IELTS Reading Progress Test

Student's name: _____ **Class / Level:** **Date:** _____

Time allowed: 60 minutes **Score:** _ **Band Score:** _/9

READING TEST

READING PASSAGE 1

The history of the guitar

An overview of the origins of the modern guitar

A The earliest stringed instruments currently known to archaeologists are bowl harps. For millennia, people made bowl harps using, for example, tortoise shells as resonators, with a bent stick for a neck and one or more gut or silk strings. The world's museums contain many such harps from the ancient Sumerian, Babylonian, and Egyptian civilisations. Around 2500-2000 BC more advanced harps, such as the beautifully carved 11-stringed instrument found in the tomb of Queen Shub-Ad in ancient Mesopotamia, now modern day Iraq, started to appear.

B The tanbur* probably developed from the bowl harp. It was different from the bowl harp in that its neck was straightened out to allow the strings to be pressed down to create more notes. Tomb paintings and stone carvings in Egypt indicate that harps and tanburs - plus flutes and percussion instruments - were being played together 3,500-4,000 years ago. Archaeologists have also found many similar relics amongst the ruins of the ancient Mesopotamian civilisation. Many of these instruments have survived into modern times in almost unchanged form, for example folk instruments of the region such as the Turkish saz and Afghan panchtar.

C At 3,500 years old, the tanbur which belonged to the Egyptian singer Har-Mose is the earliest known example of this instrument. Har-Mose's tanbur had three strings and a plectrum suspended from the neck by a cord. The soundbox, which increased the volume, was made of beautifully polished cedarwood and covered in rawhide. It can be seen today at the Archaeological Museum in Cairo.

D In order to distinguish guitars from other stringed instruments, it is helpful to have a broad definition of the guitar. Music expert Dr Michael Kasha defines a guitar as having 'a long, fretted neck, flat wooden soundboard, ribs, and a flat back, most often with sides that curve inwards'. The oldest known visual representation of such an instrument is a stone carving at Alaca Huyuk in Turkey, which shows a 3,300-year-old instrument with a long neck and sides that clearly curve inwards.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

E The name 'guitar' comes from the ancient Sanskrit word for 'string' - 'tar'. Many popular stringed instruments used in central Asia today have existed in an unchanged form for several thousand years, as shown by archaeological finds in the area. Many have names that end in 'tar', with a prefix indicating the number of strings, such as the dutar, a two-stringed instrument found in Turkestan, and the Persian three-stringed setar and four-stringed chartar. The Indian sitar almost certainly took its name from the setar, but over the centuries it evolved radically, following the Indians' own aesthetic and cultural ideals.

F Tanburs and harps spread around the ancient world with travellers, merchants and seamen. The earliest guitar-like instruments to arrive in Europe had, most often, four strings. Many such instruments, and variations with from three to five strings, can be seen in mediaeval illustrated manuscripts. They were also carved in stone in European churches and cathedrals, from the first century AD through until the 13th century.

G When the four-stringed Persian chartar arrived in Spain, however, it changed in form and construction, acquiring pairs of strings tuned to the same note instead of single strings. It became known as the chitarra. By the middle of the 14th century, the chitarra had become dominant, at least in most of Europe. The earliest known music for the eight-stringed chitarra was written in 16th-century Spain. The ten-string version first appeared in Italy at the same time, and gradually replaced the eight-stringed instrument. A further two strings first appeared in the 17th century, an innovation which guitar makers all over Europe quickly took up. However, this twelve-string arrangement gradually gave way to six single strings across the continent. The six-stringed guitar can thus be said to be a development of the twelve-stung, rather than vice versa, as was thought previously.

H At the beginning of the 19th century, the present-day guitar began to take shape, although bodies were still fairly small and narrow-waisted. The modern classical guitar first appeared in its current form in the mid-19th century, when the Spanish guitar maker Antonio Torres increased the size of the body, altered its proportions, and introduced the revolutionary fan-braced top**. His design radically increased the volume and improved the tone of the instrument, and very soon became the norm. This design has remained essentially unchanged to this day.

