

VNU-HCM High School for the Gifted Entrance Exam (2021-2022) - Reading

Part 2. Reading (30 pts)

Passage 1

While reading a magazine, you came across an article on elves. Read the article carefully and write the letter A, B, C, or D in the corresponding numbered box provided to indicate the correct answer to each of the questions from 1 to 10.

Elves

Elves have been a popular subject in fiction for centuries, ranging from W. Shakespeare's play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" to the classic fantasy novels of J. R. R. Tolkien 300 years later. But it's only recently that **elves have been confined to plays**, books, and fairy tales. In centuries past, belief in the existence of fairies and elves was common among both adults and children.

Like fairies, elves were said to be magical, tiny shape changers. Shakespeare's elves were tiny, winged creatures that lived in, and playfully flitted around flowers. English male elves were described as looking like little old men, though elf maidens were invariably young and beautiful. Like men of the time, elves lived in kingdoms found in forests, meadows, or hollowed-out tree trunks. [A]

Elves, fairies and leprechauns are closely related in folklore, though elves specifically seem to have sprung from early Norse mythology. By the 1500s, people began incorporating elf folklore into stories and legends about fairies, and by 1800, fairies and elves were widely considered to be simply different names for the same magical creatures. [B]

As with fairies, elves eventually developed a reputation for pranks and mischief, and strange daily occurrences were often attributed to them. For example, when the hair on a person or horse became tangled and knotted, such "elf locks" were blamed on elves. [C]

Though elves were sometimes friendly toward humans, they were also known to take terrible revenge on any human who offends them. They may steal babies, cattle, milk, and bread or enchant and hold young men in their spell for years at a time.

Another type of elf **emerged**, one with a somewhat different nature and form than the mischievous and tiny ones of old. Some elves, such as those depicted in J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, are slender, human-sized, and beautiful, with fine, almost angelic, features. Tolkien's characters were drawn largely from his research into Scandinavian folklore, and therefore it's not surprising that his elves might be tall and blond. Though not immortal, these elves were said to live hundreds of years. They have also become a staple of modern fantasy fiction. [D]

In either form, elves are strongly associated with magic and nature. As with fairies, elves were said to secretly steal healthy human babies and replace them with their own kind. There were even legends instructing parents on how to get their real child back from its elven **abductors**.

Each generation seems to have their own use for elves in their stories. Just as leprechauns have historically been associated with one type of work (shoemaking), it is perhaps not surprising that many common (and commercial) images of elves depict them as industrious workers; think, for example, of Santa Claus' toy making elves. Folklore, like language and culture, is constantly evolving, and elves will likely always be with us, in one form or another.

1. What, according to the article, is true about elves?
 - A. Centuries ago people believed in them.
 - B. They are identical to fairies.
 - C. They sprung from leprechauns.
 - D. They may cause hair to get tangled.
2. Which of the following is closest in meaning to **elves have been confined to plays** in paragraph 1?
 - A. Elves appear only in literature.
 - B. Restrictions have been put on them.
 - C. They cannot go wherever they want.
 - D. They still like to play tricks.
3. What was one characteristic of Shakespeare's elves?
 - A. They were mostly male.
 - B. They were unattractive.
 - C. The females were good-looking.
 - D. They were better-looking.
4. What, according to the author, is the origin of elves?
 - A. They are the ancestors of leprechauns.
 - B. Their roots lie in Scandinavian folklore.
 - C. Shakespeare first brought them to life.
 - D. They belong to early Norse Mythology.
5. What does the author claim about Tolkien's elves?
 - A. They liked to create trouble.
 - B. They were immortal.
 - C. They liked to play tricks.
 - D. They were the size of normal people.
6. Which of the following is closest in meaning to **emerged** in paragraph 6?
 - A. appeared
 - B. united
 - C. followed
 - D. took place
7. What are elves associated with?
 - A. youth and beauty
 - B. nature and magic
 - C. deformity and birthmarks
 - D. tangled hair
8. Which of the following is closest in meaning to **abductors** in paragraph 7?
 - A. kidnappers
 - B. villains
 - C. associates
 - D. benefactors
9. What does the article claim about Santa's elves?
 - A. They are leprechauns.
 - B. They are always around.
 - C. They work hard.
 - D. They are very commercial.
10. At which point in the article would the following sentence best fit?
"A baby born with a birthmark or deformity was said to be elf-marked."
 - A. [A]
 - B. [B]
 - C. [C]
 - D. [D]

Your answers

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Passage 2

You are going to read an article about life expectancy.

