UGC-NET Paper I Unit III: Comprehension – Notes

Dr. Akkenapally Meenaiah

1. What This Unit Tests

In the exam, a passage of about 300–500 words are given, followed by five questions (10 marks). The passage may be on education, environment, economy, society, science, philosophy or culture. Answers must be based **only on the passage**, not on the candidate's outside knowledge or opinion.

The unit tests the ability to:

- Grasp the central idea and the author's purpose.
- Locate specific facts and details.
- Draw logical inferences from what is stated.
- Understand words and phrases in context.
- Recognise tone, attitude and assumptions.

2. Common Question Types

Type	What it asks	How to approach
Main idea / central theme	What the passage is mainly about	Look at the first and last paragraphs; choose the option that covers the whole passage, not one detail
Suitable title	Best heading for the passage	Must be neither too broad nor too narrow
Factual detail	'According to the passage…'	Scan for keywords and match the exact statement
Inference	'It can be inferred / implied…'	Choose what logically follows from the text, not what is merely possible
Vocabulary in context	Meaning of a word as used in the passage	Read the sentence around the word; dictionary meaning may differ
Author's tone / attitude	Critical, optimistic, neutral, sarcastic, etc.	Notice adjectives and evaluative words
Author's purpose	To inform, argue, criticise, compare, explain	Ask why the author wrote the passage
Assumption	Unstated premise behind an argument	Something the author takes for granted
'NOT mentioned / NOT true'	Odd one out	Check each option against the text
Conclusion	What follows from the argument	Must be supported by the whole passage

3. A Step-by-Step Strategy

1. **Skim the questions first** (30 seconds) to know what to look for.
2. **Read the passage actively.** Note the topic of each paragraph in a word or two. Mark linking words such as *however, therefore, yet, moreover, on the other hand* — they show the direction of the argument.
3. **Identify the main idea** in one sentence before looking at the options.
4. **Answer factual questions by scanning** for keywords.
5. **For inference questions**, eliminate options that go beyond the text, contradict it, or use extreme words.
6. **Choose the best answer**, not just a correct-sounding one. Two options may be partly true; pick the one most fully supported.
7. **Manage time:** about 10–12 minutes for one passage and five questions.

4. Reading Techniques

- **Skimming:** fast reading for the general idea.
- **Scanning:** searching for specific information (names, dates, numbers, keywords).
- **Intensive reading:** careful reading for full understanding.
- **SQ3R method** (Francis P. Robinson, 1946): Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review.
-

5. Useful Tone and Attitude Words

Positive	Negative	Neutral
Optimistic, appreciative, laudatory, enthusiastic, hopeful	Critical, cynical, sarcastic, pessimistic, satirical, condemnatory	Objective, analytical, factual, informative, balanced, impartial

Other tones: cautionary (warning), nostalgic (longing for the past), didactic (instructive), ironic, sympathetic, introspective.

6. Common Traps

- **Extreme words:** options with *always, never, only, all, completely* are usually wrong unless the passage says so.
- **Outside knowledge:** an option may be true in reality but not stated in the passage.
- **Partial truth:** an option that covers only one paragraph is wrong for a 'main idea' question.
- **Distortion:** the option uses words from the passage but changes their meaning.
- **Reversal:** the option states the opposite of what the author says.
- **Too broad or too narrow titles.**

7. Practice Tips

- Read editorials and opinion pages of quality newspapers daily and summarise each in two lines.
- Build vocabulary through context, not lists alone.
- Practise with previous UGC-NET passages under timed conditions.
- After each practice set, review why each wrong option was wrong.
- Note recurring themes in UGC-NET passages: higher education, environment and climate, development, technology and society, ethics, Indian culture and philosophy.