IELTS Reading
Academic

Test 5

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READING PASSAGE 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1–14, which are based on Reading Passage 1 on the next page.

Questions 1–6
Reading Passage 1 has 6 sections, A–G.
*Choose the correct headings for Sections **A–C** and **E–G** from the list of headings below.*
Write the correct number i–viii in answer boxes 1–6.

List of headings	
i	The long-term impacts of horror
ii	Trends in horror
iii	Widespread popularity
iv	Personal preference
v	Horror and identity
vi	Emotional highs and lows
vii	A cultural icon
viii	A genre like no other

Example:

		Answer
1	Section **D**	*vi*

1	Section **A**	
2	Section **B**	
3	Section **C**	
4	Section **E**	
5	Section **F**	
6	Section **G**	

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Scary Movies

Paula Johnson explores the horror genre

Section A
The horror genre is often derided by cinema critics as being artistically inferior to other types of film. They see little creative merit in films that are mainly intended to shock, repulse and terrify their audiences, a point reflected in the fact that horror films rarely win major industry awards. Yet, despite their lack of critical recognition, horror films have enjoyed significant commercial success for decades. And a strong case can be made that no other film genre attracts such loyal or dedicated audiences as horror does. There are cinema festivals, award ceremonies and fan conventions all devoted to the genre, and there's no sign that interest in horror is declining.

Section B
Although horror films may not be to everyone's taste, it's hard to ignore their impact on mainstream culture. The plot devices and cinematic techniques employed in horror films are instantly recognisable. Scenes and characters from classic horror films have become so iconic that they are widely known even amongst audiences with no interest in the genre, and they have been used as a source of inspiration in fashion design and music videos. In fact, the distinctive features of horror films are so familiar that they are often exploited for humour in comedy shows and even in advertising.

Section C
While devotees may defend the cinematic quality of horror films, there is substantial evidence that this is not the main reason why they appeal to so many people. Horror films evoke a range of different emotional responses in viewers, both positive and negative. Research indicates that these responses may be more powerful than the feelings viewers experience while watching other film genres. In other words, both the type and strength of emotions viewers experience while watching horror films simply cannot be replicated by other types of film. It is this unique feature of the horror genre that seems to be key to understanding its appeal.

Section D
But why exactly do people actively seek out the intense emotions associated with horror films? Several theories have been proposed, and many of these focus on the "tension resolution" aspect of most horror films. Horror films typically present situations designed to scare the audience or place them under great stress. Yet, at the end of the film, the plot is usually resolved with the hero somehow managing to escape from danger. Therefore, the audience's positive emotions at the end of the film are heightened because of the extreme stress and fear they had previously felt during the film. Much like a rollercoaster, we feel adrenaline and excitement because of the perceived danger. In addition, some psychoanalysts argue that watching horror films enables people to release their negative emotions, in much the same way that playing violent video games is thought to help people get rid of their aggression.

Section E
Many viewers derive pleasure from imagining themselves in the film and deciding what actions they would take. Viewers can challenge themselves mentally and emotionally without actually coming to any real harm. It is also worth noting that horror films tend to be rated more favourably by viewers when the hero is perceived as authentic. If the hero is someone with whom the viewers can identify, the audience will care more about the hero's struggles. Some studies even suggest that gender may play a role in people's perceptions of the characters in horror films. Although gender has not been conclusively found to influence whether someone enjoys horror films, it may play a role in determining how much empathy viewers have for the various characters in the films.

Section F
The horror genre includes various sub-categories, from extremely bloody, violent films to psychological thrillers and "cat-and-mouse" chases between good and evil. Some films cover classic supernatural themes such as haunted houses. In others, threats come from a human source. As with many other aspects of popular culture, the popularity of the genre has gone in cycles. For instance, zombie films were particularly fashionable in the 1960s and later in the early 2000s. In the 1980s, horror films focused more on the so-called "slasher" format, featuring a killer on the loose. The historian David Skal asserts that horror films are a reflection of society's main fears or concerns. Viewed from this perspective, contemporary zombie films could be interpreted as representing our concerns about widespread environmental destruction or fears concerning global threats.

Section G
When it comes to understanding audience's motivations for consuming horror films, I find sociological interpretations less persuasive than psychoanalytical perspectives. Ultimately, our decision to watch a horror film is a matter of personal taste, just as some people opt for romantic comedies or musicals. Whether our motives stem from the desire to be exposed to danger in a controlled way or a need to release negative emotions, horror films will continue to find enthusiastic audiences.

