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NSF's Fiscal Year 2024 enacted budget Percent of budget supporting research, education and related activities Organizations supported by NSF across every state and U.S. territory Researchers, entrepreneurs, students and teachers supported by NSF Learn more about our impacts Reading Passage 3 Cleaning up the Thames The River Thames, which was biologically “dead” as recently as the 1960s, is now the cleanest metropolitan river in the world, according to the Thames Water Company. The company says that thanks to major investment in better sewage treatment in London and the Thames Valley, the river that flows through the United Kingdom capital and the Thames Estuary into the North Sea is cleaner now than it has been for 130 years. The Fisheries Department, who are responsible for monitoring fish levels in the River Thames, has reported that the river has again become the home to 115 species of fish including sea bass, flounder, salmon, smelt, and shad. Recently, a porpoise was spotted cavorting in the river near central London. But things were not always so rosy. In the 1950s, sewer outflows and industrial effluent had killed the river. It had starved of oxygen and could no longer support aquatic life. Until the early 1970s, if you fell into the Thames you would have had to be rushed to the hospital to get your stomach pumped. A clean-up operation began in the 1960s. Several Parliamentary Committees and Royal Commissions were set up, and, over time, legislation has been introduced that put the onus on polluters-effluent-producing premises and businesses to dispose of waste responsibly. In 1964 the Greater London Council (GLC) began work on greatly enlarged sewage works, which had completed in 1974. The Thames clean up is not over, though. It is still going on, and it involves many disparate arms of government and a wide range of non-government stakeholder groups, all representing a necessary aspect of the task. In London’s case, the urban and non-urban London boroughs that flank the river’s course each has its own reasons for keeping “their” river nice. And if their own reasons do not hold out a sufficiently attractive carrot, the government also wields a compelling stick. The 2000 Local Government Act requires each local borough to “prepare a community strategy for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area.” And if your area includes a stretch of river, that means a sustainable river development strategy. Further legislation aimed at improving and sustaining the river’s viability has been proposed. There is now legislation that protects the River Thames, either specifically or as part of a general environmental clause, in the Local Government Act, the London Acts, and the law that created the post of the mayor of London. And these are only the tip of an iceberg that includes industrial, public health and environmental protection regulations. The result is a wide range of bodies officially charged, in one way or another, with maintaining the Thames as a public amenity. For example, Transport for London – the agency responsible for transport in the capital – plays a role in regulating river use and river users. They now are responsible for controlling the effluents and rubbish coming from craft using the Thames. This is done by officers on official vessels regularly inspecting craft and doing spot checks. Another example is how Thames Water (TW) has now been charged to reduce the amount of litter that finds its way into the tidal river and its tributaries. TW’s environment and quality manager, Dr. Peter Spillett, said: “This project will build on our investment which has dramatically improved the water quality of the river. “London should not be spoiled by litter which belongs in the bin not the river.” Thousands of tons of rubbish end up in the river each year, from badly stored waste, people throwing litter off boats, and rubbish in the street being blown or washed into the river. Once litter hits the water it becomes too heavy to be blown away again and therefore the rivers act as a sink in the system. While the Port of London already collects up to 3,000 tons of solid waste from the tideway every year, Thames Water now plans to introduce a new device to capture more rubbish floating down the river. It consists of a huge cage that sits in the flow of water and gathers the passing rubbish. Moored just offshore in front of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, south-east London, the device is expected to capture up to 20 tons of floating litter each year. If washed out to sea, this rubbish can kill marine mammals, fish, and birds. This machine, known as the Rubbish Muncher, is hoped to be the first of many, as the TW is now looking for sponsors to pay for more cages elsewhere along the Thames. Monitoring of the cleanliness of the River Thames in the past was the responsibility of a welter of agencies – British Waterways, Port of London Authority, the Environment Agency, the Health and Safety Commission, Thames Water – as well as academic departments and national and local environment groups. If something was not right, someone had bound to call foul and hold somebody to account, whether it was the local authority, an individual polluter, or any of the many public and private sector bodies that bore a share of the responsibility for maintaining the River Thames as a public amenity. Although they will all still have their part to play, there is now a central department in the Environment Agency, which has the remit of monitoring the Thames. This centralization of accountability will, it is hoped, lead to more efficient control and enforcement. [Source: US Water News 2000] Questions 27-32 Some of the actions taken to clean up the River Thames are listed below. The writer gives these actions as examples of things that have been done by various agencies connected with the River Thames. Match each action with the agency responsible for doing it. Write the appropriate letters (A-G) in boxes 27-32 on your answer sheet. Actions to clean up the River Thames A. Operating the Rubbish Muncher B. Creating Community Strategies C. Monitoring the Cleanliness of the River Thames D. Monitoring Fish Levels E. Collecting Solid Waste from the Tideway F. Creating Enlarged Sewage Works G. Controlling the River Thames’ Traffic 27. The Environment Agency 28. Transport for London 29. The Greater London Council 30. Thames Water 31. Port of London 32. Local Boroughs Questions 33–40 Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer of the reading passage on Cleaning up the Thames? In Boxes 32-39 write: YES – if the statement agrees with the writer NO – if the statement doesn’t agree with the writer NOT GIVEN – if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this 33. The Thames is now cleaner than it was in 1900. 