

COMPREHENSION: UNDERSTANDING CORRUPTION IN SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICS

Read the article below and answer the questions that follow.

Corruption is one of the biggest problems facing South Africa today. It happens when people in power abuse their positions for personal gain – often by stealing public money, awarding dishonest tenders, or giving jobs and contracts to friends or family. This affects the entire country, especially poor communities who rely on government services like clinics, schools, and water supply.



In recent years, many corruption scandals have made headlines. Some politicians have been accused of taking millions of rand meant for housing projects, education, and hospitals. Instead of building proper roads or fixing electricity problems, the money is spent on luxury cars, overseas holidays, or even private security. This is called state capture – when a small group controls parts of the government for their own benefit.

The effects of corruption are serious. Communities are left without working toilets or clean water, and learners go to schools without textbooks or desks. Sometimes, the same contractor is paid many times for work that is never completed. In other cases, government officials are bribed to ignore safety regulations, putting lives at risk.

Many South Africans are speaking out. Civil society groups, journalists, and whistleblowers have played a major role in exposing corruption. Organisations like the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) are working to bring corrupt officials to justice.

Fighting corruption takes time and effort. It requires honest leadership, clear rules, and a public that refuses to accept dishonesty. Young people can play a part by asking questions, reporting wrongdoing, and choosing leaders who care about fairness and service.

Corruption weakens democracy, but knowledge and action can build a better future. When citizens demand accountability, real change becomes possible.

(Original text)



Questions:

For each of the following, choose the most correct answer and write down only the LETTER of your choice, i.e. A, B, C or D.

Literal:

1. What is corruption, according to the passage?
 - A. Paying taxes late
 - B. Breaking traffic laws
 - C. Abusing power for personal gain
 - D. Voting for the wrong candidate
2. Which group is specifically mentioned as being harmed by corruption?
 - A. Wealthy business owners
 - B. Private schools
 - C. Poor communities
 - D. Tourists

3. What are some services mentioned that are affected by corruption?
 - A. Internet, television, and sports
 - B. Clinics, schools, and water supply
 - C. Shopping malls and restaurants
 - D. Police stations and courts

4. What does the term “state capture” refer to?
 - A. A police arrest
 - B. A change in political leadership
 - C. A group controlling government for personal gain
 - D. A military takeover

5. According to the passage, what do some corrupt politicians spend stolen money on?
 - A. Local charities
 - B. Road safety campaigns
 - C. Luxury items and holidays
 - D. Helping the elderly

6. What is one danger of ignoring safety regulations due to corruption?
 - A. Elections might be delayed
 - B. Lives could be at risk
 - C. Tourism numbers may drop
 - D. Jobs will increase

7. Which organisation is mentioned as working to fight corruption?
 - A. SAPS
 - B. WHO
 - C. NPA
 - D. SANDF

8. Who are “whistleblowers”?
 - A. People who clean government offices
 - B. People who expose corruption
 - C. People who work in banks
 - D. People who support politicians

9. What is required to fight corruption successfully?
 - A. High taxes and long speeches
 - B. Private investors and business deals
 - C. Honest leadership and public action
 - D. Closed court trials

10. What kind of future does the passage suggest is possible if citizens demand accountability?
 - A. A poorer future
 - B. A divided future
 - C. A dangerous future
 - D. A better future



Inferential:

11. The passage says some politicians spend money meant for hospitals on “luxury cars” and “holidays”. What does this suggest about their priorities? (2)
12. Why do you think it is difficult to completely stop corruption, even when some leaders are arrested? (2)
13. The writer says “communities are left without working toilets or clean water”. What deeper problem is this sentence hinting at, beyond just a lack of services? (2)
14. Why might whistleblowers be considered brave, even though they help expose the truth? (2)
15. Explain what the phrase “corruption weakens democracy” mean in your own words? Give one reason based on the passage. (2)

Evaluative:

16. Why do you think corruption remains a serious problem in South Africa, despite efforts to fight it? Support your answer with one reason from the passage. (3)
17. If you were a government leader, what would you do differently to stop corruption? Explain your choice briefly. (2)

Vocabulary:

Match each word from the passage to its correct meaning by writing the correct letter (A–E). Then, write a short sentence of your own using the word correctly.

Words from the passage:

18. Corruption
19. Accountability
20. Whistleblower
21. Contractor
22. Regulation (5)

Meanings:

- A. A person hired to build or deliver a public service
- B. A rule or law that controls how something is done
- C. Dishonest use of power for personal gain
- D. Someone who reveals wrongdoing in an organisation
- E. Being responsible for your actions and decisions



Summary:

23. Summarise five key facts about corruption in South African politics from the passage. Write in full sentences. Do not write more than 5 sentences. (5)
 - ✓ Use point form.
 - ✓ Use your own words.

