

READING SKILLS

Using general nouns
 Matching headings (2)
 Matching information to paragraphs (1)
 Matching information to names

EXAM PRACTICE

Matching headings
 Matching information to names
 Completing multiple-choice questions
 Completing global multiple-choice questions

Using general nouns

1 Look at the photos and answer questions a–c.

**Technique**

Learn to notice and collect general nouns as IELTS reading questions often contain such words. These nouns belong to a limited set. By identifying these, it is easier to find the answer.

- a What aspects of culture do the pictures reflect?
 b Do you associate the word 'culture' with the activities shown? Why/Why not?
 c Which factors in the box are important in making your culture different from other people's? Give examples for each item you choose.

food ■ sport ■ music ■ family ■ art ■ work

2 Divide the following general nouns into pairs with similar meanings.

advantage ■ aim ■ benefit ■ consequence ■ difference
 difficulty ■ discrepancy ■ factor ■ hazard ■ influence
 outcome ■ problem ■ purpose ■ risk

3 General nouns are common in matching tasks. Complete each of the paragraph headings below with a suitable word from the box.

action ■ reservations ■ role ■ strategies ■ outline ■ problem

- a The _____ played by the individual in maintaining traditions
 b The _____ of protecting culture from outside influences
 c Different _____ to combat vandalism of historical sites
 d _____ about the benefits of globalization
 e _____ taken to improve historical sites of international importance
 f An _____ of various strategies to promote the speaking of Chinese

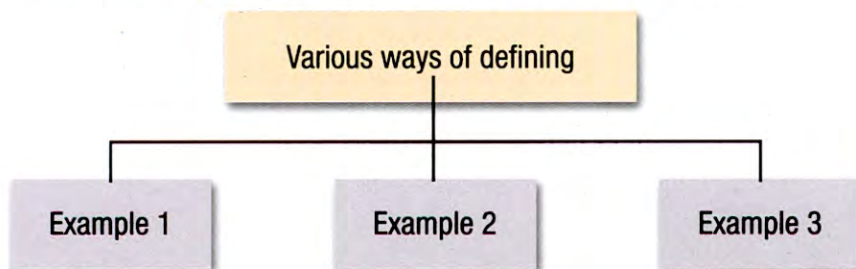
4 Describe in your own words the possible paragraph contents of three headings in exercise 3.

Matching headings (2)

1 Read the paragraph headings i-vi and answer questions a-d below.

- i Various interpretations of culture based on meaning
- ii The problem of explaining what culture means
- iii A definition of culture based on shared behaviour
- iv Defining a culture is not only a matter of observation
- v The main reason for difficulty in investigating culture
- vi The discrepancy between personal explanations and the real reasons for cultural behaviour

- a What do you think the topic of the text is?
 - b Which general nouns are used in the headings? Underline them.
 - c Based on your answers to a and b, which is the most likely heading for paragraph A on page 48?
 - d What does the plural in the word *interpretations* indicate?
- 2 Skim the passage on page 48 and match each paragraph A-D with a heading from i-vi above. Decide why the remaining two headings are not suitable.
- 3 The diagram shows the plan of a paragraph. Decide which paragraph from the passage it relates to. Underline the three examples mentioned.



Matching information to paragraphs (1)

1 Underline the general nouns in each phrase 1-4 below. Then decide which phrase is most likely to relate to a whole paragraph and explain why.

- 1 the idea that researching a culture is not just about observation
- 2 the fact that countries close to each other can be dissimilar
- 3 the fact that theories about culture can take a long time to develop
- 4 various anthropologists' ways of looking at the concept of culture

Technique

Notice and collect general nouns in Matching information to paragraph tasks. Compare these nouns to those used in Matching headings to paragraphs and sections in a reading passage. They are very similar.

2 Which paragraph (A–D) in the reading passage contains the information in 1–4?

The meaning of culture

A Culture is a term for which it is very difficult to give a precise meaning. The word means so many different things to different people, so devising a single acceptable definition is more problematic than may be first thought. The idea of culture as something shared is inherently complex. Even people neighbouring each other, or sharing a common language, or possessing certain common core values may actually have as many differences as similarities.

B Anthropologists have proposed over one hundred different definitions. A number of these are variations on the idea that culture consists of 'shared patterns of behaviour' as may be observed by the researcher. This is the definition put forward by Margaret Mead, for example, in her study of indigenous ritual in Samoa. This kind of definition, however, does not take account of the fact that studying culture is not just a question of observation. It also involves studying the meaning of this observed behaviour.

C Accordingly, other anthropologists, such as Max Weber, speak of culture as consisting of systems of shared meaning; as he puts it, 'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.' Similarly, Claude Levi-Strauss also speaks of culture as a product of the implicit beliefs which underlie it. The problem with this approach is that the meaning of cultural behaviour is not always easy to establish. Explanations may be offered up to a point, but the underlying assumptions often remain obscure. Indeed, they are often not understood by insiders. As Chris Argyris and Donald Schon point out, what people say to explain their cultural behaviour and what really drives this behaviour are often



widely different. The search for meaning can therefore be a long and painstaking process, involving long periods of observation and interviews in order to build possible theories.