For questions 1-4, match the headings below (A-G) with the appropriate paragraph.

One heading has been done as an example. There are TWO headings which you do not need.

Write your answers in the corresponding numbered boxes provided.

Example: 0. **D**

- A Not a new idea
- B Specific things we can do to live longer
- C More people getting ill
- D Research shows we are living longer
- E No-one knows why we live longer
- F Few deaths due to disease
- G Stopping illness before it happens

Life Expectancy

- 0 Life expectancy can be defined as the number of years someone is expected to live and has been the subject of many studies. The most recent studies into changes in life expectancy in many countries of the world show that it has been increasing for many years. In fact, life expectancy is higher today than it has ever been in the past. This is a very positive development for those who are interested in diet, health and lifestyle. It would appear that, when judged by changes in life expectancy, health in our modern society is improving all the time and is not, as is often suggested, getting worse.
- 1 In adults, the main change is a decline in circulatory disease, especially heart disease. Heart disease is the principal cause of death in the world. The mortality rate from this type of disease has decreased dramatically over the last 15 years in many countries, and it is likely that this **trend** will continue. The second principal cause of death is cancer. However, mortality over the last 15 years from cancer has either stabilised in countries such as Japan and Switzerland, or has decreased slightly in countries such as Italy, the USA and the UK.
- 2 Of course, the increase in life expectancy during the last 100 years is not due to any one factor. On the whole, improvements in medical care as well as better prevention of illnesses have both played a role in the increase. By prevention we mean better food availability, variety and balance, more appropriate nutrition, and understanding of the importance of exercise, and a reduction in smoking and alcohol consumption.
- 3 It is obvious that many factors have been involved in making our lives safer and healthier. This conclusion is by no means new. Hippocrates stated something similar over 2,000 years ago. In the 5th century BC, he said: "Positive health requires knowledge of man's primary constitution and the powers of various foods, both those natural to them and those resulting from human skills. But eating alone is not enough for good health. There must be exercise, of which the effects must likewise be known." Interestingly, Hippocrates **incorporated** almost every element that we now consider important for improving health and increasing our chances of longer life.
- 4 A recent study has shown that there are four types of behaviour which can actually increase our average life expectancy. The research found that those who exercised regularly, ate five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, didn't smoke, and consumed alcohol in moderation, lived an average of 14 years longer than those who didn't adopt any of these behaviours. Finally, it is interesting to note that in virtually every population in the world, women live longer than men – by an average of 7 years. To date, no-one has come up with an exact explanation for this phenomenon.

For questions 5-10, read the passage and decide which is the best answer A, B, C or D. Write your answers in the corresponding numbered boxes provided.

5. According to the passage, life expectancy is
- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| A. at a low point. | B. not really understood. |
| C. the highest it's ever been. | D. not related to diet, health and lifestyle. |

6. Heart disease in adults
A. has been rising for the last 15 years.
B. is as serious as cancer.
C. has only been monitored for 15 years.
D. causes the highest number of deaths.
7. The word closest in meaning to **trend** in paragraph 2 is
A. disease. B. tendency. C. increase. D. rate.
8. According to the passage, deaths from cancer
A. used to be a less serious problem in the USA.
B. have neither increased nor decreased in Italy.
C. are increasing in Japan.
D. have remained the same in Switzerland.
9. An example of **prevention** is
A. drinking less alcohol. B. living a less demanding lifestyle.
C. improving medical care. D. eating mostly one type of food.
10. The word closest in meaning to **incorporated** in paragraph 4 is
A. included. B. criticized. C. explained. D. rejected.

Your answers

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10