Reading Part 1

Read the text and complete the tasks that follow. Choose a, b, or c. Put a circle round the most appropriate answer. An example is done for you.

There's a reason why we love computer games

Video computer games have become as much a part of our entertainment world as books and movies. Why is it that so many of us are drawn to the computer monitor or TV screen? A bit of history might help explain the phenomenon. Originally, computers were all work and no play, being expensive to build and operate. But computer engineers and designers, being overgrown kids after all, soon began to get comfortable with their big machines. It occurred to some of them that it might be a good idea to have the computer show some spaceships and planets cruising around the galaxy.

And in the 1960s a group of fun-loving computer geniuses created a game called *SpaceWar* in their idle hours. *SpaceWar* was well received by geniuses and many others as well, which motivated the geniuses to design some more fun stuff. Somehow the visual element of the games activated the imagination. Over time we got *Pong*, *PacMan* and a continually evolving string of games.

By the late 1980s, with the invention of *Sim City*, computer games software became quite sophisticated. This product expanded on what was going on in all the previous games; the players were drawn into an imaginary world. But *Sim City* actually allowed the user to create amazing cities and even worlds. Not unlike books and movies, such video games were therefore mentally very satisfying.

Also in the 1980s, a group of computer programmers began creating software that would show moving figures, all generated by computer. The figures were stick people, but they could move their bodies to music. They had no facial features, but it was very exciting to think what might come with more powerful computers.

The power of computers grew massively and, over recent years, the realism of video games has taken a huge leap forward. A good computer game will draw you in to another world and, unlike a book or movie, it will offer an interactive experience. There are now hundreds of options, including many that allow you to play online against other players. Then there are the specialty consoles such as PlayStation, Nintendo and XBox360. You can really develop some hand-eye coordination by playing many of their current titles. But the biggest reason we love our computer games is that they capture our imagination in a variety of interactive ways.

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Example:

The writer thinks computer designers are

a) like grown-up children.
b) only interested in fun.
c) usually very young.

1. SpaceWar was developed

a) as part of a serious computer project.
b) by computer experts in their spare time.
c) to show people what space travel is like.

2. After SpaceWar more games appeared because

a) computer design improved.
b) it wasn't exciting enough.
c) people enjoyed playing it.

3. Sim City was different because it

a) gave players more power.
b) showed cities in the future.
c) depended on advanced computers.

4. The first moving figures

a) were very simply drawn.
b) were easy to tell apart.
c) weren't able to dance.

5. According to the writer, many modern computer games

a) take their themes from movies.
b) allow players to be part of the game.
c) are only effective if you play them online.

6. One of the benefits of computer games is that

a) players learn to develop games themselves.
b) special equipment is never necessary.
c) they improve physical abilities.

(Total: 6 marks)

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