

Lesson N01: Paragraph Translation

Activity N01: Reading Comprehension & Analysis

Read carefully one of the following paragraphs, then answer the questions:

Paragraph 01 :

The achievement of the civilization itself may be expressed in terms of its best points- moral, aesthetic, scientific, and, not least, literary. Legal theory flourished and was sophisticated early on, being expressed in several collections of legal decisions, the so-called code, of the best-known is the code of Hammurabi. Throughout these codes recurs the concern of the ruler for the weak, the widow, and the orphan, even if sometimes, the phrases were regrettably only literally clichés. The aesthetics of art are too much governed by subjective values to be assessed in absolute terms, yet certain peaks stand out above the rest, notably the art of Uruk IV, the seal engraving of the Akkad period, and the relief sculpture of the Ashurbanipal. Nonetheless, there is nothing in Mesopotamia to match the sophistication of Egyptian art. Science the Mesopotamians had, of a kind, though not in the sense of Greek science. From its beginnings in Sumer before the middle of the 3rd millennium BC, Mesopotamian science was characterized by endless, meticulous enumeration and ordering into columns and series.

Paragraph 02 :

Above all, the literature of Mesopotamia is one of its finest cultural achievements. Though there are many modern anthologies and chrestomathies (compilations of useful learning), with translations and paraphrases of Mesopotamian literature, as well as attempts to write its history, it cannot truly be said that “cuneiform literature” has been resurrected to extent that it deserves. There are partly material reasons for this: many clay tablets survive only in a fragmentary condition, and duplicates that would restore the texts have not yet been discovered, so that there are still large gaps. A further reason is the inadequate knowledge of the languages: insufficient acquaintance with the vocabulary and, in Sumerian, major difficulties with the grammar. Consequently, another generation of Assyriologists will pass before the great myths, epics, lamentations, hymns, “law codes”, wisdom literature, and pedagogical treatises can be presented to the reader in such a way that can fully appreciate the high level of literary creativity of those times.

Questions:

1. According to the paragraphs, check-in your English Language dictionary the meaning of the following words :
 - **Paragraph N° 01 :**
Code, clichés, aesthetics, peaks, the art of Uruk IV, the seal engraving, Akkad period, relief sculpture, Sumer.
 - **Paragraph N° 02 :**
Anthology, cuneiform, resurrected fragmentary condition, duplicates, acquaintance, Assyriologists, epics,
2. Who or what do the underlined words refer to?
3. Give a brief summary of each paragraph (say out or write the ideas the author wants to convey using your own words).
4. Which title best summarizes the main idea of each paragraph?
5. How many sentences are there in each paragraph?
6. What can you understand from the following sentences?
 - The aesthetics of art are too much governed by subjective values to be assessed in absolute terms, yet certain peaks stand out above the rest.
 - The literature of Mesopotamia is one of its finest cultural achievements.
7. Define the main verbs and subjects in each paragraph.
8. What is the type of the text?

Reading comprehension is not only understanding the words in the text, but more importantly, the meaning hidden under the words that the authors want to convey to the readers. In this process, the readers have to try their best on the reading passage to “extract the required information from it as efficiently as possible”. (Cuc Thi Kim Pham, 2017)