V O C A B U L A R Y

Read the text and complete the sentences with the correct form of the word written in brackets.

We live in a golden age of technological, medical, **(1)** _____ **(SCIENCE)**, and social progress. Look at our computers! Look at our phones! Twenty years ago, the internet was a machine for geeks. Now we can't imagine life without it. We are experiencing medical breakthroughs that would have seemed like magic only half a century ago.

Almost every week we read about 'new hopes' for cancer sufferers **(2)** _____ **(DEVELOP)** in the lab that might lead to new cures and talk of a new era of space **(3)** _____ **(TOUR)**. Yet this vision of great innovation can't be right, and is, in fact, speculation – even fantasy.

But there once *was* an age when speculation matched reality. That true age of **(4)** _____ **(INNOVATE)** – I'll call it the **(5)** _____ **(GOLD)** Quarter – lasted from approximately 1945 to 1971. Just about everything that defines the modern world came about during this time. Electronics. Computers and the birth of the internet. Nuclear power. Cheap, **(6)** _____ **(RELY)** and safe automobiles.

Today, progress is defined almost entirely by consumer-driven **(7)** _____ **(IMPROVE)** in information technology. Sure, our phones are great, but that's not the same as being able to fly across the Atlantic in eight hours or eliminating smallpox. As the US technologist Peter Thiel once put it: 'We wanted flying cars, we got 140 characters.'

One **(8)** _____ **(EXPLAIN)** is that the Golden Age was the result of technological and economic **(9)** _____ **(GROW)** from the Second World War. It is certainly true that the war sped up the development of several technologies and medical discoveries. But penicillin, the jet engine, and even the nuclear bomb would have happened anyway.

The US economist Tyler Cowen, in his essay *The Great Stagnation* (2011), argues that progress of the Golden Age slowed because the 'low-hanging fruit' had been picked. These fruits include developing **(10)** _____ **(USE)** land, mass education, and the capitalisation of scientific breakthroughs made in the 19th century. But history suggests that this explanation is unrealistic. During periods of technological and scientific expansion, it has often seemed that progress has stopped, only for a new discovery to break old theories and ideals completely.

(Adapted from Hanlon, M.: The Golden Quarter. *AEON*, December 3, 2014. [online]. Retrieved from: https://aeon.co/essays/has-progress-in-science-and-technology-come-to-a-halt)

1 point/correct answer
Total: _____/ 10 pts

G R A M M A R

Read the text below and decide which answer (A, B, C or D) best fits each space. Then circle the correct option on the following page.

I **(1)** ___ up, groggy with sleep, and try to guess the time. Midnight is surprisingly noisy, while 3am carries a curiously softened sound, and 4:10am is when **(2)** ___ first aeroplane **(3)** ___ over my house. As my ears listen to the darkness, I sense the soft silence of 3am. Once I would have **(4)** ___. **(5)** ___, tonight, I listen to the emptiness for a few enjoyable moments, then I reach for my notebook and **(6)** ___ candle.

I **(7)** ___ insomnia for 25 years. Three years ago, I **(8)** ___ battling my sleeplessness. Instead, I decided to investigate my night brain, **(9)** ___ explore the curious effects of darkness on my mind. I had long **(10)** ___ slightly different at night, but now I wondered whether darkness and sleeplessness might have gifts to give. Perhaps I **(11)** ___ make use of my subtly changed brain.

I am not the first person to notice a shift **(12)** ___ thoughts and emotions after dark. 'Why does one feel so different at night?' asks Katherine Mansfield in her short story 'At the Bay' (1921). Mansfield **(13)** ___ became more and more frightened after dark, often barricading herself into her apartment by pushing all the furniture **(14)** ___ the front door. And yet, later in life, sleepless nights became one of her most creative times, as she confided to her journal:

It often **(15)** ___ to me now that when I lie down to sleep at night, instead **(16)** ___ getting sleepy, I feel more wakeful and I…begin to live over either scenes from real life or imaginary scenes.

Around the same time, Virginia Woolf **(17)** ___ about her own feelings that struck when the lights went down. She too recognised that night made us 'no longer quite ourselves'.

My night-awakenings began **(18)** ___ my first pregnancy. Ten years later – with four children and several years of working across time zones – a full night of sleep **(19)** ___ a rarity. Most nights, I woke between 2am and 4am, then read until I fell asleep again for a short while **(20)** ___ the alarm went off.

