Reading Comprehension - Part 1

Read the following text about an orchestra and choose the most suitable heading from the list A-I for each part (1-8) of the text. There is one extra heading which you do not need to use. Mark your answers on the answer sheet.

Absolute Beginners

1. The East London Late Starters Orchestra (ELLSO) is not the most professional orchestra in Britain, but it is seriously fun. What is more, all are welcome to join in. After each of its concerts, anyone from the audience can choose an instrument and have a go. Then the whole orchestra launch into another piece of music and the new recruits are free to play along.

2. The orchestra, now in its sixteenth year, grew out of a small scheme run by one of the local councils in east London to give children in the area the opportunity to make music. ‘I shall never forget the day my daughter Kate came home from school with a cello,’ ELLSO’s founder Chris Surety told me. ‘They’d had a couple of teachers come in and play instruments. Then they said, ”Who wants one?” Everyone put up their hands, and they were each given one to take home. Music-making was seen as central to the children’s education, and as a parent, I found it joyful to see it happening.’

3. Since that time, dozens, if not hundreds, of adults have felt the same thrill at handling these beautiful instruments, a lot of them for the first time in their lives. And for most, it comes as a revelation that they too can learn to play. It’s never too late, and there is nothing, apart from their own inhibitions, to prevent them.

4. The idea of starting the ELLSO came about when the council invited parents to drop in for a one-hour sample lesson. ‘This was not with a view to getting something going among adults,’ says Chris. ‘It was just to give us a better understanding of what the children were doing. But we went there, and for me that was it. I had a preliminary lesson on the cello, and I thought, ”I could learn to play these instruments!”’

5. ELLSO is all about removing barriers and providing access to music in a friendly, non-competitive environment, for people of mixed abilities and of all ages and social backgrounds. Fees are based on income. The absolute beginner, on turning up, will be handed an instrument and given a brief tutorial, before being invited to play with the orchestra.
6. ‘Everyone’, says Chris, ‘has the ability to make music’. But, of course, they have to practice, and the 60-plus members do so every Saturday morning without fail, some travelling a long way. Many of them are so eager that they also get together in the week for group practice, or have private tuition. It’s something they do for personal satisfaction and for the confidence that flows from it. It is a very important part of their lives.

7. Helen Couch is 76 and hadn’t played an instrument until she joined the ELLSO at the age of 67. ‘I thought it must be a joke, the idea that you could play with an orchestra after a couple of hours – I thought it was the funniest thing I’d ever heard,’ she admits. ‘I always assumed I was musically illiterate. Well, I still am, but I love it, although it’s hard work. I’m ashamed that I’m not better, but you can hide in the orchestra, and knowing that gives you confidence. We’re improving as a group. Nine times out of ten we finish together now, which we didn’t use to.’

8. ‘It’s changed my life,’ says Chris Surety. ‘And that’s what ELLSO has done for lots of other people. Not all will want to carry on learning an instrument, but if they’ve had a positive experience and are beginning to find out what they really do want to learn in life, it gives them confidence to move on to other things. There are a lot of people who started with ELLSO who’ve gone on to study for degrees and emerged in new careers.’

A. Not as silly as it sounds
B. Not the original intention
C. Responding to a demand
D. A great discovery for many
E. Leading to new ambitions
F. Modest origins
G. Great dedication
H. Nobody is excluded
I. The orchestra you can join straight away
Imagine being able to go back in time and have a little chat with the 17-year-old you. We asked two 30-somethings what advice they would give their younger selves.

**Martha Lee**

The problem with most 17-year-olds is not that they are wild or rebellious but that they’re just so sensitive, and so self-obsessed that even an innocent comment might cause them much emotional pain. So, what I’d tell my younger self is to live a little, relax, and take no notice of what anyone else says. At parties, when I was 17, I’d sit in the corner trying to look grown up and sophisticated instead of enjoying myself. I’d soon put a stop to that if I could go back in time. I’d drag the silly girl up and show her just how much fun dancing in an embarrassing way can be! Mind you, I might have a word with her about how a little lipstick is more appealing than layers and layers, and why that lovely flowery dress didn’t suit those awful high-heeled white sandals.

