



Reading and Use of English Paper Part 6 – Gapped text: Life expectancy

Overview: Students practise understanding vocabulary from context, identifying main ideas in a text, then complete a Part 6 exam task.

Part of Exam: Reading and Use of English (Paper 1) Part 6

Language / Skill Practised: understanding meaning from context, identifying main ideas in a text

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student.

Time: 50 to 60 minutes, plus extension

Preparation: Make a copy of the worksheet for each student.

Procedure:

Part One: Warmer – Understanding meaning from context

1. Begin by asking students to identify the part of speech of the underlined words (*Longevity* = noun, *life expectancy* = noun phrase, *centenarian* = noun, *outlive* = verb). Ask students what they think the underlined words mean. Encourage them to take a guess, based on the context of the sentences, if they don't know the answer. They can then check their answers in a dictionary if necessary.

Key:

- 1 *Longevity* = having a long life or existence
- 2 *life expectancy* = the length of time that someone is likely to live
- 3 *centenarian* = someone who is 100 years old or older
- 4 *outlive* = to live longer than someone else

2. Give students 5–10 minutes to discuss the opinions. Monitor and make a note of any language errors for correction at the end of their discussions. When students have finished, ask them to share their opinions with the class.

Identifying main ideas in a text

3. Tell students to read the first paragraph. They can make notes of the key points in the paragraph to help them. Then tell them to complete the sentences using their own words, or words from the passage. Point out that there is no single correct answer here, but that the important thing is to convey the meaning of the passage in their answers. Check answers as a whole class.

Suggested key:

- 1 a country, people live longer than in the USA
- 2 geographic regions, small populations outlive their technologically advanced peers
- 3 analysed, lifestyle

Part Two: Exam practice

4. Tell students to quickly skim the rest of the reading passage and ask them what they can remember about factors that contribute to a long and healthy life.

Tell students to work in pairs and look at the options A–G. Tell them to pay attention to any referencing words (*It, They*) and any linkers (*Instead, As a consequence*) that could help them identify where the sentences fit. Go through any vocabulary in the questions/answers that students are unsure of.

Tell students to work on their own and answer the questions. When they have finished, they can check their answers in pairs and make any corrections as necessary.

Go through the answers as a whole class. Ask students to try to explain why each answer is correct.

Key:

- 1C 2A 3E 4G 5B 6D

Part Three: Extension

5. Begin by reading through the newspaper cutting and the options as a class. You could brainstorm ideas as a whole class and write



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key vocabulary and ideas on the board.

Tell students to work in groups and discuss which of the three options they think should receive the most funding. They should try to reach a consensus, with supporting reasons for their decision.

Ask one student from each group to report back on their group's decision to the class, and to explain their reasons. At the end you could have a class vote on which option is the most popular.



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Tip: It is not necessary to know the meaning of every word in a reading passage. If you come across a word you do not know, use the other words in the sentence to help you guess the meaning.

1 What do you think the underlined words in the sentences below mean? Use a dictionary to help you if necessary.

- 1 I guess it's not enough to live a healthy life. Longevity is what really matters these days!
- 2 I'm convinced that regular medical check-ups guarantee increased life expectancy.
- 3 The life of a centenarian in contemporary society is not a happy one.
- 4 I'd really like to outlive my peers even if my health condition isn't going to be perfect.

2 In pairs, discuss the opinions in the sentences above. To what extent do you agree with them? Why?

3 Read the introduction to the reading passage (in bold) below and complete the sentences.

- 1 Costa Rica is _____ where _____ .
- 2 The Blue Zones are _____ where _____ .
- 3 Dan Buettner has _____ the effect of _____ on longevity.

4 You are going to read a newspaper article about longevity. Six sentences have been removed from the article. Choose from the sentences A–G the one which fits each gap (1–6). Note that there is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

Tip: Complete the easiest answers first. Cross out each option as you use it. Leave the most difficult answers until last, by which time you will already have used some of the options.

LONGEVITY HOTSPOTS

Although Costa Rica spends only 15% of what the USA does on health care, a Costa Rican man aged 60 has about twice the chance of reaching 90 as does a man living in the USA. Trying to uncover the secrets of extraordinary longevity, world-famous researcher Dan Buettner has explored Costa Rica and four other geographic regions – called the Blue Zones – where small populations outlive their more technologically advanced peers. While interviewing the oldest people in the Blue Zones, the researcher analysed how their lifestyle is reflected by their increased life expectancy. 1

As regards a healthy lifestyle, Buettner suggests that we make our daily habits less convenient. The Blue Zone inhabitants don't need extreme gym workouts. 2 Similarly, we should be more demanding about our diets. To live longer and healthier lives, it is advisable to eat plenty of nuts and beans, and to stop eating when our stomach is 80% full. No pain, no gain, as the saying goes.

Our mental hygiene is no less significant. To gain 7 years of increased life expectancy, you should find and articulate your personal reason to live, your sense of purpose. 3 It is believed that attending faith-based services on a weekly basis will give you between 4 and 14 years of increased life expectancy. Additionally, it turns out that the healthiest centenarians in the Blue Zones put their families and friends first. 4 Thanks to this, their lifespan can be prolonged by up to three years. Research from the Framingham Studies shows that both addictions (e.g. smoking) and positive



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habits (e.g. happiness) are contagious. That's why it's important to be surrounded by friends you have chosen wisely in order to maintain good mental health. It is a widely known fact that stressful situations do not contribute positively to a healthy lifestyle. Although stressful situations never disappear altogether from our lives, we should follow in the footsteps of the Blue Zone community members, and figure out some daily routines to help us chill out – be it remembering our loved ones, praying or simply sleeping. 5

Interestingly, a prototype Blue Zone community was established in the North American town of Albert Lea in 2009. The results of the experiment have been analysed by scientists and proved extremely positive, as life expectancy increased by an average of 3.2 years. 6 Consequently, there are plans to create another Blue Zone community in the South Bay area of Los Angeles. [518 words]

- A Instead, they have to move around a lot doing daily errands – walking to a shop, a friend's house, or simply climbing stairs instead of using lifts.
- B People who take regular naps have a 35% lower incidence of heart-related disease, since the heart rate drops and stress hormones diminish during sleep.
- C As a consequence, Buettner has figured out the ways in which we can re-organise our local communities so as to enhance our health and well-being.
- D The research carried out among working people in the zone showed an almost 50% decrease in their health care costs.
- E This could, for example, be a religion you choose to practise.
- F They work out every day and try to follow a diet rich in fruit and vegetables.
- G They live in positive, committed relationships which support and promote healthy behaviour.

5 Work in groups. Read the news cutting below, then discuss it. Defend your opinions with supporting arguments.

The government is introducing a new healthcare reform. Its aim is to increase the nation's life expectancy. The general public can voice their opinions about which one of the three following projects should receive the most substantial government funding:

- developing scientific research into preventing cancer;
- transforming towns across the country into Blue Zone communities;
- paying individuals (students, employees, etc) for participating in sports activities.