive
 - B. Private and personal
 - C. Extensive and diverse
 - D. Simple and temporary
5. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in Paragraph 1?
 - A. All languages contain grammar, regardless of the number of people who speak them.
 - B. Some languages include a lot of grammar, whereas others contain very little.
 - C. English is the most universal language because its grammar is so widespread.
 - D. The grammar of all languages is identical because it is a universal human trait.
6. According to Paragraph 3, what happened when deaf children in Nicaragua were placed in schools?
 - A. They successfully learned to speak and lip-read as instructed.
 - B. They abandoned their home gestures to use the teachers' sign language.
 - C. The older children taught the younger children a consistent grammar.
 - D. They spontaneously created a complex sign language among themselves.
7. The word "consistent" in Paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to:
 - A. Natural
 - B. Predictable
 - C. Uniform
 - D. Imaginable
8. Look at the four squares [A, B, C, D] in Paragraph 2. Where would the following sentence best fit?

"It included standardized word orders and grammatical markers that existed in neither the pidgin nor the language of the colonizers."

A. [A]

B. [B]

C. [C]

D. [D]

9. What is the author's primary purpose in discussing sign language in Nicaragua?

- A. To argue that deaf children are more creative than hearing children.
- B. To provide further evidence that children are the primary creators of grammar.
- C. To explain the history of education in Central America.
- D. To show that gestures are not a real form of language.

10. [Summary] Select 3 sentences that summarize the most important ideas of the passage.

- a. Grammar is a universal feature of all human languages, including those of isolated tribes.
- b. Pidgins are simple languages that develop when groups with no common language must communicate.
- c. Evidence from creoles and sign language suggests that children have an innate ability to create grammar.
- d. The English past tense suffix "-ed" likely evolved from the word "did."
- e. The Cherokee language has a more complex pronoun system than the English language.
- f. Nicaragua's government schools were the first to teach sign language to the deaf.

PASSAGE II: Extinction of the Dinosaurs

Paragraph 1: Paleontologists have argued that the demise of the dinosaurs was caused by climatic alterations associated with plate tectonics. Throughout the Cretaceous period, large shallow seas covered extensive areas of the continents. These seas buffered the temperature, keeping the air relatively constant. However, at the end of the Cretaceous, these seaways retreated. Climates around the world became dramatically more extreme: warmer days, cooler nights, and colder winters. Perhaps dinosaurs could not tolerate these extreme **fluctuations** and became extinct.

Paragraph 2: If true, though, why did cold-blooded animals such as snakes, lizards, and turtles survive? These animals are at the mercy of the climate to maintain a body temperature. Critics also point out that shallow seaways had retreated and advanced numerous times before. Why did dinosaurs survive earlier changes but not this one? Dissatisfaction with these explanations led to a new hypothesis.

Paragraph 3: Many plants and animals disappear abruptly from the fossil record as one moves from layers of rock documenting the end of the Cretaceous to the beginning of the Cenozoic. Between these layers, there is often a thin layer of clay containing a high concentration of the element iridium (Ir). [A] Ir is common in meteorites but rare on Earth's surface. [B] Scientists hypothesized that a single large asteroid collided with Earth. [C] The impact kicked up a dust cloud that cut off sunlight, inhibited photosynthesis, and caused a **disruption** of the food chain. [D]

11. According to Paragraph 1, what was the Late Cretaceous climate like before the extinction?
- A. It was characterized by extreme heat and severe droughts.
 - B. It was relatively stable because of the influence of shallow seas.
 - C. It was much colder than the climate we experience today.
 - D. It changed dramatically every few years due to plate tectonics.
12. Why does the author mention "snakes, lizards, and turtles" in Paragraph 2?
- A. To argue that dinosaurs were actually cold-blooded creatures.
 - B. To question whether climate change alone is a sufficient explanation for extinction.
 - C. To provide examples of animals that migrated when the seaways retreated.
 - D. To support the idea that extreme winters caused the mass extinction.
13. The word "fluctuations" in Paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to:
- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| A. Extremes | C. Periods |
| B. Retreats | D. Variations |
14. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in Paragraph 3?
- A. The fossil record shows a sudden end to many species at the transition between the Cretaceous and Cenozoic.

- e. Plate tectonics were responsible for the creation of shallow continental seas.
- f. Photosynthesis is the primary process that was interrupted by the dust cloud.

Solutions - Section I

1. (C) The author mentions the Cherokee pronoun system to illustrate that even cultures thought to be "primitive" have grammar that is more complex than English in certain aspects.
2. (B) In the context of creating a new language, "from scratch" means to start from nothing or from the very beginning.
3. (C) The text states that pidgins have "little in the way of grammar," making it "difficult for a listener to deduce when an event happened," which implies they were hard to understand.
4. (D) A "make-shift" language is one that is temporary and simple, used as a stop-gap measure for communication.
5. (A) The original sentence says grammar is universal regardless of how widespread the language is. Option A correctly captures this meaning.
6. (D) The passage explains that the children in Nicaragua "invented their own sign system" in the playgrounds, which evolved into a complex language.
7. (C) In terms of grammar, "consistent" means that the rules are the same throughout, or "uniform."
8. (D) Square [D] is the correct placement as it follows the description of how children adapt words to create a creole, providing specific details about that new creation.
9. (B) The Nicaraguan example serves to support the main thesis that children possess the "innate grammatical machinery" to invent language.
10. (a, b, c) These summarize the universality of grammar (a), the definition of pidgins (b), and the central role of children in creole creation (c).

Solutions - Section II

11. (B) Paragraph 1 states that the shallow seas "buffered the temperature, keeping the air relatively constant."
12. (B) The author uses these animals to show that a simple "cold winters" theory is flawed, as these cold-blooded animals—who are more sensitive to cold—survived while dinosaurs did not.
13. (D) "Fluctuations" refers to the irregular rising and falling or changes in the climate; "variations" is the best synonym.
14. (A) The highlighted sentence says species "disappear abruptly" at the boundary layer. Option A captures this sudden extinction event perfectly.
15. (C) Since iridium is rare on Earth but common in meteorites, finding a thick layer of it suggests that a massive space object struck the planet.

16. **(C)** If seaways retreated many times before without killing the dinosaurs, the author implies that the final retreat alone cannot explain why they went extinct this time.
17. **(B)** A "disruption" of the food chain refers to an interruption or a "disturbance" of the normal process.
18. **(B)** Square [B] is correct as it transitions from the fact that iridium is rare on Earth to the specific conclusion that it must have come from a large impact.
19. **(B)** The passage states the cloud "cut off sunlight, inhibiting photosynthesis," which is the process plants use to produce energy/food.
20. **(a, b, c)** These capture the initial theory (a), the major criticisms of that theory (b), and the new asteroid evidence (c).