

READING PASSAGE 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 1–13**, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.

The Davies Sisters

Between 1908 and 1924, Gwendoline and Margaret Davies amassed one of the largest collections of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century French paintings in Britain

Gwendoline (1882–1951) and Margaret (1884–1963) Davies were the granddaughters of David Davies, a Welshman who amassed a fortune in the shipping and mining industries. In 1907, when Gwendoline came into her inheritance (Margaret would follow in 1909), the sisters were said to be the wealthiest unmarried women in Britain. Their religious upbringing in rural Wales gave them a deep sense of social responsibility and they chose to use their inheritance for cultural and philanthropic* purposes.

While there was no real family history of art collecting, the sisters' education was rigorously geared toward such pursuits. Their London school focused on cultural rather than academic study, and they travelled extensively with their governess, Jane Blaker, visiting art galleries and making extensive notes on the collections there.

The sisters began to make regular art purchases from 1908, which roughly coincided with the dates of their inheritance. They took advice from various people, including the art dealer Hugh Blaker (the brother of Jane Blaker) and David Croal Thompson, who was also an art dealer. While it was long assumed that these men were largely responsible for the nature of the sisters' collection, it has recently been accepted that Gwendoline and Margaret retained a far more active role in the process.

The sisters' journals reveal their preference for Old Master** paintings. Yet they initially made very few attempts to secure any such works. While the sisters were wealthy in relative terms, their income was nothing compared to the fortunes of American art collectors of this period, such as J. Pierpont Morgan. Quite simply, high quality Old Master works were, if not beyond their means, then beyond what they were willing to pay for them. Instead, their early purchases were of the fashionable, safe variety, and included, for example, paintings by the French artist Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot.

* philanthropic: seeking to promote the welfare of others, often by charitable funding

** Old Master: a highly respected artist of great skill who worked in Europe before about 1800

However, it was only a few years before their collecting took a new direction and they turned to the work of the French Impressionists***. We know that Hugh Blaker, as a champion of contemporary French art had a hand in the decision, and we know also that they would have seen examples on their various trips to Paris. Whatever the precise reason for this change, their first purchases of Impressionist art, made in October 1912, were scenes of Venice by the French artist Claude Monet. Over the next 12 years, the sisters amassed the bulk of their Impressionist collection, including six further works by Monet, two more by Manet, and three by Renoir, including his well-known painting *La Parisienne*.

The First World War (1914-1918) played a part in the development of the sisters' collection. Their initial response to the war effort was to finance the safe passage of artists from occupied Belgium to Wales, as a humanitarian act, but also with the hope of establishing a vibrant artists' community in the area. Later in the conflict, both sisters decided to volunteer at a canteen for troops at Troyes, in northern France; Gwendoline in 1916, followed by Margaret in 1917.

It was tedious and distressing work, which would have a permanent effect on Gwendoline's health. Yet on one of numerous trips to nearby Paris, she visited the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery. Here she acquired two works by Cézanne – *Provençal Landscape* and *The François Zola Dam*. The paintings were shipped directly to Bath, England, where they became the first works by Cézanne to go on display in a public gallery in Britain.

Commentators have often described the sisters as unlikely pioneer collectors. Much is made of their isolation in rural Wales and the fact that they didn't make friends with artists or gallery owners. Yet they didn't feel obliged to follow fashionable tastes and were free to pursue their own preferences. Although they relied on a trusted circle of advisers, they made frequent trips to London and Paris, and also regularly had paintings sent to their home for consideration.

By the early 1920s, Gwendoline felt increasingly uncomfortable buying art works when faced with the poverty and social upheaval created by the First World War. Her philanthropic pursuits then became focused almost exclusively on social causes and the development of the sisters' home at Gregynog Hall into a conference center and venue for the Gregynog Festival of Music and Poetry. Gwendoline made her final art purchase in March 1926. Margaret also stopped collecting around this time, but started again in the 1930s acquiring, on a relatively small scale, work by contemporary British artists.

The sisters collected French Impressionist paintings at a time when such art was routinely ignored by individuals and institutions alike. The Gwendoline and Margaret Davies collection, donated in 1951 and 1963 respectively to the National Museum Wales, contains major examples of work by leading French Impressionists. In collecting paintings that they loved, the sisters created a lasting and meaningful cultural legacy for the people of Wales and beyond.

