

Reading Comprehension – Test 1

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ Score: / 20



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answers instantly

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 repair cafés and answer questions 1-7.

Fixing the Future, One Toaster at a Time

On the first Saturday of every month, a community hall on the edge of town undergoes an unlikely transformation. Folding tables are covered with screwdrivers, soldering irons and spools of thread, and by ten o'clock a queue has formed at the door. People arrive clutching lamps that flicker, jackets with broken zips and radios that fell silent years ago. They have come not to buy replacements, but to learn how to bring their belongings back to life.

Repair cafés, as these gatherings are known, began as a modest experiment more than a decade ago and have since spread to thousands of locations worldwide. Volunteers – retired engineers, tailors, students who have taught themselves electronics – offer their time and expertise free of charge. Crucially, they do not simply take an object away and return it fixed. Visitors are expected to sit alongside them and take part, so that the next time something breaks, they might attempt the repair themselves.

At first glance, the movement appears to be primarily about reducing waste, and its environmental credentials are certainly impressive. Organisers at one café estimate that they have kept several tonnes of electrical goods out of landfill. Yet many regulars insist that the real appeal lies elsewhere. 'I came because my coffee machine had stopped working,' says Priya Nair, a teacher who now volunteers as a host. 'I stayed because it was the first time in years I'd had a proper conversation with my neighbours.'

This social dimension may explain why the movement has proved so resilient. In an era when much of daily life is mediated by screens, there is something quietly radical about strangers bending over a broken kettle together, trading theories about what might have gone wrong. Failure is common – not everything can be saved – but it is rarely treated as a disappointment. Even an unsuccessful repair tends to end with the owner understanding a little more about how the object was made.

Not everyone is convinced, however. Critics point out that repair cafés, however well-intentioned, cannot by themselves counter an economy built on rapid replacement. Many modern devices are deliberately difficult to open, and spare parts can be expensive or simply unavailable. Some manufacturers have responded to public pressure by publishing repair manuals, but campaigners argue that only legislation guaranteeing a 'right to repair' will bring about meaningful change.

The volunteers themselves tend to be pragmatic about such debates. 'We're not going to transform the global economy from a community hall,' admits Tomás Ferreira, a former electrician who has been fixing appliances at his local café for six years. 'But every time someone leaves here with a working lamp and a bit more confidence, that's a small shift in how people think about the things they own. Small shifts add up.'

1. What is the writer's main purpose in the article?
 - A To persuade readers to volunteer at their nearest repair café
 - B To examine a movement whose value goes beyond simply fixing objects
 - C To criticise manufacturers for making devices difficult to repair
 - D To explain step by step how to organise a community repair event
2. According to the article, what distinguishes repair cafés from a conventional repair service?
 - A The repairs are carried out by qualified professionals only
 - B Objects are collected and returned the following month
 - C Visitors are expected to take part in the repair themselves
 - D Only electrical items are accepted for repair
3. What can be inferred from Priya Nair's comment?
 - A She now values the café mainly for the human contact it offers
 - B She was disappointed that her coffee machine could not be fixed
 - C She already knew most of her neighbours well before her first visit
 - D She volunteers because she wants to teach repair skills to her students
4. The word 'resilient' in paragraph 4 is closest in meaning to:
 - A fashionable
 - B controversial
 - C rapidly growing
 - D able to continue despite difficulties
5. By describing strangers repairing a kettle together as 'quietly radical', the writer suggests that...
 - A the activity is too modest to have any real impact
 - B an ordinary act gently challenges the way most people now live
 - C volunteers are deliberately trying to provoke manufacturers
 - D the cafés must remain quiet so that people can concentrate
6. Which statement best reflects the view of the critics and campaigners?
 - A Repair cafés are harmful because they discourage people from buying new goods
 - B Publishing repair manuals has already solved the problem of rapid replacement
 - C Repair cafés alone cannot change a system that depends on constant replacement
 - D Spare parts are now cheap and easy to find for most modern devices
7. Which phrase best describes Tomás Ferreira's attitude towards the movement?
 - A Realistic but hopeful
 - B Dismissive
 - C Naively idealistic
 - D Bitter and frustrated

Part 2: Short story

Read the short story and answer questions 8-14.

The Translator

For eleven years, Lena Okafor had translated other people's words, and she had become so skilled at disappearing into them that she sometimes forgot she had words of her own. Novels, contracts, instruction manuals for machines she would never see – each arrived in one language and left in another, smoothed and polished, with no trace of her fingerprints. That, she had always believed, was the mark of a good translator: to be invisible.

