UNIT 2: LEISURE AND RECREATION

READING

Exercise 1:

In this unit, you will do an IELTS Reading multiple-choice task. Read the information. Then skim read the paragraph. Choose the best summary.

In the IELTS Reading test, you maybe asked to decide what the main idea of a paragraph is. Remember that a paragraph usually contains one main idea. You can often get a good idea of what the paragraph is about by reading the first sentence. However, you may need to read further to understand what the writer's main point is.

A history of ice cream

Although many people might consider ice cream a recent invention, dependent on refrigeration technology and the dairy industry, there have been certain people eating frozen desserts made by mixing ice with fruit flavours for thousands of years. We don't know when people started doing this, but we do know that Roman and Chinese emperors used to eat fruit mixed with snow as far back as 2,000 years ago. However, most fruit grows in the warmer months, and ice needed to be transported from distant mountain tops, or collected in winter and stored in very expensive underground chambers. This meant that it was available only to the people at the very top of society, and only on special occasions.

The main point of this paragraph is that…

- **A** no one knows when ice cream was invented.
- **B** long ago, only wealthy, powerful people ate fruit mixed with ice.
- **C** storing and collecting ice is very difficult.
- **D** ice can be mixed with fruit to create a dessert.

Exercise 2:

In a paragraph, the writer's main point is usually supported several times, by different sentences. Read the paragraph below. The parts which relate to the main point are in bold. Choose the best answer.

Not until relatively recently – the 1600s – did people begin mixing milk or cream with ice to create what people today might recognise as ice cream. **Ice cream desserts began to appear in expensive cafés in Paris, and then in New York in the 1700s. In England, recipes for making your own ice cream began to be published in the early 1700s.** Indeed, **the word *ice cream* appeared for the first time in a dictionary in 1744.** This all meant that **ordinary people might have heard about ice cream and understood what a frozen dessert was**, even if they couldn't afford to buy one themselves.

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Which idea best summarises the writer's main point in this paragraph?

o A. Ordinary people couldn't afford ice cream until relatively recently.
o B. People have not been mixing ice with cream for long.
o C. Only rich people consumed ice cream in the 1600s and 1700s.
o D. The idea of ice cream began to spread amongst ordinary people in the 1600s and 1700s.

Exercise 3: Read the paragraph. Choose the best answer to the question below.

In the 1700s, ice cream started to become popular in the USA. Adverts began to appear in newspapers for a growing number of specialist ice-cream shops, which made and sold their own frozen desserts. As before, however, ice cream was only affordable for society's elite. The first American president, George Washington, was known to enjoy ice cream. He spent an incredible $200 on ice cream in just one year – the equivalent of at least $5,000 in today's money.

When the writer discusses the first ice-cream shops in the USA, he or she is surprised that...

- **A** there were so many ice-cream shops.
- **B** anyone would spend so much on ice cream.
- **C** ice cream was so expensive in the 1700s.
- **D** the first American president liked ice cream

Exercise 4: In the IELTS Reading test, as well as identifying the writer's opinion, you may be asked to summarise a writer's argument in a paragraph. In order to do this, you need to read the whole paragraph carefully. Read the paragraph and answer the question. Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

Of course, when the right technology came along, ice cream became something that could be easily produced. It was in the USA, in the mid-1800s, that the first small freezers appeared. These were quite primitive compared to today's machines, and were powered by steam. Around this time, the first ice cream factory was set up in Pennsylvania, in the USA. From there, ice cream was transported by train to different cities in the region. This was, essentially, the beginning of the ice-cream industry. However, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that ice cream became a successful commercial product. By this time, much cheaper methods of refrigeration had been developed, meaning that the technology to create ice cream could be adopted in different countries around the world, and affordable products became available to millions of ordinary people.

Which of the following statements best summarises the writer's main point in this paragraph?

- **A** Ice cream became a popular product in the mid-1800s.
- **B** Ice cream became a popular product when the cost of making it became cheaper.
- **C** Early technology for creating ice cream was not successful.
- **D** Ice cream first became a popular product in the USA.

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Exercise 5: Read the information. Then read the text and answer the questions. Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

The history of chocolate

Why people first started eating chocolate and how it spread across the world.

No one is certain which Mesoamerican* culture first farmed cacao trees. However, archaeologists think the Olmec people of southern Mexico were one of the earliest to create a drink using cacao beans. While the Olmecs left behind no written records, researchers have dug up pots from this ancient civilisation that date back to 1500 BC. After the pots were taken to a laboratory and analysed, it was discovered that they contained theobromine, a chemical found in cacao beans. A small team of archaeologists has also been looking at a site in the Mexican state of Chiapas. Here, they claim, is proof of another society making cacao drinks even earlier. Not everyone accepts their evidence, so it seems further investigation is necessary.