34. Swimming in the Thames now poses no health hazards. 35. It is now mainly the responsibility of those who pollute the Thames to clean their waste up. 36. All local London boroughs are now partly responsible for keeping the Thames clean. 37. Transport for London now employs a type of River Police to enforce control of their regulations. 38. Rubbish Munchers are now situated at various locations on the Thames. 39. Previously no one department had overall responsibility or control for monitoring the cleanliness of the Thames. 40. British Waterways will no longer have any part in keeping the Thames clean. Cleaning up the Thames IELTS Reading Answers 27. C 28. G 29. F 30. A 31. E 32. B 33. YES 34. NOT GIVEN 35. NO 36. YES 37. YES 38. NO 39. YES 40. NO Also Check: Prison the Solution or the Problem IELTS Reading Academic Answers Explanation Cleaning Up The Thames IELTS Reading Answers Explanation READING PASSAGE 3 This passage explores the concept of dual-process thinking, introducing System 1 and System 2 as two distinct modes of thought. System 1 is fast, intuitive, and automatic, while System 2 is slow, deliberate, and effortful. The passage highlights the influence of System 1 on our judgments and decisions, often leading to biases and irrational thinking. Practice Exercises: True/False/Not Given: Determine whether the following statements are true, false, or not given based on the information in the passage. Match the Information: Match headings to the appropriate paragraphs or sections. Summary: Briefly summarize the main points discussed in the passage. Multiple Choice Questions: Choose the correct answer from a list of options. By practicing these exercises and focusing on the key aspects of IELTS reading, you can improve your comprehension skills and achieve a higher score on the exam. Real IELTS Exam Question, Reported On: Thinking Fast and Slow IELTS Reading Passage You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 27-40 based on Reading Passage 3 below. Thinking, Fast and Slow The idea that we are ignorant of our true selves surged in the 20th century and became common. It’s still a commonplace, but it’s changing shape. These days, the bulk of the explanation is done by something else: the ‘dual-process’ model of the brain. We now know that we apprehend the world in two radically opposed ways, employing two fundamentally different modes of thought: ‘System 1’ and ‘System 2’. System 1 is fast; it’s intuitive, associative and automatic and it can’t be switched off. Its operations involve no sense of intentional control, but it’s the “secret author of many of the choices and judgments you make” and it’s the hero of Daniel Kahneman’s alarming, intellectually stimulating book Thinking, Fast and Slow. System 2 is slow, deliberate and effortful. Its operations require attention. (To set it going now, ask yourself the question “What is 13 x 27?”). System 2 takes over, rather unwillingly, when things get tricky. It’s “the conscious being you call ‘I’”, and one of Kahneman’s main points is that this is a mistake. You’re wrong to identify with System 2, for you are also and equally and profoundly System 1. Kahneman compares System 2 to a supporting character who believes herself to be the lead actor and often has little idea of what’s going on. System 2 is slothful, and tires easily (a process called ‘ego depletion’) – so it usually accepts what System 1 tells it. It’s often right to do so, because System 1 is for the most part pretty good at what it does; it’s highly sensitive to subtle environmental cues, signs of danger, and so on. It does, however, pay a high price for speed. It loves to simplify, to assume WYSIATI (‘what you see is all there is’). It’s hopelessly bad at the kind of statistical thinking often required for good decisions, it jumps wildly to conclusions and it’s subject to a fantastic range of irrational cognitive biases and interference effects, such as confirmation bias and hindsight bias, to name but two. The general point about our self-ignorance extends beyond the details of Systems 1 and 2. We’re astonishingly susceptible to being influenced by features of our surroundings. One famous (pre-mobile phone) experiment centred on a New York City phone booth. Each time a person came out of the booth after having made a call, an accident was staged – someone dropped all her papers on the pavement. Sometimes a dime had been placed in the phone booth, sometimes not (a dime was then enough to make a call). If there was no dime in the phone booth, only 4% of the exiting callers helped to pick up the papers. If there was a dime, no fewer than 88% helped. Since then, thousands of other experiments have been conducted, all to the same general effect. We don’t know who we are or what we’re like, we don’t know what we’re really doing and we don’t know why we’re doing it. For example, Judges think they make considered decisions about parole based strictly on the facts of the case. It turns out (to simplify only slightly) that it is their blood-sugar levels really sitting in judgment. If you hold a pencil between your teeth, forcing your mouth into the shape of a smile, you’ll find a cartoon funnier than if you hold the pencil pointing forward, by pursing your lips round it in a frown-inducing way. In an experiment designed to test the ‘anchoring effect’, highly experienced judges were given a description of a shoplifting offence. They were then ‘anchored’ to different numbers by being asked to roll a pair of dice that had been secretly loaded to produce only two totals – three or nine. Finally, they were asked whether the prison sentence for the shoplifting offence should be greater or fewer, in months, than the total showing on the dice. Normally the judges would have made extremely similar judgments, but those who had just rolled nine proposed an average of eight months while those who had rolled three proposed an average of only five months. All were unaware of the anchoring effect. The same goes for all of us, almost all the time. We think we’re smart; we’re confident we won’t be unconsciously swayed by the high list price of a house. We’re wrong. (Kahneman admits his own inability to counter some of these effects.) For example, another systematic error involves ‘duration neglect’ and the ‘peak-end rule’. Looking back on our experience of pain, we prefer a larger, longer amount to a shorter, smaller amount, just so long as the closing stages of the greater pain were easier to bear than the closing stages of the lesser one. Questions 27-31 Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D. Write the correct letter in boxes 27-31 on your answer sheet. 27. The dual process model of the brain is A. The common practice of thinking about two things at the same time. B. The conflicting impulses pushing the brain to make both more and less effort, C. The feeling of liking and not liking something simultaneously. D. The natural tendency to make sense of the world in two different ways. 28. System 2 takes charge of decision-making when A. When the brain needs a rest. B. When more mental effort is required. C. When a person feels excessively confident. D. When a dangerous situation is developing. 29. ‘Confirmation bias’ is an example of A. System 1 rushing to judgment. B. System 1 making a careful judgment. C. System 1 making a brave judgment D. System 1 judging a situation based on facts. 30. The main conclusion of the phone booth experiment was that A. People are more likely to help someone that they are attracted to. B. People are more responsive to their environment than they realize. C. People are more likely to be helpful if they think they will be rewarded. D. People are generally selfish and will always do what is best for themselves. 31. The ‘anchoring effect’ is the process by which A. Decisions are made using a numerical system. B. A subconscious factor may strongly influence our decision-making C. Decisions about prison sentences are made by rolling a dice. D. We may emphasize certain factor too much in our decision-making. Questions 32-36 Do the following statements agree with the claims of the writer in Reading Passage 3? In boxes 32-36 on your answer sheet, write TRUE if the statement agrees with the claims of the writer FALSE if the statement contradicts the claims of the writer NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this 32. In general, humans have become less rational over the last 100 years. 33. Most people lack a clear sense of their own personal identity. 34. A person can train themselves to use System 2 most of the time. 35. People who make important decisions should be made aware of the dual-process model. 36. In most everyday situations, people are capable of making calm and rational decisions. Questions 37-39 Complete each sentence with the correct ending, A-E, below. Write the correct letter, A-E, in boxes 37-39 on your answer sheet. 37. In the course of evolutionary history System 1 has served humans well because 38. Low blood sugar or tiredness may be factors in decision making because 39. The ‘peak-end rule’ shows us that A. feeling a certain way at the conclusion of an experience decides how we remember it. B. decision-making and judgments are made too quickly. C. having less energy means we are more likely to succumb to an irrational bias. D. being sensitive to ones’ surroundings is a useful survival skill. E. wanting more food or drink may distract us from the decision we are making. Question 40 Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D. Write the correct letter in box 40 on your answer sheet. What is the writer’s primary purpose in writing this article? A. to introduce their own research to the general reader B. to summarize and review a recently published book C. to argue against a commonly-held theory D. to encourage readers to question their own decision-making processes. Thinking Fast and Slow IELTS Reading Answers 27. D 28. B 29. A 30. B 31. B 32. NOT GIVEN 33. TRUE 34. NO 35. NOT GIVEN 36. NO 37. D 38. C 39. A 40. B Also Check: El Nino and Seabirds IELTS Reading Passage Curve Theatre in Leicester IELTS Reading with Answers Reading Passage 1 Curve Theatre in Leicester A. The Lumière Brothers opened their Cinematographe, at 14 Boulevard des Capucines in Paris, to 100 paying customers over 100 years ago, on December 8, 1985. Before the eyes of the stunned, thrilled audience, photographs came to life and moved across a flat screen. B. So ordinary and routine has this become to us that it takes a determined leap of imagination to grasp the impact of those first moving images. But it is worth trying, for to understand the initial shock of those images is to understand the extraordinary power and magic of cinema, the unique, hypnotic quality that has made films the most dynamic, effective art form of the 20th century. C. One of the Lumière Borthers’ earliest films was a 30-second piece which showed a section of a railway platform flooded with sunshine. A train appears and heads straight for the camera. And that is all that happens. Yet the Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky, one of the greatest of all film artists, described the film as a ‘work of genius’. ‘As the train approached,’ wrote Tarkovsky, ’panic started in the theatre: people jumped and ran away. That was the moment when cinema was born. The frightened audience could not accept that they were watching a mere picture. Pictures were still, only reality moved; this must, therefore, be reality. In their confusion, they feared that a real train was about to crush them.’ ielts-reading.com D. Early cinema audiences often experienced the same confusion. In time, the idea of films became familiar, the magic was accepted- but it never stopped being magic. Film has