

# GRE Prep

## Reading Comprehension 1



# Reading Comprehension 1

## Introduction

- Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Social Sciences, Business, Arts, Humanities, etc.
- Number of passages: 4-5
- Number of questions: 13-14
- Number of questions per passage: 1-5
- All questions based on passages



# Reading Comprehension 1

## Strategy for Reading Comprehension

- Read and comprehend the passage
- Identify the question type and apply the question specific strategy
- Eliminate the incorrect answer choices



# Reading Comprehension 1

## Tips to read and comprehend a passage

### 1. Engage with the passage

- Do not get distracted.
- Pretend to like the passage even if you don't.
- Develop your working memory.

### 2. Identify the simple story

- Make a table of contents – a brief headline for every paragraph.
- Segregate the content (subject matter) and the judgement (what the author or others believe).
- Check if there are major twists in the discussion.

### 3. Link every new idea to what you have already read

- Is the new sentence expected or surprising?
- Does it support or oppose earlier material?
- Does it answer or ask a question?



# Reading Comprehension 1

## 4. Pay Attention to Signals

- Shift of ideas within and between paragraphs.
- Identify the signal words (Ex: furthermore, additionally, consequently, nevertheless, apparently etc.)

## 5. Pick up the Pace

- Be quicker after the first paragraph. You must read the whole passage but Do NOT get lost in details later on in the passage. Do NOT try to master every bit of content.

### **Pay close attention to the following elements**

- Beginnings and endings of paragraphs.
- Big surprises or changes in direction.
- Big results, answers, or payoffs.



# Reading Comprehension 1

## Reading Comprehension Question Types

1. Primary Purpose/Main Idea Questions
2. Factual Questions
3. Inference Questions
4. Logical Structure Questions
5. Application Questions
6. Vocabulary in the Context Questions
7. Tone/Attitude Questions



# Reading Comprehension 1

## Format of the Questions

- Multiple-choice — Select One Answer Choice out of five options
- Multiple-choice — Select One or More Answer Choices out of three options
- Select-in-Passage



# Reading Comprehension 1

**Primary Purpose/Main Idea Questions:** You can determine the Primary Purpose /Main Idea from the overall organization or development of the passage.

## Common Question Stems

- The *primary purpose* of the passage is to
- The *passage as a whole* can best be described as doing which of the following?
- The passage is *primarily/chiefly/mainly concerned with/focuses on*
- Which of the following most accurately states the *main idea* of the passage?
- Which of the following *titles* best describes the passage as a whole?

## Strategy for Primary Purpose/Main Idea Questions

### 1. Evaluate

Evaluate the thought flow chart, especially the main idea.

### 2. Eliminate

Eliminate options that focus on the idea and purpose of particular parts of the passage instead of taking the passage as a whole into account.



# Reading Comprehension 1

**Inference Questions:** They are not explicitly stated in the passage.

## Common Question Stems

- The author *suggests*
- It can be *inferred/implied*
- Which of the following statements finds *support in the passage*?
- Which of the following statements about ... *are supported by the passage*?
- It can be *inferred* **EXCEPT**:

## Strategy for Inference Questions

1. The inferences have to logically follow from the information given in the passage.
2. Do not go out of the scope of the passage. The questions do not require you to read the author's mind.
3. Eliminate answer choices that make arguments that are extreme in their ideas or use of language.



# Reading Comprehension 1

**Logical Structure Questions:** These questions require you to analyze and evaluate the organization and logic of the passage.

## Common Question Stems

- Which of the following *describes the function* of the concluding sentence/paragraph of the passage?
- Which of the following best *describes the relation* of the first paragraph to the passage as a whole?
- The author *mentions/uses/refers 'x' in order to*
- The *last sentence serves primarily to*
- Which of the following *techniques* are used by the author to convey his message?
- Which of the following *best describes the organization of the passage?*

## Strategy for Logical Structure Questions

Use the thought flow chart to identify how the author has constructed the passage and conveyed his ideas.



# Reading Comprehension 1

**Application Questions:** These questions measure your ability to discern the relationships between situations or ideas presented by the author and other situations or ideas that might parallel those in the passage.

## Common Question Stems

- Which of the following *best describes* '.....' *as defined* in the passage?
- Which of the following would serve as *an example of* .....
- Which of the following is *most consistent with the principle* described in lines 22-23?
- .....described in the passage is *most similar* to which of the following?
- The author of the passage would most likely *agree/disagree*

## Strategy for Application Questions

1. Simplify the situation/principle/idea, for which you have to find an example in the answer choices, into your own words focusing on the underlying logic.
2. Eliminate answer choices that deviate from the logic.



