IELTS Reading
Academic

Test 6

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READING PASSAGE 1

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

Culture Shock

The thrill of experiencing new sights, sounds and unfamiliar customs is one of the main attractions for many tourists who travel overseas. Spending time in a foreign culture can be an exciting break from routine, and a chance to have new adventures. And of course, since tourists only spend time in a new culture on a temporary basis, their positive impressions generally last for their entire stay. But what about people who immerse themselves in a foreign culture for a longer period? For instance, globalisation has created more opportunities than ever before to work or study abroad. Such opportunities are certainly appealing, but how do people adjust to a new life overseas?

Moving abroad requires careful planning. For instance, there are practical matters to consider such as finding accommodation and completing all the official paperwork. Then, of course, new arrivals need to figure out how to find their way around their new city, while also getting used to their new job or study programme. With all these issues to take care of, not to mention the emotional stress of moving away from friends and family, it's clear that moving to a foreign country simply cannot be compared with taking a holiday overseas.

Acculturation, or adapting to a different culture, can be extremely challenging. No matter how carefully people try to prepare for their move, there will still be times when they feel overwhelmed in their new country. The intense emotions people feel when adapting to an unfamiliar context are known as "culture shock". The concept was first described by the Canadian academic Kalervo Oberg in the 1950s. Oberg viewed acculturation as a process consisting of different stages during which people may experience a range of emotions. Understanding the acculturation process can help people when they experience difficulties in their host country.

Interestingly, many new arrivals cope remarkably well in the host country at first. People's enthusiasm for their new adventure initially makes up for any confusion they encounter. This is known as the "honeymoon stage", because people view the new culture positively. Although they may experience things that they aren't used to, they regard these experiences as charming or interesting. In fact, it's fair to say that the honeymoon stage gives people unrealistic expectations about the reality of living in a foreign country. But at some point, the initial excitement fades. This is when many people experience culture shock.

During the honeymoon stage, people mistakenly assume that they have successfully completed the transition from one culture to another. Therefore, experiencing culture shock after a few months can be very distressing. What usually follows is a period of frustration, often referred to as the "rejection stage", where they become critical of the host culture. Customs or values they viewed as interesting during the honeymoon stage can become annoying. In particular, people start to feel frustrated that they cannot communicate as well as they can in their own culture, and may feel tired of being perceived as an "outsider". They may experience a range of negative emotions including anger, anxiety and isolation.

People may resent struggling to understand the local way of doing things, and become homesick. They make unfair comparisons to the culture they left behind. They become nostalgic for all the things they miss about their home country, and forget about the negative aspects they used to dislike. At this point, some people may even decide that they cannot adapt to the new culture, and return home. However, socialising with locals, acknowledging that no culture is perfect, and asking for help may reduce this desire. In fact, many companies and universities now offer support programmes to help international employees or students feel less isolated.

The feelings experienced during the rejection stage are completely normal and eventually fade for most people. If they come through this period, people can progress to the "adjustment stage". As the name suggests, the adjustment stage is a period where daily routines become more familiar. While there are still challenging cultural differences, people's ability to cope with them is stronger. Nevertheless, people in this phase may feel like "outsiders" as they haven't had time to develop the strong bonds or relationships that they had in their home countries.

People enter the "adaptation stage" when they feel more or less integrated in the new culture. They can survive and even thrive in their new context. They have learned to appreciate both their native culture and the new one, and they feel comfortable in both. They recognise the flaws and qualities of both cultures, and can navigate life in both