never lost its unique power to embrace its audience and transport them to a different world. For Tarkovsky, the key to that magic dynamic image of the real flow of events. A still picture could only imply the existence of time, while time in a novel passed at the whim of the reader. But in cinema, the real, objective flow of time was captured. E. One effect of this realism was to educate the world about itself. For cinema makes the world smaller. Long before people travelled to America or anywhere else, they knew what other places looked like; they knew how other people worked and lived. Overwhelmingly, the lives recorded at least in film fiction- have been American. From the earliest days of the industry, Hollywood has dominated the world film market. American imagery-the cars, the cities, the cowboys became the primary imagery of film. Film carried American life and values around the globe. ielts-reading.com F. And, thanks to film, future generations will know the 20-th century more intimately than any other period. We can only imagine what life was like in the 14th century or in classical Rome. But the life of the modern world has been recorded on film in massive encyclopaedic detail. We shall be known better than any preceding generations. G. The ‘star’ was another natural consequence of cinema. The cinema star was effectively born in 1910. Film personalities have such an immediate presence that inevitably, they become super-real. Because we watch them so closely and because everybody in the world seems to know who they are, they appear more real to us than we do ourselves. The star as magnified human self is one of cinema’s most strange and enduring legacies. H. Cinema has also given a new lease of life to the idea of the story. When the Lumiere Brothers and other pioneers began showing off this new invention, it was by no means obvious how it would be used. All that mattered at first was the wonder of movement. Indeed, some said that, once this novelty had worn off, cinema would fade away. It was no more than a passing gimmick, a fairground attraction. ielts-reading.com I. Cinema might, for example, have become primarily a documentary form. Or it might have developed like television -as a strange noisy transfer of music, information and narrative. But what happened was that it became, overwhelmingly, a medium for telling stories. Originally these were conceived as short stories- early producers doubted the ability of audiences to concentrate for more than the length of a reel. Then, in 1912, an Italian 2-hour film was hugely successful, and Hollywood settled upon the novel-length narrative that remains the dominant cinematic convention of today. J. And it has all happened so quickly. Almost unbelievably, it is a mere 100 years since that train arrived and the audience screamed and fled, convinced by the dangerous reality of what they saw, and, perhaps, suddenly aware that the world could never be the same again -that, maybe, it could be better, brighter, more astonishing, more real than reality. ielts-reading.com Questions 1-5 Reading Passage has ten paragraphs, A-J. Which paragraph contains the following information? Write the correct letter, A-J. in boxes 1-5 on your answer sheet. 1. the location of the first cinema 2. how cinema came to focus on stories 3. the speed with which cinema has changed 4. how cinema teaches us about other cultures 5. the attraction of actors in films ielts-reading.com Questions 6-9 Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading Passage 148? In boxes 6-9 on your answer sheet, write: YES if the statement agrees with the views of the writer NO if the statement contradicts the views of the writer NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this 6. It is important to understand how the first audiences reacted to the cinema. 7. The Lumiere Brothers’ film about the train was one of the greatest films ever made. 8. Cinema presents a biased view of other countries. 9. Storylines were important in very early cinema. Questions 10-13 Choose the correct letter. A, B, Cor D. Write the correct letter in boxes 10-13 on your answer sheet. 10. The writer refers lo the film of the train in order lo demonstrate A. the simplicity of early films. B. the impact of early films. C. how short early films were. D. how imaginative early films were. 11. In Tarkovsky’s opinion, the attraction of the cinema is that it A. aims to impress its audience. B. tells stories better through books. C. illustrates the passing of lime. D. describes familiar events. 12. When cinema first began, people thought that A. it would always tell stories. B. it should be used in fairgrounds. C. US audiences were unappreciative. D. its future was uncertain. 13. What is the best title for this passage? A. The rise of the cinema star B. Cinema and novels compared C. The domination of Hollywood D. The power of the big screen Curve Theare in Leicester Reading Answers 1. A 2. I 3. J 4. E 5. G 6. YES 7. NOT GIVEN 8. NOT GIVEN 9. NOT 10. B 11. C 12. D 13. D Also Check: Science in Space IELTS Reading General The Wolves Dogs and Humans IELTS Reading passage explores the fascinating relationship between wild wolves, domesticated dogs, and humans. This article provides a detailed answer key along with helpful explanations, making it an ideal resource for IELTS test-takers aiming to improve their academic reading techniques such as skimming, scanning, and critical thinking. The Wolves Dogs and Humans Reading answers explores the fascinating evolutionary relationship between wolves and modern dogs, and their connection with humans. It highlights how domestication and mutual benefit shaped this unique bond over time. In this article, you’ll find accurate Wolves Dogs and Humans Reading Answers, complete with brief explanations to help you prepare effectively for your IELTS Reading test. Reading Passage 1 Wolves Dogs and Humans There is no doubt that dogs are the oldest of all species tamed by humans and their domestication was based on a mutually beneficial relationship with man. The conventional view is that the domestication of wolves began between 10,000 and 20,000 years ago. However, a recent ground-breaking paper by a group of international