

### CONCLUSION

One of the critical reading skills that should consciously be applied while reading is the skill of "conclusion." After having invested precious time in reading something, you ought to be able to use the information, for often there are doubts or questions you may have while reading or after having finished reading. When you form a conclusion, you resolve some of your questions. A decision on the purpose of the main idea or process involved helps to put an end to doubt. Remember when you make your decision, it should be supported by information in the paragraph.

However, a reader must understand what the author is saying--must think about what he has read and draw the conclusion **supported by the facts**. Drawing a conclusion means arriving at a decision justified by the evidence.

Example 1: You cannot stay out on school nights, and there is school tomorrow. We can conclude that you cannot stay out tonight.

Comment: The conclusion, ". . . you cannot stay out tonight," is right. It is the only conclusion that can be drawn from the stated facts.

Example 2: Hard work is always rewarded, but Bob has not received sufficient reward for his work. We can conclude that Bob does not work hard enough.

Comment: The conclusion, ". . . Bob does not work hard enough" is wrong. You have learned through personal experience that hard work is not always rewarded. It is therefore wrong to conclude that Bob does not work hard enough. There could be other reasons why Bob has not been rewarded.

A person's ability to draw an accurate conclusion depends upon his ability to read critically. "Critical," as it is used in "critical reading," refers to a person's ability to identify and understand facts accurately. The careful reader evaluates logic and accuracy in the development of the main idea, the appropriateness and accuracy of supporting details, and the presence of bias, prejudice or propaganda within the selection.

A critical reader asks himself these questions:

1. What did the writer say?
2. Do the facts support the writer's main idea?
3. Has the writer tried to control my thinking by making biased statements or appealing to my emotions?
4. Have I drawn the only conclusion allowed by the facts and justified by critical evaluation?

We sometimes jump to conclusions because we have a reason or a motive for doing so. We jump to a conclusion we want--in spite of the evidence. For example, consider the following line of reasoning:

It is true that cigarettes cause cancer, heart disease, emphysema; and it may be true that they are a nuisance because they burn holes in clothing, carpets, and non-smokers are annoyed and often offended; and I know they take a big chunk out of my budget--but they do relax me and so, for me, it is all right to smoke. Besides, my grandfather is 76 years old, and he has been smoking since he was 16. Nothing happened to him.

For another example of jumping to conclusion, consider the following:

Sure I know it needs a paint job, the tires are bad, the horn doesn't work, and the motor knocks. But it is a real bargain at that price.

Briefly, go where the evidence leads. In your quest for knowledge and "truth," shut out biases, prejudices, predispositions and carefully examine evidence to arrive at a reasonable, justifiable conclusion.

To assist you in drawing conclusions read the following two passages and answer the questions following each one.

EXERCISE I:

#### (A) DRAWING CONCLUSIONS FROM A TEXTBOOK SELECTION

Read this paragraph about the microscope from a college science textbook. Then answer the questions, most of which are based on your ability to draw conclusions or predict outcomes.

The **resolving power** of an optical instrument, such as a telescope or a microscope, is the measurement of its ability to distinguish clearly between two different things. Anton van Leeuwenhoek (1631-1723) is listed in the Biographical Dictionary of Outstanding Men because he was the first to arrange simple lenses as a primitive microscope and call the attention of the Royal Society of London to living forms in a drop of water. Up to that moment, his usefulness to society had been as a family man and custodian. Leeuwenhoek's invention helped the human eye to distinguish clearly among living protozoa, very small single cell animals. This was a simple beginning that led to more sophisticated generations of instruments and incredible advances in science and medicine.

--John W. Harrington

- \_\_\_\_\_1. The main point of this selection is
  - a. to define **resolving power**.
  - b. to discuss Leeuwenhoek's contribution to the development of improving the resolving power of optical instruments.
  - c. to explain the ability of the human eye to see one-celled animals.
  - d. to call attention of the Royal Society of London to living forms in a drop of water.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_2. We may conclude from this selection that the better the resolving power of a microscope or telescope,
  - a. the more sophisticated the instrument.
  - b. the more important Leeuwenhoek's family life.
  - c. the less we need to rely upon the human eye in scientific observations.
  - d. the more protozoa in a drop of water.

- \_\_\_\_\_3. It is correct to assume that a direct outcome of Leeuwenhoek's primitive microscope was
- a. the growth of the Royal Society of London.
  - b. his increased usefulness as a family man and custodian.
  - c. his improved ability to arrange simple lenses.
  - d. high-powered microscopes and telescopes in use today.

(B) DRAWING CONCLUSIONS AND PREDICTING OUTCOMES

Read the following selection to see what kind of instruction children may need in order to learn to read. Answer the questions that follow.

