

(Đề thi gồm 17 trang)

KỲ THI CHỌN HỌC SINH GIỎI
LẦN THỨ XVII, NĂM 2026
ĐỀ THI MÔN: TIẾNG ANH - LỚP 10
Thời gian làm bài: 180 phút
(Không kể thời gian giao đề)

SECTION A: LISTENING (50 points)

HƯỚNG DẪN PHẦN THI NGHE HIỂU

- Bài nghe gồm 4 phần; mỗi phần được nghe 2 lần, mỗi lần cách nhau 05 giây; mở đầu và kết thúc mỗi phần nghe có tín hiệu. Thí sinh có 20 giây để đọc mỗi phần câu hỏi.
- Mở đầu và kết thúc bài nghe có tín hiệu nhạc. Thí sinh có 03 phút để hoàn chỉnh bài trước tín hiệu nhạc kết thúc bài nghe.
- Mọi hướng dẫn cho thí sinh (bằng tiếng Anh) đã có trong bài nghe

Part 1: For questions 1-5, listen to a talk about human reactions to the cold and decide whether these statements are True (T), False (F), or Not given (NG). Write your answers in the corresponding numbered boxes provided.

1. Children's stronger resilience to the cold can be attributed to the higher amount of warming substances in their bodies compared to adults.
2. Contrary to popular knowledge, different types of fat exist inside the bodies to serve distinctly different purposes from one another.
3. Brown fat's ability to effectively warm up the body can be put down to its even distribution throughout many crucial body parts.
4. The blood-heating mechanism of brown fat follows the body's rapid pumping of the blood from a vital organ, defending the body from the cold.
5. Babies' inability to shiver to generate heat is linked to the lack of muscle mass in their bodies.

Your answers

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
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Part 2: For questions 6-10, listen to a talk about a new innovation and answer the questions. Write NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS taken from the recording for each answer in the corresponding numbered boxes provided.

6. What supposedly unattainable capabilities has the man in the speech gained after losing his mobility?
7. What is each thread weaved by the surgical robot capable of doing?
8. What kind of power source allows data to be delivered into the skull without any physical penetration?
9. What requires rehearsals of movements coming from the end user in order to develop a correlation between movements and thoughts?
10. What is one quality that a robotics company has accomplished in their invention?

Your answers

6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
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Part 3: You will hear an interview in which two academics, Julia Ford and Stuart Cameron, discuss human memory. For questions 11-15, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which fits best according to what you hear. Write your answers in the corresponding numbered boxes provided.

11. Julia and Stuart both think that concerns about the reliability of shared memories are
 - A. over-emphasised in some studies.
 - B. reasonable in some situations.
 - C. underestimated by some psychologists.
 - D. unfounded in legal contexts.
12. What surprised Stuart about how older couples remembered information?
 - A. the marked difference in the success of their approach
 - B. the few signs of personal disagreement
 - C. the great variety in the memories recalled
 - D. the evidence of the use of similar processes.
13. Julia and Stuart agree that the least effective sharing of memories occurred when one person
 - A. ignored the knowledge of the other person.
 - B. tried to control the direction of the conversation.
 - C. knew a lot more about the topic than the other person.
 - D. contradicted information given by the other person.
14. Julia contrasts humans with animals in order to
 - A. illustrate human social independence.
 - B. suggest humans abuse their privileges.
 - C. emphasise the carelessness of some humans.
 - D. explain how humans are vulnerable.

15. When talking about the nature of change in human memory, Julia and Stuart reveal
- A. their respect for art history.
 - B. their insistence on scientific evidence.
 - C. their interest in cultural explanations.
 - D. their differences regarding philosophical claims.

Your answers

11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
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Part 4: Complete the LISTENING summary below.

Write **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** for each answer.

The Strategic Importance of the Strait of Hormuz

Experts Julian and Elena describe the Strait of Hormuz as a highly precarious region, warning that a minor miscalculation there could result in a (16) _____. As a critical (17) _____, the strait sees approximately 21 million barrels of oil pass through daily, accounting for nearly 20% of global (18) _____. Any reduction in this flow would inflict disastrous (19) _____ on emerging markets.

Due to the narrow geography of the shipping lanes, littoral states like Iran gain tremendous (20) _____. Although countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE have built (21) _____, these are insufficient to offset a total closure. Additionally, no alternative route exists for Qatar's crucial LNG exports.