# Reading Comprehension 1

**Vocabulary in the context questions:** In this question type, you need to answer the meaning of the word as used in the passage.

## Common Question Stems

- In the context in which it appears, ‘x’ most nearly means?
- Replacement of the word “-----” with which of the following words results in the least change in meaning for the passage?
- Which of the following best describes the ‘x’ referred to in the passage? (A sentence can be an answer)

## Strategy for Vocabulary in the context questions

1. The context – that is, that particular situation in which the word is used, including information given in the neighboring sentences before or after – helps determine its meaning. So check the given references/information.
2. The literal meaning of the word may be incorrect.



# Reading Comprehension 1

**Tone Questions:** These questions ask you to identify the author's attitude or perspective.

## Common Question Stems

- Which of the following best describes the author's *attitude* towards...
- The *tone* of the author is best *described as*
- The *attitude* of the author of the passage toward x is best described as one of
- The author *regards the idea that* .....*is incomplete with?*
- To an assertion that ..... the author would most probably *respond with which of the following?*

## Strategy for Tone Questions

1. Pay attention to "how" the author expresses his opinion. The author's tone is most evident when he is presenting his view or opinion.
2. What are the words he uses to do so? These words reveal the author's tone.



# Reading Comprehension 1

## Passage 1

In his 1976 study of slavery in the United States, Herbert Gutman, like Fogel, Engerman, and Genovese, has rightly stressed the slaves' achievements. But unlike these historians, Gutman gives plantation owners little credit for these achievements. Rather, Gutman argues that one must look to the Black family and the slaves' extended kinship system to understand how crucial achievements, such as the maintenance of a cultural heritage and the development of a communal consciousness, were possible. His findings compel attention.

Gutman recreates the family and extended kinship structure mainly through an ingenious use of what any historian should draw upon, quantifiable data, derived in this case mostly from plantation birth registers. He also uses accounts of ex-slaves to probe the human reality behind his statistics. These sources indicate that the two-parent household predominated in slave quarters just as it did among freed slaves after emancipation. Although Gutman admits that forced separation by sale was frequent, he shows that the slaves' preference, revealed most clearly on plantations where sale was infrequent, was very much for stable monogamy.

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

1. Which of the following best describes the organization of the passage?
  - A. The author compares and contrasts the work of several historians and then discusses areas for possible new research.
  - B. The author presents his thesis, draws on the work of several historians for evidence to support his thesis, and concludes by reiterating his thesis.
  - C. The author describes some features of a historical study and then uses those features to put forth his own argument.
  - D. The author summarizes a historical study, examines two main arguments from the study, and then shows how the arguments are potentially in conflict with one another.
  - E. The author presents the general argument of a historical study describes the study in more detail, and concludes with a brief judgment of the study's value.



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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

2. Which of the following is the most appropriate title for the passage, based on its content?
  - A. The Influence of Herbert Gutman on Historians of Slavery in the United States
  - B. Gutman's Explanation of How Slaves Could Maintain a Cultural Heritage and Develop a Communal Consciousness
  - C. Slavery in the United States: New Controversy About an Old Subject
  - D. The Black Heritage of Folklore, Music, and Religious Expression: Its Growing Influence
  - E. The Black Family & Extended Kinship Structure: How They Were Important for Freed Slaves



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**For the following question, consider each of the choices separately and select all that apply.**

3. According to the passage, Fogel, Engerman, Genovese, and Gutman have all done which of the following?
  - A. Discounted the influence of plantation owners on slaves' achievements.
  - B. Emphasized the achievements of slaves.
  - C. Pointed out the prevalence of the two-parent household among slaves.



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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

4. Which of the following statements about the formation of the Black heritage of folklore, music, and religious expression is best supported by the information presented in the passage?
  - A. The heritage was formed primarily out of the experiences of those slaves who attempted to preserve the stability of their families.
  - B. The heritage was not formed out of the experiences of those slaves who married their cousins.
  - C. The heritage was formed more out of the African than the American experiences of slaves.
  - D. The heritage was not formed out of the experiences of only a single generation of slaves.
  - E. The heritage was formed primarily out of slaves' experiences of interdependence on newly created plantations in the Southwest.



