Reading Comprehension – Test 5

Name: Class: Date: Score: / 20

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Read each text carefully and choose the best answer (A, B, C or D) for each question.

Part 1: Magazine article

Read the article about the psychology of waiting and answer questions 1-7.

Why the Wait Feels Longer Than It Is

Most of us have stood in a queue that seemed to last forever, only to check the time and discover that barely five minutes had passed. According to researchers who study the psychology of waiting, this gap between real time and felt time is not our imagination. How long a wait feels depends far less on the clock than on what happens to us while we wait.

One of the most consistent findings is that unoccupied time drags. When people have nothing to do, they pay attention to time itself, and time that is watched closely seems to slow down. This is why many hotels place mirrors beside their lifts: guests who are busy checking their hair complain less about slow lifts, even though the lifts are no faster.

Uncertainty makes things worse. A delay of twenty minutes is far easier to bear when we know it will be twenty minutes. "The real enemy is not the length of the wait but not knowing," explains Dr Helena Varga, a behavioural scientist who has advised several transport companies. "Once a screen tells passengers when the next train is coming, complaints drop sharply, even when the service itself hasn't improved at all."

Fairness matters too. People will often accept a long wait in a single line more happily than a shorter wait in several parallel lines, because in the second case they can see others being served first. Watching someone who arrived after you reach the front can turn mild impatience into genuine anger.

Interestingly, the end of an experience colours our memory of the whole thing. Some theme parks deliberately overestimate the waiting times on their signs. Visitors who are told to expect forty minutes and are then on the ride after thirty leave feeling pleasantly surprised rather than cheated.

Varga believes these lessons apply well beyond shops and stations. "Hospitals, call centres, even websites that take a while to load: all of them can make waiting less painful without spending a fortune on speed," she says. "Often the cheapest improvement is simply to keep people informed and treat them as if their time matters."

1. Which sentence best summarises the central idea of the article?
   A Most queues are actually much shorter than people believe.
   B People today are less patient than they were in the past.
   C How a wait feels depends largely on the situation, not only on its length.
   D Companies should invest more money in making their services faster.

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2. According to the article, why do some hotels put mirrors next to their lifts?
   A To give guests something to do so the wait seems shorter
   B To make the lift area look larger and more attractive
   C To help guests notice when the lift doors are opening
   D To encourage guests to use the stairs instead

3. According to Dr Varga, what upsets people most while they are waiting?
   A Standing in a crowded place
   B Seeing that the service has not improved
   C Waiting for more than twenty minutes
   D Not knowing how long the wait will last

4. In paragraph 2, the phrase "unoccupied time drags" means that time with nothing to do _____.
   A goes by without being noticed
   B seems to pass very slowly
   C makes people feel tired
   D is wasted and cannot be recovered

5. What can be inferred about why people often prefer one long queue to several shorter ones?
   A A single queue always moves faster than several queues.
   B Shorter queues are usually badly organised by staff.
   C In a single queue, nobody who arrived later is served first.
   D People enjoy talking to others in a long queue.

6. Why do some theme parks show waiting times that are longer than the real ones?
   A So that visitors finish the wait feeling it was better than expected
   B So that fewer visitors decide to join the queue
   C So that staff have extra time to prepare the ride
   D So that visitors buy food and drinks while they wait

7. In the final paragraph, what does Dr Varga suggest?
   A Websites are now more important than hospitals or call centres.
   B Only transport companies can benefit from this research.
   C Making services faster is the only real solution to long waits.
   D Organisations can reduce frustration with simple, inexpensive measures.

Part 2: Job application letter

Read the letter and answer questions 8-13.

Dear Ms Lindqvist,

I am writing to apply for the position of Weekend Learning Assistant at the Harbourside Science Centre, as advertised on your website. Having visited the centre many times with my younger cousins, I know how much effort goes into making science feel exciting rather than intimidating, and I would very much like to be part of that.

I am currently in the second year of a degree in environmental science, so I have a solid grounding in the subjects covered by many of your exhibits. However, I appreciate that knowing the facts is only half the job. What matters just as much is being able to explain an idea to a curious eight-year-old and to their grandparent in the same conversation. For the past eighteen months, I have worked part-time as a swimming instructor for children aged five to eleven, a role that has taught me patience and the importance of adapting my explanations to each child. I have also learnt to stay calm when a session doesn't go according to plan, which I imagine happens fairly often on a busy Saturday at the centre.

