Reading Passage 3

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 27- 40**, which are based on Reading Passage 3.

Sibling rivalry: How birth order affects your personality

A. For centuries, psychologists, philosophers and pretty much anyone with a family has argued that birth order shapes personality. It goes something like this: firstborns are reliable and hard-working. Middle children are rebellious but friendly. Last-borns are more outgoing and doted on. Only-children are wiser than their years, perfectionists and spoiled. Psychologists have long sought insights into the way birth order shapes us, but recent research has shown the studies to be so flawed that they are almost meaningless.

B. Meanwhile, there is an urgent reason to turn our attention to birth order: we are starting to appreciate how it may influence physical and mental health – not least because some cells in our bodies harbour our older siblings' DNA rather than our own. Regardless of the stereotypes, birth order has profound effects. So how much of our personality, success and health can we blame on being an oldest, youngest, middle or only child?

C. It was 19th-century polymath Francis Galton, the youngest of nine siblings, who first suggested that birth order might matter. He theorised that oldest sons get more parental attention and thrive on it. Fifty years later, Austrian psychotherapist Alfred Adler, the second of six children, suggested that older siblings were more privileged, but also "power-hungry conservatives" prone to feelings of excessive responsibility and anxiety. He also suggested that middle children were expert negotiators and considered youngest children to be pampered, irresponsible and lazy, due to being overindulged by their parents.

D. In 1995, Frank Sulloway, now at the University of California, Berkeley, revitalised the debate by proposing his "family niche" theory for birth order effects: this says that siblings' personalities vary because they each take on a different role within the family dynamic, which reduces competition and facilitates cooperation. For example, in childhood, simply by being older, the firstborn tends to be physically bigger, so might become more aggressive or use their size to their advantage. They are also able to please adults by acting as a surrogate parent to their siblings, which increases their

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conscientiousness. Later-born children can't, or have no need to, fill the same niches, so look for alternatives. This may require them to develop greater imagination than older siblings, but makes them more self-conscious as a result. In this way, says Sulloway, birth order isn't a direct cause of, but a proxy for, the family dynamics that mould your personality.

E. There was only one problem with his proposal: nobody could prove it was right. Over the next two decades, many studies that tried to elucidate exactly which personality traits were driven by birth order found contradictory results. "The literature was a huge mess," says Julia Rohrer at the University of Leipzig, Germany. "So many of the associations that were found were cherry-picked."

F. The studies didn't account for the huge number of confounding factors, like the fact that an older child is likely to be more conscientious purely because this trait increases with age. Besides, many studies didn't account for socioeconomic factors, the age gap between children or how old the parents were when they had them. And when associations were found, they would hold only within very specific circumstances – for older brothers, or for three-child families or for people with younger sisters exactly two years apart. "Basically, if you analyse data in enough ways, you'll find something," says Rohrer, "but these are just false positives there by random chance."

G. In 2015 Rohrer and her colleagues analysed data from 20,000 children across the UK, US and Germany – the biggest data set used up until then. After taking into account all of the confounding factors that had plagued previous studies, they found that birth order had almost no influence on personality whatsoever. The only genuine effect they could find was an association with birth order and intellect – and even that was tiny, equating to a drop in IQ of about 1 to 2.5 points between the oldest and youngest child. That is nothing, says Rohrer. It is about the same difference that you would expect to get if you took an identical IQ test on different days. "It's interesting that we reliably see this association, but it's not something that you can detect in everyday life," she says.

H. This would have been the final nail in the coffin for the birth order effect, had Sulloway not spent the best part of the past two decades trying to take the field one step further. To address the doubts swirling around earlier research, he created three new personality surveys that would allow him to better control for confounding factors. He saw four major issues to address. First, people's perception of their own personality

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differs depending on who they think about themselves in relation to. You may see yourself as deferential to your parents, but domineering compared with younger siblings, for instance. Second and third: people don't always answer honestly on quizzes, and also tend to acquiesce to questions – so they might say they are both talkative and quiet, for instance, when answering different questions. Research shows that people give more realistic answers if they have previously had to think about moral conundrums. Finally, you need a lot of data. "And that's why it took 18 years to complete," says Sulloway.

I. Like Rohrer, Sulloway's team found a consistent, if small, increase in intelligence in firstborns compared with younger siblings. But unlike her work, his latest analysis suggests that there are real, identifiable effects of birth order on personality. Previous research has confirmed that genetics explain up to 50 per cent of the variation between our personalities. Sulloway and his colleagues found that age and gender contribute 5.5 and 10 per cent, respectively. Birth order, on the other hand, was more modest, accounting for about 4.1 per cent of the variation between personalities. "This is still a pretty impressive effect," says Sulloway. "Especially where the importance of birth order has long been doubted."

Questions 27-31

Reading Passage 3 has nine sections ***A-I***.

Which section contains the following information?

Write the correct letter ***A-I*** in boxes ***27-31*** on your answer sheet.

27. Suggestions on the fact that firstborns receive more privileges from parents.

28. Contrasting results of efforts to explain which features of personality were shaped by birth order.

29. A theory about the impact of birth order on forming a close-knit family.

30. Our body parts carry genetic information of our elder brothers and sisters.

31. Tricky questions about morality usually make people aware of answering realistically later.

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Questions 32 - 34

Answer the questions below

Chose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/ OR A NUMBER** from the passage for each answer.

32. Besides aggressiveness, what negative personality trait are older siblings believed to have as a result of being born earlier than other children?

33. How many children did Francis Galton's parents probably have?

34. What did Sulloway believe as a measure to mould people's personalities, instread of a direct contributing factor?

Questions 35-40

Looking at the following statements (Questions 35-40) and the list of people's names below.

Match each statement with the correct person, **A-D**

Write the correct letter, **A-D**, in boxes 35-40 on your answer sheet.

35. Lastborns' negative qualities result fom parents' overindulgence.

36. Test results of analyzing data adequately are randomly false.

37. One's personality is indirectly shaped by his or her position in family.

38. There should not be doubt about the significance of birth rate.

39. The association between intellect and birth order are hard to pick out.

40. Surveys about controlling confounding factors requires long a period of time to conduct.

List of names	
A. Francis Galton	B. Alfred Adler
C. Frank Sulloway	D. Julia Rohrer

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