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5. According to the passage, all of the following are true of the West African rules governing marriage mentioned in the italicized sentence “This preference for exogamy... unions with close kin” **EXCEPT**:
- A. The rules were derived from rules governing fictive kinship arrangements.
  - B. The rules forbade marriages between close kin.
  - C. The rules are mentioned in Herbert Gutman's study.
  - D. The rules were not uniform in all respects from one West African tribe to another.
  - E. The rules have been considered to be a possible source of slaves' marriage preferences.



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6. In the context in which it appears, “consanguinity” most nearly means:
- A. empathy for similar tribes
  - B. marriage with close kin
  - C. marriage outside bloodline
  - D. being related by blood
  - E. emancipation from slavery



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7. With which of the following statements regarding the resources that historians ought to use would the author of the passage be most likely to agree?
  - A. Historians ought to make use of written rather than oral accounts.
  - B. Historians should rely primarily on birth registers.
  - C. Historians should rely exclusively on data that can be quantified.
  - D. Historians ought to make use of data that can be quantified.
  - E. Historians ought to draw on earlier historical research but in order to refute it.



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Gutman's examination of other facets of kinship also produces important findings. Gutman discovers that cousins rarely married, an exogamous tendency that contrasted sharply with the endogamy practiced by the plantation owners. This preference for exogamy, Gutman suggests, may have derived from West African rules governing marriage, which, though differed from one tribal group to another, all involved some kind of prohibition against unions with close kin. This taboo against cousins' marrying is important, argues Gutman, because it is one of many indications of a strong awareness among slaves of an extended kinship network.

The fact that distantly related kin would care for children separated from their families also suggests this awareness. When blood relationships were few, as in newly created plantations in the Southwest, "fictive" kinship arrangements took their place until a new pattern of consanguinity developed. Gutman presents convincing evidence that this extended kinship structure – which he believes developed by the mid-to-late eighteenth century - provided the foundations for the strong communal consciousness that existed among slaves.

In sum, Gutman's study is significant because it offers a closely reasoned and original explanation of some of the slaves' achievements, one that correctly emphasizes the resources that slaves themselves possessed.

**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

8. Select the sentence in the second paragraph, which indicates the slaves' preference for a uniformity in their family structure.



# Reading Comprehension 1

In his 1976 study of slavery in the United States, Herbert Gutman, like Fogel, Engerman, and Genovese, has rightly stressed the slaves' achievements. But unlike these historians, Gutman gives plantation owners little credit for these achievements. Rather, Gutman argues that one must look to the Black family and the slaves' extended kinship system to understand how crucial achievements, such as the maintenance of a cultural heritage and the development of a communal consciousness, were possible. His findings compel attention.

Gutman recreates the family and extended kinship structure mainly through an ingenious use of what any historian should draw upon, quantifiable data, derived in this case mostly from plantation birth registers. He also uses accounts of ex-slaves to probe the human reality behind his statistics. These sources indicate that the two-parent household predominated in slave quarters just as it did among freed slaves after emancipation. Although Gutman admits that forced separation by sale was frequent, he shows that the slaves' preference, revealed most clearly on plantations where sale was infrequent, was very much for stable monogamy.

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In sum, Gutman's study is significant because it offers a closely reasoned and original explanation of some of the slaves' achievements, one that correctly emphasizes the resources that slaves themselves possessed.

**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

9. Which of the following statements concerning the marriage practices of plantation owners during the period of Black slavery in the United States can most logically be inferred from the information in the passage?
- A. These practices began to alter sometime around the mid eighteenth century.
  - B. These practices varied markedly from one region of the country to another.
  - C. Plantation owners usually based their choice of marriage partners on economic considerations.
  - D. Plantation owners often married earlier than slaves.
  - E. Plantation owners often married their cousins.



# Reading Comprehension 1

## Passage 2

The 1960's witnessed two profound social movements: the civil rights movement and the movement protesting the war in Vietnam. Although they overlapped in time, they were largely distinct. For a brief moment in 1967, however, it appeared that the two movements might unite under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr.

King's role in the antiwar movement appears to require little explanation, since he was the foremost advocate of nonviolence of his time. But King's stance on the Vietnam War cannot be explained in terms of pacifism alone. After all, he was something of a late comer to the antiwar movement, even though by 1965 he was convinced that the role of the United States in the war was indefensible. Why then the two years that passed before he translated his private misgivings into public dissent? Perhaps he believed that he could not criticize American foreign policy without endangering the support for civil rights that he had won from the federal government.