geneticists has pushed this date back by a factor of 10. Led by Dr. Robert Wayne, at the University of California, Los Angeles, the team showed that all dog breeds had only one ancestor, the wolf. They did this by analysing the genetic history through the DINA of 162 wolves from around the world and 140 domestic dogs representing 67 breeds. The research also confirms, for the first time, that dogs are descended only from wolves and do not share DNA with coyotes or jackals. The fact that our companionship with dogs now appears to go back at least 100,000 years means that this partnership may have played an important part in the development of human hunting techniques that developed 70,000 to 90,000 years ago. It also may even have affected the brain development in both species. The Australian veterinarian David Paxton suggests that in that period of first contact, people did not so much domesticate wolves as wolves domesticated people. Wolves may have started living at the edge of human settlements as scavengers, eating scraps of food and waste. Some learned to live with human beings in a mutually helpful way and gradually evolved into dogs. At the very least, they would have protected human settlements, and given warnings by barking at anything approaching. The wolves that evolved into dogs have been enormously successful in evolutionary terms. They are found everywhere in the inhabited world, hundreds of millions of them. The descendants of the wolves that remained wolves are now sparsely distributed, often in endangered populations. In return for companionship and food, the early ancestor of the dog assisted humans in tracking, hunting, guarding and a variety of other activities. Eventually humans began to selectively breed these animals for specific traits. Physical characteristics changed and individual breeds began to take shape. As humans wandered across Asia and Europe, they took their dogs along, using them for additional tasks and further breeding them for selected qualities that would better enable them to perform specific duties. According to Dr. Colin Groves, of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at Australian National University, early humans came to rely on dogs’ keen ability to hear, smell and see – allowing certain areas of the human brain to shrink in size relative to oilier areas. ‘Dogs acted as human’s alarm systems, trackers and hunting aids, garbage disposal facilities, hot-water bottles and children’s guardians and playmates. Humans provided dogs with food and security. This symbiotic relationship was stable for over 100,000 years and intensified into mutual domestication,’ said Dr. Groves. In his opinion, humans domesticated dogs and dogs domesticated humans. Dr. Groves repealed an assertion made as early as 1914 that humans have some of the same physical characteristics as domesticated animals, the most notable being decreased brain size. The horse experienced a 16 percent reduction in brain size after domestication while pigs’ brains shrank by as much as 34 percent. The estimated brain-size reduction in domesticated dogs varies from 30 percent to 10 percent. Only in the last decade have archaeologists uncovered enough fossil evidence to establish that brain capacity in humans declined in Europe and Africa by at least 10 percent beginning about 10,000 years ago. Dr. Groves believes this reduction may have taken place as the relationship between humans and dogs intensified. The close interaction between the two species allowed for the diminishing of certain human brain functions like smell and hearing. Questions 1-5 Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer of the passage? Write: YES – if the statement agrees with the views of the writer NO – if the statement contradicts the views of the writer NOT GIVEN – if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this 1. The co-existence of wolves and humans began 10,000 years ago. 2. Dogs, wolves, jackals and coyotes share a common ancestor. 3. Wolves are a protected species in most parts of the world. 4. Dogs evolved from wolves which chose to live with humans. 5. Dogs probably influenced the development of human hunting skills. Questions 6-8 Choose the correct letter A-D. 6. How do we know that dogs have been more successful in evolutionary terms than wolves? A. Dogs can be trained more easily than wolves. B. Wolves are stronger than dogs. C. Humans prefer dogs to wolves. D. There are more dogs than wolves today. 7. As a result of domestication, the size of the human brain has _____ A. increased. B. decreased C. stayed the same. D. become more complex. 8. What can we infer from the studies of brain size and domestication? A. Domestic life is less demanding than surviving in the wild. B. Animals like living with humans. C. Domestication has made animals physically weaker. D. Pigs are less intelligent than dogs. Question 9 Choose TWO WORDS from the passage for the answer. There are many different types of dogs today, because, in early times humans began to 9. ______ their animals for the characteristics they wanted. Questions 10-14 Match one of the researchers (A-C) to each of the findings (10-14) below. A. Dr. Wayne B. Dr. Paxton C. Dr. Groves 10._______ studied the brain size of domesticated animals 11._______ claims that wolves chose to interact with humans 12._______. established a new time frame for domestication of wolves 13._______ believes that dogs and humans domesticated each other 14._______ studied the DNA of wolves and dogs. 1. NO 2. NO 3. NOT GIVEN 4. YES 5. YES 6. D 7. B 8. A 9. SELECTIVELY BREED 10. C 11. B 12. A 13. C 14. A Also Check: Kids and Sport IELTS Reading Academic Passage || “Obviously we must do some serious rethinking of our priorities, lest linguistics go down in history as the only science that presided obviously over the disappearance of 90 percent of the very field to which it is dedicated.” – Michael Krauss, “The World’s Languages in Crisis”. A Ten years ago Michael Krauss sent a shudder through the discipline of linguistics with his prediction that half the 6,000 or so languages spoken in the world would cease to be uttered within a century. Unless scientists and community leaders directed