D While there are some cultures which have remained isolated for long periods of time, many others have built up commercial links with other groups. Eventually, this may lead to adopting elements of the other group's rituals and behaviour which then become integrated into those of the original group. Some cultures have clashed with less powerful neighbours only to find that over time their culture became heavily influenced by these subordinates, like the Romans by the Greeks. In this way, the original meaning of an aspect of cultural behaviour may be lost in history and may originally have been part of a belief system very different from that which prevails in the culture today. This dynamism is, perhaps, the major reason why researching the meaning behind cultural behaviour is far from easy.

- 3 Read this additional extract from the reading passage and answer the questions.

The study of a different culture can be carried out in different ways. It can be compared to the study of a new planet or terrain. We can study what is immediately observable: the valleys, mountains and different geographical features, or, in the case of a culture, the various rituals and patterns of behaviour. Alternatively, we can ask what values and beliefs underlie these behaviours or what past events have shaped them, just as we may ask what geological events have shaped the landscape. This deeper level of enquiry may often lead on to a third stage in which we not only assess the new culture, but we also become increasingly aware of the different factors which have created our own culture as well.

- a What general noun in the first sentence means 'method'?
- b What three methods are mentioned in the text?
- 4 Which of the phrases below relates to a part of the paragraph and which to the whole? Use the general nouns to help you decide.

- i various strategies for studying another culture
- ii a comparison between the study of a planet and a new culture
- iii a cause of geographical features

Matching information to names

- 1 The lists below are taken from a task where you have to match information to names. Scan the previous reading passage on page 48 for the names and draw a box around each one.

- 1 Culture is something which is embodied in the way groups behave.
- 2 The reasons people give for their behaviour are often different from why it originally developed.
- 3 Societies create networks of meaning within which their members live.
- 4 Culture is something which arises from a group's beliefs.

List of people

- A Margaret Mead
- B Max Weber
- C Claude Levi-Strauss
- D Chris Argyris and Donald Schon

- 2 Match each statement 1–4 with the correct person A–D.

Improve your IELTS word skills

- 1 Decide which general nouns in the box below could replace the word in *italics* in this paragraph heading.

The *connection* between body language and environment.

link ■ bond ■ relationship ■ correlation ■ relation ■ strategy ■ association

- 2 The heading can also be rewritten in the form below. Which other verbs could be used? Use the list of nouns above to help you.

Example

How body language and environment are *connected*.

- 3 Divide the general nouns below into five groups with similar meanings.

aim ■ analysis ■ characteristic ■ consequence ■ difficulty ■ effect ■ explanation
feature ■ goal ■ interpretation ■ objective ■ obstacle ■ outcome ■ problem

- 4 Change the following sentences into paragraph headings using an appropriate general noun. Make the headings as short as you can.

Example

The paragraph exemplifies various subcultures in Brazilian society.

Various *examples* of Brazilian subcultures.

- The paragraph describes the outcome of the research on stem cells.
- The paragraph details how hydrogen is produced from water for energy.
- The section explains how culture and wealth are linked.
- The paragraph provides a list of the different factors involved in the production of a film.
- The paragraph sets out the part played by the United Nations in protecting cultures under threat.

- 5 What synonyms can you find for the general nouns you used in a–e in exercise 4?

- 6 Using the nouns below, make headings that reflect aspects of a university student's life.

Example

Connection: The *connection* between studying and achievement

- Benefit: _____
- Aim: _____
- Problems: _____
- Ways: _____
- Examples: _____
- Factors: _____
- Effect: _____

Reading Passage 6

- 1** You should spend 20 minutes on questions 1–13, which are based on Reading Passage 6.

Questions 1–4

Reading Passage 6 has five sections, **A–E**.

Choose the correct heading for sections **B–E** from the list of headings below.

List of Headings

- i** Research into African community life
- ii** Views about intelligence in African societies
- iii** The limitations of Western intelligence tests
- iv** The Chinese concept of intelligence
- v** The importance of cultural context in test design
- vi** The disadvantages of non-verbal intelligence tests
- vii** A comparison between Eastern and Western understanding of intelligence
- viii** Words for 'intelligence' in African languages
- ix** The impossibility of a universal intelligence test

Example Section A **iii**

- 1** Section B
- 2** Section C
- 3** Section D
- 4** Section E

Technique

- 1 Survey the whole reading passage and the questions.
- 2 Skim the title and predict the contents of the passage.
- 3 Skim the reading passage in no more than two minutes.
- 4 Skim the questions. Use the questions to help you improve your understanding of the general content of the reading passage.

Technique

- 1 Do not just cross out the example heading.
- 2 Skim the relevant paragraphs for the example(s), as this can help you find the other headings.
- 3 Skim the headings, noticing the general nouns such as views, comparison, etc and the words which help you scan the text. Also think of synonyms.
- 4 When you have finished, check the order of the headings you have chosen and see if they are logical.

