

PTE Academic Lesson Plan Ideas: Test Taking Strategies

Lesson 8 – Reading: Multiple-choice, choose single answer

Time allocated: 50 minutes

Step 1: Introduce the Item Type

This is a multiple-choice item type that assesses reading skills. It requires test takers to read, analyze, understand and assess a short text on an academic subject and choose a single correct response.

In many ways Britten's most ambitious effort is the War Requiem of 1961, a flawed but still impressive work for chorus, soloists, and orchestra. It weaves together the traditional Latin Mass for the Dead with antiwar poems by Wilfrid Owen, a young officer killed in World War I. The point of War Requiem is how the words of the liturgical text are reinterpreted and often rendered hollow by the realities of death in war. In this work we see Britten's prodigal inconsistencies on display. For all its problems, the War Requiem will probably survive as one of our time's most impassioned indictments of war and its heroic myth.

Read the text and answer the multiple-choice question by selecting the correct response. *Only one response is correct.*

Which of the following most accurately summarizes the opinion of the author in the text?

- ☐ He finds the weaving together of the Latin Mass and antiwar poems to be quite effective.
- ☐ He is critical of Britten's inconsistencies as observed in the War Requiem.
- ☐ He admires the War Requiem of Britten but finds it far from perfect.
- ☐ He questions whether Britten's work will endure.

Step 2: Present the Item Type Strategies

Strategy 1

Tackle each reading item in a different way. Adapt your reading strategy according to the direction of the question and the purpose of your reading.

Strategy 2

If the topic of the reading passage is unfamiliar to you, concentrate on what you understand rather than worrying about words that are new to you. Focus on extracting the general gist of what is in the text rather than the meaning of individual words and phrases.

Strategy 3

After you have chosen your response, quickly check the remaining response options against the passage one-by-one, to make sure they can be eliminated.

Step 3: Explain and Practice Each Strategy

Strategy 1

Explain to your students that there is no one way of approaching multiple-choice reading items, and each item should be approached in a way that matches the purpose of the reading. To do this, students need to first identify the direction of the question and the type of information that needs to be extracted. Once they have done this, students should decide on their reading strategy and then read the passage accordingly.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities:

- Explain that the questions for multiple-choice items can require them to extract different types of information. Tell students that they are going to work in pairs and decide on the best reading strategy for each of the following different types of questions, e.g.:
What is the main idea/main aim/point ... ? (main idea or gist; useful reading strategy: look for topic sentence(s))
According to the text, which of the following ... ? (supporting information; useful reading strategy: read for specific details, look for key words in the options and find similar words in the text)
Why does the writer ... ? (writer's purpose; useful reading strategy: look for reasons or words indicating reasons)
What is the writer's point of view/opinion on ... ? (writer's opinion; useful reading strategy: look at the conclusion or concluding sentence)
- Have pairs share their thoughts with the class and explain the reasons for their choices.
- Give students copies of Item 1. Tell them to read the question and the options, and compete to see which pair can be the first to identify an appropriate strategy (e.g., look at the concluding sentence) and decide on the correct response option.
- Have students discuss their experiences with the class. Explain that the correct response will be confirmed in the following activities.

Strategy 2

Explain to your students that if the topic of the reading passage is unfamiliar to them, they should concentrate on the information they understand rather than worrying about words and phrases that are new to them. Encourage them to focus on extracting the general gist of what is in the text rather than the meaning of individual words and phrases.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities:

- Display a copy of Item 1. Tell students not to read the text fully but just to quickly scan the question, the response options and the reading passage for unfamiliar or confusing words.
- Ask individual students to come to the front of the class and underline any words or phrases where the meaning is not fully clear to them.
- Now have students reflect on the activity for Strategy 1 and confirm the correct response to Item 1. Have students discuss whether their understanding of these unfamiliar words stopped them from being able to decide on an appropriate response option.

Strategy 3

Explain to your students that after they have chosen their response, they should quickly check the remaining options against the passage one-by-one, to make sure they have made the right choice.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Have students read through each incorrect response option one-by-one and check the text carefully to find a reason why each one is not correct.
- Have pairs discuss their reasons with the class. Discuss any problematic or unclear options and, if necessary, explain words or phrases identified as problematic in the previous activity.
- After they have done this, show the answers and explanations for Item 1.