a worldwide effort to stabilize the decline of local languages, he warned, nine-tenths of the linguistic diversity of humankind would probably be doomed to extinction. Krauss’s prediction was little more than an educated guess, but other respected linguists had been clanging out similar alarms. Keneth L. Hale of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology noted in the same journal issue that eight languages on which he had done fieldwork had since passed into extinction. A 1990 survey in Australia found that 70 of the 90 surviving Aboriginal languages were no longer used regularly by all age groups. The same was true for all but 20 of the 175 Native American languages spoken or remembered in the US., Krauss told a congressional panel in 1992. B Many experts in the field mourn the loss of rare languages, for several reasons. To start, there is scientific self-interest: some of the most basic questions in linguistics have to do with the limits of human speech, which are far from fully explored. Many researchers would like to know which structural elements of grammar and vocabulary – if any – are truly universal and probably, therefore, hardwired into the human brain. Other scientists try to reconstruct ancient migration patterns by comparing borrowed words that appear in otherwise unrelated languages. In each of these cases, the wider the portfolio of languages you study, the more likely you are to get the right answers. C Despite the near-constant buzz in linguistics about endangered languages over the past 10 years, the field has accomplished depressingly little. “You would think that there would be some organized response to this dire situation,” some attempt to determine which language can be saved and which should be documented before they disappear, says Sarah G. Thomason, a linguist at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. “But there isn’t any such effort organized in the profession. It is only recently that it has become fashionable enough to work on endangered languages.” Six years ago, recalls Douglas H. Whalen of Yale University, “when I asked linguists who were raising money to deal with these problems, I mostly got blank stares.” So Whalen and a few other linguists founded the Endangered Languages Fund. In the five years to 2001, they were able to collect only $80,000 for research grants. A similar foundation in England, directed by Nicholas Ostler, has raised just $8,000 since 1995. D But there are encouraging signs that the field has turned a corner. The Volkswagen Foundation, a German charity, just issued its second round of grants totaling more than $2 million. It has created a multimedia archive at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in the Netherlands that can house recordings, grammars, dictionaries and other data on endangered languages. To fill the archive, the foundation has dispatched field linguists to document Aweti (100 or so speakers in Brazil), Ega (about 300 speakers in Ivory Coast), Waima’a (a few hundred speakers in East Timor), and a dozen or so other languages unlikely to survive the century. The Ford Foundation has also edged into the arena. Its contributions helped to reinvigorate a master-apprentice program created in 1992 by Leanne Hinton of Berkeley and Native Americans worried about the imminent demise of about 50 indigenous languages in California. Fluent speakers receive $3,000 to teach a younger relative (who is also paid) their native tongue through 360 hours of shared activities, spread over six months. So far about 5 teams have completed the program, Hinton says, transmitting a least some knowledge of 25 languages. “It’s too early to call this language revitalization,” Hinton admits. “In California, the death rate of elderly speakers will always be greater than the recruitment rate of young speakers. But at least we prolong the survival of the language.” That will give linguists more time to record these tongues before they vanish. E But the master-apprentice approach hasn’t caught on outside the U.S., and Hinton’s effort is a drop in the sea. At least 440 languages have been reduced to a mere handful of elders, according to the Ethnologue, a catalogue of languages produced by the Dallas-based group SIL International that comes closest to global coverage. For the vast majority of these languages, there is little or no record of their grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation or use in daily life. Even if a language has been fully documented, all that remains once it vanishes from active use is a fossil skeleton, a scattering of features that the scientist was lucky and astute enough to capture. Linguists may be able to sketch an outline of the forgotten language and fix its place on the evolutionary tree, but little more. “How did people start conversations and talk to babies? How dis husbands and wives converse?” Hinton asks. “Those are the first things you want to learn when you want to revitalize the language.” F But there is as yet no discipline of “conservation linguistics,” as there is for biology. Almost every strategy tried so far has succeeded in some places but failed in others, and there seems to be no way to predict with certainty what will work where. Twenty years ago in New Zealand, Maori speakers set up “language nests,” in which preschoolers were immersed in the native language. Additional Maori-only classes were added as the children progressed through elementary and secondary school. A similar approach was tried in Hawaii, with some success – the number of native speakers has stabilized at 1,000 or so, reports Joseph E. Grimes of SIL International, who is working on Oahu. Students can now get instruction in Hawaiian all the way through university. G One factor that always seems to occur in the demise of a language is that the speakers begin to have collective doubts about the usefulness of language loyalty. Once they start regarding their own language as inferior to the majority language, people stop using it in all situations. Kids pick up on the attitude and prefer the dominant language. In many cases, people don’t notice until they suddenly realize that their kids never speak the language, even at