Furthermore, the legal status of the area under UNCLOS is heavily disputed. While the convention generally allows for (22) _____, Iran argues that only "innocent passage" applies. This resulting (23) _____ is often weaponized strategically. This causes insurance premiums to spike during tense periods, functioning as an (24) _____ on global commerce. With constant military friction in the area, a small skirmish could easily escalate into a devastating (25) _____.

Your answers

16.	17.	18.	19.	20.
21.	22.	23.	24.	25.

SECTION B: LEXICO- GRAMMAR (40 points)

Part 1. For questions 26-45, choose the best option A, B, C, or D to complete the following sentences. Write your answers in the corresponding numbered boxes on your answer sheet. (20 points)

26. I play tennis _____. That makes around twenty-five times each year, so it's not excessive at all.
A. each other Saturday
B. each two Saturdays
C. every other Saturday
D. every two Saturdays
27. The first people to live in _____ Hawaii were the Polynesians, who sailed there in large canoes from other Pacific islands about 2000 years ago.
A. now where is B. it is now C. now this is D. what is now
28. The bark of a tree thickens _____.
A. with age B. it gets older C. as older D. by age
29. All _____, there must have been 3000 people in that small hall.
A. said B. meant C. found D. told
30. The board's recommendation was that the CEO _____ of his duties until the investigation concludes.
A. is not relieved B. not be relieved C. be not relieved D. not relieved
31. After working outside all day in the summer heat, I was eager to _____ my thirst with a cold glass of lemonade.
A. alley B. sate C. dampen D. quench
32. The old house could use a _____ of paint to freshen up its faded exterior.
A. pinch B. lick C. dash D. speck
33. After the airplane engine failed, the pilot unfortunately bought the _____ in the crash.
A. farm B. garden C. land D. ranch
34. Although he received intensive treatment, there was no _____ improvement in his condition.
A. decipherable B. legible C. discernible D. intelligible
35. When Mary suggested opening a scuba diving shop in the desert, her business idea was clearly out in left _____.
A. field B. zone C. sphere D. scope
36. The company's new strategy was a _____ success, surpassing all financial projections for the first quarter
A. thundering B. roaring C. screaming D. resounding
37. After winning the championship, the team decided to paint the town red, celebrating their victory with a night of lively festivities and _____ joy

- A. exuberant B. despondent C. austere D. lethargic
 38. After years of neglect, the old stadium was in a state of _____ and required immediate renovation.
 A. fortitude B. rectitude C. solitude D. decrepitude
 39. The sudden _____ of the negotiations left both parties wondering if a deal would ever be reached.
 A. inception B. cessation C. continuation D. proliferation
 40. I decided it was time to stop hiding my mistakes and make a clean _____ of it by admitting everything to my parents.
 A. sweep B. breast C. break D. killing
 41. His _____ of concentration during the crucial moment of the game cost the team a valuable point.
 A. loss B. flop C. lapse D. slip
 42. There have been several attempts by politicians and lawmakers to _____ the current president on grounds of corruption.
 A. oust B. out C. ostracize D. evict
 43. The success of the project was _____, lasting only a few weeks before the market conditions shifted drastically.
 A. eternal B. inveterate C. perennial D. ephemeral
 44. Propaganda and _____ reinforced the pressures on people to change their way of life and thought.
 A. edification B. dissemination C. instigation D. indoctrination
 45. Despite his attempts to explain the complex theory, his audience remained none the _____ about the intricate details.
 A. smarter B. wiser C. brighter D. sharper

Your answers

26.	27.	28.	29.	30.	31.	32.	33.	34.	35.
36.	37.	38.	39.	40.	41.	42.	43.	44.	45.

Part 2. For questions 46-55, fill each gap with the correct form of the word in brackets. Write your answers in the corresponding numbered boxes on your answer sheet. (10 points)

46. _____ of East and West Germany began in 1900 when the Berlin Wall came down. (UNITY)
 47. David is a very _____ person and never does anything without thorough planning. (METHOD)
 48. The new car is advertised as _____, ensuring it will remain free from rust for many years. (RUST)
 49. We all go out for a _____ meal after the two-week project. (CELEBRATE)
 50. She looked absolutely _____ when I told her what had happened. She could hardly say a word. (DUMB)
 51. Hundreds of sailors and Marines yesterday loaded supplies and equipment aboard the _____ ships. (AMPHIBIAN)

- 52.If this theory is correct, then it is _____that we will be able to cure diseases in the foreseeable future. (VISION)
- 53.Harry's friends reminded her to drink water instead of alcoholic beverages to prevent waking up _____the next day. (HANG)
- 54.It's illegal for _____individuals to purchase alcohol in Viet Nam. You have to be 18 years old to buy alcoholic beverages. (AGE)
- 55.The organization was accused of _____deleting incriminating files. (SYSTEM)

Your answers:

46.	47.	48.	49.	50.
51.	52.	53.	54.	55.

