

Reading

Part 1

You have 1 minute and 20 seconds to answer each question.

1 Read the blog entry and choose the correct answer.



I've been volunteering at a 2nd-century settlement and was asked to explore an area thought to have been a Roman-era waste dump. In the first trench I dug, the layer of waste proved to be all of 15 centimetres thick. The second one looked more promising; I unearthed fragments of pottery one metre down. Then, part of the trench collapsed, revealing an impressive-looking ceramic object. Painstakingly, I brushed away earth and realized it was an early 20th-century land drain, presumably installed by farmers unaware of the spot's significance. The drain's position meant that everything above it, including the pottery, could have been moved there from elsewhere and so had dubious value for dating purposes. Two days' labour down the drain.

What did the blogger feel frustrated about?

- A the failure of people in the past to investigate the location adequately
- B the challenging environment in which the work took place
- C the uncertain origin of man-made material

2 Read the review of a news app and choose the correct answer.

WebStreamNews app

There's often little to choose between news apps these days, and competition between them is fierce. Their algorithms have a frustrating tendency to filter out content that might conflict with the point of view on particular topics that an app's software perceives you to have – sometimes incorrectly. *WebStreamNews* attempts to counter this by providing buttons beneath each headline

which bring up an abundance of alternative interpretations on the issue. It is this that sets it apart. Revisions are made to its stories hourly, a characteristic it has in common with countless other news apps. It also has the kind of straightforward interface that seems very familiar to users these days – functional but predictable.

In the reviewer's opinion, which feature makes the app particularly worth downloading?

- A the multiple links provided to similar articles
- B the frequency of how articles are updated
- C the ease with which articles can be found

3 Read the extract from a novel and choose the correct answer.

'The ancient teachers of this science,' said the professor, 'promised impossibilities and performed nothing. The modern masters promise very little but penetrate into the inner workings of nature and show how it works in its hiding places. They have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe. They mock the invisible world with its own shadows.' As he went on, I felt as if I were wrestling with a real enemy; soon my mind was filled with one thought. So much has been done. Far more, will I achieve; treading in the steps already achieved, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.

Adapted and abridged from an authentic source, acknowledged at the end of the test.

On hearing the professor's words, the narrator feels ...

- A committed to ensuring that the work of scientists is better understood.
- B determined to make a mark for himself as a famous scientist.
- C inspired to discredit the dismissal of ancient scientists.

4 Read the extract from a psychology journal and choose the correct answer.

Earlier research has indicated a clear link between the mental health of city inhabitants and the extent to which they have easy access to green spaces such as parks and playing fields. Our own research shows a correlation between access to green spaces and the physical health of a city's residents, and this correlation stands after taking into account how prosperous or deprived an area is and the types of facilities in each green space. The positive benefits of green spaces on health are therefore now well established. While the causal relationship between the two offers scope for further research, there is little doubt that, going forwards, access to green spaces needs to be an important consideration for city planners.

What does the extract suggest about green spaces in cities?

- A They are more advantageous in relation to the happiness of people in poorer areas.
- B The explicit reasons as to how they enhance well-being remain uncertain.
- C Their inclusion in any future development is sometimes taken for granted.

5 Read the blog entry and choose the correct answer.

This week's entry looks at graduate jobseeking in the current labour market. At times like these, employers tend to exercise caution when hiring. They're less likely to take a chance on unproven talent, so this may be a time to suppress enthusiasm for speculative applications and concentrate on the achievable. It can't be overstated how important it is to just have *something*, whatever that is. Holding out for a position that is precisely aligned to your degree subject won't make it easy to make ends meet, after all. Once things pick up, you can start looking around for that perfect career pathway. And when you do, employers will look more favourably on someone with a record of continuous employment.

The writer thinks that graduates should currently prioritize applying for jobs that ...

- A cover the day-to-day costs of general outgoings.
- B provide some financial stability for the long-term future.
- C correspond with the skillset that they have acquired from academia.

6 Read the letter to a local newspaper and choose the correct answer.

To the editor,

In your editorial on the proposed building project in Almond Avenue, local residents are urged to convey their views at a consultation meeting on 30th March, as well as through online questionnaires. Given our experience over the last decade regarding applications for permission to build, the outcome in this case would appear to be a foregone conclusion. The powers-that-be will have decided that a 25-floor apartment block is needed, whatever the implications for traffic, services and amenities in an already overcrowded district. Nonetheless, I will attend this meeting, and all subsequent consultations over the next nine months, and I urge everyone to do likewise. Developers, architects and planning officers need to hear the serious objections we have.