Views of intelligence across cultures

A In recent years, researchers have found that people in non-Western cultures often have ideas about intelligence that are considerably different from those that have shaped Western intelligence tests. This cultural bias may therefore work against certain groups of people. Researchers in cultural differences in intelligence, however, face a major dilemma, namely: how can the need to compare people according to a standard measure be balanced with the need to assess them in the light of their own values and concepts?

B For example, Richard Nesbitt of the University of Michigan concludes that East Asian and Western cultures have developed cognitive styles that differ in fundamental ways, including how intelligence is understood. People in Western cultures tend to view intelligence as a means for individuals to devise categories and engage in rational debate, whereas Eastern cultures see it as a way for members of a community to recognize contradiction and complexity and to play their social roles successfully. This view is backed up by

15

20

Sternberg and Shih-Ying, from the University of Taiwan, whose research shows that Chinese conceptions of intelligence emphasize understanding and relating to others, and knowing when to show or not show one's intelligence.

C The distinction between East Asia and the West is just one of many distinctions that separate different ways of thinking about intelligence. Robert Serpell spent a number of years studying concepts of intelligence in rural African communities. He found that people in many African communities, especially in those where Western-style schooling is still uncommon, tend to blur the distinction between intelligence and social competence. In rural Zambia, for instance, the concept of *nzelu* includes both cleverness and responsibility. Likewise, among the Luo people in rural Kenya, it has been found that ideas about intelligence consist of four broad concepts. These are named *paro* or practical thinking, *luoro*, which includes social qualities like respect and responsibility, *winjo* or comprehension and *rieko*. Only the fourth corresponds more or less to the Western idea of intelligence.

D In another study in the same community, Sternberg and Grogorenko have found that children who score highly on a test of knowledge about medicinal herbs, a test of practical intelligence, often score poorly on tests of academic intelligence. This suggests that practical and academic intelligence can develop independently of each other, and the values of a culture may shape the direction in which a child's intelligence develops.

It also tends to support a number of other studies which suggest that people who are unable to solve complex problems in the abstract can often solve them when they are presented in a familiar context. Ashley Maynard, for instance, now professor of psychology at the University of Hawaii, conducted studies of cognitive development among children in a Mayan village in Mexico using toy looms, spools of

thread and other materials drawn from the local environment. The research suggested that the children's development could be validly compared to the progression described by Western theories of development, but only by using materials and experimental designs based on their own culture.

E The original hope of many cognitive psychologists was that a test could be developed that was absent of cultural bias. However, there seems to be an increasing weight of evidence to suggest that this is unlikely. Raven's Progressive Matrices, for example, were originally advertised as 'culture free' but are now recognized as culturally loaded. Such non-verbal intelligence tests are based on cultural constructs which may not appear in a particular culture. It is doubtful whether cultural comparisons of concepts of intelligence will ever enable us to move towards creating a test which encompasses all aspects of intelligence as understood by all cultures. It seems even less likely that such a test could be totally free of cultural imbalance somewhere.

The solution to the dilemma seems to lie more in accepting that cultural neutrality is unattainable and that administering any valid intelligence test requires a deep familiarity with the relevant culture's values and practices.



Questions 5–9

Look at the following findings (Questions 5–9) and the list of researchers below.

Match each finding with the correct researcher, A–E.

List of findings

- 5 There is a clear relationship between intelligence and relationships with others in Chinese culture.
- 6 The difference between intelligence and social competence is not distinct in many African communities.
- 7 Children frequently scoring well in practical tests score less well in academic tests.
- 8 In experiments to measure cognitive development, there is a link between the materials used and the test results.
- 9 The way cognition is viewed in East Asian cultures differs fundamentally from those in Western cultures.

List of researchers

- | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| A Richard Nesbitt | B Robert Serpell | C Ashley Maynard |
| D Sternberg and Shih-Ying | E Sternberg and Grogorenko | |

Technique

Matching names

- 1 Scan the passage for each name in the list.
- 2 Draw a box around each name. This limits where you need to look for their findings (opinions, claims, etc).
- 3 Skim to see whether the person's findings occur before or after their name. Then read the findings.
- 4 Read through the list of statements to find the correct match.

Question 10–12

The list below gives statements about non-verbal intelligence tests.

Which **THREE** statements are mentioned by the writer of the passage?

- A Raven's Progressive Matrices are widely considered to be culturally free.
- B Cultural comparisons will allow the development of culturally neutral tests.
- C The development of culturally neutral tests is unlikely.
- D Raven's Progressive Matrices are culturally specific.
- E The creation of culturally-free tests is sometimes possible.
- F Many cognitive psychologists originally hoped tests could be developed free of cultural bias.

Question 13

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

Which of the following is the main argument of the article?

- A Intelligence tests should include tests of social skills and responsibility.
- B Test takers from any culture can learn the cognitive style required by Western intelligence tests.
- C Intelligence tests cannot be free of cultural bias.
- D More research is needed to develop an intelligence test which is valid for all cultures.

- 2 Write down ways that (a) you (b) your friends (c) your family (d) people in your home country or a country you are familiar with use to measure intelligence in other people.