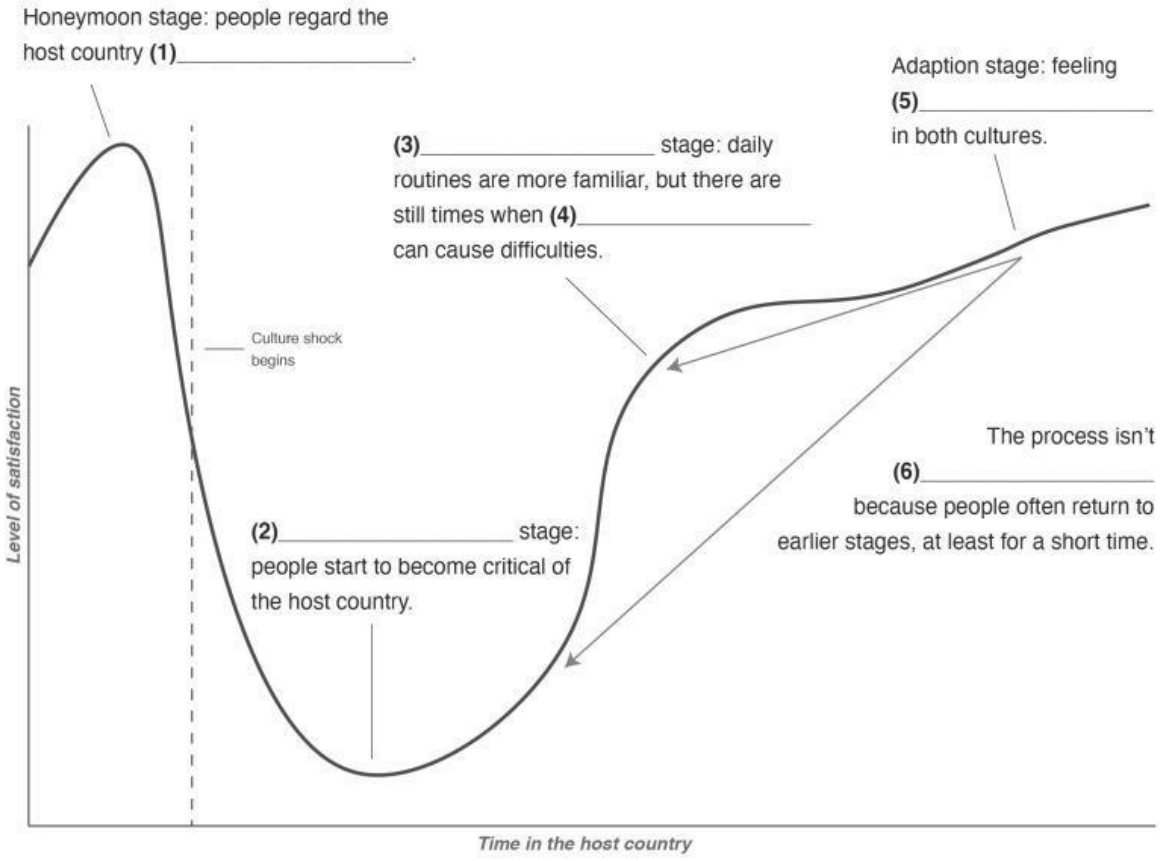
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contexts. Acculturation shouldn't be viewed as a linear process, because people don't necessarily experience all the stages. It's also common for people to return to an earlier stage temporarily. For instance, people who have generally adjusted may have a sudden period of homesickness. It should also be noted that the acculturation process teaches people to respect both a new culture and aspects of their own culture that they may never have considered before. It also helps people to develop self-reliance and the ability to consider issues from different perspectives.

Questions 1–6
Complete the diagram below.
*Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from Reading Passage 1 for each answer.*
Do not write articles (a, an, the).

Write your answers in gaps 1–6.



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Questions 7–9
Complete each sentence with the correct ending A–E from the box below.
*Write the correct letter **A–E** in answer boxes 7–9.*
N.B. You may use any letter more than once.

7 An academic from Canada ☐

8 When people haven't completely settled into their host country, they ☐

9 Compared with tourists on holiday, people who move abroad to work of study ☐

A	may experience a wider range of feelings about the host country.
B	may feel like outsiders or that they don't belong.
C	argued that culture shock can be prevented with careful planning.
D	was one of the first researchers to identify how culture shock develops.
E	should expect to spend more time in the honeymoon stage of acculturation.

Questions 10–13
*Complete the summary below. Chose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*
Write your answers in gaps 10–13.

Culture Shock

Moving overseas is obviously a major life decision, and one which should only be made after careful consideration. Nevertheless, with all the professional or education **(10)**_____ available in other countries, it's hardly surprising that more people are taking advantage of today's globalised world.