In commenting on the consultation process, the writer expresses ...

- A** concern about the number of people taking part.
- B** frustration about the timescale involved.
- C** scepticism about the impact it will have.

Part 2

You have 8 minutes to complete this task. Read the questions and match them to the correct book review.

A Brief History of Time

Three reviews of physicist Stephen Hawking's famous book



A Charlene Scott

A definitive work that catapulted its author, the famous physicist Stephen Hawking, into the public consciousness and on to endless bestseller lists, *A Brief History of Time* is often described as the most-bought, least-read book in existence. And that's according to Hawking himself, who, known for his wry sense of humour and ability to poke fun at himself, though these traits do not exactly leap off the page, suggested that many people may have acquired the book simply to boost their intellectual credibility. Hawking set out to make the subject matter of the book – the universe and its structure, origins and evolution – accessible to non-specialists by writing in a non-technical style. An informal survey of friends, several of whom have studied science at a relatively high level, leads me to think the great physicist's success in this respect is somewhat debatable. It is also important to highlight that huge advances have been made in astrophysics since the book was first written in the 1980s, and a number of claims that Hawking then made are now not thought to be correct, or at least are still to be proven. However, among those who are properly equipped to grasp the ins and outs of the 'Big Bang', thermodynamics, black holes, worm holes and so on – such as fellow theoretical physicists – there appears to be almost unanimous admiration for the flair with which Hawking managed to summarize what the universe is comprised of and how it came to be what it is.



B Robert Bradshaw

When Hawking first approached a publisher with his idea for *A Brief History of Time*, he made it clear that he wanted the book to be accessible to everyone and not just a serious work for other physicists. His aim was to establish that, as a result of significant breakthroughs in knowledge through the work of 20th-century physicists and astronomers, humanity was on the verge of finding a unified theory of the cosmos and to 'explain how far we had come in our understanding of the universe'. The editor who read the manuscript told the physicist that general readers would not purchase the publication if he insisted on retaining the many mathematical equations he had included. Hawking agreed to remove all the equations bar one: Einstein's $E = mc^2$. *A Brief History of Time* has now sold more than 25 million copies worldwide. This is far beyond what anyone could have anticipated in 1988, when it was first published. In those days, there was no mass readership for science books generally, let alone one that explored such obscure and complex subjects as black holes, superstrings and the finite yet boundless nature of the universe. Hawking's achievement was to break down the tough theoretical concepts and explain them in plain language, often with the help of deft humour and analogy. So effective was he that many well-known scientists have put their decision to study physics, maths, astronomy or chemistry down to the inspiration they found in Hawking's writing.



C Lucia Marlow

A Brief History of Time is a seminal volume in science writing that explores profound and difficult questions about time and the universe. With great imagination and skill, physicist Stephen Hawking leads us through the mysteries at the heart of creation. He takes us through the history of astronomical studies, paying due recognition to the contributions of astronomers and physicists from the Ancient Greeks such as Aristotle and Ptolemy up to Einstein and fellow giants of the 20th century, and explains in terms within the grasp of non-specialists the reasoning behind some of the most fundamental principles in quantum physics and the theory of relativity. If I had to express one reservation about the book, it would be that, to my mind, not enough of Hawking's own life and personality is evident. And that is to be regretted. Those who knew the man speak of his impish wit, for example, yet I find that missing from the book, though for many that may not be an attractive selling point. That aside, however, his book is a remarkable achievement. In 1988 when it was first published, it was at the cutting edge of what was known about the universe, and recognized as such by many, though not all, of Hawking's peers. Since then, huge advances have been made in astrophysics. However, the book has certainly stood the test of time. Leading physicists highlight its importance, and it is recommended reading for anyone with even a passing interest in astronomy and physics.