I At the time when Torres made his breakthrough, German immigrants to America - among them Christian Fredrich Martin - began making guitars with X-braced tops. Steel strings, which became widely available several decades later in the early 1900s, offered the promise of much louder guitar, but the increased tension was too much for the

LIVEWORKSHEETS

fan-braced top. The stronger X-braced top proved equal to the job, and quickly became the industry standard.

J At the end of the 19th century, guitar manufacturer Orville Gibson added steel strings to a body constructed like a cello, a combination which produced more volume. The electric guitar was born when pickups were fitted to Hawaiian and jazz guitars in the late 1920s, but met with little success until 1836, when Gibson introduced its famous ES150 model.

tanbur: a long-necked stringed instrument with a small pear-shaped body*
*fan-braced top**: a strengthening structure in the shape of a fan inserted into the soundbox*

Questions 1-6
Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 1?
In boxes 1-6 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE *if the statement agrees with the information*
FALSE *if the statement contradicts the information*
NOT GIVEN *if there is no information on this*

1 The instrument found in Queen Shub-Ad's tomb is the world's oldest known version of a harp.
2 Today's Afghan panchtar is very similar to an ancient Mesopotamian instrument.
3 The Egyptian singer Har-Mole was an excellent tanbur player.
4 Cairo Archaeological Museum contains many historic musical instruments.
5 The instrument carved in stone at Alaca Huyuk is consistent with Dr Michael Kasha's definition of a guitar.
6 The different instruments that appeared in medieval literature had the same number of strings.

Questions 7-13
Complete the table below.
*Write **ONE WORD ONLY** from the passage for each answer.*

Date	**Type of instrument**	**Notes**
13th-19th century	Chitarra	• was a development of an earlier instrument called the **7** .....

LIVEWORKSHEETS

		• extra strings added in 16th century in Italy
from around the 1850s	Classical guitar	• its shape is a result of modifications including a larger **8** ..... introduced by Antonio Torres • changes produced better tone and greater **9** .....
	X-braced top guitar	• first made in **10** ..... in mid-19th century • strings made of **11** ..... became available around 1900
1920s onwards	Electric guitar	• in the 1920s, **12** ..... added to guitars • a well-known version brought out by **13** .....

READING PASSAGE 2

Playing soccer

There are many differences between playing soccer in the street and joining a youth team in an organized league in the USA

A Street soccer, as its name implies, is an informal variation of the sport, often played on the street, particularly in urban areas. There are many reasons for the widespread popularity of street soccer. Unlike youth soccer, its more formally organized counterpart, no large space is needed, and goal posts, corner markers, and marked lines, associated with the formal game, are typically absent, as are game officials or referees. Another attraction of street soccer is that it is played frequently and competitively, but does not necessarily require standard 11-a-side teams or fixed playing positions. Unlike in youth soccer, inexperienced street soccer players rarely learn from repetitive technical and tactical drills. Instead, they learn from their poor performance in competition, unconscious of the skills they are nonetheless developing, and without older adults or coaches present. Players learn without effort through playing the game, and soon attain an almost natural feeling for the sport.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

B However, there are lots of cities in the world today where conditions are such that street soccer is no longer possible. Congested traffic now dominates where games were once played. Parks and open fields are used as hangouts for older teenagers with other interests. Add to this the requirement in many localities for official permits to use public spaces and the managed schedules that many young people have today, and spontaneous play of any kind is hard to imagine.

