Unit 2: Exercise 8

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

- Try to spend no more than 20 minutes on this task.
- After getting a general idea of what the passage is about, read each question (but not the options) and use the key words to help you find which section of the passage contains the information you need. For this type of task, the questions will be in the same order as in the passage.
- When you have found the right section, read it in more detail and then choose the best option.
- Make sure you know why the other three options are wrong.

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.

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

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- ◯ **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

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 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

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- ◯ **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.
- ◯ **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.

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.

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