Part 3: The passage below contains 5 mistakes. Identify the mistakes and write the corrections in the corresponding numbered boxes from 56-60. (10 points)

Line 1	Japanese sumo wrestling is generally considered to be one of the oldest
2	organised sports on earth. Men have been made fighting each other in the
3	wrestling ring for more than a thousand years, and wrestlers were to be
4	found throughout Japan as early as the 17th century. The organisational
5	structure of the sport began in the 1680s, with most of the basic rules
6	remaining largely unchanged ever then.
7	The ring itself is considered a sacred place, and for this reason, wrestlers
8	must throw a hand of salt into it before they may start fighting. Therefore,
9	when they are in the ring, the men must fight each other until one of them
10	is knocked down or pushed out of the ring. Slapping, tripping, and judo-
11	style moves are all allowed, whereas punching with fist is not.
12	There is no upper weight limit, so many sumo wrestlers spend years long
13	trying to put on weight. A tournament lasts for fifteen days, and the man
	who has the best record over the two-week period is judged to have won
	the championship.

Your answers:

	Lin e	Mistakes	Correction
56			

57			
58			
59			
60			

SECTION C: READING (60 points)

Part 1: For questions 61-70, read the passage below and decide which answer (A, B, C, or D) best fits each space. Write the letter A, B, C, or D in the numbered boxes provided. (10 points)

What is so special about Georges ‘Hergé’ Rémi’s tales of the adventures of a boy called Tintin, created for a newspaper in Belgium in the 1920s, that they should have (61) _____ being translated into more than 50 languages and selling more than 120 million copies? How is it that they have managed to endure for so long? One reason may be Hergé’s extraordinary attention to detail. He constantly revised and improved Tintin’s original black-and-white adventures to make them more (62) _____ to new audiences. And he based all his illustrations on an extensive personal library of photographs which he (63) _____ over the years.

In a career of more than 50 years, Hergé produced only 24 Tintin books. Had he been less meticulous, he might well have been a lot more (64) _____, but I doubt he would have been so widely loved and admired. Picking up a Tintin book the other day for the first time in many years, I found myself (65) _____ between the urge to race through the story and an (66) _____ to linger on the visual detail.

(67) _____ elevates Tintin beyond mere entertainment is the layered subtlety of its storytelling. Beneath the fast-paced plots and vivid illustrations (68) _____ a nuanced exploration of global politics, human ambition, and ethical dilemmas. Hergé did not (69) _____ embedding complex themes in seemingly simple narratives — from colonialism and capitalism to the follies of power. While some early works have been criticized for cultural stereotypes, later editions often reflect Hergé’s increasing self-awareness and efforts toward sensitivity and accuracy.

Furthermore, Tintin’s enduring legacy can be attributed to the universality of its characters. Tintin himself, (70) _____ relatively featureless in personality, serves as a moral compass and an ideal observer, allowing readers of all backgrounds to project themselves into the story. The supporting cast – from the irascible Captain Haddock to the eccentric Professor Calculus – brings humor, unpredictability, and emotional depth. Together, they form a world that feels both richly imaginative and profoundly human, explaining why the adventures continue to captivate readers across generations.