C In spite of all these obstacles, which are probably solvable in most instances, there is another sociological explanation of why in many places street soccer doesn't enjoy the same popularity it once did. In his book How Soccer Explains the World, US writer Franklin Foer observes: But for all the talk of freedom, the 1960s parenting style had a far less relaxed side too. Like the 1960s consumer movement which brought seat belts and airbags to cars, the (youth) soccer movement felt like it could create a set of ... regulations that would protect both the child's body and mind from damage. Soccer leagues like the one I played in as a child handed out 'participation' prizes to every player, no matter how few games his (or her) team won... Where most of the world accepts the practice of using your head to hit the ball as an essential element of the game, some (youth) soccer parents have worried over the potential for injury to the brain. An entire industry grew up to manufacture protective headgear... Even though very little medical evidence supports this fear, some youth leagues prohibited heading the ball altogether.

D A growing body of people don't believe street soccer involves a legitimate educational method. They argue that children need to be taught by experts. Youth soccer instruction now begins with four-year-olds, so that they will have an advantage as six-year-olds. This need to get ahead brings with it a fear of falling behind that only expert instruction can prevent. This type of instruction leaves no room for the trial and error approach of street soccer.

E One of the basic ideas of street soccer is that young players are assigned a particular role by a better player and are expected to play for the good of the team. Such an assignment runs counter to the idea of youth soccer that every child needs to learn every position and will benefit from doing so. In street soccer, you fill the role that you are best willed to at a particular time. While this role assignment can change from game to game, the purpose is always the same: to get the best out of each individual at any given moment.

F In street soccer, children have to learn patience, to wait their turn, to realize that they are not entitled to make decisions, or even be listened to simply because they show up. Positions of responsibility are earned through competition within the team. Younger players in street soccer must wait to attain those positions. In youth soccer, however,

LIVEWORKSHEETS

with its overly democratic values, youngsters are guaranteed their time in the spotlight. Whether it's their turn to be captain, to play a central position or to take a crucial shot, youth soccer players come to believe that hard work and patience aren't really necessary.

G Not only does every youth soccer player get a chance, it is assumed that each individual has played well. 'Everyone's a winner; no one's a loser' is a guiding principle of youth soccer. This ensures each individual goes away positive about themselves. No one can leave a game or a practice feeling bad. But, if there really are no losers, then why try at all? Since giving less than your best receives the same reward as giving your best, why go to any extra effort? In street soccer, every game results in a winner and a loser and everyone knows who is who. Losing a game is a common experience and players learn early on how to handle this. As a result, unlike most youth soccer players, they acquire resilience.

A further difference between these two strands of soccer is that in street soccer a formal record is not kept. You can lose one day and win the next. The results are only temporary and are forgotten within minutes of the end of the match. But in organized youth soccer, the position each person plays and the results are formally noted and maintained throughout a season.

Questions 14-19
Reading Passage 2 has seven sections, A-G.
Which section contains the following information?
*Choose the correct letter, **A-G**, to boxes 14-19.*

14 a contrast between the ways young players gain experience of playing different positions
15 examples outside sport of greater emphasis on individual safety
16 a description of methods of selection for leadership on soccer teams
17 details of urban changes that discourage street soccer
18 a mention of the lesson that failure teaches street soccer players
19 an explanation of why youth soccer emphasises the need for coaches

Questions 20-21
*Choose **TWO** correct answers.*
The list below gives some possible reasons for the popularity of street soccer.
*Which **TWO** of these reasons are mentioned by the writer of the text?*

A Many famous soccer players got their start in street soccer.
B Young people can begin playing street soccer at a very early age.
C You do not need elaborate facilities to play street soccer.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

D Inexperienced street soccer players are not criticised for mistakes.

E Street soccer teams can have varying numbers of players.

*Questions 22-23 Choose **TWO** correct answers.*
The list below shows some possible results of the 1960s parenting style.
*Which **TWO** of these results are mentioned by Franklin Foer in the excerpt from How Soccer Explains the World?*

A Participation in youth soccer became much more expensive.

B Some youth soccer leagues adopted more restrictive rules of play.

C Fewer young people joined youth soccer teams.

