

UNIT 3: ART AND ARCHITECTURE

A. READING

Exercise 1: Read the sentences in the box. Do the verbs in **bold** in the sentences refer to past time? Complete the table with the sentences. The first one has been done for you.

He told me he **was** a sculptor.

When **heated** to high temperatures, the material becomes flexible and easy to work with.

Architects **used to produce** all their drawings on a wooden drawing board.

Breaking news – prime minister **resigns** in shock announcement

I wouldn't want to be an artist unless I **was** a rich and famous one.

not past time

Most architects wish that they **didn't have** to **work** such long hours.

past time

Exercise 2: Read the information. Then skim read the article quickly. Put the topics in the order in which they appear in the article.

In the IELTS Reading test, there isn't a task that asks you to put information in the correct order. However, doing this is a useful way for you to practise quickly looking at the whole text to see what it is about *before* trying to answer the questions.



Architectural determinism

Back in the 1960s, the Welsh academic and town planner Maurice Broadbent came up with a new term in architectural speak: architectural determinism. This referred to what he saw as the practice of making unjustified claims that the built environment could somehow change people's behaviour in ways that could be predicted. It was a new term to describe what at the time was not uncommon. Although the idea of architectural determinism is now widely discredited, it had allowed the heroes of architecture to make all sorts of ridiculous claims in the past.

In the 1400s, one of the stars of the Italian Renaissance, Leon Battista Alberti, claimed that the balanced classical forms of well-designed buildings would convince invaders to abandon their weapons and become calm, non-violent citizens.

In the early twentieth century, the British theorist and planner Ebenezer Howard developed the idea of garden cities. These were to be village-like housing schemes with substantial gardens and green areas, and were intended to provide working people with an alternative to living in 'crowded, unhealthy cities'. He envisaged a 'group of slumless, smokeless cities', in which employees, benefiting from better living and working conditions, would be more efficient.

Frank Lloyd Wright, designer of New York's Guggenheim Museum and many of the USA's most iconic houses, believed that appropriate architectural design could even save the USA from corruption and make people more virtuous.

The Swiss-born modernist architect Le Corbusier declared that one of the houses he designed outside Paris, the Villa Savoye, would heal the sick. But when it did exactly the opposite (its large windows made the house overheat, and its flat roofs let in the rain), the owners threatened legal action. Le Corbusier only managed to avoid court due to the outbreak of the Second World War.

The failings of modernist architecture are well documented, and many writers and theorists have made a living out of critiquing it. But the high point of this trend was the delight that many shared over the demolition of the disastrous Pruitt-Igoe urban housing complex in St Louis in the USA. It had been designed by architects George Hellmuth, Minoru Yamasaki and Joseph Leinweber, supposedly to create 'community gathering spaces and safe, enclosed play yards'. And yet for some reason, the community declined to gather and play safely in their enclosed yards. Instead, the complex became a hotspot for crime and poverty and was demolished in the 1970s.

As with many of the modernist planning and design philosophies of the twentieth century, architectural determinism was appealing at first sight but ultimately misguided. It became unfashionable during the post-modern era and all but disappeared. One of the consequences of this loss of faith in the power of architecture is that architects are now left defenceless before the superior technical know-how of structural engineers, the restrictions placed on them by generations of planners and the calculations of project managers.

But was architectural determinism dismissed too soon? This is one question posed by Jan Golembiewski, a researcher in the environmental determinants of mental health at the University of Sydney and a consultant for Medical Architecture, a firm specialising in architectural psychology. Golembiewski's research has found that the healthier a person is, the more a well-designed environment will affect them positively, and the less a badly designed one will affect them negatively. Patients who are mentally ill react more negatively to bad environments, which means 'fewer smiles, less laughter and a reported drop in feeling the fun of life'.

Likewise, Charles Montgomery, author of *Happy City: Transforming our Lives Through Urban Design*, points out that some environments do affect our moods, and that they do so rather predictably. His central thesis is that urban sprawl – the unplanned spread of car-dependent, low-density development that accounts for most new housing in many parts of the world – makes us unhappy and isolated and drives teenagers to boredom. The drawbacks of urban sprawl aren't confined to psychological health; living amongst sprawl ages people by an extra four years, and there are four times as many fatal traffic accidents on suburban roads as on city streets, according to Montgomery's research.