Acculturation is the process of adapting to life in an unfamiliar culture. Since **(11)**_____, it has been known that this process can involve various stages, and people may go through a range of confusing emotions known as "culture shock".

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At first, many people find that all the new experiences are interesting and exciting, but this can give them **(12)**_____ of what living in a foreign country is really like.

After this "honeymoon period", many people can feel disappointed when they notice that their host country isn't the perfect place they'd first imagined. This can lead to a difficult time filled with many negative emotions. However, it's important to understand that having such feelings is entirely **(13)**_____. Over time, they are usually replaced with more positive emotions as people become more familiar with their host country.

Question 14
What is the writer's purpose in Reading Passage 1?
Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.
*Write the correct letter **A–D** in the answer box below.*

A To encourage people to appreciate foreign cultures

B To suggest ways that people can overcome culture shock

C To describe typical experiences people have while adjusting to a new culture

D To argue that living in a foreign country can help people understand their native culture

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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.

The Houseplant Craze

Section A

Houseplants are fast becoming the trendiest way to add style to our interiors. A beautiful plant in a striking pot can add colour to even the dullest of rooms. From spiky, sculptural cacti to romantic, exotic orchids, the variety of houseplants available to consumers nowadays is astonishing. It's possible to find the ideal plant for any interior, no matter the temperature, amount of sunlight or humidity level of the space. The increasing number of social media influencers focusing on houseplant content highlights how trendy and desirable plants are becoming. But is the current houseplant craze destined to be a passing fad?

Section B

While the cultivation of indoor plants for decorative purposes has a history dating back at least three thousand years, its popularity has risen and fallen throughout the ages. Plants began to be exported around the world in large quantities in the nineteenth century, and since then gardening trends have rarely remained constant. However, fashion alone doesn't seem to account for the sustained surge in popularity that houseplants have had in recent times. For one thing, unlike in previous decades where only particular plant species were in fashion, there's now widespread interest in growing all sorts of plants. What's more, houseplants now seem to appeal to a much wider range of people in society than ever before.

Section C

Globally, the indoor plant market has grown by over 10% and is forecast to reach a value of $726 million within five years. In the UK, companies specialising in indoor plants are reporting a boom in sales, with up to 70% of purchases made by young adults. Garden centres and online plant retailers are reporting significant growth in houseplant sales. It's a similar story in the US, where sales have risen fastest amongst consumers under 35 years old. At the same time, market research indicates that, regardless of age, the number of first-time houseplant buyers is growing. But what is driving this desire for indoor greenery?

Section D

The potential link between increasing urbanisation and the popularity of cultivating indoor plants is difficult to ignore. One major British houseplant supplier recently reported that over two-thirds of all purchases were made by people living in London. As more of us are living in crowded, overpopulated cities with limited access to green spaces, we are bringing nature into our homes instead. At the same time, many people in cities, especially young adults, do not own their own homes. Rental agreements often forbid tenants from having pets or making major interior design changes. Growing houseplants can therefore enable us to put a personal stamp on the places we rent, making them feel cosier and more like our own homes.

Section E

The current houseplant trend might also reflect society's growing realisation that we should appreciate nature more. As public green spaces such as parks, woods and fields are lost due to urban development, people are attempting to preserve nature in whatever way they can. Growing houseplants may seem like an insignificant step, but it is one way we can stay connected with the natural world. Houseplants represent the world beyond our electronics, high-rise buildings and air pollution. They remind us of the green places the world is at risk of losing.

Section F

In fact, some indoor gardeners are convinced that houseplants can actually improve air quality. This belief mainly stems from experiments conducted in 1989 by NASA scientists investigating whether plants could be used to filter toxic chemicals on space stations. The plants in the study removed over 70 per

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cent of the chemicals in the air within 24 hours. But, unfortunately, this research has limited practical applications on Earth. The NASA study was conducted under very controlled conditions that reflected the unique conditions found in space. Subsequent studies have shown that plants have virtually no effect on air quality in real homes. An extremely high quantity of plants would be needed to produce even minimal air-quality benefits.