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

10. According to the passage, the delay referred to in sentence “After all... indefensible” is perhaps attributable to which of the following?
- A. King's ambivalence concerning the role of the United States in the war in Vietnam
  - B. King's attempts to consolidate support for his leadership within the civil rights movement
  - C. King's desire to keep the leadership of the civil rights movement distinct from that of the antiwar movement
  - D. King's desire to draw support for the civil rights movement from the leadership of the antiwar movement
  - E. King's reluctance to jeopardize federal support for the civil rights movement



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

11. Select the sentence from the passage that indicates the author's assumption about Martin Luther King Jr's possible reason for delaying support to the antiwar movement



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

12. In the context in which it appears, “endanger” could mean all of the following **EXCEPT**

- A. imperil
- B. compromise
- C. jeopardize
- D. sabotage
- E. annihilate



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

13. Which of the following best describes the passage?
- A. It discusses an apparent inconsistency and suggests a reason for it.
  - B. It outlines a sequence of historical events.
  - C. It shows why a commonly held view is inaccurate.
  - D. It evaluates an explanation and finally accepts that explanation.
  - E. It contrasts two views of an issue.



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

14. The author supports the claim that “King's stance on the Vietnam War cannot be explained in terms of pacifism alone” by implying which of the following?
- A. There is little evidence that King was ever a student of pacifist doctrine.
  - B. King, despite pacifist sympathies, was not convinced that the policy of the federal government in Vietnam was wrong.
  - C. King's belief in nonviolence was formulated in terms of domestic policy rather than in terms of international issues.
  - D. Had King's actions been based on pacifism alone, he would have joined the antiwar movement earlier than he actually did.
  - E. Opponents of United States foreign policy within the federal government convinced King of their need for support.



# Reading Comprehension 1

## Passage 3

Mycorrhizal fungi infect more plants than do any other fungi and are necessary for many plants to thrive, but they have escaped widespread investigation until recently for two reasons. First, the symbiotic association is so well-balanced that the roots of host plants show no damage even when densely infected. Second, the fungi cannot as yet be cultivated in the absence of a living root. Despite these difficulties, there has been important new work that suggests that this symbiotic association can be harnessed to achieve more economical use of costly superphosphate fertilizer and to permit better exploitation of cheaper, less soluble rock phosphate. Mycorrhizal benefits are not limited to improved phosphate uptake in host plants. In legumes, mycorrhizal inoculation has increased nitrogen fixation beyond levels achieved by adding phosphate fertilizer alone. Certain symbiotic associations also increase the host plant's resistance to harmful root fungi. Whether this resistance results from exclusion of harmful fungi through competition for sites, from metabolic change involving antibiotic production, or from increased vigor is undetermined.



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

15. Which of the following most accurately describes the passage?
- A. A description of a replicable experiment
  - B. A summary report of new findings
  - C. A recommendation for abandoning a difficult area of research
  - D. A refutation of an earlier hypothesis
  - E. A confirmation of earlier research



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, consider each of the choices separately and, and select all that apply.**

16. The level of information in the passage above is suited to the needs of
- A. a researcher whose job is to identify potentially profitable areas for research and product development
  - B. a state official whose position requires her to alert farmers about possible innovations in farming
  - C. an official of a research foundation who identifies research projects for potential funding



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

17. Select the sentence from the passage that hints at difficulties surrounding the laboratory production of mycorrhizal fungi specimens.



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

18. The passage suggests which of the following about the increased resistance to harmful root fungi that some plants infected with mycorrhizal fungi seem to exhibit?
- A. There are at least three hypotheses that might account for the increase.
  - B. An explanation lies in the fact that mycorrhizal fungi increase more rapidly in number than harmful root fungi do.
  - C. The plants that show increased resistance also exhibit improved nitrogen fixation.
  - D. Such increases may be independent of mycorrhizal infection.
  - E. It is unlikely that a satisfactory explanation can be found to account for the increase.



# Reading Comprehension 1

## Additional Questions

### Passage 4

The common belief of some linguists that each language is a perfect vehicle for the thoughts of the nation speaking it is in some ways the exact counterpart of the conviction of the Manchester school of economics that supply and demand will regulate everything for the best. Just as economists were blind to the numerous cases in which the law of supply and demand left actual wants unsatisfied, so also many linguists are deaf to those instances in which the very nature of a language calls forth misunderstandings in everyday conversation, and in which, consequently, a word has to be modified or defined in order to present the idea intended by the speaker: "He took his stick - no, not John's, but his own." No language is perfect, and if we admit this truth, we must also admit that it is not unreasonable to investigate the relative merits of different languages or of different details in languages.