A child takes great pleasure in becoming able to read some words. But the excitement fades when the texts the child must read force him to reread the same word endlessly. Word recognition--"decoding" is the term used by educational theorists--deteriorates into empty rote learning when it does not lead directly into the reading of meaningful content. The longer it takes the child to advance from decoding to meaningful reading, the more likely it becomes that his pleasure in books will evaporate. A child's ability to read depends unquestionably on his learning pertinent skills. But he will not be interested in learning basic reading skills if he thinks he is expected to master them for their own sake. That is why so much depends on what the teacher, the school, and the textbooks emphasize. From the very beginning, the child must be convinced that skills are only a means to achieve a goal, and that the only goal of importance is that he become literate--that is, come to enjoy literature and benefit from what it has to offer.

---Bruno Bettelheim and Karen Zelan1.

- \_\_\_\_\_1. As the writer uses it, the word "decoding" means
- a. figuring out secret languages.
  - b. empty rote learning.
  - c. educational theorists.
  - d. learning to read individual words.

- \_\_\_\_\_2. From this writer's point of view we may conclude that a child who reads mainly by rote decoding
- a. will learn how to read intelligently.
  - b. will never learn how to read.
  - c. will not gain much joy and satisfaction from reading.
  - d. will come to enjoy literature later in life.
- \_\_\_\_\_3. We may conclude from this selection that, as a skill, decoding is
- a. worthless.
  - b. important only as a part of a larger effort to enjoy literature.
  - c. supported by teachers, schools, and textbooks as the most important reading skill.
  - d. still being explored as a new area for teaching reading.
- \_\_\_\_\_4. If this writer examined a children's reading text that read: "Run, Jim, run. Run to Tim. Tim and Jim run to Tom" we could predict that the author would
- a. disapprove quite strongly.
  - b. approve enthusiastically.
  - c. have no real opinions one way or the other.
  - d. want teachers and parents to read the text aloud to children.

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EXERCISE II:

Read the following two passages and answer the questions that follow. All questions are designed to teach you to form conclusions.

- (A) (A) Ever since the first lion skin was tied on at the waist with a handmade cord, fashion has been an important and changing part of our world. (B) From the earliest times, women's clothes have been long and short, wide and narrow, safe and unsafe. (C) Keeping up with fashion is fun. (D) But being fashionable and sensible means being aware of the possible dangers in wearing the new styles.

(E) For instance, the famous miniskirt is one of the safest things women have ever worn. (F) Minis allow great freedom of movement. (G) They present little problem in walking, climbing stairs, or driving. (H) In fact, one insurance company reports that miniskirts make driving a car much easier and safer than long skirts.

- \_\_\_\_\_1. The author traces the importance of fashion back to
- a. the cave man.
  - b. the Middle Ages.
  - c. the Industrial Revolution
  - d. the age of the miniskirt.
- \_\_\_\_\_2. It is reasonable to conclude that
- a. some accidents are caused by unsafe clothing.
  - b. miniskirts will always be popular.
  - c. styles change greatly every five years.
  - d. keeping up with the latest fashions is expensive.
- \_\_\_\_\_3. In his discussion of the miniskirt, the writer uses
- a. clever propaganda.
  - b. strongly biased ideas.
  - c. a "bandwagon approach."
  - d. facts and examples
4. Select the letter of the sentence which supports the conclusion drawn in question 2.
- (B) (A) Although the benefits of aspirin are great, for some there are problems in its use. (B) There are some people who cannot take aspirin. (C) They get skin rashes or asthma-like reactions to even normal doses. (D) Although the number of such reactions is quite low, people who suffer from asthma, hay fever, and other problems may have reactions from aspirin.

(E) About 5 percent of users suffer stomach upset after one dose. (F) This problem has led to the creation of a number of products which combine aspirin with an antacid. (G) Although makers of these products claim less stomach upset, such claims have not been proved. (H) Probably the best way to lessen stomach upset from aspirin is to take it with milk, food, or a large glass of water.

- \_\_\_\_\_1. Aspirin does not have warnings about its use because
  - a. it is safe for all people to use.
  - b. the maker does not know all the facts.
  - c. very few people suffer reactions from it.
  - d. no scientific research has ever proved it harmful.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_2. The selection supports the conclusion that
  - a. aspirin should be made a prescription drug.
  - b. aspirin is a natural substance.
  - c. people with allergies should not take aspirin.
  - d. antacids are dangerous to take on an empty stomach.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_3. Makers of aspirin with antacids who claim that their product causes less stomach upset
  - a. are making false statements.
  - b. are guilty of making unproven claims.
  - c. are not using reason.
  - d. are providing a great service to the public.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_4. Select the letter of the sentence which supports the conclusion that aspirin should not be taken by itself.

## ANSWER KEY

### EXERCISE I:

(A)

1. b
2. a
3. d

(B)

1. d
2. c
3. b
4. a

### EXERCISE II:

(A)

1. a
2. a
3. d
4. But being fashionable and sensible means being aware of the possible dangers in wearing new styles.

**-or-**

In fact, one insurance company reports that miniskirts make driving a car much easier and safer than long skirts.

(B)

1. c
2. c
3. b
4. Probably the best way to lessen stomach upset from aspirin is to take it with milk, food or a large glass of water.