

## READING COMPREHENSION TEXT SHEET VERSION 2007A

### The interview

“We would like to interview you ...”. Joyful words for the job-seeker, but my letter carried a warning: ‘You will be required to take a psychometric test.’ More than 70 per cent of companies now use these ‘objective’ tests for potential employees. They are meant to give a true picture of candidates that removes the unfairness that may result from the personal opinions of interviewers.

On the day of my interview for the job of assistant to a company Public Relations consultant, my nerves were made worse by finding that the office was close to a hospital with particularly unhappy associations. Luckily, I had deliberately got there early so that I was able to calm myself down before a secretary rushed me upstairs for my test.

Keeping to a strict time limit, I had to assess groups of adjectives, marking which most and which least matched my ideas of myself at work. Choosing one quality out of four when all seemed appropriate was difficult, more difficult than the interview that followed – though I felt I hadn’t impressed in that either.

Confirmation of this arrived a week later. My rejection letter was accompanied by a copy of the Private and Confidential Personal Profile Analysis – two and a half sides of paper, based on that 10-minute test.

The Profile’s rude inaccuracy and its judgemental tone were harder to accept than the fact that I had been turned down for the job. Apparently, I have ‘no eye for detail’; I am also ‘a forceful individual ... who leads rather than directs’ and am ‘motivated by financial reward to pay for good living’. The words ‘impatient’, ‘restless’ and ‘strong-willed’ also came up.

‘A portrait of an ambitious, power-mad person’, said a psychologist friend of 15 years to whom I showed the Profile. She said it didn’t apply to me at all. I know myself to be a careful, industrious checker. I am shy but cheerful and a bit over-anxious to be thought creative. I am not a power-crazed person.

What would I do, I worried, if I had to take another test for another job, and this unattractive personality emerged again?

I sent the company a polite disagreement with the Profile, purely for the record. Meanwhile, I made a few enquiries.

Had my emotional state of mind made the results untypical of me? I had been disturbed to find the office so close to a hospital that held unhappy memories for me.

‘State of mind will have an impact’, said Shane Pressey, an occupational psychologist, ‘but on the whole its effect will be relatively minor. It appears that the test was an inadequate tool for the amount of information they were trying to get out of it, and it is not surprising that there were inaccuracies.’

Too late for that particular job, I arranged to sit another psychometric test. This one took much longer and was more thorough; the profile was also more detailed and accurate – it showed my eye for detail and the fact that I have a problem meeting deadlines.

But a peculiar result is hard to challenge without seeming unable to take criticism. It is simply not acceptable to refuse to take a test, in case the job candidate seems uncooperative and eccentric. The interview, with its yes/no personal feeling, is here to stay, but so is objective testing.

If my experience is anything to go by, the job candidate should be suspicious of 10-minute tests that result in generalised – and possibly wildly inaccurate judgements. I accept that it would be costly to arrange for face-to-face discussions of test results with all job candidates,

but a telephone call would be preferable to simply receiving a written 'profile' through the post and having no opportunity to discuss its contents.

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1. Before the writer took the test, she
  - A felt that she was unlikely to do it very well.
  - B made sure that she was mentally prepared for it.
  - C believed that such tests were fair to candidates.
  - D did some research into tests of that kind.
  
2. Of the qualities the writer was asked to match with her personality
  - A some seemed more suitable than others.
  - B all seemed equally suitable.
  - C none seemed really suitable.
  - D the writer was not able to decide which were suitable.
  
3. What did the writer think when she took the test?
  - A She could not understand some of the questions.
  - B She found that there was not enough time to do it.
  - C She felt that she had not done it very well.
  - D She decided that it would not prove anything.
  
4. What does the writer mean by 'judgemental' in the fifth paragraph?
  - A critical
  - B impatient
  - C impersonal
  - D thoughtful
  
5. When the writer received the Personal Profile Analysis, she
  - A was offended by the comments made about her answers.
  - B was glad that she had not been offered the job.
  - C regretted some of the answers she had given in the test.
  - D realized that her personality would not have suited the job.
  
6. Why did the Profile worry her?
  - A It made her feel that she had been too self-confident before.
  - B It indicated that she might have trouble getting a job in future.
  - C It did not show that she was capable of being a creative person.
  - D It told her things about herself that she had not noticed before.
  
7. According to the occupational psychologist,
  - A state of mind has no influence on the result of a psychometric test.
  - B state of mind has a significant influence on the result of a psychometric test.
  - C the influence of state of mind is not significant.
  - D the influence of state of mind is decisive.
  
8. What did she find out after taking the test for the job?

- A** The way she was feeling had badly affected her performance in it.
- B** Psychometric tests seldom provide reliable information about people.
- C** Many job candidates are unwilling to take psychometric tests.
- D** It may have been an unsuitable test for its intended purpose.

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9. What does the writer recommend?
- A** Candidates should be able to talk about their test results with employers.
  - B** Employers should pay no attention to the results of psychometric tests.
  - C** Candidates should not be concerned about taking psychometric tests.
  - D** Employers should stop asking candidates to take psychometric tests.
10. Why does the writer describe her experience?
- A** It is typical of experiences that a great many other people have.
  - B** It shows that no method of selecting job candidates can ever be fair.
  - C** It is an example of how difficult it can be for someone to get a job.
  - D** It illustrates faults in a new method of assessing job candidates.