Section G

Nevertheless, people may gain mental and psychological benefits from plants. The therapeutic effects of exposure to nature have been known for a long time, and studies indicate that even indoor plants may have a beneficial influence on people's stress levels, productivity and even their ability to concentrate. In hospitals, some research suggests that plants may play a role in reducing patients' pain levels after surgery. Although these studies should be interpreted with caution, it's clear that plants do more than simply look pretty. With this in mind, it's hardly surprising that they are now a common sight in many workplaces, as well as in private homes.

Section H

From yoga to alternative therapies, the booming "wellness" industry highlights how people are placing more emphasis on their physical and mental wellbeing than ever before. Indoor gardening may be an extension of this. While we should challenge the most extreme claims about what can be achieved by filling our homes with plants, any trend that encourages people to appreciate nature should be applauded!

Questions 15–19
Reading Passage 2 has 8 sections labelled A–H.
Which paragraph contains the following information?

*Write the correct letter **A–H** in answer boxes 15–19.*

NB: You may use any letter more than once.

15 evidence that claims about the environmental benefits of houseplants are misleading ☐

16 a reason why people who rent their homes may like houseplants ☐

17 a suggestion that the current popularity of houseplants is unlike earlier houseplant trends ☐

18 commercial evidence of the increasing popularity of houseplants ☐

19 a reason why houseplants are popular in places where people work ☐

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Questions 20–23
Do the following statements agree with the claims of the writer in Reading Passage 2?
In boxes 20–23, write:

TRUE	*If the statement agrees with the information in the passage*
FALSE	*If the statement contradicts the information in the passage*
NOT GIVEN	*If there is no information on this in the passage*

20 The amount of information relating to houseplants is growing on social media. [ ]

21 The practice of growing plants inside began in the nineteenth century. [ ]

22 Houseplant sales have overtaken sales of other gardening products in the US. [ ]

23 Indoor plants have been found to help people stay focused. [ ]

Questions 24–27
*Complete the sentences below using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*
Write your answers in boxes 24–27.

24 One of the main houseplant retailers in the UK sells the majority of its houseplants to customers …

_____

25 Growing houseplants in urban homes can be seen as way for people to try to …

_____

26 The NASA study led to a popular belief that houseplants have the ability to …

_____

27 Some studies have suggested that plants could be used in medical contexts to decrease people's …

_____

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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.

Perfectly Imperfect?

Charlotte Morris reflects on a craft like no other

Section A

I've always been artistic, but over the years my creative passions have evolved. I used to enjoy arts and crafts that I could use in my everyday life. And, while I'm still interested in activities like photography, dressmaking and cake decoration, in recent times my creativity has taken me in new directions. I've become more focused on exploring artistic pursuits simply for the joy of creating something beautiful. I'm especially keen on artforms that require attention to detail and precision. For instance, I get a lot of satisfaction from perfecting the delicate patterns of calligraphy, or trying to master oil painting brushstroke techniques. In that sense, I suppose I might be described as a "perfectionist". I don't stop practising until I create a piece of art that I consider to be completely free of fault.

Section B

One of my newest passions is ceramics. In many ways, it's the ideal pastime for me. The art of creating beautiful, decorative vases, dishes or plates requires a lot of skill but also results in wonderful objects I can enjoy and use at home. I've taken quite a few courses in recent years, and it's been interesting to discover more about the different ceramic styles found around the world. My skills continue to improve, and I'm very proud of some of the pieces I've created. In fact, my friends now beg me to make objects for them, which gives me enormous pleasure!

Section C

When a colleague suggested that I should give the Japanese art of *kintsugi* a try, I was intrigued. Having never heard of it before, the first thing I did was search for kintsugi images online to understand more about what it was, or what it looked like. The search engine displayed a series of images of beautiful ceramics decorated with delicate, gold lines. It also showed textiles and clothing with "kintsugi prints", all decorated with similarly fine lines. Because of this, I assumed that the word kintsugi referred to making eye-catching designs using straight lines arranged in random patterns. I was wrong about that and many other things!