Each fruit of the cacao tree is full of white flesh, and inside this are about 60 brown seeds, or *beans*. Some researchers theorise that early Mesoamerican cultures boiled the flesh for stews, before discovering that the seeds could also be used. This seems highly likely, as the flesh is sweet, but the seeds are incredibly bitter. It's remarkable, in fact, that anyone would have thought to dry out the seeds and then roast them in the first place. Perhaps what happened is that someone was eating the fruit and spitting seeds into a fire. They might have then noticed that the burnt seeds were producing a rich smell, and decided to experiment, but we can never know for sure. More certain is the fact that the Olmecs turned the roasted beans into a thick paste to make their drink, and into this was added chilli and vanilla.

Unlike the Olmecs, the Mayan people left behind paintings showing their use of cacao beans. From these pictures, we know that cacao beans and chocolate drinks had a special status in Mayan society, and were often used in marriage ceremonies and other rituals. Later, when the Aztecs ruled much of Mesoamerica, they wanted cacao beans for themselves, and would trade with the Mayans to get them. Although other crops were important at the time, they were nowhere near as valuable as cacao beans. This was partly because cacao trees could not survive in the dry highlands of central Mexico, the centre of Aztec civilisation. Unusually for plants, cacao trees depended on tiny swarms of flies for pollination, and these insects lived only in a humid climate.

In Mayan society, we know that cacao beans were very valuable, perhaps so valuable that it may have been worth creating 'fake beans'. Archaeologists have discovered beans made of clay in many Mesoamerican sites, and suspect that they were used by Mayans when they had to pay a form of tax to the Aztecs. But it wasn't just their economic value that made them important in society. Like today, the Mayan people liked to prepare traditional dishes to share with friends and family. Extended families would have come together to collect cacao beans and slowly turn them into a rich drink, using the occasion to strengthen their social ties.

In the 16th century, the Spanish arrived in Mexico and noticed the way in which cacao was central to the local diet. We still have records of the letters they sent home to Spain. Expedition leader Hernán Cortés wrote to King Carlos I of Spain about a strange drink called *xocoatl*, which he mistakenly believed the Aztecs, including their ruler, Montezuma, used for medicinal purposes. One of Cortés's officers even claimed to have seen Montezuma drinking more than 50 cups of a chocolate drink per day, and thought he was doing this to improve his health. That number is no doubt inaccurate, but even if it were true, the officer missed the point. The Aztecs simply saw cacao as part of their diet and did not attribute any special qualities to it. Nevertheless, the Spanish were soon exporting cacao beans back to Spain and

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creating chocolate drinks for themselves, adding sugar and honey to sweeten them. The demand for cacao soon spread across the rest of Europe.

Until 1828, it was only the wealthy that could afford these new chocolate drinks. It was in this year that Dutch chemist Coenraad Johannes van Houten invented the cocoa press, a machine that could squeeze the natural oils from roasted cacao beans. The beans were then crushed into powder, combined with alkaline salts, and sold as cheap blocks of cooking chocolate. Later, in 1847 the first edible chocolate was created by Fry and Sons in England. Unfortunately, its bitter taste was unpopular with consumers. In 1874, Swiss chocolate maker Daniel Peter finally realised that milk was perfect for improving the taste and texture of chocolate, and it has been a key ingredient ever since.

* *Mesoamerica* A region stretching from Mexico to Costa Rica in which several advanced civilisations existed before the 1600s.

1 *What are we told about research into the origins of cacao-based drinks?*

- **A** Researchers have used written documents as evidence.
- **B** Researchers have failed to agree about the findings.
- **C** It was carried out in laboratories outside Mexico.
- **D** No more research is needed.

2 *When the writer discusses the early use of cacao beans, he is surprised that…*

- **A** they were first eaten raw.
- **B** people preferred the flesh to the seeds.
- **C** people regarded them as something to throw away.
- **D** anyone had the idea that they could be eaten.

3 *What problem did the Aztecs face in getting cacao beans?*

- **A** The beans were destroyed by insect pests.
- **B** The Mayans asked increasingly high prices for the beans.
- **C** The local conditions were unsuitable for growing the cacao tree.
- **D** The Mayans were unwilling to trade with them for religious reasons.

4 *Which of the following best summarises the writer's argument in the fourth paragraph?*

- **A** The Aztecs mainly appreciated cacao beans for their economic benefit.
- **B** The sharing of food is not as important now as it used to be in earlier societies.
- **C** Cacao beans had a value which went beyond how much they were worth.
- **D** The use of artificial cacao beans meant that real ones lost their value.