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Questions 7–10
Do the following statements agree with the claims of the writer in Reading Passage 1?
In boxes 7–10, write:

YES	*If the statement agrees with the claims of the writer*
NO	*If the statement contradicts the claims of the writer*
NOT GIVEN	*If it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this*

7 Popular culture has been influenced by horror films. ☐

8 Horror fans are mainly attracted to the superior quality of filmmaking in this genre. ☐

9 Horror films which include sympathetic characters attract larger audiences. ☐

10 The popularity of the horror genre is best understood by considering sociological factors. ☐

Questions 11–14
Complete the summary using the list of words or phrases, A–I, below.
*Write the correct word, **A–I**, in gaps 11–14.*

Horror Films

Within the film industry, horror movies are rarely **(11)**_____ for their artistic quality. Instead, they are viewed as inferior to serious dramas or other cinematic genres. Yet this has not **(12)**_____ the high level of recognition the genre has achieved across society. The **(13)**_____ look and feel of horror films can often serve as a source of inspiration across various forms of mainstream culture.

Psychological and sociological theories offer competing explanations of what **(14)**_____ people to watch frightening content. However, like any other artform, an interest in horror is surely a matter of personal taste.

A	diminished	**B**	watched	**C**	familiar
D	influences	**E**	widespread	**F**	inspired
G	motivates	**H**	praised	**I**	enables

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READING PASSAGE 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 15–27, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.

Plastic has transformed the retail sector. The introduction of plastic containers and packaging has made the production and distribution of goods cheaper and more convenient, which has undoubtedly benefitted manufacturers, retailers and consumers. However, the widespread adoption of plastic has also been a major factor in the development of linear economic systems. A linear economy is a system based around a "take–make–discard" approach to resource management. In other words, raw materials are collected to produce objects which are only used once before being discarded. The vast majority of this waste cannot be recycled, and, in most cases, it is disposed of in ways which can harm the environment. And as societies have embraced single-use plastic, the resultant waste has become a serious problem which simply cannot be ignored.

It's clear that plastic waste endangers the lives of both land-based and marine wildlife. Toxic chemicals in plastic are extremely dangerous when ingested, which is something many creatures do by accident, as they often mistake small plastic items in their habitats for food. Discarded plastic packaging poses another threat to small animals since these creatures may get trapped inside plastic wrappers, and become unable to escape. Plastic waste also blocks drains and sewage systems, increasing the risk of flooding. These issues, along with the associated problems of secondary microplastic pollution, litter and carbon emissions, are driving many campaigners to demand a plastic-free future.

Many governments are attempting to address the issue by focusing on the thin, single-use plastic bags provided by shops and supermarkets. Approximately 130 countries have already restricted the use of these bags, presumably because it is one of the simplest ways to reduce the amount of plastic in the environment. Over 80 countries have implemented some form of plastic bag ban, while many others now impose a plastic bag tax, meaning that shops are required to sell the bags to customers rather than provide them free of charge. In many instances, governments use the revenue raised from the sale of plastic bags to fund environmental programmes such as cleaning up coastal areas.

As described in a report published by the United Nations, developing countries lead the way in terms of implementing complete plastic bag bans. Of course, it's worth noting that many of these countries are directly affected by plastic waste mismanagement. In fact, some of them are dealing not only with their own domestic plastic waste, but also the plastic waste coming from other parts of the world. As a result, these countries are already experiencing consequences such as serious flooding. By contrast, affluent countries, many of which export their plastic waste abroad, often impose less stringent measures. But regardless of why governments choose one particular measure over another, the question remains: are the policies working?

Many countries have reported substantial reductions in plastic bag usage after implementing restrictions. For instance, plastic bag bans in several municipalities in the Philippines have contributed to decreases in overall plastic waste collection. In addition, over 90% of citizens now use their own reusable grocery bags there. Likewise, after introducing charges for plastic bags, Portugal reported a 74% reduction in the consumption of plastic bags, along with a 61% increase in the usage of re-usable plastic bags. Such statistics are encouraging, but there are notable exceptions where measures have been less successful. Research has found that India did not enforce its ban effectively, which meant its impact on consumers' actions was minimal. In California, local regulations meant that retailers switched from providing plastic bags to offering paper bags. This actually encouraged people to use more bags to pack their groceries, leading to more waste overall.