Last summer, I volunteered at a coastal nature festival, where I ran a rock-pool activity for families. At first, I relied heavily on a prepared script, but I quickly realised that children engaged far more when I

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let their questions lead the discussion. By the end of the week, I had abandoned the script almost entirely. That experience convinced me that hands-on learning is the most effective way to spark an interest in science.

I should mention that I am not available on the first weekend of each month during term time, when I attend compulsory field trips for my course. I would, however, be happy to make up these hours during the school holidays, when I understand the centre is at its busiest.

I have attached my CV and the contact details of two referees. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my application further and could attend an interview on any weekday afternoon.

Yours sincerely,

Joaquin Ferreira

8. Why does Joaquin mention visiting the centre with his younger cousins?
   A To explain why he is applying for a weekend job
   B To show that he already understands and values what the centre tries to do
   C To suggest that his cousins could join the centre's activities
   D To complain that some exhibits were difficult for children

9. When Joaquin writes that "knowing the facts is only half the job", he means that _____.
   A explaining ideas well to different people is just as important as knowledge
   B he does not yet know enough about science to do the job
   C the job is only part-time, so it is not very demanding
   D most visitors are not interested in scientific facts

10. According to the letter, what has Joaquin's work as a swimming instructor taught him?
    A How to plan sessions so that nothing goes wrong
    B How to teach older adults as well as children
    C How to be patient and adjust his explanations to each child
    D How to manage large groups on busy weekends

11. What did Joaquin learn from running the rock-pool activity?
    A A prepared script is essential when working with families.
    B Children are less interested in nature than in other sciences.
    C Activities for families should be shorter than one week.
    D Children become more involved when their own questions guide the activity.

12. In paragraph 3, the word "spark" in "spark an interest" is closest in meaning to _____.
    A start **B** measure **C** test **D** replace

13. Which statement about Joaquin's availability is true?
    A He cannot work at all during the school holidays.
    B He is unavailable on some weekends but offers to work extra hours in the holidays.
    C He can only attend an interview at the weekend.
    D He will miss every weekend while he is on field trips.

Part 3: Short story

Read the story and answer questions 14-20.

The Night the Kitchen Found Its Rhythm

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By half past six, every table at Corvo was booked, and Ibrahim had been a junior cook there for exactly three weeks. He was slicing onions when Chef Delphine came out of her office, pale and holding her phone.

"My daughter's been taken to hospital," she said quietly. "It's nothing serious, they think, but I have to go." She looked around the kitchen. Marco, her deputy, was on holiday. The two other cooks avoided her eyes. Then she looked at Ibrahim. "You know the menu. You've watched me run the pass every night. You'll call the orders."

Before he could object, she had gone.

For the first hour, it was chaos. Ibrahim's voice, which he had always thought of as reasonably loud, seemed to vanish under the hiss of the grills. Orders piled up. A plate of fish went out without its sauce and came straight back. Finally, Sana, who had worked at Corvo for six years, tapped him on the shoulder.

"Stop asking," she said. "You keep saying, 'Could someone maybe do the lamb?' Nobody moves for 'maybe'. Tell us."

He swallowed hard. "Lamb, two minutes. Sana, risotto now, please." To his astonishment, she nodded and turned back to the stove without a word.

Something shifted after that. He stopped apologising for every request and started watching the whole kitchen instead of the single ticket in front of him. He noticed when the dishwasher was falling behind and sent someone to help before the clean plates ran out. By nine o'clock, the tickets were arriving faster than ever, yet the kitchen had settled into a strange, steady rhythm, like a song everyone suddenly knew the words to.

When the last dessert went out, nobody cheered. Sana simply handed him a glass of water and said, "Not bad, for someone who says 'maybe'."

The next morning, Delphine called to say her daughter was fine. Then she asked how service had gone.

Ibrahim thought about the returned fish, the shaking in his hands, and the moment the kitchen had finally started listening.

"We got through it," he said. He decided the rest could wait until he was sure he could tell it without sounding proud.

14. Why did Delphine choose Ibrahim to call the orders?
    A He had asked her several times for more responsibility.
    B He was the most experienced cook in the kitchen that night.
    C Her deputy was away, the other cooks seemed unwilling, and he had watched her do the job.
    D Sana had recommended him because he had a loud voice.

