UNIT 5: HISTORY

READING

Exercise 1: Read the statements about different kinds of questions in the IELTS Reading test. Choose True or False.

1 In the IELTS Reading test, True / False / Not Given tasks are the same as Yes / No / Not Given tasks.

◯ True ◯ False

2 True / False / Not Given statements apply to *facts* in a reading text.

◯ True ◯ False

3 Yes / No / Not Given statements apply to the *opinions* expressed by the writer of the text.

◯ True ◯ False

4 If a statement is 'Not Given', this means that the statement isn't correct.

◯ True ◯ False

5 A statement that is 'Not Given' might be correct or it might be incorrect; it's impossible to be sure from reading the text.

◯ True ◯ False

6 To do these IELTS Reading tasks successfully, you need to be able to read critically and carefully, and distinguish fact from opinion.

◯ True ◯ False

Exercise 2: Read the information. Then read the statements. Do they give facts or the writer's opinions? Choose Fact or Opinion.

In the IELTS Reading test, it is important to distinguish between facts and opinions. A fact is something that can be proven to have happened or to exist. An opinion is a thought or belief about someone or something.

1 Considerable amounts of money were spent on improving the region's infrastructure.

◯ Fact ◯ Opinion

2 The minister's announcement attracted widespread criticism in the media.

◯ Fact ◯ Opinion

3 Little thought appears to have been given to the future use of the site.

◯ Fact ◯ Opinion

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4 According to the latest government figures, life expectancy increased by 5 years in the first 15 years of the century.

◯ Fact ◯ Opinion

5 Millions of dollars were wasted on the project, and could and should have been spent in other ways.

◯ Fact ◯ Opinion

6 Arguably, it would be hard to function effectively in the modern world without a basic knowledge of maths.

◯ Fact ◯ Opinion

Exercise 3: Read the information. Then read the adjectives in the box. The adjectives can all be used by writers to give their opinions or to evaluate what other writers have said. Choose the correct adjectives for each category. The first one has been done for you.

IELTS Reading texts often contain a writer's opinions – as well as their evaluations of what other writers have said.

mistaken	unmistakable	undeniable	uncertain	misguided		
inaccurate	vague	legitimate	genuine	unsure	evident	valid
ambiguous	distinct	flawed				

obvious	unclear
clear	

true	untrue

Exercise 4: Read the statements. What opinions are being expressed by the phrases in bold? Choose the correct answers.

1 **It goes without saying that** a country's culture is fundamentally shaped by its past.

◯ This is obviously true.

◯ This is rarely said.

2 **It remains to be seen whether** history will be kept on the school's curriculum.

◯ This is continuing to happen.

◯ We don't yet know if this will happen.

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3 **Beyond doubt**, the popularity of history as a school subject is in decline.

- ◯ This is clearly true.
- ◯ This is difficult to prove.

4 The value of learning historical dates by heart is **open to debate**.

- ◯ It is a controversial subject.
- ◯ There are different opinions about this.

5 **The jury is out** on whether history should be compulsory for all schoolchildren.

- ◯ No decision has been reached.
- ◯ This is a complex legal issue.

Exercise 5: Read the sentences. Then choose the correct answers to complete the second sentences which explain the meaning of the first sentences.

1. Subsequent research has undermined Kolowski's original findings.
The research *strengthens / weakens* Kolowski's claims.

2. Although it was influential at the time of publication, Lowton's 1927 book has been widely discredited.
The reputation of Lowton's 1927 book has *been harmed / improved* .

3. While Dupont's hypothesis has gained popularity, it is almost impossible to verify.
Evidence supporting Dupont's ideas *can / cannot* easily be found.

4. Other studies appear to confirm Mitchel's theory.
Other work provides evidence that *disproves / supports* Mitchel's theory.

5. Rowe's work has been widely endorsed by the scientific community.
Scientists say they *agree / disagree* with Rowe.

6. Nowadays, the profession almost universally refutes the conclusions of Gavi's 2004 paper.
Gavi's ideas have been *accepted / rejected* .

Exercise 6: Read the verbs in the box. The verbs can all be used to express either agreement or disagreement. Complete the table with the verbs.

support	recognise	negate	deny	undermine	confirm	validate
contradict	discredit	refute	endorse	verify		

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verbs for agreement	verbs for disagreement

Exercise 7: Read the information. Then read the statements and the extracts. Is the information given in the statements expressed, contradicted or not made clear in the extracts? Choose Yes if the information is expressed, No if the information is contradicted and Not Given if the information is not made clear.

In the IELTS Reading test, you will be asked to read a text and choose Yes, No or Not Given to confirm whether opinions are expressed (*Yes*), contradicted (*No*) or not made clear (*Not Given*). In this exercise, you will see a statement and then an extract from a text.

Choose
Yes if the statement agrees with the views of the writer of the extract
No if the statement contradicts the views of the writer of the extract
Not Given if it is impossible to say what the writer of the extract thinks about this.

1 **Statement**
The general public now have little respect for the views of historians.

Extract
Long gone are the days when historians were held in great admiration by the population.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Given

2 **Statement**
The teaching and learning of history play an essential role in society.

Extract
It is undeniable that history is a constant source of fascination and tells the gripping story of how people have dealt with the most pressing challenges of their times.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Given

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3 **Statement**
The words of John Acton are relevant today.