Some environmentalists are unconvinced that targeting single-use bags is the right strategy to tackle global plastic waste. Although a paper published by Lund University states that a trillion of these bags are used each year, consumption of other types of single-use plastic is much higher. In fact, many studies have shown that plastic bags are responsible for a relatively small proportion of the plastic waste currently polluting the planet. Therefore, unless the main sources of plastic waste are regulated, we are unlikely to see any benefits from controlling plastic bag usage. As with any environmental issue, individual responsibility is crucial in the fight against plastic waste.

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Although plastic bag restrictions have mainly been welcomed by the public, they don't seem to have encouraged people to re-evaluate their consumption habits. Psychologists warn of the risk of "compensatory behaviour", where people believe that one positive step makes up for all their other destructive actions. Since consumers are willing to obey the rules on plastic bag usage, they may feel that they have done enough to protect the environment, and therefore take no further steps to reduce their ecological impact.

Measures on plastic bags can only be effective when taken in conjunction with more far-reaching measures. There needs to be a fundamental shift in the way society thinks, so that we move from wasteful linear systems of industrial production to more circular systems which renew, recycle and re-use resources at every stage.

Questions 15–19
Complete the flow chart below.

*Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the text for each answer.*

Write your answers in gaps 15–19.

Linear Economic Systems

A linear economic system approaches **(15)**_____ from a perspective which can be described as "take, make, discard".

↓

(16)_____ are obtained from the earth so that products can be made.

↓

In a linear system, most goods and products are designed to be used just **(17)**_____.

↓

Once the product has been used, it is discarded. In many cases, these items are not **(18)**_____.

↓

Disposing of most products creates environmental harm and leads to huge amounts of **(19)**_____.

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Questions 20–23
Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.
*Write the correct letter **A–G** in answer boxes 20–23.*

20 The development of plastic has enabled

A firms to produce goods in high quantities.

B manufacturers to design goods that last longer.

C retailers to discard fewer items.

D firms to reduce their production costs.

21 According to the writer, authorities have focused mainly on plastic bag usage because

A these products cause the most damage to marine areas.

B it is seen as an easy environmental measure to take.

C these products contain some of the highest levels of plastic.

D this measure raises the highest amount of money in taxes.

22 What does the United Nations report reveal?

A Where plastic bag bans have been introduced

B Which countries export the most plastic waste

C How developing countries are affected by plastic waste

D Why countries differ in their approaches to limiting plastic bags

23 According to the text, a plastic bag ban had little effect on people's behaviour in

A India

B California

C The Philippines

D Portugal

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Questions 24–26
*Answer the questions below using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*

Write your answers in boxes 24–26.

24 How many countries have taken measures to limit plastic bag usage?

_____

25 What do many governments invest in with the money they collect from plastic bag taxes?

_____

26 What term is used in the text to mean the belief that positive and harmful actions balance out?

_____

Question 27
Choose the correct letter, A, B, C, D, or E.
Which of the following is the most suitable title for Reading Passage 2?

*Write the correct letter **A–E** in the answer box below.*

A The impacts of plastic waste on wildlife

B Do consumers actually care about plastic waste?

C How plastic waste mismanagement became a global issue

D Is restricting plastic bags the key to tackling the plastic waste problem?

E Comparing the effectiveness of different plastic bag restrictions

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READING PASSAGE 3

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 28–40, which are based on Reading Passage 3 below.

Diet and Nutrition

Nutritional science is the branch of science examining how diet affects living organisms. Nutritional scientists investigate the chemical and biological responses that occur during the process of consuming and digesting food. Studying these physiological responses can help scientists to understand more about the relationship between diet and health. This information has played a vital role in shaping public policy for decades. For instance, governments often refer to the latest research findings from nutritional science when making important decisions about food taxation and regulations, and developing public education campaigns about healthy eating. However, recently academic focus has shifted towards a wider range of issues related to diet.

Fascinating research findings suggest that some creatures analyse situations and adjust their behaviour according to dietary needs. In a study conducted by the University of Cambridge, researchers investigated sea creatures called cuttlefish, and how they search for food. They found that when they provided the cuttlefish with a regular and predictable supply of their preferred food source, shrimps, in the evening, the creatures adopted a selective strategy during the day. The cuttlefish ate fewer crabs or other types of food even when they had the opportunity to do so. By contrast, when supplies of food in the evening were unpredictable and irregular, the cuttlefish adopted opportunistic foraging, meaning they took every opportunity to eat during the day.