5 *The writer refers to the drinking of chocolate by the Aztec ruler Montezuma to show how*

- **A** the Spanish misunderstood why Aztecs drank chocolate.
- **B** the history of chocolate has not always been a peaceful one.
- **C** the Aztecs pretended their chocolate drink had powerful qualities.
- **D** people tend to make untrue claims about food and drink.

6 *What is the writer doing in the final paragraph?*

- **A** Highlighting why modern chocolate is less healthy than its original form.

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- **B** Questioning whether modern chocolate is superior to older types.
- **C** Outlining the steps that led to the kind of chocolate we have today.
- **D** Explaining why rich people were prepared to pay more for chocolate.

7 According to the writer, what led to chocolate becoming a successful mass product?

- **A** The price of manufacturing chocolate became cheaper.
- **B** New machines were invented which made it easier to create chocolate.
- **C** A lot of the fatty oils were taken out of cacao beans.
- **D** The recipe was altered to reflect what consumers wanted.

Exercise 6: Read the information. Then read the extracts from the Reading passage and look at the words in bold. Match the words on the left from the Reading passage with the descriptions on the right.

It is very likely that an IELTS Reading passage will contain specialised words, or other words you do not know. Often, you do not need to know what the word means in order to answer a question. Sometimes, you can guess what a technical word means by reading around it in the passage. Where this is not possible, the meaning of the word may be given in a footnote.

1. After the pots were taken to a laboratory and analysed, it was discovered that they contained **theobromine**, a chemical found in cacao beans.
2. From these pictures, we know that cacao beans and chocolate drinks had a special status in Mayan society, and were often used in marriage ceremonies and other **rituals**.
3. Unusually for plants, cacao trees depended on tiny swarms of flies for **pollination**, and these insects lived only in a humid climate.
4. The beans were then crushed into powder, combined with **alkaline salts**, and sold as cheap blocks of cooking chocolate.
5. Later, in 1847 the first edible chocolate was created by Fry and Sons in England. Unfortunately, its **bitter** taste was unpopular with consumers.

1 theobromine	a set of fixed actions performed regularly, especially as part of a ceremony
2 rituals	a chemical that can be added to food to improve it in some way
3 pollination	something that exists in chocolate
4 alkaline salts	with a sharp, unpleasant taste
5 bitter	to take pollen from one plant, or part of a plant, to another so that new plant seeds can be produced

Exercise 6. Read the passage and choose the correct letter, A, B or C.

Social organisation among animals

Varieties of social organisation

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A The palalo – worm which lives on rocks in the sea – is one of very few animals which we never have contact with other members of the same species. Others, such as spiders, are normally solitary, meeting only to mate (that is, to reproduce).

B Some species form social links only for the period while they are rearing their young. Among birds, European robins raise their chicks in a pair, away from other members of their species, while herring gulls form larger groups (colonies) consisting of many pairs living close together, each pair raising their chicks independently.

C Many species of fish and birds form large groups, called schools and flocks, respectively, and swim or fly together. Hens attack each other, and eventually establish a hierarchy based on their individual strength. Those at the top of the 'pecking order' et to eat before the others.

D Finally, some animals spend most or all of their lives in social groups in which individuals co-operate. Lions, for instance, usually live in a relatively permanent group, called a pride, where some activities, such as hunting, are social, and others, like sleeping, are solitary.

E Bees, wasps and ants live in stable, co-operative groups in which every activity is communal and organized. Worker bees (which are all female) have several jobs in succession, depending on their age. They begin with cleaning duties, and later become soldiers to defend the hive against intruders. Finally they fly out of the hive to collect food. Theirs is a highly complex social organization.

1. Which of these animals spends most, but not all, of its life alone?
   A. Palalo
   B. Herring gull
   C. Spider
2. European robins and herring gulls are different with regard to
   A. How many birds help to bring up each chick.
   B. The social organization in which pairs bring up their young.
   C. How long they spend together.
3. What point is made about hens?
   A. The best fighters eat different kinds of food from weaker hens.
   B. They live in large groups than most other species of birds.
   C. Their social structure gives certain individuals advantages over others.
4. What is said about the life of lions?
   A. They live in a group and do some activities together.
   B. They live separately and come together for some activities.
   C. They live in a group and do all activities together.
5. What point is made about worker bees?
   A. They carry out different tasks as they get older.
   B. They live I a social structure unlike that of any other animals.
   C. They could not survive alone.

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