The letter from the publisher changed that. It was brief and courteous, and it asked whether she would consider writing a short introduction to her latest translation, a collection of stories by an elderly author who had died the previous spring. 'Readers would value your perspective,' the editor had written. 'You have spent more time inside these stories than anyone alive.'

Lena read the sentence several times. It was true, of course, and yet it unsettled her. She had spent eight months with those stories, arguing with their author in her head over the meaning of a single verb, waking at night convinced she had misjudged the tone of an ending. She knew the author's habits as intimately as she knew her own: his fondness for weather, his reluctance to let any character be entirely happy, the way his sentences grew longer whenever he wrote about the sea. But to set all that down under her own name felt like stepping onto a stage after years in the prompter's box.

She began the introduction four times. The first draft was a dry list of facts – dates, titles, prizes – that could have been written by anyone. The second was so full of praise that it read like an advertisement. The third, which she abandoned halfway through, was mostly about herself, and she deleted it with a shiver of embarrassment.

On the fourth attempt, she stopped trying to explain the author and wrote instead about a single problem she had never solved. In one story, a fisherman's wife says a word to her husband that, in the original, means both 'stay' and 'wait'. There was no equivalent in English. Lena had chosen 'wait', and for eight months she had wondered whether the woman was really asking her husband to stay.

She wrote about that word for two pages. She admitted that she did not know the answer, and that perhaps the author had not known either. When she had finished, she read it aloud in her empty kitchen, and for the first time in eleven years she heard a voice that was unmistakably her own.

She sent it to the editor before she could change her mind.

8. At the beginning of the story, Lena believes that a good translator should...
- A** add their own style to improve the original
 - B** translate only literary works rather than manuals
 - C** always consult the author about difficult passages
 - D** leave no visible sign of their own presence in the text
9. Why did the editor's sentence unsettle Lena?
- A** She suspected that the editor had not read her translation
 - B** Although it was accurate, it pushed her towards a public role she was not used to
 - C** She felt that eight months was not enough time to understand the stories
 - D** She disagreed with the editor's opinion of the late author
10. What does the phrase 'stepping onto a stage after years in the prompter's box' suggest about Lena?
- A** She once had ambitions to become an actor
 - B** She feels she has been treated unfairly by publishers
 - C** She is moving from a hidden, supporting role to a visible one
 - D** She is tired of translating and wants a new career
11. Why did Lena delete her third draft?
- A** It focused more on her than on the stories
 - B** It was simply a list of dates and prizes
 - C** It praised the author too enthusiastically
 - D** It was longer than the editor had requested
12. Which of the following is true about the author's writing, according to the story?
- A** His sentences became shorter when he described the sea
 - B** He rarely allowed any of his characters to be completely happy
 - C** He avoided describing the weather in his stories
 - D** He usually wrote stories with clear, happy endings

13. What made the fourth draft different from the others?
- A It explained the author's life in greater detail
 - B It offered a definitive interpretation of the fisherman's wife
 - C It was written with help from the editor
 - D It honestly explored a question she had been unable to resolve
14. The final sentence, 'She sent it to the editor before she could change her mind', implies that Lena...
- A was confident the editor would reject the introduction
 - B feared that hesitating might stop her from sharing it
 - C had been given an extremely tight deadline
 - D regretted writing about the problem of the single word

Part 3: Workplace email

Read the email and answer questions 15-20.

Subject: Proposed changes to the shared project space

Dear colleagues,

As many of you will be aware, the working group set up in the spring to review how we use the third-floor project space has now completed its consultation. I'd like to thank everyone who completed the survey or attended one of the drop-in sessions; over seventy of you took part, which is considerably more than we had anticipated.

The headline finding will probably come as no surprise. While the open layout was originally intended to encourage collaboration between departments, most respondents told us that it now does the opposite. Noise levels make focused work difficult, meeting rooms are booked weeks in advance, and several people admitted that they now avoid the space altogether, preferring to work from home on days when they need to concentrate. In other words, a facility designed to bring people together has, in practice, been driving some of them away.

On the basis of these findings, the working group is proposing three changes, which we intend to trial for an initial period of three months from the start of next term.

First, the eastern end of the floor will be designated a quiet zone, where phone calls and conversations will not be permitted. Second, two of the larger meeting rooms will no longer be available for advance booking and will instead operate on a first-come, first-served basis, so that informal discussions can take place without weeks of planning. Third, we will introduce a 'collaboration morning' every Wednesday, during which teams are encouraged to be on site at the same time.