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 61.A. turned out | B. finished off | C. come to | D. ended up |
| 62.A. relevant | B. apt | C. applicable | D. fitting |
| 63.A. amassed | B. mustered | C. convened | D. swelled |
| 64.A. abundant | B. prolific | C. fruitful | D. profuse |
| 65.A. pulled | B. drawn | C. lured | D. torn |
| 66.A. impetus | B. incentive | C. impulse | D. intuition |
| 67.A. Which | B. That | C. What | D. How |
| 68.A. having laid | B. lays | C. having lain | D. lies |
| 69.A. shy away from | B. hold out for | C. run out of | D. fall back on |
| 70.A. however | B. albeit | C. still | D. despite |

Your answers:

61.	62.	63.	64.	65.	66.	67.	68.	69.	70.
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Part 2: For questions 71 – 80, read the following passage and fill in each of the numbered spaces with ONE suitable word. Write your answers in the corresponding numbered boxes provided. (10 points)

In the realm of digital transformation, the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence has catapulted industries (71) _____ uncharted territories. As businesses scramble to harness the power of machine learning and automation, the need for cutting-edge solutions has (72) _____ been more pressing. However, as organizations rush to innovate, they often overlook the foundational principles (73) _____ govern ethical AI deployment, leading to a potential Pandora's (74) _____ of unintended consequences. The quest for efficiency and profit must (75) _____ come at the expense of transparency and fairness in algorithmic decision-making processes. (76) _____ must always bear in mind that technology, if unchecked, can become a double-edged sword, simultaneously driving progress and fostering inequality. While it is tempting to (77) _____ the wave of technological advancement, one must not lose sight of the forest for the trees, as the fine balance between innovation and responsibility is (78) _____ ultimately determines the sustainability of AI in our society. To achieve this, collaboration between technologists, policymakers, and ethicists is paramount. Only (79) _____ collective vigilance and an unwavering commitment to ethical standards can we ensure that AI continues to benefit humanity (80) _____ tipping the scale into dystopia. In this journey, we must all keep our noses to the grindstone, working tirelessly to safeguard the future of digital innovation.

Your answers:

71.	72.	73.	74.	75.
76.	77.	78.	79.	80.

Part 3: For questions 81-90, read the following text and choose the answer A, B, C or D which you think fits best according to the text. Write your answers in the corresponding numbered boxes provided. (15 points)

For centuries, philosophers and writers have debated whether human beings are naturally curious explorers or fundamentally cautious creatures. Some argue that people possess an innate desire to discover new things, while others believe that caution is the dominant instinct and curiosity develops later. Neuroscientist Dr. Felix Arden explores this question using insights from modern neuroscience. One useful way to investigate the issue is to study young children. Children between four and six years old provide an ideal group because they have not yet been heavily shaped by social expectations, formal education, or peer pressure. In many ways, their thinking offers a clearer window into basic human tendencies. However, studying them also presents difficulties. Unlike adults, children often cannot explain complex reasoning verbally, so researchers must interpret their actions rather than their explanations.

Fortunately, curiosity and caution appear clearly in children's behavior. Young children often reach for unfamiliar objects, hesitate in uncertain situations, or focus closely on surprising outcomes. Researchers at Cambridge University designed experiments to observe whether children show a stronger inclination toward exploration or restraint. Their findings suggested that children display **a propensity for** curiosity, especially when they perceive the environment as safe.

To explore this further, the researchers created a device called the "Mystery Machine." This colorful machine included levers, buttons, and slots that produced different effects such as flashing lights, ringing bells, or toys appearing. Three objects—a red prism, a blue orb, and a yellow crescent—could be used with the machine. A researcher first demonstrated one action: pressing the prism to trigger flashing lights. The children were then allowed to experiment freely. The machine rewarded exploration because some combinations produced unexpected effects while others produced none. One slot was labeled "Risky," accompanied by a warning that it might create a loud noise, although it never actually did.

The design of the experiment required no detailed verbal explanation and was intuitive for children to understand, **speaking volumes about human instincts**. Most children did not simply copy the demonstrated action. Instead, they tried new combinations and experimented with different objects. This behavior indicated that they were motivated by curiosity rather than mere imitation. However, when they approached the "Risky" slot, many children paused and looked toward the researcher for reassurance. Their hesitation revealed a **wary** element in their behavior. Once reassured that the situation was safe, most of them continued exploring.

A second experiment supported these results. Children watched the researcher use one object that produced a predictable result and another that produced unpredictable outcomes. When given a choice, most children selected the unpredictable option because it offered the possibility of discovering something new. They even seemed puzzled when the researcher repeatedly chose the predictable option, reacting as though such behavior **flies in the face of reason**. Their responses suggested that they expected others to seek novelty rather than certainty when risks were low.

Although these experiments cannot completely resolve the debate, they suggest that curiosity plays a central role in early human behavior. At the same time, caution is not absent. Children demonstrate the ability to evaluate risk and hesitate when uncertainty appears threatening. The findings therefore imply that human beings begin life with a natural curiosity that is balanced by a secondary instinct for caution.

81. Why are young children ideal for studying human curiosity, according to the first paragraph?

- A. They are easier to engage than older participants.
- B. They can clearly explain their thought processes.
- C. They lack significant societal influences.
- D. They are already familiar with experimental settings.

82. What challenge do researchers face when working with young children?

- A. Children are less cooperative than adults.
- B. Children struggle to express complex ideas verbally.
- C. Children are heavily shaped by cultural norms.
- D. Children refuse to engage with experimental tasks.

83. The phrase “**a propensity for**” in paragraph 2 refers to children _____

- A. having a natural tendency toward certain behaviors.
- B. being able to articulate their preferences clearly.
- C. showing reluctance to participate in experiments.
- D. developing skills to mimic adult actions accurately.

84. Which detail about the “Mystery Machine” experiment is NOT mentioned in the text?

- A. It included levers, buttons, and slots.
- B. It produced effects like lights or toys.
- C. One slot was labeled “Risky.”
- D. It was operated by a computer program.

85. What point is the writer making by describing the experiment’s setup?

- A. It was too complex for children to understand.

- B. It allowed children to express preferences without verbal cues.
- C. It required children to replicate the researcher's actions.
- D. It was designed to intimidate the children.

86. The phrase “**speaking volumes about human instincts**” in paragraph 4 suggests that _____

- A. the experiment provided significant insights into children's behavior.
- B. the objects were designed to resemble human traits.
- C. the children's actions were identical to adult behaviors.
- D. the experiment was overly intricate for its purpose.

87. Which word is synonymous with “**wary**” in paragraph 4?

- A. confident
- B. enthusiastic
- C. cautious
- D. reckless

88. What did the children's gazing behavior in the second experiment indicate?

- A. They were confused by both outcomes shown.
- B. They preferred the predictable option over the unpredictable one.
- C. They showed no interest in the researcher's choices.
- D. They expected the researcher to choose the unpredictable option.

89. The phrase “**flies in the face of reason**” in paragraph 5 emphasizes that the children _____

- A. found the predictable choice illogical, similar to adult reasoning.
- B. reacted as expected for their age.
- C. were uninterested in the experiment's outcome.
- D. learned a new approach to decision-making.

90. In the final paragraph, the writer suggests that children _____

- A. are inherently cautious but learn curiosity later.
- B. have a natural inclination toward curiosity, tempered by caution.
- C. lack the ability to assess risks effectively.
- D. are heavily influenced by societal pressures from a young age.

Your answers:

81.	82.	83.	84.	85.	86.	87.	88.	89.	90.
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Part 4: For questions 91 – 100, choose the correct heading for sections B-F from the list of headings below. Write the correct number, i-ix, in the corresponding numbered boxes provided.(15 points)

How should reading be taught?

A.

Learning to speak is automatic for almost all children, but learning to read requires elaborate instruction and conscious effort. Well aware of the difficulties, educators have given a great deal of thought to how they can best help children learn to read. No single method has triumphed. Indeed, heated arguments about the most appropriate form of reading instruction continue to polarize the teaching community.

B.

Three general approaches have been tried. In one, called whole-word instruction, children learn by rote how to recognise at a glance a vocabulary of 50 to 100 words. Then they gradually acquire other words, often through seeing them used over and over again in the context of a story.

Speakers of most languages learn the relationship between letters and the sounds associated with them (phonemes). That is, children are taught how to use their knowledge of the alphabet to sound out words. This procedure constitutes a second approach to teaching reading – phonics.

Many schools have adopted a different approach: the whole-language method. The strategy here relies on the child's experience with the language. For example, students are offered engaging books and are encouraged to guess the words that they do not know by considering the context of the sentence or by looking for clues in the storyline and illustrations, rather than trying to sound them out.

Many teachers adopted the whole-language approach because of its intuitive appeal. Making reading fun promises to keep children motivated, and learning to read depends more on what the student does than on what the teacher does. The presumed benefits of whole-language instruction – and the contrast to the perceived dullness of phonics – led to its growing acceptance across America during the 1990s and a movement away from phonics.

C.

However, many linguists and psychologists objected strongly to the abandonment of phonics in American schools. Why was this so? In short, because research had clearly demonstrated that understanding how letters related to the component sounds in words is critically important in reading. This conclusion rests, in part, on knowledge of how experienced readers make sense of words on a page. Advocates of whole-language instruction have argued forcefully that people often derive meanings directly from print without ever determining the sound of the word. Some psychologists today accept this view, but most believe that reading is typically a process of rapidly sounding out words mentally. Compelling evidence for this comes from experiments which show that subjects often confuse homophones (words that sound the same, such as rose and 'rows). This supports the idea that readers convert strings of letters to sounds.

D.

In order to evaluate different approaches to teaching reading, a number of experiments have been carried out, firstly with college students, then with school pupils. Investigators

trained English-speaking college students to read using unfamiliar symbols such as Arabic letters (the phonics approach), while another group learned entire words associated with certain strings of Arabic letters (whole-word). Then both groups were required to read a new set of words constructed from the original characters. In general, readers who were taught the rules of phonics could read many more new words than those trained with a whole-word procedure.

Classroom studies comparing phonics with either whole-word or whole-language instruction are also quite illuminating. One particularly persuasive study compared two programmes used in 20 first-grade classrooms. Half the students were offered traditional reading instruction, which included the use of phonics drills and applications. The other half were taught using an individualised method that drew from their experiences with languages; these children produce their own booklets of stories and developed sets of words to be recognised (common components of the whole-language approach). This study found that the first group scored higher at year's end on tests of reading and comprehension.

E.

If researchers are so convinced about the need for phonics instruction, why does the debate continue? Because the controversy is enmeshed in the philosophical differences between traditional and progressive (or new) approaches, differences that have divided educators for years. The progressive challenge the results of laboratory tests and classroom studies on the basis of a broad philosophical skepticism about the values of such research. They champion student- centred learning and teacher empowerment. Sadly, they fail to realise that these very admirable educational values are equally consistent with the teaching of phonics.

F.

If schools of education insisted that would-be reading teachers learned something about the vast research in linguistics and psychology that bears on reading, their graduates would be more eager to use phonics and would be prepared to do so effectively. They could allow their pupils to apply the principles of phonics while reading for pleasure. Using whole-language activities to supplement phonics instruction certainly helps to make reading fun and meaningful for children, so no one would want to see such tools discarded. Indeed, recent work has indicated that the combination of literature-based instruction and phonics is more powerful than either method used alone.

Teachers need to strike a balance. But in doing so, we urge them to remember that reading must be grounded in a firm understanding of the connections between letters and sounds. Educators who deny this reality are neglecting decades of research. They are also neglecting the needs of their students.

List of Headings

- i Disagreement about the reading process
- ii The roots of the debate

- iii A combined approach
- iv Methods of teaching reading
- v A controversial approach
- vi Inconclusive research
- vii Research with learners
- viii Allowing teachers more control
- ix A debate amongst educators

Example Section A ix

91. Section B

92. Section C

93. Section D

94. Section E

95. Section F

91.	92.	93.	94.	95.
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For questions 96-100, write T for TRUE, F for FALSE, and NG for NOT GIVEN in the corresponding numbered boxes provided.

96. The whole-language approach relates letters to sounds.

97. Many educators believe the whole-language approach to be the most interesting way to teach children to read.

98. Research supports the theory that we read without linking words to sounds.

99. Research has shown that the whole-word approach is less effective than the whole-language approach.

100. Research has shown that phonics is more successful than both the whole-word and whole-language approaches.

96.	97.	98.	99.	100.
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Part 5: For questions 101-110, read the passage and do the task that follows. Write your answers in the corresponding numbered boxes provided. (10 points)

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Why are people attracted to the idea of buying and renovating ruinous old houses?

A. Years ago, glancing through the property pages of the newspaper one evening, I stumbled upon a tiny photograph of a small ivy-clad stone house with a triangle of blue sea in the background. 'For sale by auction' it said, 'guide price: £80,000.' Even if I'd been looking for a country house, and I wasn't, I'd hardly have opted for one in such a remote area, yet somehow that little image became lodged in my mind. Next day, on a

whim, I rang the selling agent. The house, I gleaned, gloried in the name Desolate, was truly in the middle of nowhere and hadn't been touched in half a century. Intrigued, I immediately felt an urge to go and see it for myself. So, it was that the following weekend, after an inordinately long drive down from London with the whole family in tow, I found myself edging up the seemingly interminable farm track that led up to Desolate from the main road. It turned out to be two little houses joined by a stone archway. On one side was a clapped-out electricity generator; on the other, a couple of dingy rooms downstairs and a couple more upstairs, all with rotten windows and peeling, brown wallpaper. But from the sitting-room window was a view of a garden gate opening onto a field with the sea cliffs beyond. On seeing that, I was smitten.

B. For more than 50 years, or so the story went, it had been home to a woman aviator called Miss Darker whose wartime exploits had allegedly inspired Michael Ondaatje's novel, *The English Patient*. In the film, she's played by Kristin Scott Thomas and meets a nasty end in the north African desert. The real-life Miss Darker returned home and spent the rest of her life as a recluse at Desolate. All of this just added to my conviction: I just had to have her house. I didn't care that my children thought it the grittiest thing ever, pointing out that despite the view there was no access to the sea, and it was miles to the nearest shop. My ears were closed to such details. I was in love and would elope if need be. I spent the next two weeks gazing rapt at the photos I'd taken and counting money.

C. On the day of the auction, I drove down with an old friend. I took her to see Desolate first, showing it to her with anxious pride as I would show her a man I was marrying. Yes, she said. She understood. The sale was being held in a quiet local town, but as we arrived, I sensed my plan was going awry. The car park was jammed with large 4x4s and the room itself was full of braying Londoners: mostly women with expensively abundant hair, all looking strained and excited. I took my place in the front row so I wouldn't have to see the others crammed in behind me. The bidding started at £50,000 and went up slowly. When it paused at £120,000, I was about to raise a shaking hand, but it raced on up, far out of reach until Desolate eventually sold for the best part of half a million. I couldn't look at the man who'd bought it. I got into the car and wept. It was shameful for an unsentimental, middle-aged woman to be brought so low by a heap of stone and a view. But I was desolate over Desolate.

D. The memory of that thwarted love affair came back to me recently when a friend called to tell me about a house she'd seen that was far too expensive for her and suited her in no way. I could hear in her voice that it was pointless trying to talk sense into her. I started to wonder what it is about these houses that can hold such allure for people that they sell for many times their value. Internet message boards are testimony to the fact that it's by no means an uncommon scenario. Perhaps the real reason has little to do

with bricks or mortar. You look at a view and you think: ‘This will make my life different.’ And of course, the houses we fall for most are those that need us most – those where we can most easily make our mark and become part of their history. In the end, we did buy a house; an ugly, cheap and practical one. But the sea is easily reached and through repeated use I've grown fond of it. Yet in writing this article I've looked again at the photographs I took of Desolate all those years ago and my heart still aches, just a bit.

In which section does the writer

- 101. accept that the location of the house called Desolate left a lot to be desired? _____
- 102. admit to harbouring some regrets about a missed opportunity? _____
- 103. attempt to rationalise her feelings about the house she wanted to buy? _____
- 104. draw an analogy to underline how seriously she took an idea? _____
- 105. pinpoint the moment when she decided to go for something? _____
- 106. mention feelings of curiosity arising out of a conversation? _____
- 107. recount the story of another person who experienced similar feelings to her own? _____
- 108. recall getting the first inkling that a dream wouldn't be realised? _____
- 109. remember ignoring sensible misgivings about a plan? _____
- 110. suggest that her behaviour on one occasion was out of character? _____

Your answers:

101.	102.	103.	104.	105.
106.	107.	108.	109.	110.

SECTION D: WRITING (50 points)

Part 1: Graph writing (20 points)

The table below illustrates how much money a single person and a couple in Australia need for a comfortable lifestyle after they retire.

Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant. Write at least 150 words. Write your answer on the answer sheet.

Expense	A retired single person	A retired couple
Housing	\$184	\$194
Leisure	\$140	\$202
Health	\$122	\$177
Transport	\$107	\$108
Clothing	\$44	\$80
Food	\$50	\$100
Others	\$37	\$70
Total	\$684	\$931

Part 2: Essay writing (30 points)

Topic: "True education is measured not by grades achieved, but by the values a person carries into the world." To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Write an essay of about 250 words to answer the above question. Give reasons and include any relevant examples and explanations to support your answer. Write your answer on your answer sheet.

----- **HẾT** -----