The latest statistics suggest that one in six of us cannot get to sleep or stay asleep. That figure is **(21)** ___ for women. At the last count, 8 per cent **(22)** ___ sleep medication and 11 per cent were regularly buying sleep aids.

To be clear, like **(23)** ___ sleep-deprived person, I longed for a comfortable night of uninterrupted sleep. But, as I became familiar **(24)** ___ the gifts of darkness, my sleep **(25)** ___ returned. I still have nights of broken sleep, but I no longer let them disturb me. Since then, I **(26)** ___ that a 20-minute walk reboots my brain as **(27)** ___ as a nap, that yoga is almost as restful **(28)** ___ sleep, and that reflecting when I **(29)** ___ be sleeping might be good for my brain. Best of all, I have a notebook full of night-ish lyrics and poems. One day I might use **(30)** ___ for my own 'creative profit'.

(Adapted from Abbs, A.: Spinning the night self. *AEON*, September 12, 2024. [online]. Retrieved from https://aeon.co/essays/tender-and-creative-is-the-night-on-the-benefits-of-insomnia)

G R A M M A R – continued

1. **A)** woke   **B)** wake   **C)** have woken   **D)** was waking
2. **A)** *no article*   **B)** a   **C)** the   **D)** an
3. **A)** passing   **B)** has passed   **C)** passed   **D)** passes
4. **A)** cursed   **B)** cursing   **C)** curse   **D)** curses
5. **A)** For   **B)** And   **C)** But   **D)** So
6. **A)** a   **B)** an   **C)** the   **D)** *no article*
7. **A)** has   **B)** have   **C)** am having   **D)** have had
8. **A)** stopped   **B)** stop   **C)** was stopped   **D)** stopping
9. **A)** for   **B)** about   **C)** to   **D)** *no word*
10. **A)** feel   **B)** felt   **C)** feeling   **D)** feels
11. **A)** can   **B)** could   **C)** would   **D)** will
12. **A)** in   **B)** about   **C)** for   **D)** to
13. **A)** oneself   **B)** herselfs   **C)** herself   **D)** her own
14. **A)** against   **B)** onto   **C)** in   **D)** at
15. **A)** happen   **B)** happening   **C)** happens   **D)** happened
16. **A)** to   **B)** of   **C)** off   **D)** from
17. **A)** think   **B)** is thinking   **C)** was thinking   **D)** has thought
18. **A)** since   **B)** during   **C)** while   **D)** in
19. **A)** has become   **B)** have become   **C)** became   **D)** become
20. **A)** before   **B)** after   **C)** when   **D)** until
21. **A)** highest   **B)** higher   **C)** much high   **D)** high
22. **A)** taking   **B)** took   **C)** were taking   **D)** have taken
23. **A)** any   **B)** a   **C)** some   **D)** *no word*
24. **A)** to   **B)** about   **C)** on   **D)** with
25. **A)** slower   **B)** slowly   **C)** slow   **D)** slowness
26. **A)** learnt   **B)** have learnt   **C)** learn   **D)** was learning
27. **A)** good   **B)** better   **C)** well   **D)** best
28. **A)** with   **B)** from   **C)** than   **D)** as
29. **A)** must   **B)** would   **C)** should   **D)** might
30. **A)** them   **B)** they   **C)** they're   **D)** their

0.5 point/correct answer
Total: _____/ 15 pts

R E A D I N G   C O M P R E H E N S I O N

Empress Matilda, George R. R. Martin's Muse

For the fantasy writer George R. R. Martin, medieval Europe is a free source of inspiration. At his fingertips, he finds a rich supply of war and intrigue, romance and legend, betrayal and scandal, and politically driven arranged marriages.

It is common knowledge that Martin's widely praised series *A Song of Ice and Fire*—known as the book material behind HBO's television series *Game of Thrones*—was based on the events of the War of the Roses in fifteenth-century England. In this conflict, the two families of York and Lancaster fought fiercely for the English throne.

For Martin's book *Fire & Blood* (2018), which inspired HBO's *House of the Dragon*, the author travelled even further back in time. **(1) ___** Enter, though not on the back of a dragon, Empress Matilda.

As Professor of Medieval Literature Elizabeth M. Tyler explains, Empress Matilda (1102–1167) was the daughter of Henry I of England. **(2) ___** Despite Henry I's demand for loyalty to Matilda from his people, England was not ready to accept a woman ruling on her own. And so, after Henry I's death, the country entered a civil war. It was a long and bloody battle for the throne between Matilda and her cousin, Stephen of Blois. **(3) ___**

Matilda and Stephen have counterparts in *House of the Dragon* as the half-siblings Rhaenyra Targaryen and Aegon Targaryen. King Viserys names Rhaenyra, his eldest living child, as his heir instead of Aegon, his firstborn son. **(4) ___** In the real world, historians call the civil war between Matilda and Stephen the English Anarchy (1138–1153). Martin's name for Rhaenyra and Aegon's conflict is slightly more elegant: the Dance of the Dragons.