Application:

Imagine you are a famous detective trying to solve a mystery about corruption in your town. Write a short paragraph (3–5 sentences) describing **how you would investigate the problem** and **what advice you would give people to help stop corruption**. Use at least **two words from the passage** (e.g., whistleblower, accountability, regulation). (5)

Suggested Answers:

Literal:

1. C
2. C
3. B
4. C
5. C
6. B
7. C
8. B
9. C
10. D



Targeted skills:

1. Identify the main idea or definition from the text
2. Recognise who is affected by an issue in the text
3. Identify key details or examples from the text
4. Understand the meaning of a specific term used in context
5. Extract factual information stated explicitly
6. Recognise cause and effect based on literal facts
7. Recall named organisations and their roles
8. Understand the meaning of a term based on how it's explained
9. Identify required solutions mentioned in the text
10. Extract a stated conclusion or summary from the text

Inferential:

11. It suggests that these politicians care more about their own comfort and wealth than about helping the people they were elected to serve. They are putting personal luxury above public needs. (2 marks)
12. Corruption is difficult to stop because it often involves many people protecting each other, and some cases take years to investigate. Even if a few leaders are caught, others may still continue if systems are weak or if there are no serious consequences. (2 marks)
13. The sentence hints that corruption causes deep inequality and suffering. It's not just about services missing – it means people live without dignity and basic human rights because of the dishonest actions of a few. (2 marks)
14. Whistleblowers are brave because they risk losing their jobs, facing threats, or being targeted by powerful people when they speak out. They choose to do the right thing, even when it's dangerous or unpopular. (2 marks)
15. The phrase means that corruption damages the public's trust in government and the fairness of the system. If people believe leaders are dishonest, they lose faith in voting, laws, and democracy itself.

Targeted skills:

11. Infer values or priorities from behaviour described in the text
12. Explain underlying reasons for challenges presented in the text
13. Infer social or emotional consequences from a stated fact
14. Understand risk and moral courage from implied context
15. Interpret the meaning of figurative or abstract language based on the text

Evaluative:

16. Corruption remains a serious problem because it is often hidden and involves many people protecting each other. Even when some leaders are arrested, others continue corrupt practices because the systems are weak and consequences are not always enforced. This makes it hard to stop corruption. (3 marks)
17. Personal response, mark on merit. E.g. If I were a government leader, I would create stronger laws and make sure everyone is held responsible, no matter how powerful they are. I would also support people who expose corruption and encourage honesty in schools and communities. This would help build trust and stop dishonest behaviour. (2 marks)

Targeted skills:

16. Explain underlying reasons or causes of ongoing problems using evidence from the text and own reasoning
17. Express personal opinion clearly and support it with logical reasoning related to the topic

Vocabulary:

18. Corruption – C
Sentence: Corruption in local government meant the community never received the housing funds.
19. Accountability – E
Sentence: The mayor showed accountability by explaining how every rand was spent.
20. Whistleblower – D
Sentence: A brave whistleblower exposed the stolen money meant for textbooks.
21. Contractor – A
Sentence: The contractor promised to repair the clinic roof but never completed the job.
22. Regulation – B
Sentence: A new regulation was introduced to make tender processes fairer.



Targeted skills

Recognise the correct meaning of a word as used in the text
Use a word from the text correctly in an original sentence
Match words to their definitions based on contextual understanding
Demonstrate clear understanding of word meaning through personal example
Apply vocabulary in familiar contexts relevant to the topic

Summary:

- *Corruption means dishonest leaders steal money meant for public services.*
- *It causes important projects like clinics and schools to fail.*
- *Many people protect each other, making corruption hard to stop.*
- *Whistleblowers are brave individuals who expose corrupt activities.*
- *Fighting corruption requires strong laws and holding everyone responsible.*

Targeted skills:

Identify and select key information from a passage
Paraphrase information in own words
Organise ideas clearly and logically
Write concisely within a set limit (five sentences)
Demonstrate understanding of the main topic

Application:

Example:

As a detective investigating corruption, I would listen carefully to whistleblowers who risk a lot to share important information. I would also review government regulations to check if officials are following the rules and demand accountability from those who break them. My advice to the community would be to stay alert, report dishonest behaviour, and support leaders who act with honesty and fairness to help end corruption.

Targeted skills:

Use imagination to apply knowledge from the text to a new situation

Incorporate key vocabulary correctly in own writing

Write clearly and coherently in a short paragraph

Demonstrate understanding of the text's theme through creative response

Express opinions or advice relevant to the topic



While this comprehension looks at a darker side of South Africa, Macrat's *Mzansi Comprehension Pack* focuses on the positive in South Africa: interesting, feel-good articles to develop critical thinking!

Take a look online at key features of the comprehension pack:

<https://www.digital.macrat.co.za/resources/additional-resources/>

Order today!