
VSTEP READING PRACTICE (Time allowed: 50)

Directions: *In this section, you will read THREE different passages. Each one is followed by 10 questions about it. For questions 1-30, you are to choose the best answer A, B, C or D to each question. Then on your answer sheet, find the number of the question and fill in the space that corresponds to the letter of the answer you have chosen. Answer all questions following a passage on the basis of what is stated or implied in that passage.*

PASSAGE 1. Questions 1-10**The hugs that keep on giving**

Every weekend over the past 10 months, Nguyen Bao Ngoc has been walking around the Sword Lake in Hanoi, dressed up as Doraemon, a popular Japanese comic book character that is half cat half robot. Stretching his arms out, he tries to hug as many strangers as possible. **Some** stop to hug him back before putting money into one of the boxes that his friends are holding. Some others walk faster and avoid eye contact with him. Ngoc, 23, says he started the “Hug Me” (Om toi di) campaign in February, inspired by the Free Hugs social movement in Australia. The difference is his hugs are not free, because he wants to raise money to help children in poor and remote areas around the country. **[A]**

The **senior** college student who is studying to become a TV reporter has been doing charity work for three years. In one of his most successful attempts, he worked as a xe om motorbike driver in his free time and donated all the money he could earn to poor families in his hometown in Quang Binh Province. But “Hug Me,” Ngoc says, is his favorite because with it, he can get the attention of his peers. “Young people of my age have been more into social media than real life. We may cry over a sad story on Facebook but when we witness the same story in real life, we can be **indifferent**”. **[B]**

As hugging in public is not very common in Vietnam, Ngoc said he puts on a costume so that strangers will not feel uncomfortable. Doraemon the cat is in fact famous for its friendliness and kindness. Sometimes, for a change, he also dresses as a bee or a puppy. **[C]**

Many students who gave him a hug donated more than VND 5,000, which is what he hopes to receive, allowing the campaign to earn between \$50 and \$200 each week. Some also brought old clothes and books. Ngoc has organized two trips to bring gifts and food to children in Quang Binh and the northern mountainous province of Yen Bai this year. The **third** has been planned for December.

Ngoc has been diagnosed with first stage bone marrow cancer but he says his condition is “stable.” He says he does not want to be defined by his illness. Having cancer is not the

VSTEP B1 - Reading handout 3

motivation for him to help others. "I'd do it anyway. I want people to see me as a student doing charity work, not a cancer patient doing charity work." [D]

1. Why does Ngoc start the "Hug Me" campaign?

- A. to initiate a social movement in Australia B. to offer free hugs
C. to raise money for charity D. to pay for his tuition fee at college

2. The word "some" refers to _____

- A. friends B. children C. strangers D. boxes

3. The word "senior" is closest in meaning to _____

- A. last-year B. superior C. advanced D. leading

4. The word "indifferent" is closest in meaning to _____

- A. uncaring B. concerned C. dissimilar D. responsive

5. What character might probably not represent a costume that Ngoc dresses in?

- A. a cat B. a bee C. a puppy D. a panda

6. How much is the "Hug Me" campaign expected to earn a month?

- A. VND5,000 B. \$50 and \$200 C. \$200 and \$800 D. free

7. The word "third" refers to _____

- A. province B. campaign C. trip D. month

8. In which space (marked A, B, C and D in the passage) will the following sentence fit?

"I want to live and love in the real world, not the virtual world," He added.

- A. [A] B. [B] C. [C] D. [D]

9. What does Ngoc mean when he said "I want people to see me as a student doing charity work, not a cancer patient doing charity work"

- A. having cancer motivates him to do charity work
B. he does not like being remembered by his illness
C. any student with such illness can do more to help other people
D. he is a student who helps cancer people

10. In which paragraph does the author mention the bad health condition of Nguyen Bao Ngoc?

- A. paragraph 1 B. paragraph 2 C. paragraph 3 D. paragraph 4

PASSAGE 2. Questions 11-20

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is the main political and economic organization for that area. The leaders summit is the last meeting before the launch of the ASEAN' Economic Community, or AEC, on December 31.