When I was 17, I was constantly worrying about boys. So, I’d tell her to lighten up, forget about them, and spend more time with the girls. I’d love her to know that not having a date on a Saturday night was not the end of the world, and didn’t mean she was a loser. And I’d tell her that if a boy she liked didn’t fancy her, he was allowed to have that opinion, and that following him around, changing hairstyles, or ringing him up and putting the phone down as soon as he answered wouldn’t change anything.

The other thing I’d tell her is that her mother was not an ignorant, embarrassing but loveable idiot, who didn’t know what she was talking about, but rather a witty and forgiving woman who was intelligent enough to be amused rather than annoyed at how arrogant and selfish teenagers can be.

**Jim Stewart**

To be honest with you, I don’t think there would be much point in going back in time and talking to me as a 17-year-old, and not because I wouldn’t listen. I was always being given advice, but, at that age, however hard I tried, I just couldn’t take it in. My world was listening to rock music, cleaning my new motorbike and watching football. Everything else seemed irrelevant. I tried to have ambitions and be sensible, but I really couldn’t see why.

But if I did have the chance to talk to tall, skinny, long-haired me, what would I say? Get your hair cut? No, I don’t think so, although I would tell the younger me to try to eat more healthily. Not that I was overweight. On the contrary, when I look at old photos I always envy the fact that I managed to wear such tight jeans. Actually, what I’d really want to tell myself is to think bigger and to not limit my horizons. I don’t think I was encouraged to take risks and to try to find out what I really wanted to do. Perhaps there was pressure on me to conform, to go to college, to get a good job, that sort of thing.
Oh, and the other thing I’d tell the 17-year-old me is to cut up all my credit cards. I wasn’t very good with money and I just didn’t realize how quickly you can get into debt. If it hadn’t been for my dad, it would have taken years to pay off all the bills I ran up.

9. Martha thinks 17-year-olds are
   A adventurous
   B impulsive
   C easily hurt

10. Martha advises her younger self to
    A be more mature
    B be more sensitive to others
    C not worry about what others think

11. Martha thinks that her younger self
    A wore too much lipstick
    B should have worn trousers rather than dresses
    C shouldn’t have worn high heels

12. Martha thinks her younger self
    A took dating too seriously
    B went out with too many boys
    C was a bit of a loser

13. If she liked a boy who didn’t like her, the young Martha would
    A not give up
    B forget about him by changing her appearance
    C refuse to speak to him when he phoned her

14. Martha’s mother
    A was annoyed with the young Martha’s selfishness
    B laughed at the young Martha
    C tolerated the young Martha’s selfishness

15. Jim thinks that his younger self
    A refused to listen to anyone
    B was too interested in rock music to listen to advice
    C didn’t know what to do with the advice he received

16. These days, Jim
    A is not as slim as he was
    B doesn’t wear jeans very often
    C has shorter hair

17. Jim would advise his younger self to
    A be more adventurous when deciding what to do
    B make sure he worked hard and got a good job
    C go to college and finish his studies

18. Jim criticizes his younger self for
    A buying expensive things
    B being in debt for so long
    C not knowing that it is easy to get into debt
July 28, 201……

Dear Linda

How have you been?! As usual I have to start my letter with an (19) …….. for not having written sooner. (20) …….. time you didn’t even get my traditional Christmas letter… Thank you very much for your Christmas card and the photos though!

I think it’s great that you and John have found a hobby to (21) …….., especially such an interesting and unusual one as (22) …….. the bagpipes and drums in a Scottish folk music band! I guess it must be quite difficult to learn to play the bagpipes. It’s a good thing you’ve got your own house to practice in – I imagine my flat neighbours wouldn’t be very cooperative!!!

You asked how I (23) …….. and I’m very happy to report that I have found a wonderful new job. I (24) …….. to use my knowledge of English and enjoy working with really nice colleagues. (25) …….. I lucky?!?

Mike and the kids are just fine, too. It’s (26) …….. to believe that Emma will be starting school next year! How are your nieces and nephews? I’m sure little Katie will be keen (27) …….. watching the Olympic gymnastics on TV this summer! That might motivate her even more. Actually, I’ve been reading (28) …….. on the sport in the internet and I must say that …..