Step 4: Respond to a (Reading) Multiple-Choice, Choose Single Answer Item

Explain to your students that they will now respond to a test item simulating test conditions. Remind them of the three strategies covered in this lesson and ask them to apply these strategies.

Give out copies of Item 2.

Step 5: Provide Feedback

Ask your students if they were able to use the strategies. Which one was the most difficult to apply? Which one do they think was the most useful? Ask students to compare and evaluate each other's responses in pairs or groups.

After they have done this, show the answers and explanations for Item 2.

Item 1

Read the text and answer the multiple-choice question by selecting the correct response. Only one response is correct.

In many ways Britten's most ambitious effort is the *War Requiem* of 1961, a flawed but still impressive work for chorus, soloists, and orchestra. It weaves together the traditional Latin Mass for the Dead with antiwar poems by Wilfrid Owen, a young officer killed in World War I. The point of *War Requiem* is how the words of the liturgical text are reinterpreted and often rendered hollow by the realities of death in war. In this work we see Britten's prodigal inconsistencies on display. For all its problems, the *War Requiem* will probably survive as one of our time's most impassioned indictments of war and its heroic myth.

Which of the following most accurately summarizes the opinion of the author in the text?

- ☐ He finds the weaving together of the Latin Mass and antiwar poems to be quite effective.
- ☐ He is critical of Britten's inconsistencies as observed in the *War Requiem*.
- ☐ He admires the *War Requiem* of Britten but finds it far from perfect.
- ☐ He questions whether Britten's work will endure.

Item 1: Answer Key and Explanations

Which of the following most accurately summarizes the opinion of the author in the text?

Incorrect: He finds the weaving together of the Latin Mass and antiwar poems to be quite effective.

Explanation: This response is incorrect. Although the passage mentions that Britten's work weaves together the Latin Mass for the Dead and antiwar poems, it does not comment on the effectiveness of this combination.

Incorrect: He is critical of Britten's inconsistencies as observed in the War Requiem.

Explanation: This response is incorrect. The author recognizes inconsistencies and flaws in the work, yet still praises the War Requiem as "one of our time's most impassioned indictments of war."

Correct Answer: He admires the War Requiem of Britten but finds it far from perfect.

Explanation: This response is correct. The writer describes Britten's War Requiem as "impressive" and gives details of what the work accomplishes. However, the writer also describes the work as "flawed" and refers to the work's "prodigal inconsistencies" and "all its problems."

Incorrect: He questions whether Britten's work will endure.

Explanation: This response is incorrect. The writer hypothesizes that the work will endure by stating, "the War Requiem will probably survive."

Item 2

Read the text and answer the multiple-choice question by selecting the correct response. Only one response is correct.

The approach to the methodology of learning and teaching has to be comprehensive, presenting all options in an explicit and transparent way, and avoiding advocacy or dogmatism. It has been our fundamental methodological principle that the methods to be employed in language learning, teaching and research are those considered to be most effective in reaching the objectives agreed in the light of the needs of the individual learners in their social context. Effectiveness is contingent on the motivations and characteristics of the learners as well as the nature of the human and material resources which can be brought into play.

What point is the writer making in this paragraph?

- ☐ Motivation is worth more than intelligence in learning.
- ☐ Language can be effectively learnt through play.
- ☐ There is no single best method for learning.
- ☐ Teachers should regularly change their methods.

Item 2: Answer Key and Explanations

What point is the writer making in this paragraph?

Incorrect: Motivation is worth more than intelligence in learning.

Explanation: This response is incorrect because the passage does compare the impact of motivation and intelligence on learning.

Incorrect: Language can be effectively learnt through play.

Explanation: This response is incorrect. The writer uses the phrase “brought into play” figuratively to refer to the “material resources” which can be used. The text does not suggest a method of language teaching.

Correct Answer: There is no single best method for learning.

Explanation: This response is correct because the writer consistently uses plurals when discussing methodology as in “presenting all options” and “the methods to be employed...are those considered to be most effective.” This indicates that there is more than one method.

Incorrect: Teachers should regularly change their methods.

Explanation: This response is incorrect. The passage discusses factors to consider in the selection of teaching methods but does not address how frequently to change these methods.