Many progressive measures were implemented by Enrique Peñalosa during his tenure as mayor of Bogota in Colombia from 1998 to 2000. Bogota, now a city of 8 million people, had no underground rail system at that time and suffered from chronic congestion. Peñalosa's city model gave priority to children and people not using vehicles. He built hundreds of kilometres of cycle paths, pavements and parks, and set up traffic-free zones. He organised a car-free day in 2000 (now an annual event), took measures to address poverty and started a programme of urban improvement, with more than 100,000 trees being planted across the city. All of these are impressive accomplishments in themselves, but his most compelling legacy has to be the way that he transformed people's view of Bogota. Whereas previously, the city's troubles had been seen as an inevitable consequence of uncontrolled urban growth, people now began to see that they could influence change in Bogota for the better.

Clearly, there is now a resurgence in the belief that the built environment is a key factor in how we feel, and that buildings are central to influencing behaviour. Many of the journals adopting this stance, such as *World Health Design* and *Environment and Behaviour*, focus primarily on the design of healthcare facilities, as this is where quality design can potentially have life-and-death consequences. Schools of architecture need to focus on how their students might predict how their designs can impact the users of the buildings, and give thought to including calming areas and spaces, such as gardens, in order to affect our moods, behaviours and health in as positive a way as possible.

exaggerated claims made by architects about buildings

the similar findings of two writers

the virtual disappearance of a belief about architecture

the reappearance and increased popularity of an idea

the positive influence of one politician on an environment

an abandoned belief about what architecture could do

Exercise 3: Read the information. Then quickly skim read the article again to see what the main ideas are. Read the four sentences about the article in the box. Which two sentences are the main ideas, and which two are the less important supporting ideas? Complete the table with the sentences.

Being able to distinguish between the main ideas in a text and the supporting information is a very useful reading skill. It will help you with lots of different task types in the IELTS Reading test, including multiple-choice questions and matching headings tasks.

After reading the text and identifying the two or three main ideas, try to express them in your own words.

Some architectural projects in the past proved to be failures.

The architect Le Corbusier faced legal difficulties during his career.

People used to think that architecture could change the world.

There is more interest nowadays in how building designs affect people psychologically.

main ideas

supporting ideas

Exercise 4: Read the information. Then read the opening paragraph of the article and the statements below. Choose True or False.

This exercise will help you read a text very closely, asking yourself lots of questions about what it really says. It will train you for the next exercise, in which you will attempt an IELTS-style True / False / Not Given task.



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1 Maurice Broady invented the phrase 'architectural determinism'.

True False

2 Broady thought architectural determinism was a good thing.

True False

3 Architectural determinism is the idea that architecture influences the way in which people behave.

True False

4 The text says that many people believed in architectural determinism.

True False

5 Architectural determinism is still popular today.

True False

Exercise 5: Read the information. Then read the first part of the article. Do the statements agree with the information given in the article? Choose True, False or Not Given.

Choose

True if the statement agrees with the information

False if the statement contradicts the information

Not Given if there is no information on this.



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1 Alberti believed that architecture could promote peace.

- True
- False
- Not Given

2 Howard studied the effectiveness of rural housing.

- True
- False
- Not Given

3 Lloyd Wright thought that good architecture could make people behave in a morally better way.

- True
- False
- Not Given

4 Le Corbusier's claims about the Villa Savoye proved to be accurate.

- True
- False
- Not Given

5 Hellmuth, Yamasaki and Leinweber were pleased when the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex was destroyed.

- True
- False
- Not Given

6 Architects often find it difficult to get on with colleagues in the building industry.

- True
- False
- Not Given

Exercise 6: Read the information. Then complete the table. Use the words and phrases in the box.

This activity reviews the paraphrases used in the True / False / Not Given reading tasks which you completed earlier in this unit. In this task, you are looking for wording that expresses a very similar meaning. The meaning doesn't have to be exactly the same, so you may find that a different form of a verb is used, for example.

colleagues in the building industry destroy invented a phrase

make people behave in a morally better way promote peace

phrases from the article	phrases from the questions with similar meanings
came up with a new term	
convince invaders to abandon their weapons	
save the USA from corruption and make people	
more virtuous	
demolish	
structural engineers ... planners ... project	
managers	

Exercise 9: Look at the words in bold in the second part of the article. Are they used in a positive or negative way? Complete the table with the words in the box. The first one has been done for you.

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