

READING COMPREHENSION
SESSION 7
Multiple Choice - Practice

Choose the correct answer according to the options

How did writing begin?

Many theories, few answers

The Sumerians, an ancient people of the Middle East, had a story explaining the invention of writing more than 5,000 years ago. A messenger of the **King of Uruk** arrived at the court of a distant ruler so tired that he was unable to deliver the oral message. So the king set down the words of his next messages on a clay tablet. The retelling of this story at a recent **conference** at the University of Pennsylvania amused **scholars**. **They** smiled at the **absurdity** of a letter which the recipient would not have been able to read. They also doubted that the earliest writing was a direct rendering of speech. Writing more likely began as a separate, symbolic system of communication and only later merged with spoken language.

1. The researchers at the conference regarded the story of the King of Uruk as ridiculous because...

- A** writing probably developed independently of speech.
- B** clay tablets had not been invented at that time.
- C** the distant ruler would have spoken another language.
- D** evidence of writing has been discovered from an earlier period.

Yet in the story the Sumerians, who lived in Mesopotamia, in what is now southern Iraq, seemed to understand writing's transforming function. As Dr Holly Pittman, director of the University's Center for Ancient Studies, observed, '*writing arose out of the need to store and transmit information ... over time and space*'.

2. According to the writer, the story of the King of Uruk:

- A** is a probable explanation of the origins of writing.
- B** proves that early writing had a different function to writing today.
- C** provides an example of symbolic writing.
- D** shows some awareness amongst Sumerians of the purpose of writing

In exchanging interpretations and information, the scholars acknowledged that they still had no fully satisfying answers to the **questions of how and why writing developed**. Many favoured an explanation of **writing's origins** in the **visual arts, pictures** becoming increasingly abstract and eventually representing spoken words.

Their **views clashed** with a widely held theory among archaeologists that writing developed from the pieces of clay that **Sumerian accountants** used as tokens to keep track of goods.

3. There was disagreement among the researchers at the conference about:

- A** the area where writing began.
- B** the nature of early writing materials.
- C** the way writing began.
- D** the meaning of certain abstract images.

4. The opponents of the theory that writing developed from tokens believe that it

- A** grew out of accountancy.
- B** evolved from pictures.
- C** was initially intended as decoration.
- D** was unlikely to have been connected with commerce.