

Part 3

You are going to read an extract from an article. For **questions 19 to 26**, choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D) and mark the correct letter A, B, C or D on your answer sheet.

Looking back on my childhood, I remember sitting in our small kitchen watching my mother cooking. We were living in Ipoh, Perak. I was then six years old. My parents, my sister, my two brothers and I all lived together in an old wooden hut. Dad struggled to make a living in his coffee shop. Mum had to worry about our daily bread.

Our kitchen was simple. An earthen stove blackened by smoke forever greeted us with its round mouth. Mum would start her busy daily routine in the kitchen while I would be sitting, **happily watching her in action**. She would sit on a low stool in the kitchen and chop the wood with a clumsy axe. She would place the chopped wood under the stove and set them alight. As the wood burned, the food she cooked gave off a delicious aroma.

Times were hard so my mother could only afford to make us ordinary dishes, such as vegetables with dried shrimp and fried eggs. But for me, sitting at that old wooden table with the whole family, and gobbling up the steamy rice and the simple food was very much satisfying. Once in a while Mum cooked her favourite dish of steamed chicken and that would be a big occasion, indeed. By nature, she was a clean and tidy woman, but sitting by the fire at such moments her hair would be messy, forehead beaded with sweat and her cheeks covered in grey ash. But her large eyes shone with a beauty only a mother can have. These wonderful meals Mum laboured so hard to prepare helped brighten our lives even as poverty and hard times weighed us down.

When I was eight, our whole family moved south to Singapore. Life did not improve much as all six of us were forced to huddle in a rented room. Life conditions were really difficult. Mum just kept quiet and she preferred to stick with her family behind closed doors, and when she had to stir out of the room, she would go her own way, minding her own business. She was determined not to let the crowded conditions prevent her from feeding her

family properly. Now Mum would cook using coal instead of firewood. Mum had to buy the coal from the shop and carry it home. The process of cooking using it was even harder but it did not stop Mum from giving the best to her family.

I am sure she had much to worry about though she did not share her fears with us. Dad worked very hard and was out day and night. Mum would cook, share the meal with us and keep a portion for Dad. Then she quickly put out the fire to reuse the coal. Returning home late in the evening, Dad was tired and hungry but he would swallow down his cold dinner with no complaint. He understood that coal was expensive. During our first two years in Singapore, life was a struggle but slowly our fortunes improved. When I was ten years old, we finally moved into a new apartment.

We now had a large kitchen and most importantly, a gas stove. For Mum, all those years of chopping firewood and carrying coal home were over. The spontaneous rush of gas which now burst forth at the turn of the knob must have come as a great relief. Cooking became so much more enjoyable that she bought any new recipe books and tried them all. Working by the gas stove, she no longer seemed distracted by distant thoughts although she still missed her previous kitchen. Mum looked even happier when Dad started to help out in the kitchen. Dad even accompanied her on shopping sprees. Meals which had once been a source of comfort now became one of joy.

In the years that followed, grey hair had slowly appeared on my parents' heads and so had a sense of contentment with their lives. They now live in a good-sized apartment and the kitchen is equipped with a gas stove, an oven and a microwave – all conveniences that once seemed so impossible. Sitting on the balcony amidst the gorgeous flowers, they enjoy peace after those difficult years.

- 19 In paragraph 2, why does the writer use the phrase **happily watching her in action**?
- A She enjoyed being of help to her mother.
 - B She felt contented to be with her mother.
 - C She admired her mother's cooking skills.
 - D She found her mother's routine amazing.
- 20 In paragraph 3, what does the writer say about her mother's character?
- A She was discouraged by the economic hardship faced by the family.
 - B She was conscious of the way she looked when she was cooking.
 - C She was concerned about what the future holds for her children.
 - D She was determined to put food on the table for everyone.
- 21 In paragraph 4, how did the writer describe their new life in Singapore?
- A They could not go out much.
 - B The mother started a business.
 - C The family had to depend on others.
 - D They had to live in a cramped place.
- 22 In paragraph 5, what was the proof that their lives changed for the better?
- A It took them ten years to turn their lives around.
 - B They could afford to get a place of their own.
 - C The family reused the coal to save money.
 - D The father did not complain anymore.
- 23 What effect did moving to the new apartment have?
- A It made mum want to return to their old home.
 - B It meant that providing food was no longer problematic.
 - C It encouraged dad to spend more time with the family.
 - D It made the writer want to be more involved with the meal preparation.
- 24 Why had preparing meals become more pleasurable for Mum?
- A Buying groceries with Dad was fun.
 - B Trying out new recipes gave her joy.
 - C Using the gas stove made cooking simpler.
 - D Having a bigger area made her work easier.
- 25 How does the writer feel about her parents in the last paragraph?
- A grateful that they can grow old together
 - B relieved that their life has become easier
 - C envious of the possessions they now have
 - D disappointed that they are not as active as they once were
- 26 What is the purpose of the writer writing this article?
- A To share precious memories of her mother.
 - B To recall how she faced the difficulties in her life.
 - C To look back at how her Dad worked hard for the family.
 - D To show the beautiful relationship between her and her parents.