19  A apologetic  B apologise  C apology
20  A That  B The  C This
21  A include  B part  C share
22  A play  B playing  C to play
23  A did  B have done  C was doing
24  A can  B get  C let
25  A Am  B Aren’t  C Don’t
26  A hard  B harder  C hardly
27  A at  B on  C to
28  A out  B over  C up
Language Elements - Part 2

Read the following text and decide which of the words a – o is missing in items 29-38. There are five more words than you need. Mark your answers on the answer sheet.

GLOBAL WARMING

Few people now (29) ........ the reality of global warming and its effects on the world’s climate. Many scientists (30) ...... the blame for recent natural disasters on the increase in the world’s temperatures and are convinced that, more than (31) ...... before, the Earth is at (32) ...... from the forces of the wind, rain and the sun. According to them, global warming is making extreme weather events, (33) ...... as hurricanes and droughts, even more severe and causing sea levels all around the world to (34) .........

Environmental groups are putting (35) ......... on governments to take action to reduce the (36) ......... of carbon dioxide which is given off by factories and power plants. Some scientists, (37) ........, believe that even if we stopped releasing carbon dioxide and other gases into the atmosphere tomorrow, we would have to wait (38) ......... hundred years to notice the results. Global warming, it seems, is here to stay.

a/ such  b/ put  c/ however  d/ force  e/ question  f/ numerous  
g/ amount  h/ pressure  i/ several  j/ although  k/ ever  l/ risk  
m/ give  n/ rise  o/ just

Listening Comprehension - Part 1

Listen to a radio show and for each of the questions (39-48), choose the best answer (A, B or C). You will hear the text twice. Mark your answers on the answer sheet.

39. The guest on the radio show is
   A  a teacher 
   B  a psychologist 
   C  a nutritionist

40. You can call the radio show on
   A  0121 32223 
   B  0111 33223 
   C  0121 32233

41. The guest on the radio show
   A  was bullied at school 
   B  has a child who is depressed 
   C  says that problems of addiction are rising
42. The woman is complaining that
A there is no choice of school dinner
B children are able to eat and drink unhealthy things at school
C school dinners are very expensive

43. The woman says that her children
A never eat healthy meals
B never listen to what she and her husband say about food
C eat differently when they are away from their parents

44. The guest’s advice is
A to show the children that eating healthily is fashionable
B for the children to laugh at those who eat fast food
C to become a vegetarian

45. The man’s son
A never switches his computer off
B argues with his parents about switching off his computer
C switches off the computer when he is told to

46. The man doesn’t want to put the son’s computer in the living room because
A he wants his son to have the same things as his friends
B he doesn’t want to be disturbed while watching TV
C there is nowhere to put it

47. The man gets angry because
A the doctor says that his son is mad
B the doctor recommends that his son gets help
C the doctor doesn’t want to help his son

48. The guest’s final piece of advice is
A for the man to tell his son to go to bed earlier
B for the son to play sports in the evening
C for the man to try to make his son want to take up a sport
Listening Comprehension - Part 2

Listen to a radio interview on the topic of regional accents and decide if the statements (49-58) are True or False. You will hear the text twice. Mark your answers on the answer sheet.

49. The Beatles spoke with a regional accent because it was fashionable.
50. The diplomat was criticised because of his accent.
51. The radio show host thinks that most managers of top football clubs are foreigners.
52. The diplomat was not qualified for the job.
53. It’s very difficult to get a job on the radio if you have a regional accent.
54. Anthony Hopkins’ accent is difficult to understand.
55. The Edinburgh and Glasgow Scottish accents aren’t the same.
56. A London accent can only be heard in or near London.
57. A country accent is good to have if you want people to think you are an honest politician.
58. Professor Belling doesn’t give any personal views at all, just reports what others say and think.

Writing

Choose one of the tasks presented below.

Writing 1
You have recently stayed in an expensive hotel but you are totally dissatisfied with your stay. Write a letter of complaint to the manager (150 – 200 words). Include the following points:

- mention the reason for your letter
- complain about the room
- express your dissatisfaction with the hotel facilities
- ask for some actions to be taken

Writing 2
Write a composition giving your opinion on the following statement:

Cars are the greatest danger to human life today.