D Youth soccer players were sometimes rewarded for simply playing in games.

E Soccer equipment manufacturers directed advertising towards parents.

Questions 24-26
Complete the summary below.
*Write **ONE WORD ONLY** from the passage for each answer.*

Winners and losers

For youth soccer players, a key **24** ..... is that they should always come away from the game with a positive attitude. In this respect, regardless of the effort the players make, they get some kind of **25** ..... at the end of a game.
In street soccer, however, players gain resilience because they have to learn to cope with failure. But the outcome of a match isn't remembered for long. In fact, no-one ever keeps a **26** ..... of the results of games.

READING PASSAGE 3

The History of Chocolate

A Chocolate is now perceived as a ubiquitous indulgence, whether consumed as confectionery or a beverage, readily accessible in global markets. However, it may come as a surprise that chocolate was once regarded as a commodity of extraordinary value. The discovery of the cocoa tree, the source of chocolate, occurred approximately 2,000 years ago in the lush tropical rain forests of the Americas. The evolution of the chocolate - from a regionally significant Mesoamerican drink to globally consumed confectionery - has been shaped through cross-continental cultural exchanges and the successive influences of multiple civilisations.

B Historians suggest that the ancient Maya pioneered cocoa tree cultivation in Mesoamerica, with evidence dating back approximately 2,000 years. They transplanted

LIVEWORKSHEETS

cocoa trees from the dense rain forest into their domesticated gardens, where cocoa beans were initially roasted and ground into a smooth paste. The paste was combined with spices and water to produce unsweetened chocolate beverages. The Maya also employed a distinctive technique of transferring the liquid back and forth between containers, generating a foamy layer on the drink's surface.

C Cocoa and chocolate were integral to Maya culture, commonly depicted in their architectural structures and artistic works. While the aristocracy, particularly the royal families, consumed chocolate during elaborate ceremonies, even less privileged groups occasionally savoured the drink. Furthermore, cocoa beans served as a powerful emblem of marital union and were ritually exchanged during wedding ceremonies.

D The Aztec civilisation in Mexico regarded chocolate as a prestigious commodity, despite being geographically unable to cultivate cocoa trees within their heartland. Accordingly, they sourced cocoa beans through extensive trade networks, even utilising them as currency for tax payments. Chocolate held an exclusive function within Aztec imperial and religious ceremonies, where priests offered cocoa beans as divine offerings and prepared sacred chocolate drinks. Due to the scarcity of cocoa beans, consumption remained restricted to the societal elite, with historical accounts suggesting Emperor Montezuma consumed up to 50 cups daily. Linguists trace the term 'chocolate' to the Aztec Nahuatl word xocolatl, meaning 'bitter water' in the Nahuatl language, though some scholars argue that it has hybrid origins combining Maya and Nahuatl linguistic elements.

E In 1502, explorer Christopher Columbus introduced cocoa beans to Spain after voyaging to Mesoamerica, and later Spanish explorer Hernán Cortés quickly recognised the potential economic value of chocolate. Upon arriving in present-day Mexico in 1519, Cortés observed that chocolate beverages would appeal to the Spanish. After conquering the Aztec Empire, Spanish forces exported confiscated cocoa supplies to Spain. In response to the growing demand, Spain began cultivating cocoa trees in its American colonies. The Spanish elite first developed a taste for sweetened chocolate drinks, but the beverage rapidly spread across Europe. England, the Netherlands, and France followed suit by establishing cocoa plantations in their own colonies. By the 18th century, chocolate remained primarily a luxury restricted to the affluent. However, the Industrial Revolution's technologies enabled mechanised production, dramatically reducing costs and making chocolate available to a broader population.