home. This is how Cornish and some dialects of Scottish Gaelic is still only rarely used for daily home life in Ireland, 80 years after the republic was founded with Irish as its first official language. H Linguists agree that ultimately, the answer to the problem of language extinction is multilingualism. Even uneducated people can learn several languages, as long as they start as children. Indeed, most people in the world speak more than one tongue, and in places such as Cameroon (279 languages), Papua New Guinea (823) and India (387) it is common to speak three of four distinct languages and a dialect or two as well. Most Americans and Canadians, to the west of Quebec, have a gut reaction that anyone speaking another language in front of them is committing an immoral act. You get the same reaction in Australia and Russia. It is no coincidence that these are the areas where languages are disappearing the fastest. The first step in saving dying languages is to persuade the world’s majorities to allow the minorities among them to speak with their own voices. The reading passage has eight paragraphs, A-H Choose the correct heading for paragraphs A-H from the list below. Write the correct number, i-xi, in boxes 1-7 on your answer sheet. List of headings i data consistency needed for language ii consensuses on an initial recommendation for saving dying out languages iii positive gains for protection iv minimum requirement for saving a language v Potential threat to minority language vi a period when there was absent of real effort made. vii native language programs launched viii Lack of confidence in young speakers as a negative factor ix Practise in several developing countries x Value of minority language to linguists. xi government participation in the language field 1 iiiiiiivvviviiviiiixxxi Paragraph AAnswer: v 2 iiiiiiivvviviiviiiixxxi Paragraph BAnswer: x Example: Paragraph C vi 3 iiiiiiivvviviiviiiixxxi Paragraph DAnswer: iii 4 iiiiiiivvviviiviiiixxxi Paragraph EAnswer: i 5 iiiiiiivvviviiviiiixxxi Paragraph FAnswer: vii 6 iiiiiiivvviviiviiiixxxi Paragraph GAnswer: viii 7 iiiiiiivvviviiviiiixxxi Paragraph HAnswer: ii Use the information in the passage to match the people (listed A-F) with opinions or deeds below. Write the appropriate letters A-F in boxes 8-12 on your answer sheet. A Nicholas OstlerB Michael KraussC Joseph E. GrimesD Sarah G. ThomasonE Keneth L. HaleF Douglas H. Whalen 8 ABCDEF Reported language conservation practice in HawaiiAnswer: C 9 ABCDEF Predicted that many languages would disappear soonAnswer: B 10 ABCDEF The experienced process that languages die out personallyAnswer: E 11 ABCDEF Raised language fund in EnglandAnswer: A 12 ABCDEF Not enough effort on saving until recent workAnswer: D What is an endangered language? The world faces enormous challenges in maintaining language diversity. Of the more than 6,912 languages, half may be in danger of disappearing in the next several decades, although this figure cannot be verified. Endangered languages are languages that are on the brink of extinction, much like endangered species of plants or animals. A language is considered to be endangered when parents are no longer teaching it to their children, and it is no longer being actively used in everyday life. A language is considered to be nearly extinct when it is spoken by only a few elderly native speakers. Among factors that contribute to language endangerment are small number of speakers, their ages, whether or not children are using the language, the regular use of other languages, feelings of ethnic identity and attitudes about their language, urban drift of the younger population, government policies, language(s) used in education, as well as availability of jobs. A language may also lack important factors that contribute to its survival such as an alphabet, a body of literature, and people who read and write it. A language may also lack prestige and support of its speakers (Ethnologue). The survival of a language is also threatened when speakers move to other areas where different languages are spoken, or when government policies promote the use of a specific language in school, official business and the media. These situations encourage people to learn the wider-used language and may cause them, especially the young, to stop using their mother tongue. Often those speaking lesser-known languages will choose to learn a more prestigious language with the hope of greater economic opportunities. In many parts of the world parents are teaching their children English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Russian or some other dominant language instead of their own language for social and economic reasons. Below is data on the world’s smallest languages (Ethnologue). 1,619 (or 23%) of all world languages are spoken by fewer than half-a-million people, 548 (about 8%) are spoken by fewer than 100 people, and 204 (or 3%) of all world languages are spoken by fewer than 10 people. Number of speakers Number of languages 100 -999 1,071 10-99 344 1-9 204 Total 1,619 What is a nearly extinct language? 516 of the languages listed in Ethnologue are classified as nearly extinct because they are spoken by only a few elderly speakers.The table below shows the number of nearly extinct languages by major world areas. The Pacific 210 The Americas 170 Asia 78 Africa 46 Europe 12 Total 516 Click here to learn about the exact location of these languages. What is being done to preserve endangered languages? Many organizations and institutions have fascinating projects aimed at documenting and preserving one of the world’s most precious resources — its languages. The Foundation for Endangered Languages supports the documentation, protection and promotion of endangered languages. Endangered Languages Project seeks to promote the revitalization of languages headed for extinction. The passage below, "Endangered Languages," is a very common Reading passage in the IELTS exam. Read the passage to answer Questions 1—14 given below. Endangered Languages Reading Passage Paragraph A: ‘Nevermind whales, save the languages’, says Peter Monaghan, a graduate of the Australian National University Worried about the loss of rainforests