*** Impressionist: an artist with a style of painting that developed in France in the late 1800s by Renoir including his well-known painting *La Parisienne*

Questions 1–7

Complete the notes below.

Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes 1–7 on your answer sheet.

Gwendoline and Margaret Davies

Family and early life

- their grandfather's wealth came from 1 and transportation businesses
- their upbringing gave them a sense of social responsibility
- their 2 was designed to give them an interest in activities such as collecting art
- their governess took them on trips to art galleries
- they took lengthy 3 about the things they saw in art galleries

The sisters as art collectors

- their 4 showed they liked Old Master paintings, but they were expensive to buy
- their early purchases were safe, popular paintings
- the first Impressionist paintings they bought showed places in 5

Impact of First World War

- they helped bring artists from Belgium to Wales
- they worked in a 6 for soldiers in France

Opinions about the sisters as art collectors

- were not considered typical collectors – they lived in isolation in the countryside and did not have any 7 who were artists

Questions 8–13

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 1?

In boxes 8–13 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE	<i>if the statement agrees with the information</i>
FALSE	<i>if the statement contradicts the information</i>
NOT GIVEN	<i>if there is no information on this</i>

- 8 The Davies sisters' childhood influenced the way they decided to use their wealth.
- 9 The Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot paintings in the Davies sisters' collection were purchased from a gallery in France.
- 10 Hugh Blaker opposed the Davies sisters' decision to buy art by French Impressionists.
- 11 The exhibition of Cézanne paintings at the Bath gallery was very popular with the public.
- 12 The impact of the First World War encouraged Gwendoline to reconsider her interest in collecting art.
- 13 The Davies sisters bought French Impressionist art during a period when very few people were doing so.

READING PASSAGE 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 14–26**, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.

Why we need silence

- A** Humans are finely attuned to noise, and for good reason. From an evolutionary perspective, sounds give us vital information, helping us navigate the world and avoid danger. To help ensure loud or unexpected noises get the attention they deserve, our internal chemistry alters in response to them. Our blood pressure goes up, muscles tense and glands release hormones that prepare us for fight or flight. In the short term, this is a good thing. When we are exposed to too much noise over the long term, however, those responses can lead to a multitude of health issues, from sleep disturbance to even cardiovascular disease.
- B** The World Health Organization has recently designated excessive noise as an ‘underestimated threat’ to public health, and has said that people living in cities such as Mumbai, Tokyo and Buenos Aires are being exposed to far more than the recommended 40 decibels of noise at night. A report from the European Environment Agency concluded that noise was an ongoing and widespread issue in Europe, with at least 1 in 5 people consistently exposed to levels considered harmful to health. ‘There are no “earlids” that can protect your brain from noise,’ says Nick Antonio, an acoustic consultant who has contributed to the British and international standards for noise.
- C** The good news is that several cities have been working to turn the volume down. One of the first to do so was London. ‘By providing recommendations for quieter buses, reducing noise from roads and also controlling noise from aircraft, they were able to make the city quieter,’ says Antonio. Other cities have introduced noise-reducing road coatings, for instance, alongside greenery that muffles sound. Some solutions are more specific: Washington DC’s ban on petrol-powered leaf blowers came into effect recently, while in New York City, legislation has been approved to fine people who modify their vehicles to make them noisier. ‘People are seeing the benefits of these more quiet environments in their cities,’ Antonio says. ‘I expect we will see much more of this in the future.’
- D** Researchers are also seeking to understand what aspects of silent experiences are most beneficial to our health. One of the best-researched is the flotation tank: a lightproof, soundproof tank of salt water in which a person floats as a form of deep relaxation. While some people experience altered perception in the tanks, involving subtle humming sounds and visual effects, these effects are benign and do not detract from the benefits of the experience, says Justin Feinstein, a clinical neuropsychologist. ‘When you don’t have external sensory stimuli coming in, the brain tries to fill the void to make sense of this dark and silent world,’ he explains. ‘In these tanks, some people can even hear the sound of their eyes blinking,’ says Feinstein. ‘But it is the ability to focus on the breath that helps people reach a relaxed or meditative state.’