F Cocoa trees are cultivated across multiple countries in Africa, Mesoamerica, and South America, thriving in cool, shaded environments within equatorial zones. Despite widespread cultivation, cocoa farming remains labour-intensive, due to the trees'

LIVEWORKSHEETS

requirement for specific water thresholds, temperature ranges, soil compositions, and protection from environmental threats. Approximately five years after planting, cocoa trees begin to yield large, pod-shaped fruits that grow on the trunk. These pods contain the beans used in chocolate production. While several types of cocoa trees exist, the bulk of the chocolate is produced from the seeds of the most commonly cultivated varieties. However, farmers opt to grow more specialised types, such as Criollo or Trinitario, valued for distinctive flavour profiles. Unexpectedly, cocoa trees grown on farms are more vulnerable to disease and pests than their wild counterparts. Cocoa cultivation presents a strenuous endeavour for farmers, who sell their harvests on futures markets, exposing their incomes to external market fluctuations.

G The process of chocolate production involves a series of steps, carried out in specialised factories where cocoa beans are meticulously processed. Workers first sort, clean, and roast the beans before extracting the outer shells, leaving only the inner nibs. These nibs are then ground into a dense paste known as chocolate liquor, which is subsequently separated into two components: cocoa solids and cocoa butter. Following standardised formulations, chocolate manufacturers blend the chocolate liquor with precise ratios of sugar, milk, and cocoa butter. The resulting mixture, often referred to as the 'crumb', undergoes fine grinding to create a smooth consistency. Finally, the mixture is then subjected to two additional processes - conching and tempering - before being placed into molds to create various forms, such as bars or other chocolate products.

H Chocolate holds significant global economic value, with the manufacturing industry generating over $5 billion annually from cocoa crops, and its reputation remains most prominent in Europe and the United States. For instance, US cocoa product imports reached $1.4 billion in 2005. On average, Americans consume over five kilograms of chocolate per person each year. In addition, upscale chocolate boutiques, which offer premium chocolates, have gained significant popularity. Many of these shops specialise in artisanal chocolates, crafted with unique flavour profiles. Renowned chocolate brands such as Cadbury, Godiva, Lindt, and Ferrero Rocher dominate the market. However, the cocoa and chocolate production sectors often face challenges related to fair trade, sustainable development, and environmental preservation. These issues are now being actively addressed by industry stakeholders, including officials, activists, and researchers, who are working closely with farmers to promote farming practices that foster sustainability and protect the environment.

Questions 27-31
Reading Passage 3 has eight paragraphs, A-H.
Which paragraph contains the following information?
*Choose the correct letter, **A-H**, in boxes 27-31.*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

NB *You may use any letter more than once.*

27 the part of cocoa trees used for chocolate production
28 annual chocolate consumption per capita in the United States
29 the higher likelihood of cultivated cocoa trees being attacked by insects
30 a community which developed a preference for sweetened chocolate beverages
31 an approach by which ancient Mexicans could acquire cocoa beans

Questions 32-36
Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 3?
In boxes 32-36 on your answer sheet, write
TRUE *if the statement agrees with the information*
FALSE *if the statement contradicts the information*
NOT GIVEN *if there is no information on this*

32 The Mayan ruling class forbade the use of cocoa and chocolate in rituals.
33 The Spanish explorer Hernán Cortés had made an investment in chocolate and chocolate beverages.
34 Wild cocoa trees are more susceptible to infectious diseases than cultivated ones.
35 During chocolate production, some of the seeds are discarded.
36 Chocolate enjoys more prestige in Europe and the United States than in any other country.

Questions 37-40 Complete the flow-chart below.
*Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*

From Cocoa Beans to Chocolate

Seeds
classifying, cleaning, and roasting
stripping their **37** .....
↓
Nibs
↓
Crushing
producing **38** .....
mixing with measured quantities of substances such as sweeteners, liquid dairy, and **39** .....
↓
Crumb blending

LIVEWORKSHEETS

crushing finely to obtain a smooth texture

manufacturing diverse shapes of chocolate in **40** ……molds

↓

Chocolate

LIVEWORKSHEETS