



ENGLISH

COMPREHENSION PASSAGE

Name: _____

Date: _____

Class: VIII Sec: ____

Read the following passage and answer the questions below:

1 At all times, in all cultures, presents served to express gratitude, to demonstrate wealth, to show submission –or also, quite simply, to give someone pleasure. In his essay ‘The Gift’, French Sociologist Marcel Mauss tells of the rites of the Kwakiutl Indians of Northwest America. There, it was the customs of the chiefs to invite members of other tribes and give them presents. It was also part of the ceremony to wilfully destroy piles of goods, offerings, and presents before the eyes of the guests as a sign of wealth and affluence.

2 Gifts from rulers to their subjects were also part of the political system in ancient Rome. They served to display power and to keep the masses quiet.

In Europe during the Middle Ages, gift-giving remained the prerogative of the upper class. Political negotiation was replaced by the exchange of gifts- an attempt to attain goals not by argument but through presents. Underlings were excluded. Even in the seventeenth century, Christmas and New Year gifts were officially banned in parts of Germany. It was only with industrialization and rise of the middle classes that the private exchange of gifts developed as a social institution. Christmas offered an opportunity for this- based on the gifts that the three wise men offered the infant Christ. Then, in the eighteenth century, the custom of giving presents to children started.

4 The nineteenth century saw the development of the gift industry, particularly toys and sweets. Today, the world over, Christmas is the high point of this industry. Jewellers and toy sellers make a substantial proportion of their annual turnover at this time.

5 Perhaps the last word on gifts is the best left to the fourth century BC Chinese Philosopher Lao-Tse, “Goodness in words creates trust,” he said, “goodness in thinking creates depth, goodness in giving creates love.”

1.1 Why have gifts been used in the past?

Ans

1.2 Why did the Indians of Northwest America destroy piles of gifts?

Ans

1.3 In which century did the custom of giving gifts to children start?

1.4 Why did the Romans give gifts to their subjects?



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Ans

1.5 Why were political negotiations replaced by the exchange of gifts?

Ans

1.6 How did the exchange of gifts develop as a social institution?

Ans

Pick out the words from the passage which mean the same as the words given below:

- 1.7
- a. Surrender (para 1)
 - b. Right (para 3)

Pick out the words from the passage which mean the opposite of the words given below:

- 1.8
- a. Preserve (para 1)
 - b. Shallowness (para 5)