Extract
John Acton's views were expressed in a different era and arguably have no obvious connection to contemporary ideas.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Given

4 **Statement**
Henry Ford's views on history have been misrepresented.

Extract
Ford has frequently been quoted, yet what he said about history has often been taken out of context.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Given

5 **Statement**
The decision to make history an optional subject in the UK was a mistake.

Extract
Opinion is divided on whether the UK government was right to make the study of history optional.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Given

6 **Statement**
A good knowledge of history is an appropriate indicator of a person's suitability for a job.

Extract
Most employers would like to feel that their staff have a reasonable working knowledge of the real world – and there is no reason why historical knowledge should be treated any differently.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Given

Exercise 8: Read the information. Then match the paraphrases with the opinions.

In the IELTS Reading test, you are sometimes asked to match opinions with the people who express them in the text. It is important to understand how opinions can be paraphrased. For example:

Opinion: *Henry Ford's views on history have been misrepresented.*
Paraphrase: *Ford has frequently been quoted, yet what he said about history has often been taken out of context.*

In this example, *misrepresented* is paraphrased as *taken out of context.*

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Essentially, looking at where we've come from enables us to interpret where we are at the moment.

A knowledge of history should enable people to evaluate how valid a statement or an argument actually is.

Professors of history frequently have little contact with those who teach and learn in today's classrooms.

It is debatable whether, for example, Tim Berners-Lee was able to invent the World Wide Web because of all the historical dates he'd memorised as a schoolboy.

1 The study of history involves learning to think critically.

2 Learning about the past enables us to better understand the present.

3 Some historians are out of touch with the realities of the education system.

4 Improvements that affect people's lives are not made possible by the study of history.

Exercise 9: Read the article. Do the statements agree with the views of the writer of the article? Choose Yes, No or Not Given.

Choose
Yes if the statement agrees with the views of the writer
No if the statement contradicts the views of the writer
Not Given if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this.

Why study history?

by Professor Percy Adams, head of history at Hardwick University

I am often asked, 'What's the use of history?' As a professional historian, I can think of a number of uses. I sometimes reply by asking what the use of studying French is for someone who isn't about to go to France. A wide-ranging list of uses usually follows, ranging from the intellectual to the more practical, such as familiarity with phrases like *de rigueur* that have entered the English language from French. Many of these reasons have a parallel with history – both in the purely intellectual and the more practical sense.

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It is undeniable that historians don't perform life-saving medical operations, fly planes or design labour-saving software. These tasks are clearly crucial to the general population, and it is not my opinion that the work of a historian is in the same category. But one of the more practical applications of history has been articulated by Peter Stearns, for whom history provides us with a way of making sense of events. How do you interpret a recession if the country is enjoying a boom, other than by using historical references? He argues that to comprehend the events we experience, we must look to factors that took shape earlier, whether it is a fall in crime statistics or a political protest in a far-off country. Whether a day earlier or a century ago, previous events hold the key.

Back in 1906, the historian John Acton identified one central role of the study of history. Its role was not to promote the accumulation of knowledge, but to train people to investigate history, to separate truth from dishonesty and certainty from doubt. Acton saw the historian's role as being to carefully analyse any statement before drawing conclusions as to its validity. And this viewpoint is just as appropriate nowadays as it was over a century ago.

However, there are still those who remain doubtful. Many hold the opinion credited to Henry Ford, that 'history is bunk'. In actual fact, Ford's original comment was not so succinct, and it was a journalist who came up with the three-word phrase that is so well recognised today and often used by those who are critical of the value of history. For a man like Ford, the technological progress he was to become famous for depended on the development of the new technologies of the future, and not looking back at the past.

A century on, this way of thinking is still common and is underpinned by the government's highly controversial decision to remove history from the compulsory curriculum for schoolchildren over the age of 14. Some distinguished historians, such as Niall Ferguson, have supported the government, accusing critics of the policy, such as Oxford historian David Priestland, of pursuing an inward-looking and heavily politicised agenda, questioning when they last stepped into an actual school to discuss the curriculum with teachers and students. And yet, it must be said that little thought appears to have been given to the consequences of this and the potential limitations it places on youngsters progressing through the school system.

Admittedly, the study of history was justified in the past for reasons that can no longer be considered valid, such as differentiating between an educated and an uneducated person when there was a job vacancy to be filled – the applicant who could recite the dates of kings' and queens' reigns was deemed to be a stronger candidate than the one who couldn't. Fortunately, times have moved on.

1 The general public have little respect for the views of historians.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Given

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2 The teaching and learning of history play an essential role in society.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Given

3 The words of John Acton are relevant today.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Given

4 Henry Ford's views on history have been misrepresented.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Given

5 The decision of the government to make history an optional subject was a mistake.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Given

6 A good knowledge of history is an appropriate indicator of a person's suitability for a job.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not Given

Exercise 10: Read the information. Then read the article *"Why study history?"* again. Match the people with the opinions. Write the correct letter, A–E, for each answer.

A Peter Stearns

B John Acton

C Henry Ford

D Niall Ferguson

E David Priestland

1 The study of history involves learning to think critically. ____

2 Learning about the past enables us to better understand the present. ____

3 Some historians are out of touch with the realities of the education system. ____

4 Improvements that affect people's lives are not made possible by the study of history. ____

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