As for human diets, the link between food and emotions has been an important area of academic focus for several years. Numerous studies have examined the emotional factors driving people to eat unhealthy food or to eat too much. For instance, a study conducted at the National Institute of Health and Welfare in Finland revealed a clear link between emotional stress and a tendency to overeat. Interestingly, the findings suggested so-called "stress eating" is more common among women. The Finnish researchers reported that women were more likely to overeat when they were experiencing stress. Another study at Deakin University in Australia found that when people are subject to significant stress in their life, their food preferences change and they are more likely to eat food that is high in fat or sugar.

Researchers have also examined whether what people eat can actually change the way they feel. For example, various studies, including reports published by Wake Forest University in America, have identified the mood-enhancing qualities of chocolate. Chocolate is thought to lower feelings of anxiety and increase feelings of pleasure or happiness. Furthermore, people's mood can be affected by a lack of particular nutrients in their diet. Researchers at the University of New South Wales in Australia have highlighted how omega-3 fatty acids, found mainly in seafood, affect mood. They found that diets deficient in this nutrient may be linked to several mood disorders, such as depression. Of course, further research is necessary to identify why certain types of food affect how people feel, but the research conducted so far has clearly demonstrated that nutrition plays a role beyond regulating physical health.

As modern lifestyles have changed eating habits across the world, this has raised many interesting questions regarding the impact of so-called "junk food", which is processed food high in fat, sugar and salt. While we have known for a long time that excessive consumption of such food increases the risk of a range of physical conditions including heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure, the latest studies are now focusing on identifying potential links between junk food consumption and behavioural or cognitive issues. This is a fascinating area of research, and one which could potentially change the message that educators give to the public about the importance of nutrition.

One study which has gained particular attention in the media was undertaken by Macquarie University in Australia in 2020. The study showed that spending just one week eating junk food can impair important cognitive functions in the brain, such as the ability to remember and process information. Participants in this study performed less well on memory tests after eating a diet consisting of nothing but junk food for a week. The participants also reported wanting to eat more of the same, meaning that unhealthy snacks became increasingly appealing to them during the study.

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What makes the Macquarie study so important is that it proves that junk food can actually alter the brain. It is thought that this type of food disrupts a region in the brain called the hippocampus which plays a major role in our ability to form memories. Crucially, the hippocampus also controls people's appetite. This study shows how people can easily fall into a cycle of eating unhealthy food, which in turn makes them want to eat more. In fact, one of the lead professors behind the Macquarie study has stated that it strengthens the case for junk food to be regulated in a similar way to such addictive products as cigarettes, and he is not alone in this view.

The significance of dietary research should never be underestimated. These studies help scientists, medical practitioners and psychologists to discover more about the specific ways in which diet affects wellbeing. In this way, academic investigation can result in practical applications that can bring long-term, real-world benefits.

Questions 28–34

Complete each idea with the correct research study A–F from the box below.

*Write the correct letter **A–F** in answer boxes 28–34.*

N.B. You may use any letter more than once.

28 The connection between stress and overeating seems to be stronger in females. ☐

29 Stress may affect the types of food people want to eat. ☐

30 Eating chocolate may have a positive effect on mood. ☐

31 Overconsumption of junk food can lead to an increasing appetite for this type of food. ☐

32 Insufficient quantities of certain nutrients can have serious negative impacts on people's mood. ☐

33 Availability of food can influence the decision making or behaviour of some animals. ☐

34 There is a link between the consumption of junk food and poor cognitive performance. ☐

A Deakin University

B Cambridge University

C Wake Forest University

D National Institute of Health and Welfare

E University of New South Wales

F Macquarie University

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Questions 35–39
*Complete the sentences below using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*

Write your answers in boxes 35–39.

35 For many years, research findings from the field of nutritional science have influenced …

_____

36 Cuttlefish eat less during the day if they believe they will later be able to eat …

_____

37 Disorders including depression have been linked to a lack of nutrients called …

_____

38 In one study, excessive junk food consumption was found to negatively affect people's memory after only …

_____

39 As studies suggest people can become addicted to unhealthy food, some people would like it …

_____

Question 40
Choose the correct letter, A, B, C, D, or E.
What is the writer's purpose in Reading Passage 3?

*Write the correct letter **A–D** in the answer box below.*

A To describe the relationship between diet and intelligence

B To evaluate different approaches to nutritional science research

C To highlight the importance of investigating diet and nutrition

D To argue for improvements in healthy-eating campaigns

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