Write your composition in 150-200 words.
Key
Reading Comprehension, Part 1
1  I
2  F
3  D
4  B
5  H
6  G
7  A
8  E

Reading Comprehension, Part 2
9  C
10 C
11 A
12 A
13 A
14 C
15 C
16 A
17 A
18 C

Language Elements, Part 1
19 C
20 C
21 C
22 B
23 C
24 B
25 B
26 A
27 B
28 C

Language Elements, Part 2
29 e (question)
30 b (put)
31 k (ever)
32 l (risk)
33 a (such)
34 n (rise)
35 h (pressure)
36 g (amount)
37 c (however)
38 i (several)

Listening Comprehension, Part 1

39 B
40 C
41 C
42 B
43 C
44 A
45 C
46 A
47 B
48 C

Listening Comprehension, Part 2

49 F
50 T
51 T
52 F
53 F
54 F
55 T
56 F
57 T
58 T
Part I  Self-presentation
Give a short presentation on your academic interests and planned career path. (1.5-2 min.)

Part II  Discussion (5min.)

Student A
Tell your partner about the text. Then talk to your partner about the topic. Ask questions and exchange opinions.

The best place to live

“Personally, I’d always prefer to live in the country away from the noise and dirt of the town. Perhaps it’s because I grew up in a block of flats in a city centre area. We lived on a busy main road and I didn’t have a garden. I’ll always remember how nice it was to get away from everything when we went on holiday. Yes, it’s the country for me any time.”
(Janet Sweetman, 32, sales manager)

Student B
Tell your partner about the text. Then talk to your partner about the topic. Ask questions and exchange opinions.

The best place to live

“You know I’ve always lived in towns – ever since I was a child, and so the noise and things don’t bother me at all. What would bother me about living out in the country would be having to drive for miles to get to the nearest theatre or to go shopping. And my office is in the centre of town anyway, so I’d be travelling for at least an extra two hours every day just to get to the office! No, it’s city life for me.”
(Jerry Walker, 28, designer)

Part III  Communication activity

You are planning a new building project for your town. The local council have given you a list of buildings. Discuss all options and decide on the two projects that would be best for your town. (4 min.)

- a new children’s hospital
- a free swimming pool
- an indoor ski slope
- an airport
- a conference centre
- a student hostel
Listening, Part I

P – Presenter, DP – Dr Phillips, W – Woman, M – Man

P       Good afternoon and welcome to Your Worries – the radio show which tries to help you solve your problems. This week we have as our guest an educational psychologist, Dr Terence Phillips, who works a lot in schools around the country, and the topic of today’s programme is ‘Our children’s health’ so, if you are an anxious parent, please phone us now on 0121 32233. Dr Phillips, before we get our first caller, what problems do you have to deal with?

DP       Well, all sorts of problems really: bullying, depression. But what is noticeable over the last ten years is the increase in addictions of all sorts from eating disorders to gambling.

P       Well, we have our first caller, Mrs Jason. Is your call about addictions?

W       Not really but it’s about diet. My question concerns the meals served in our schools. I’m sure you’re aware that the schools serve unhealthy, fat-filled, fast food every day and that there are now three fizzy drinks vending machines in the high school? The school says it offers a choice but what I want to know is whether you have any advice on how to control my children’s eating habits when they are at school. Obviously my husband and I talk to them about the dangers of excess fat but, when we’re not there, I’m afraid they forget all that we have told them.

DP       Yes, a difficult question and one which I have discussed several times with education chiefs. The obvious solution would be for the schools to allow parents to choose their children’s meals but this doesn’t happen. A major problem is peer pressure. Children choosing salads can be laughed at for being strange in some way. I think what we need to do is to show children that healthy food is somehow ‘cool’. Try talking to your children about famous vegetarians or healthy eaters or find out about sports stars’ diets. Give them role models who they can look up to so that they can turn round to people at school and say: Well, so-and-so doesn’t eat chips either.

W       Oh, yes, that’s an excellent idea. Thank you.

P       Thank you. And we have another caller on line 2. And I think this call is more about an addiction.