Section D

I was surprised to discover that kintsugi is actually about repairing objects rather than making them. It's the practice of repairing a ceramic object by sticking all the broken pieces back together again. What makes kintsugi items look so distinctive is the glue used to stick the broken pieces together. The glue, or lacquer, contains precious metals in powder form, such as silver, platinum or, more usually, gold. In fact, the word kintsugi can be translated as "to join or mend with gold". Those beautiful golden lines that had caught my eye online are actually where broken pieces have been stuck back together. As the number and position of the broken pieces determine where the golden lacquer lines are placed, each repaired object has a completely unique appearance.

Section E

Keen to understand more, I joined a workshop to learn about different types of kintsugi repair. I learned that the gold lines I'd seen online are known as the "crack" style. But this method isn't possible when some of the pieces of a broken object are missing. In this case, the "piece method" can be used, because the gaps are filled with the lacquer, creating golden shapes on the object. Perhaps the most unusual repair style is the "joint call". In this approach, missing pieces are replaced with ceramic fragments from another object. As a result, the repaired piece ends up with different patterns, colours or styles. The teacher's enthusiasm for kintsugi brought the class to life, but the highlight was having the chance to try the different techniques myself. That's when I realised how much skill and patience is required to complete the repairs!

Section F

Although gaining a new artistic skill was my main motivation for signing up for the workshop, I learned far more than that. It definitely challenged the way I value objects. As someone who has always regarded damaged objects as less valuable, I found it fascinating to see how kintsugi actually celebrates the flaws in objects. Rather than attempting to repair a broken object by returning it to its original condition, kintsugi actually highlights the breaks, and turns these "imperfections" into something beautiful and unique. In fact, the workshop teacher explained that kintsugi repairs have become so valued that, nowadays, brand-new ceramics are actually produced to look as if they have been repaired!

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Section G

The more I learned about this wonderful craft, the more I realised that its principles can be applied in everyday life. Kintsugi turns negatives into positives, and celebrates "imperfections" as signs of experience and growth. It made me realise that society is too often focused on making everything perfect, and that, because of this, we sometimes miss the beauty of life. By contrast, kintsugi encourages us to appreciate what we have, like celebrating the lines on our face as signs of our growing wisdom, or the scars on our skin as signs of our strength. No other hobby has ever taught me such a valuable life lesson!

Questions 28–33
Reading Passage 3 has 7 sections, A–G.
*Choose the correct headings for Sections **A–B** and **D–G** from the list of headings below.*
Write the correct number i–viii in answer boxes 28–33.

List of headings

i	Making pottery	**v**	Why kintsugi has become so popular
ii	First impressions of an unfamiliar craft	**vi**	A love of creativity
iii	Understanding kintsugi	**vii**	A new perspective on objects
iv	A positive approach to life	**viii**	Learning about forms of kintsugi

Example:

	Answer
Section **C**	*ii*

28 Section **A** ☐
29 Section **B** ☐
30 Section **D** ☐
31 Section **E** ☐
32 Section **F** ☐
33 Section **G** ☐

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Questions 34–37
*Answer the questions below using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*

Write your answers in boxes 34–37.

34 Which creative activity has the writer focused on in recent years?

35 Who recommended that the writer learn about kintsugi?

36 Which metal is most commonly found in kintsugi lacquer?

37 Which method can only be used when all the broken pieces of an object are available?

Questions 38–40
Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

*Write the correct letter **A–D** in answer boxes 38–40.*

38 Which of the following best describes the writer's attitude to her hobbies before learning about kintsugi?

A Mistakes lead to learning.

B Practice makes perfect.

C Art should be shared.

D Creativity should have a practical purpose.

39 The writer initially thought kintsugi involved

A designing clothes inspired by Japanese culture.

B using gold to decorate objects.

C creating patterns using lines.

D printing patterns directly onto objects.

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40 The writer originally decided to take the kintsugi course because she wanted to

A add a new technique to her creative skills.

B create the objects she had seen online.

C have the chance to learn from expert teachers.

D put the skills she had been studying into practice.

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