Much from Matilda and Stephen's real-life war makes the transition to Martin's world. **(5) ___** All that Martin has added are the dragons.

(Adapted from Zarevich, E.: Empress Matilda, George R. R. Martin's Muse. *JSTOR Daily*, August 15, 2023. [online]. Retrieved from: https://daily.jstor.org/empress-matilda-george-r-r-martins-muse/)

A. Read the article *Empress Matilda, George R. R. Martin's Muse*. Decide which of the sentences (A)–(E) best fits into each of the numbered gaps (1)–(5) in the article. Write the correct letter in the blank chart provided below. There are three extra sentences.

a) She became her father's heir after the death of her legitimate brother in the 1120 White Ship disaster.

b) A few medieval texts claim that the War of the Roses was temporarily paused.

c) He looked to the twelfth century to choose his main character among many contenders for a crown.

d) Stephen's only real claims to power were having some royal blood and—perhaps more importantly in his fight against Matilda—his male gender.

e) Moreover, it is widely believed that King Viserys was an expert astronomer.

f) We see family conflict, a kingdom divided in two, deaths in the high thousands, and the grand prize of a throne.

g) However, half the population of the continent of Westeros refuses to accept this decision.

h) Certain sources argue that Matilda's advisors encouraged strategic marriages to solidify alliances and secure her succession.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.

B.   Read the text and for questions 1 to 5, choose the correct answer. Circle the correct answer.

1. From which historical period did Martin draw inspiration for *Fire & Blood*, later adapted into *House of the Dragon*?
A. The eighteenth century
B. The seventeenth century
C. The twelfth century
D. The sixth century

2. What do historians call the real-life civil war between Matilda and Stephen?
A. The Hundred Years' War
B. The English Anarchy
C. The War of American Independence
D. The Battle of Hastings

3. How does the text suggest gender influenced claims to power in the Middle Ages?
A. Gender played no role in inheritance or rule.
B. Male leaders often refused to acknowledge female leaders, causing conflict.
C. Women generally ruled without opposition.
D. Inheritance laws were strictly merit-based and ignored gender.

4. According to the text, which elements from Matilda and Stephen's war appear in Martin's fictional world?
A. Giant robots and spaceships
B. Peaceful negotiations and treaties
C. Religious harmony and prosperity
D. Family conflict, division, death, and the prize of a throne

5. The text suggests that Martin does not simply copy historical events. What critical insight can students gain from this approach?
A. Fiction must never reflect real-world influences.
B. Authors can draw inspiration from history while still creating original stories.
C. Historical parallels should never be recognizable.
D. Using history as a source is unethical.

1 point/correct answer
Total: _____/ 10 pts

L I S T E N I N G   C O M P R E H E N S I O N

You will listen to *an Interview with Ryan North, Creator of Dinosaur Comics.* Pay close attention and for each statement, decide whether it is true (T), false (F), or not stated in the text (NS). Circle the correct answer for each statement. You can score up to five points in this exercise.

1. **T / F / NS**   Before choosing dinosaurs, Ryan North considered using astronaut characters.

2. **T / F / NS**   Dinosaur Comics is a webcomic that often references detailed palaeontological facts.

3. **T / F / NS**   Ryan North learned very little about dinosaurs after starting his webcomic.

4. **T / F / NS**   Ryan North selected T. Rex as the main character because T. Rex represents a well-known, iconic dinosaur.

5. **T / F / NS**   The text states that Triceratops was never considered as a character.

6. **T / F / NS**   After graduating, Ryan North immediately took a traditional job before pursuing comics full-time.

7. **T / F / NS**   The text mentions that Dinosaur Comics is one of many webcomics that focus on dinosaurs.

8. **T / F / NS**   Ryan North redesigned the site so that pterosaurs appear to be flying above the comic.

9. **T / F / NS**   Ryan North's familiarity with computers influenced the decision to publish Dinosaur Comics online.

10. **T / F / NS**   According to the text, Ryan North's decision to focus on dinosaurs was partly due to having dinosaur clip art at hand.

0.5 point/correct answer
Total: _____/ 5 pts