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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

19. The primary purpose of the Passage is to
- A. analyze an interesting feature of the English language
  - B. refute a belief held by some linguists
  - C. show that economic theory is relevant to linguistic study
  - D. illustrate the confusion that can result from the improper use of language
  - E. suggest a way in which languages can be made more nearly perfect



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For the following question, consider each of the choices separately and select all that apply.**

20. The misunderstanding presented by the author in the highlighted sentence is similar to which of the following?
- A. X uses the word "you" to refer to a group, but Y thinks that X is referring to one person only.
  - B. X mistakenly uses the word "anomaly" to refer to a typical example, but Y knows that "anomaly" means "exception."
  - C. X uses the word "bachelor" to mean "unmarried man," but Y mistakenly thinks that bachelor means "unmarried woman."



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

21. In presenting the argument, the author does all of the following **EXCEPT**
- A. give an example
  - B. draw a conclusion
  - C. make a generalization
  - D. make a comparison
  - E. present a paradox



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

22. Which of the following contributes to the misunderstanding described by the author in the highlighted sentence?
- A. It is unclear whom the speaker of the sentence is addressing.
  - B. It is unclear to whom the word "his" refers the first time it is used.
  - C. It is unclear to whom the word "his" refers the second time it is used.
  - D. The meaning of "took" is ambiguous.
  - E. It is unclear to whom "He" refers.



# Reading Comprehension 1

## Passage 5

Recently some scientists have concluded that meteorites found on Earth and long believed to have a Martian origin might actually have been blasted free of Mars's gravity by the impact on Mars of other meteorites. This conclusion has led to another question: whether meteorite impacts on Earth have similarly driven rocks from this planet to Mars.

According to astronomer S.A. Phinney, kicking a rock hard enough to free it from Earth's gravity would require a meteorite capable of making a crater more than 60 miles across. Moreover, even if Earth rocks were freed by meteorite impact, Mars's orbit is much larger than Earth's, so Phinney estimates that the probability of these rocks hitting Mars is about one-tenth as great as that of Mars's rocks hitting Earth. To demonstrate this estimate, Phinney used a computer to calculate where 1,000 abstract particles would go if ejected from Earth in random directions. He found that 17 of the 1,000 particles would hit Mars.



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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

23. The Passage 1s primarily concerned with:
- A. presenting an argument to support a particular hypothesis
  - B. suggesting an answer to a theoretical question
  - C. questioning the assumptions of a research project
  - D. criticizing experimental results
  - E. explaining the origin of certain scientific data



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

24. According to the passage, which of the following events may have initiated the process that led to the presence on Earth of meteorites from Mars?
- A. A meteorite struck the Earth with tremendous velocity.
  - B. A meteorite collided with Mars.
  - C. Approximately 1,000 rocks were ejected from Mars.
  - D. The orbits of Earth and Mars brought the planets to their closest points.
  - E. Rocks from a meteorite impact broke free of Earth's gravity.



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

25. The passage suggests that which of the following is true concerning the probability that a rock, if ejected from Mars, will hit the Earth?
- A. The probability is increased when particles are ejected from Mars in random directions.
  - B. The probability is increased by the presence of large craters on the surface of Mars.
  - C. The probability is decreased when Mars's orbit brings the planet close to Earth.
  - D. The probability is greater than the probability that a rock from Earth will hit Mars.
  - E. The probability is less than the probability that a rock from Earth will escape Earth's gravity.



# Reading Comprehension 1

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**For each of the following questions, select one answer choice unless otherwise instructed.**

26. In the context in which it appears, “abstract” most nearly means
- A. hypothetical
  - B. random
  - C. simulated
  - D. artificial
  - E. arbitrary



# Reading Comprehension 1

**Where can we find GRE level reading material?**

## *Newspapers*

- *The New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com>
- *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com>
- *The Wall Street Journal Asia* <https://www.wsj.com>

## **Periodicals**

- *The Economist* <https://www.economist.com>
- *Scientific American* <https://www.scientificamerican.com>
- *London Review of Books* <https://www.lrb.co.uk>
- MIT technological Review

## **Online services for journal content**

- IOPscience2 <https://iopscience.iop.org>
- The Royal Society <https://royalsociety.org>





*Thank you*