M       The Internet.

DP       I’m sorry?

M       My son. He’s always on the Internet. He’s sailing all night.

DP       Ah. Surfing.

M       Yes, surfing or playing online games. We tell him to switch off and go to bed and he does but, when we close the door, back on goes the computer.

DP       You could take the computer out of his bedroom and have it in the living room. That way you control when he uses the computer and what he does on it.

M       I’m not going to do that. All his friends have got computers in their bedrooms. We’re just as good as they are. Anyway, he doesn’t want to be there with us watching the TV. He wants to be on his own. It’s not normal for a fifteen-year-old to want to be
with his parents all the time. I mean, we’d love him down here with us, and there’s a lovely big desk but … no, it’s not right.

DP It’s not a case of being as good as other people. Your son needs your help to overcome his addiction. If you don’t wish to take the computer away from him, which I still think is the best option, then perhaps you should consider psychiatric help. Get a counsellor to talk to him and try to help him reduce his dependence on the computer. There are often free counselling services offered.

M Counsellors? Psychiatric help? Addicted? Are you saying my son’s mad?

DP Not at all. Many people have addictive personalities. It’s not madness at all but if you are against that idea then my other suggestion would be to give him other interests, encourage him to take up a sport so that, in the evening, he is more tired and will fall asleep more easily.

P Well, three very useful pieces of advice, I’m sure one of them would be acceptable to our caller. Now, doctor …

Listening, Part II

RSH – Radio show host, PB – Professor Belling

RSH Welcome to Talking Point and, this week we are looking at the way British people speak and whether regional accents affect communication, positively or negatively. Accents in Britain have been a controversial subject for many years. Sir Walter Raleigh, the famous 15th century explorer, had a strong West Country accent. Regional accents became fashionable again with the success of the Beatles in the 1960s. Our guest today is Professor Belling, a lecturer at Durham University, who will answer our questions in his beautiful, Yorkshire accent. Welcome, professor.

PB Thank you.

RSH Now, there was a lovely quote a few years ago in a newspaper about a top British diplomat …

PB That’s right. It said that it had been a terrible mistake to allow … well, I won’t mention his name, to represent Britain because he sounded like the manager of a lower-division football club. I love the distinction between lower level and higher level football clubs as if, somehow, those with better clubs have better accents.

RSH I think most managers of top football clubs nowadays are from other countries. So why did they write that?

PB Well, no matter that this man has a PhD from Oxford University and speaks four languages fluently, his accent, in the view of the newspaper that wrote about him, is not quite right for a government representative. We want our politicians to speak like Hugh Grant!

RSH And yet, on the TV and radio nowadays, we hear more and more regional accents.
PB That’s true but certain accents are heard on certain programmes. A Scottish, Irish, Welsh or Yorkshire accent is fine for the news or documentaries as long as they aren’t too strong. A slight ‘lilt’ we say, like Antony Hopkins’ Welsh accent. It’s just strong enough to hear but doesn’t affect our understanding. The other interesting distinction is between the Edinburgh and Glasgow Scottish accents. Edinburgh’s is soft and gentle, ideal for radio. Glaswegian is much harder and more difficult to understand.

RSH Are there any other trends?

PB Yes. For youth programmes, it is better to come from one of the big urban centres: Newcastle, Manchester or Liverpool. These accents give the sense of excitement and fashion. The London accent, or estuary English is still less acceptable, even for the young people’s shows. Perhaps because it is spoken over such a wide area nowadays, the whole of south-eastern England really, it doesn’t have the big city association that the other accents have.

RSH Are there any accents which are no good at all for radio or TV?

PB Well, the country accent, a west country or Norfolk accent isn’t often heard. The vision of farms that you see in your mind when you hear it is wrong for radio. Mind you, it’s an excellent accent for a politician. It’s so honest and sincere and of course, it is associated with the old Britain. And, finally, of course, there’s the midlands accent which is just not fashionable at all, never has been. I can’t think of any national figure with a strong midlands accent except the comedian Jasper Carrott.

RSH Well, thank you very much, professor. If anyone can think of a famous person with a midlands accent, please phone or text the show.