Reading Comprehension
Task I
Agatha Christie

Dame Agatha Mary Clarissa Christie, DBE (September 15, 1890–January 12, 1976), was a British crime fiction writer. She also wrote romances under the name Mary Westmacott.

Agatha Christie is the world's best-known mystery writer and all-time best selling author of any genre other than William Shakespeare. Her books have sold over a billion copies in the English language and another billion in over 45 foreign languages (as of 2003). As an example of her broad appeal, she is the all-time best-selling author in France, with over forty million copies sold in French (as of 2003) versus 22 million for Émile Zola, the nearest contender.

Christie published over eighty novels and stageplays, mainly whodunnits and locked room mysteries, many of these featuring one of her series characters, Hercule Poirot or Miss Marple. She is a major figure in detective fiction for both her commercial success and her innovations in the genre.

Although she delighted in twisting the established form, she was scrupulous in "playing fair" with the reader by making sure all necessary information for solving the puzzle was given. One of her early books, The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, is famous for its surprise denouement.

Most of her books and short stories have been filmed, some many times over (Murder on the Orient Express, Death on the Nile, 4.50 from Paddington). The BBC has produced television and radio versions of most of the Poirot and Marple stories. A later series of Poirot dramatizations starring David Suchet was made by Granada Television.

In 2004, the Japanese broadcasting company Nippon Housou Kyoukai turned Poirot and Marple into animated characters in the anime series Agatha Christie's Great Detectives Poirot and Marple, introducing Mabel West (daughter of Miss Marple's mystery-writer nephew Raymond West, a canonical Christie character) and her duck Oliver as new characters.

Choose True/ False/ We don't know

1. Agatha Christie was born in 1890.
   True/ False/ We don't know

2. More than 40 million copies of her books have been sold in France
   True/ False/ We don't know

3. Agatha Christie wrote six novels under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott
   True/ False/ We don't know

4. "The Murder of Roger" has a surprising ending
   True/ False/ We don't know

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5. Christie was famous for publishing over 90 novels and stageplays
   True/ False/ We don't know

6. There are no films based on her books
   True/ False/ We don't know

7. There are no TV series based on her books
   True/ False/ We don't know

8. In 2004, the Japanese broadcasting company Nippon Housou Kyoukai introduced such animated characters as Mabel West and her duck Oliver
(based on Agatha Christie's Great Detectives Poirot and Marple)
   True/ False/ We don't know

Task II

How Singing Began

We know that people learned to write long, long ago. For more than 7,000 years people have been writing down their thoughts. But even before people learned to write they could sing! Music began even before writing.

The people of old times drew themselves on rocks. Some of the pictures that preserved show dancers and singers, and also people playing some musical instruments. So our earliest ancestors were fond of music.

How did people learn to sing? What musical instruments did they play? Archaeologists and musicologists give the answer to these questions.

Our ancestors lived in groups because only together they could get their food and defend themselves from wild animals. They learned to make tools and work together.

The group of early men worked together like an orchestra and they usually murmured to each movement of their hand or foot. Without the murmuring (or "singing") they could not do the work.

Later people learned to make other and better tools and it was not necessary to sing during their work. But singing began, and there are songs in many countries which are probably children of these first work songs.

When man made his earliest tools, he learned to make musical instruments, too. Those pictures on rocks show people playing musical instruments. A very careful analysis of the bones of animals that archaeologists found in a number of ice-age camps show that the men of that time could use them for making sounds. So bones of animals, horns, pieces of wood were man's first musical instruments. By blowing into horns or bones people could make a very loud sound. They could also make sounds by beating one piece of wood against another or a piece of wood against a stone. People of that time could also use strings and fur to make

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musical instruments. That was the time when people did not have metal. And yet they could sing and were fond of music.

Read the text and choose the correct item to complete the sentence.

1. For more than 7,000 years people have been writing down their …

A. music B. Stories C. Thoughts D. Letters

2. People could sing before they learned …

A. to speak B. to draw C. to read D. to write

3. Some preserved pictures on the rocks show …

A. dancers and singers B. ancient actors C. teachers and pupils

D. fighting men

4. Our ancient people lived …

A. in groups B. alone C. in families D. in tribes

5. The work of early men was like …

A. an ensemble B. a company C. a rock group D. an orchestra

6. The work of the ancient people went with…

A. dancing B. murmuring C. drawing D. fighting

7. The old rocks present the pictures of people playing …

A. musical instruments B. games C. chess D. ball

8. … were used by the men of ice-age for making sounds.

A. plants B. the bones of animals C. birds' eggs D. metal

9. Murmuring means …

A. singing B. dancing C. playing games D. drawing

10. … were also used by people of that time for making musical instruments.

A. wood and strings B. strings and fur C. fur and metal D. animal's skin

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