- E** To further explore flotation tanks as a therapeutic tool, Feinstein and his colleagues recruited 50 people with a variety of conditions related to stress and had them answer a questionnaire prior to and following a flotation session. Participants reported decreases in muscle tension, pain and symptoms of their conditions after a single, 1-hour float, alongside an increase in feelings of relaxation and overall wellbeing.

Less is known about what effects sensory deprivation can have on the brain. To investigate, Feinstein's team had 48 people participate in either three 90-minute float sessions or three 90-minute periods of relaxing on a chair which reclined. Participants had their brains scanned using functional magnetic resonance imaging at the beginning and end of the trial. Float sessions uniquely decreased activity in the default mode network (DMN), a collection of brain regions commonly linked with depression. Feinstein says it is an exciting finding, because flotation tanks seem to offer a way of 'resetting' our nervous system to prevent it from getting out of balance.

- F** Neurobiologist Tal Dotan Ben-Soussan is also an advocate of silence as a therapy. 'When we find ways to be quiet, we are not only quiet in our environment, but quiet in our inner selves,' she explains. 'This allows us to be more aware of what is happening around us and what the situation may require from us so we can provide [a more] adequate response.'

Not everyone will benefit from silence to the same extent, but Ben-Soussan says one characteristic is key: the person must need to want to engage in the experience. 'We see from animal models and human studies that volition and intentionality is important,' she says. 'When people do not want silence, it can be very distressing.'

- G** Eric Pfeifer, a psychotherapy researcher, also concedes that some people may not benefit from silence, particularly those who are in a heightened state of stress. 'People in these states may not be able to relax or calm down in a silent condition,' he says. Professional guidance can be useful, he adds, allowing people to approach silence slowly so that they can gradually enjoy the benefits. And Pfeifer is convinced that silence is more attainable in everyday life than people think. First, complete silence isn't necessary. In a recent study, he found that participants reported more relaxation and less boredom when they sat quietly in an outdoor garden compared with a completely silent room. Second, Pfeifer believes we don't need a lot of silence to gain benefits. 'You don't need to spend hours in silence,' he says. 'It is likely better to have more frequency of silence for a few minutes at a time than a longer period of silence only once a week. Just finding those places in your daily life where you can find some silence ... can make a big difference.'

Questions 14–17

Reading Passage 2 has seven sections, **A–G**.

Which section contains the following information?

*Write the correct letter, **A–G**, in boxes 14–17 on your answer sheet.*

- 14** examples of strategies to decrease the noise that the public are exposed to
- 15** data indicating the extent of the problem of excessive noise
- 16** a description of physiological changes in our bodies when we hear sudden noises
- 17** evidence that a relatively quiet environment can be more beneficial than a totally silent one

Questions 18–21

Complete the summary below.

Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes 18–21 on your answer sheet.

Flotation Tanks

According to Justin Feinstein, flotation tanks allow people to concentrate on their own **18**, which helps them relax and enables them to meditate.

Feinstein and his colleagues conducted an experiment in which 50 people, who were all suffering from stress and related issues, were given a **19** to complete before and after using a flotation tank. Participants reported a reduction in their symptoms after an hour in the tank, together with signs of relaxation and improved general **20**

In another experiment, the researchers had 48 people spend periods of 90 minutes either lying back in a chair or floating in a tank. Brain scans then revealed that those people who had been in a tank had decreased activity in parts of the brain associated with **21**

Questions 22–26

Look at the following statements (Questions 22–26) and the list of people below.

Match each statement with the correct person, **A**, **B**, **C** or **D**.

Write the correct letter, **A**, **B**, **C** or **D**, in boxes 22–26 on your answer sheet.

NB You may use any letter more than once.

- 22 It is unpleasant and upsetting for people to be placed in a silent environment against their will.
- 23 The trend towards creating quieter urban locations is likely to increase in the coming years.
- 24 When our body's senses are completely deprived of input, our minds compensate for this by creating the illusion of images and sounds.
- 25 Even a short amount of silent time can have a positive impact.
- 26 External and internal quietness makes us more conscious of events occurring in our surroundings and helps us react appropriately to these events.

List of People

- A** Nick Antonio
- B** Justin Feinstein
- C** Tal Dotan Ben-Soussan
- D** Eric Pfeifer