I should stress that none of these measures is final. The trial is precisely that – an opportunity to test our assumptions before committing to any permanent alterations, some of which would involve significant cost. We are particularly keen to hear from colleagues whose working patterns may not fit neatly into the proposed arrangements, such as those with caring responsibilities or those who work part-time, as we are conscious that a single approach is unlikely to suit everyone.

A short feedback form will be circulated at the end of each month of the trial. In the meantime, if you have any immediate concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me directly or to raise them with your department's representative on the working group.

I recognise that changes to a shared space can be unsettling, and that some of you have grown used to working in particular ways. I hope, however, that you will approach the trial in a spirit of openness. If it doesn't work, we will say so and try something else.

With best wishes,

15. What is the main purpose of the email?
- A** To announce permanent changes to the layout of the third floor
 - B** To ask staff to stop working from home
 - C** To share the consultation findings and outline a trial of new arrangements
 - D** To invite colleagues to join the working group
16. According to the email, what was the key problem identified by the consultation?
- A** A space intended to encourage collaboration was actually driving people away
 - B** Too few staff had responded to the survey to draw firm conclusions
 - C** Departments were refusing to share meeting rooms with each other
 - D** The third floor was too small for the number of employees
17. Why will two of the larger meeting rooms no longer be bookable in advance?
- A** To reduce the cost of managing the booking system
 - B** To make them available for the quiet zone
 - C** To allow informal discussions to take place without long planning
 - D** To reserve them only for the Wednesday collaboration mornings
18. In paragraph 4, the word 'designated' is closest in meaning to:
- A** temporarily closed as
 - B** redecorated as
 - C** informally suggested as
 - D** officially assigned as
19. Why does the writer mention colleagues with caring responsibilities or part-time contracts?
- A** To explain why they will be excluded from the trial
 - B** To acknowledge that the proposals may not suit everyone and to invite their views
 - C** To announce that they will have priority access to the meeting rooms
 - D** To criticise them for not attending the drop-in sessions
20. Which best describes the tone of the final paragraph?
- A** Reassuring and open to the possibility of failure
 - B** Impatient and demanding
 - C** Formal and indifferent
 - D** Apologetic and regretful about the decision

Answer key – Reading Comprehension – Test 1

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

Explanations

- B** – The article covers both the environmental and the social side of repair cafés and weighs criticism of them, rather than persuading, attacking or instructing.
- C** – The text says volunteers do not simply return objects fixed; visitors sit alongside them and take part.
- A** – She came for a repair but stayed because of the conversations with her neighbours.
- D** – 'Resilient' describes something that survives and continues despite challenges.
- B** – The phrase contrasts a simple face-to-face activity with screen-dominated modern life, a subtle form of challenge.
- C** – Critics say the cafés cannot 'by themselves' counter an economy built on rapid replacement, and campaigners call for legislation.
- A** – He admits the cafés won't transform the economy but believes 'small shifts add up'.
- D** – She believed the mark of a good translator was 'to be invisible', leaving 'no trace of her fingerprints'.
- B** – She admits the sentence 'was true', but writing under her own name felt like stepping into the spotlight.
- C** – A prompter helps actors from out of sight, so the image shows her moving from an unseen role into public view.
- A** – The third draft 'was mostly about herself', and she deleted it with embarrassment.
- B** – The text mentions 'his reluctance to let any character be entirely happy'.
- D** – She wrote about a translation problem she had never solved and admitted she did not know the answer.
- B** – Acting 'before she could change her mind' shows she worried her doubts might return if she waited.
- C** – The email reports the consultation results and proposes a three-month trial, stressing that nothing is final.
- A** – The writer says a facility 'designed to bring people together' has been 'driving some of them away'.
- C** – The rooms will be first-come, first-served 'so that informal discussions can take place without weeks of planning'.
- D** – To 'designate' an area means to officially give it a particular purpose or status.
- B** – The writer is 'particularly keen to hear from' them because 'a single approach is unlikely to suit everyone'.
- A** – The writer acknowledges people's concerns, asks for openness and admits 'if it doesn't work, we will say so'.

Notes for teachers: Give students about 15 minutes per text, or use one section as a short in-class task. Many questions target typical C1 traps: options that repeat words from the text but distort the meaning, and literal readings of figurative language such as 'quietly radical' or 'the prompter's box'. Afterwards, ask students to find and underline the exact evidence for each answer. As a follow-up, they could write a response to the email or a short opinion paragraph on repair culture.