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| 1 Who expresses disappointment that Hawking does not reveal much about himself in the book? | A | B | C |
| 2 Who mentions that some people bought the book to give a false impression? | A | B | C |
| 3 Who refers to scepticism about an early draft of Hawking's book? | A | B | C |
| 4 Who approves of the way that Hawking acknowledges the work of other scientists? | A | B | C |
| 5 Who mentions the impact the book has had on some people's careers? | A | B | C |
| 6 Who questions the extent to which the average reader will understand the ideas discussed in the book? | A | B | C |
| 7 Who points out how unlikely it was that a book of this kind would become so popular? | A | B | C |

Part 3

Six sentences are missing from this text. Insert the correct sentence (A–G) into each gap (1–6). There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use. You have 11 minutes to complete this task.

Taste and aesthetics

An introduction to how two philosophers discussed the way we perceive beauty in the world

The term 'aesthetics' came into prominence in the 18th century as a label for the study of artistic experience with German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten. Scottish philosopher David Hume did not use this term but spoke of 'taste', a refined ability to perceive quality in an artwork.

'Taste' might seem completely subjective.¹ Isn't art just like this? Perhaps you prefer Dickens and Fassbinder, while I prefer Stephen King and Austin Powers; how can you prove that your taste is better than mine? Hume and German philosopher Immanuel Kant both believed that some works of art really are better than others, and that some people have better taste. How could they account for this?

The two took different approaches. Hume emphasized education and experience: people of taste acquire certain abilities that lead to agreement about which artworks are the best. Such people, he felt, will eventually reach a consensus, and in doing so, set a 'standard of taste' which is universal.

.....² He said people of taste must 'preserve minds free from prejudice' but thought no one should enjoy immoral attitudes or 'vicious manners' in art. Sceptics now criticize the narrowness of this view, saying that Hume's judges of taste only acquired their values through cultural programming.

Kant too spoke about judgements of taste but was more concerned with understanding how judgements of beauty are formed.³ He tried to describe the human abilities to perceive and categorize the world around us, outlining a complex interplay among mental faculties including perception, imagination, and intellect or judgement. He held that to function in the world to achieve our human purposes, we label much of what we sense, often in fairly unconscious ways. For example, we recognize round flat things and categorize some of these as dinner plates. Then we use them to eat meals. Similarly, we recognize some things as food and others as potential threats.

It is not easy to say how we categorize things like red roses as beautiful. The beauty of the rose is not out there in the world, as the roundness and flatness are in the plate.⁴

And yet there is some basis for claiming that the roses are beautiful. After all, there is quite a lot of human agreement that roses are beautiful and cockroaches are ugly. Hume tried to resolve this problem by saying that judgements of taste are 'intersubjective': people with taste tend to agree with each other. Kant believed that judgements of beauty were universal and grounded in the real world, even though they were not actually objective. How could this be?

Kant noted that we typically apply labels or concepts to the world to classify sensory inputs that suit a purpose.⁵ Beautiful objects, however, do not serve ordinary human purposes, like feeding ourselves. A beautiful rose pleases us, but not because we want to eat it. His way of recognizing this was to say that something beautiful has 'purposiveness without a purpose'. This curious phrase needs further unpacking.

When I perceive a rose as beautiful, this is not quite like putting it into my mental cupboard of items labelled 'beauty' – nor do I just throw the cockroach into my mental trash can of 'ugly' items. But features of the object almost force me to label it as I do. The rose might have its own purpose, to reproduce new roses, but that is not why it is beautiful.⁶ This is what Kant means by saying that beautiful objects have purpose. We label an object beautiful because it promotes an internal harmony or 'free play' of our mental faculties; we call something 'beautiful' when it elicits this pleasure. When you call a thing beautiful, you thereby assert that everyone ought to agree.

Adapted and abridged from an authentic source, acknowledged at the end of the test.

- A** These experts, in his view, can differentiate objects of high quality from less good creations.
- B** If it did have such exact attributes, we would surely not get into so many disagreements regarding taste.
- C** The aesthetic, therefore, is experienced when a sensuous object stimulates our emotions, intellect and imagination.
- D** Some people have favourite colours and desserts, just as they favour certain kinds of automobiles or furniture.
- E** Something about that particular combination of colour and texture prompts my mental faculties to feel that what I'm looking at is 'right'.
- F** Good ones, it was felt, are grounded in features of artworks and objects themselves, not just in ourselves and our preferences.
- G** For example, on finding a cylindrical drinking vessel in the dishwasher that I recognize as a mug, I put it in the cupboard with other mugs, not with spoons.