and the ozone. Where is the layer at linguistics meetings in the US? Well, neither of those is doing any worse than the endangered-language issue that has of late been a large majority of the 6,000 to 7,000 languages that are something of a flavour of the month; they remain in use on Earth. One-half of the survivors will show growing evidence that not all approaches to this will almost certainly be gone by 2050, while 40% more preservation of languages will be particularly will probably be well on their way out. In their place, helpful. Some linguists boast that, for example, almost all humans will speak one of a handful of more and more sophisticated means of capturing mega languages – Mandarin, English, and Spanish. Paragraph B: Linguists know what causes languages to disappear, but less often remarked is what happens on the way to disappearance: languages’ vocabularies, grammar, and expressive potential all diminish as one language is replaced by another. ‘Say a community goes over from speaking a traditional Aboriginal language to speaking a creole*,’ says Australian Nick Evans, a leading authority on Aboriginal languages, ‘you leave behind a language where there’s a very fine vocabulary for the landscape. All that is gone in a creole. You’ve just got a few words like ‘gum tree’ or whatever. As speakers become less able to express the wealth of knowledge that has filled ancestors’ lives with meaning over millennia, it’s no wonder that communities tend to become demoralised.’ Paragraph C: If the losses are so huge, why are relatively few linguists combating the situation? Australian linguists, at least, have achieved a great deal in terms of preserving traditional languages. Australian governments began in the 1970s to support an initiative that has resulted in good documentation of most of the 130 remaining Aboriginal languages. In England, another Australian, Peter Austin, has directed one of the world’s most active efforts to limit language loss at the University of London. Austin heads a program that has trained many documentary linguists in England as well as in language-loss hotspots such as West Africa and South America. Paragraph D: At linguistics meetings in the US, where the endangered language issue has of late been something of a flavour of the month, there is growing evidence that not all approaches to the preservation of languages will be particularly helpful. Some linguists boast, for example, of more and more sophisticated means of capturing languages: digital recording and storage, as well as internet and mobile phone technologies. But these are encouraging the ‘quick dash’ style of recording trips: fly-in, switch on a digital recorder, fly home, download to the hard drive, and store gathered material for future research. That’s not quite what some endangered language specialists have been seeking for more than 30 years. Most loud and untiring has been Michael Krauss of the University of Alaska. He has often complained that linguists are playing with non-essentials while most of their raw data is disappearing. Paragraph E: Who is to blame? That prominent linguist Noam Chomsky, Krauss, and many others. Or, more precisely, they blame those linguists who have been obsessed with his approaches. Linguists who go out into communities to study, document, and describe languages argue that theoretical linguists, who draw conclusions about how languages work, have had so much influence that linguistics has largely ignored the continuing disappearance of languages. Chomsky, from his post at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has been a great man of theoretical linguistics for far longer than he has been known as a political commentator. His landmark work of 1957 argues that all languages exhibit certain universal grammatical features encoded in the human mind. American linguists, in particular, have focused largely on theoretical concerns ever since, even while doubts have mounted about Chomsky’s universal. Paragraph F: Austin and Co. are in no doubt that because languages are unique, even if they do tend to have common underlying features, creating dictionaries and grammar requires prolonged and dedicated work. This requires that documentary linguists observe not only languages’ structural subtleties but also related social, historical, and political factors. Such work calls for persistent funding of field scientists who may sometimes have to venture into harsh and even hazardous places. Once there, they may face difficulties such as community suspicion. As Nick Evans says, a community that speaks an endangered language may have reasons to doubt or even oppose efforts to preserve it. They may have seen support and funding for such work come and go. They may have given up using the language with their children, believing they will benefit from speaking a more widely understood one. Plenty of students continue to be drawn to the intellectual thrill of linguistics fieldwork. That’s all the more reason to clear away barriers, contend Evans, Austin, and others. Paragraph G: The highest barrier, they agree, is that the linguistics profession’s emphasis on theory gradually wears down the enthusiasm of linguists who work in communities. Chomsky disagrees. He has recently begun to speak in support of language preservation. But his linguistic, as opposed to the humanitarian, argument is, let’s say, unsentimental: the loss of a language, he states, ‘is much more of a tragedy for linguists whose interests are mostly theoretical, like me, than for linguists who focus on describing specific languages, since it means the permanent loss of the most relevant data for general theoretical work’. At the moment, few institutions award doctorates for such work, and that’s the way it should be, he reasons. In linguistics, as in every other discipline, he believes that good descriptive work requires thorough theoretical understanding and should also contribute to building new theories. But that’s precisely what documentation does, objects Evans. The process of immersion in a language, to extract, analyse and sum it up, deserves a Ph.D. because it is ‘the most demanding intellectual task a linguist can engage in’. Also Read: