

Academic Reading Test 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 1–13**, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.

The Sweet Lure of Chocolate

A The story of chocolate begins not with a sweet treat, but with a bitter beverage. The *Theobroma cacao* tree, whose name means "food of the gods," was first cultivated in Central and South America by ancient civilizations, including the Mayans and the Aztecs, as far back as 1900 B.C. Both cultures revered cacao beans, using them not only to create a ceremonial drink called "xocolatl" but also as a form of currency. This early version of chocolate was nothing like today's confection; it was a frothy, cold, and intensely bitter drink, often mixed with chili peppers, vanilla, and achiote for flavour and colour.

B When Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés arrived in Mexico in 1519, he was introduced to xocolatl by the Aztec emperor Montezuma. While Cortés and his men were reportedly not fond of the bitter taste, they were fascinated by the bean's value as currency. They brought cacao beans back to Spain in the 1520s, where they kept it a closely guarded secret for nearly a century. Spanish monks, accustomed to sweetening their foods, began mixing the ground beans with sugar, cinnamon, and honey, transforming the bitter drink into a warm, sweet, and luxurious beverage reserved for the aristocracy.

C From Spain, chocolate's popularity spread like wildfire across Europe. In 1615, the daughter of Spanish King Philip III married French King Louis XIII, and she brought her love for chocolate to the French court. Soon, it became the drink of choice for the nobility in France. England was next, with the first "chocolate house" opening in London in 1657. These establishments quickly became fashionable social hubs, similar to coffee houses, where the wealthy elite would meet to drink, gamble, and discuss politics. For over 200 years, chocolate remained exclusively a beverage for those who could afford its high price.

D The transformation of chocolate from a drink to a solid food began during the Industrial Revolution. The first breakthrough came in 1828 when Coenraad van Houten, a Dutch chemist, invented the cocoa press. This machine was revolutionary because it could squeeze the cocoa butter (the natural fat) from the roasted cacao beans, leaving behind a dry powder. This powder was not only easier to mix with water to create a drink, but it also paved the way for solid chocolate.

E The first solid chocolate bar meant for eating was created in 1847 by the British chocolatier Joseph Fry. He discovered that by adding melted cocoa butter back into the cocoa powder, along with sugar, he could create a paste that could be pressed into a mould. The result was the world's first "eating chocolate." This innovation was soon followed by another. In 1875, a Swiss chocolatier named Daniel Peter, who was neighbours with Henri Nestlé, experimented with adding Nestlé's new invention—condensed milk—to his chocolate mixture. This experiment was a resounding success, creating the first milk chocolate bar and forever changing the public's palate.

F One final invention cemented chocolate's modern form. In 1879, Rodolphe Lindt, also from Switzerland, invented the "conching" machine. This device consisted of a large, heated granite

trough where chocolate paste was continuously rolled and mixed for hours, sometimes days. This "conching" process evenly distributed the cocoa butter, broke down gritty particles, and released volatile acids, resulting in a perfectly smooth, velvety texture that melts in the mouth. This process is still fundamental to producing high-quality chocolate today.

G Thanks to these 19th-century innovations, chocolate production was mechanized, making it cheaper and accessible to the mass market. It was no longer a luxury for the rich but a treat for everyone. Today, the global chocolate industry is a multi-billion dollar enterprise, facing modern challenges of sustainability, fair trade for cocoa farmers, and deforestation. From a bitter drink of the gods to a globally beloved confection, chocolate's journey is one of innovation, luxury, and eventual mass appeal.

Questions 1–6

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

- 1 What was the Mayans' and Aztecs' primary use for cacao? **A** As a base for sweet desserts. **B** As a ceremonial drink and a form of currency. **C** Exclusively for the poor and working classes. **D** As a solid food bar mixed with chili.
- 2 How did chocolate change after its introduction to Spain? **A** It was mixed with chili peppers for the first time. **B** It was served cold, just as in Mexico. **C** It was made sweet and served warm. **D** It became immediately available to all social classes.
- 3 The "chocolate houses" in 17th-century London were **A** places for the wealthy to socialise. **B** factories producing the first chocolate bars. **C** shops selling chocolate for home use. **D** open to everyone, unlike coffee houses.
- 4 What did Coenraad van Houten's cocoa press achieve? **A** It mixed sugar and cocoa powder automatically. **B** It removed the fat from the cacao beans. **C** It created the first milk chocolate. **D** It added chili peppers to the chocolate.
- 5 Who was responsible for creating the first solid chocolate bar? **A** Rodolphe Lindt **B** Daniel Peter **C** Joseph Fry **D** Henri Nestlé
- 6 The "conching" machine improved chocolate by **A** making it quicker to produce. **B** adding milk and sugar efficiently. **C** making its texture smoother. **D** preserving its bitter, volatile acids.

Questions 7–13

Complete the summary below.

Write **ONE WORD ONLY** from the passage for each answer.

The 19th-Century Chocolate Revolution

The move from chocolate as a drink to a food was driven by the Industrial Revolution. In 1828, the invention of the cocoa **(7)** by van Houten was a key step. It separated the cocoa **(8)** from the beans, leaving a dry powder. Nearly twenty years later, Joseph

Fry created the first "eating chocolate" by adding the fat back into the powder, along with **(9)**

A significant new variety, milk chocolate, was invented in Switzerland by Daniel Peter. He added condensed **(10)** to his chocolate mixture. Finally, Rodolphe Lindt developed a machine for "conching," a process that greatly improved the chocolate's **(11)** by making it smooth. These innovations meant chocolate was no longer just a **(12)** for the rich. It became accessible to the **(13)**-market and is now a global industry.