Part 4

Read the passage about cinema. For questions 1–5, choose the correct answer. You have 8 minutes to complete this task.

The end of cinema?

The idea that cinema is dying is nothing new; the death of cinema has been announced many times before, starting in the 1920s when sound was first added to film. There has been a real flood of such claims of late, however, and for an unprecedented number of reasons. In comparable cases, such as the predicted death of the novel, announcements of this kind seem to have led to nothing but revival after revival. Nonetheless, something is happening to provoke these assertions and arguments, and it's worth trying to find out what it is.

For some film lovers, the end began in the 1990s with what looked like the disappearance of a film type they could admire: movies comprising a curious mixture of commerce and art that had been plentiful since the 1950s. For other people, the end was not about film content or style but about technology, and specifically the possibility of seeing films at home. But hadn't television embodied the same issue with its introduction into domestic life in the 1950s? Not quite, although it had provided serious competition and had somewhat reduced audiences and driven the movie sector to do things with large screens and computer-generated imagery that only cinemas could properly display.

Television by itself didn't alter things that much, however. There were still fixed schedules on television and fixed schedules in commercial theatres – no one was interfering with film time. It was the invention of video recorders, and mass ownership of them in the 1980s, that brought the most radical changes. People could now skip whole sequences without having to leave the room. They no longer needed to watch shows when they were screened; theoretically, programming became irrelevant. And, by buying or renting videos, people could watch films exclusively in their own living rooms.

Developments in digital technology since the 1990s have had a massive impact on film and cinema. Nevertheless,

cinema remains big business. The highest grossing films still make multi-million-dollar profits and most films we see in the cinema continue to be films in the old sense. Films are also cheaper to make, and more are being produced than ever. The best way to see a great film may still be on the big screen, but what is currently available for free on any smart phone probably has better definition than any version available through more traditional media such as VHS or analogue TV. And the more dominant digital technology becomes, the more complex the situation is. Sometime today, someone you know will film some moving images, and upload them to social media. This will be a piece of film but won't be on film. And it won't be seen in a cinema.

Whatever the long-term future of the cinema as an institution may be, I believe the notion of film will survive in two senses. There is the dictionary definition of a film as 'a cinematographic representation of a story, drama, episode, event, etc.'. When people say they have been watching a film, this is what we understand they mean – and we probably always will – and a film-maker is someone who makes such things. The other sense is that of fragments or sequences, short or long, fictional or actual, of motion caught in the act. These may or may not add up to a film in the traditional sense, but it's part of the social-media-driven freedom of the form that they don't have to.

Why should we care about the future of cinema? Perhaps it's because film appears to fit so perfectly with what scholars Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz describe as our 'impulse to define, fix and represent isolated moments in the face of modernity's distractions and sensations'. But surely it does that only when we treat it as a form of rolling photography? Film at its magical, animating best doesn't define, fix, capture or even necessarily represent anything. Instead, it lets its subjects run, gives them back the life we thought they had lost; and mixes what we remember with what we dream.

Adapted and abridged from an authentic source, acknowledged at the end of the test.

1 In the first paragraph, the writer suggests that recent threats to cinema ...

- A prompt a sense of hope for the future of the art form.
- B are of greater significance than any previously encountered.
- C have their roots in developments that originated about a century ago.

2 The writer refers to special effects in order to ...

- A indicate the commercial pressures present in the industry.
- B illustrate the ability to incorporate technical innovations.
- C highlight the shift away from a focus on artistic quality.

- 3** In the third paragraph, the writer suggests that, before the 1980s, television ...
- A** had a less dramatic impact than had initially been hoped for.
 - B** represented part of a wider trend towards home-based entertainment.
 - C** lacked certain features that would encourage people to stay away from cinemas.
- 4** In comparing big screens and smart phones, the writer makes the point that ...
- A** the ability to view new content digitally is negatively impacting cinema.
 - B** the type of content that people are choosing to watch is evolving.
 - C** the influence conventional cinema has over new content is profound.
- 5** The writer thinks that Charney and Schwartz's words ...
- A** reflect an overly analytical approach to thinking about film.
 - B** signify an outdated view of the potential that film offers.
 - C** reveal a limited understanding of the appeal film can have.