15. "Ibrahim's voice... seemed to vanish under the hiss of the grills." This means that _____.
    A the noise of the kitchen made it hard for anyone to hear him
    B he was too nervous to say anything at all
    C he lost his voice because of the heat and smoke
    D the other cooks deliberately ignored what he said

16. What was Sana's advice to Ibrahim?
    A He should ask Delphine to come back to the kitchen.
    B He should cook the lamb himself instead of asking others.
    C He should apologise to the customers for the delays.
    D He should give clear instructions instead of uncertain, polite requests.

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17. What does the phrase "To his astonishment" show about Ibrahim?
    A He was annoyed that Sana did not reply to him.
    B He had not expected an experienced cook to follow his direct order so easily.
    C He was surprised that the risotto was already cooked.
    D He thought Sana was about to leave the kitchen.

18. Which change in Ibrahim's approach helped the service improve?
    A He started working more slowly to avoid mistakes.
    B He asked the customers to wait longer for their food.
    C He began paying attention to the whole kitchen and dealing with problems early.
    D He let Sana take over the job of calling the orders.

19. The comparison "like a song everyone suddenly knew the words to" suggests that the kitchen was _____.
    A working together smoothly and naturally
    B full of people singing while they cooked
    C quieter than it had been earlier
    D getting fewer orders than before

20. Why does Ibrahim give Delphine such a short answer about the evening?
    A He is embarrassed because the service was a complete failure.
    B He does not want Delphine to find out about the returned fish.
    C He is too tired to talk to her on the phone.
    D He does not want to seem boastful about how well he did.

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Answer key – Reading Comprehension – Test 5

1 C	2 A	3 D	4 B	5 C	6 A	7 D	8 B	9 A	10 C
11 D	12 A	13 B	14 C	15 A	16 D	17 B	18 C	19 A	20 D

Explanations

1. **C** – The first paragraph says felt time depends 'far less on the clock than on what happens to us while we wait', and the rest of the article develops this idea.
2. **A** – Guests who are busy checking their hair complain less because the time is occupied, even though the lifts are no faster.
3. **D** – She says 'the real enemy is not the length of the wait but not knowing'.
4. **B** – 'Drag' here means to pass slowly, which is shown by the next sentence: watched time 'seems to slow down'.
5. **C** – The writer explains that parallel lines let people see others being served first, which feels unfair; a single line avoids this.
6. **A** – Visitors told to expect forty minutes who wait only thirty feel 'pleasantly surprised', because the end of an experience colours the memory of it.
7. **D** – She says waiting can be made less painful 'without spending a fortune on speed', for example by keeping people informed.
8. **B** – He says the visits showed him how much effort goes into making science exciting, which shows he understands the centre's aims.
9. **A** – He goes on to say that being able to explain an idea to both a child and a grandparent 'matters just as much'.
10. **C** – He says the role 'has taught me patience and the importance of adapting my explanations to each child'.
11. **D** – He noticed that children 'engaged far more when I let their questions lead the discussion'.
12. **A** – To 'spark' an interest means to start it or make it begin.
13. **B** – He cannot work on the first weekend of each month during term time, but offers to make up the hours in the school holidays.
14. **C** – Marco was on holiday, the other cooks 'avoided her eyes', and she says he has watched her run the pass every night.
15. **A** – His voice 'vanished' because the sound of the grills was louder than it.
16. **D** – She tells him 'Stop asking… Nobody moves for "maybe". Tell us.'
17. **B** – Ibrahim was surprised that Sana, who had six years at Corvo, simply nodded and did what he asked.
18. **C** – He started 'watching the whole kitchen' and sent help to the dishwasher 'before the clean plates ran out'.
19. **A** – The simile describes the team moving in a shared, steady rhythm, even though the tickets were arriving faster.
20. **D** – He decides to wait until he can tell the story 'without sounding proud'.

Notes for teachers: Allow about 40 minutes, or set one section per lesson for shorter practice. Many distractors repeat words from the text but distort their meaning, which trains students to check the whole context instead of matching words. Inference and figurative-language questions (similes, phrases such as 'drags' or 'spark') often cause the most errors, so they are worth going through together afterwards. For follow-up, students could write their own job application letter or retell the story from Sana's point of view.

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