The AEC will be equivalent to the world's seventh largest economy. **It** was set up to create a highly competitive single market and production area. Organizers hope it will ease the movement of capital, goods, investment, services and skilled labor across ASEAN countries. The goal is to make the whole area more competitive and economically successful. But some business leaders have low expectations for the ASEAN summit. Anthony Nelson is a director at the US – ASEAN Business Council in Washington. He believes that security will be an important issue at the meetings, especially after the terrorist attacks in Paris last week. "The November summit includes the East Asia Summit, which primarily focuses on political and security issues. So that's going to be a big part of what is actually going on around the summit. A lot of the work that business gets really involved in tends to happen around the ASEAN economic ministers' meeting in August." But the AEC may have only limited influence on business activity when it comes into being next year. Experts expect little to change at first because there is still much to be done.

"The ASEAN single window, which is a customs project, is still very much a work in progress. But beginning next year they will start limited trials with five of the 10 ASEAN countries. And there have been past mutual recognition agreements for **credentials** of skilled professionals. But there's still a lot of work to be done in terms of actually **implementing** those agreements." Some critics say the AEC will mainly help businesses, not the majority of people in Southeast Asia. Earlier this year, the ASEAN Civil Society Conference and ASEAN Peoples' Forum expressed concern about regional economic **integration**. In a statement, the group said such a move would mean unequal and unsustainable economic growth. This, it said, would result "in worsening poverty and inequalities of wealth." Jerald Joseph is co – chairman of the ASEAN People's Forum. He says people crossing borders to find employment need more protections. He said: "Cross — border migrant workers don't have the same level of protection or interest in the whole negotiation. So that's a little bit of a pity, a wasted chance, if it's not reflected in the coming document." The 27th ASEAN Summit includes the organization's partners. Nations including China, India, Japan and the United States are to attend.

11. ASEAN is the main political and economic organization in _____

- A. East Asia B. Southeast Asia C. West Asia D. North Asia

12. What does the word "It" refer to _____

- A. ASEAN B. Organizer C. AEC D. Business Council

13. According to Anthony Nelson, what is the important issue at the meetings?

- A. Security B. Climate change C. Business D. Economy

14. According to the passage, what aspect tends to happen around the ASEAN economic ministers?

- A. Security B. Climate change C. Business D. Economy

15. According to the passage, how many countries in the ASEAN will start limited trials?

- A. 3 B. 5 C. 7 D. 10

16. The word “credentials” can be replaced by _____

- A. letters B. salutations C. invitations D. certificates

17. The word “implementing” is closest in meaning to _____

- A. carrying out B. producing C. concentrating D. focusing

18. The word “integration” can be replaced by _____

- A. utilization B. contribution C. combination D. separation

19. According to the passage, what would delay the increase of the economy?

- A. the recession B. the poverty C. the move D. the employment

20. According to the passage, who requires more assurance?

- A. travellers B. immigrants C. residents D. tourists

PASSAGE 3. Questions 21 - 30

New surveys suggest that the technological tools we use to make our lives easier are killing our leisure time. We are working longer hours, taking fewer and shorter vacations (and when we do go away, we take our cell phones, PDAs, and laptops along). And, we are more stressed than ever as increased use of e-mail, voice mail, cell phones, and the Internet is destroying any idea of privacy and leisure.

Since the Industrial Revolution, people have assumed that new labor-saving devices would free them from the burdens of the workplace and give them more time to grow intellectually, creatively, and socially - exploring the arts, keeping up with current events, spending more time with friends and family, and even just ‘goofing off’.

But here we are at the start of the 21st century, enjoying one of the greatest technological boom times in human history, and nothing could be further from the truth. The very tools that were supposed to liberate us have bound us to our work and study in ways that were **inconceivable** just a few years ago. It would seem that technology almost never does what we expect.

In 'the old days', the lines between work and leisure time were markedly clearer. People left their offices at **a predictable time**, were often completely disconnected from and out of touch with their jobs as they traveled to and from work, and were off-duty once they were home. That is no longer true. In today's highly competitive job market, employers demand increased productivity, expecting workers to put in longer hours and to keep in touch almost constantly via fax, cell phones, e-mail, or other communications devices. As a result, employees feel the need to check in on what is going on at the office, even on days off. **They** feel pressured to work after hours just to catch up on everything they have to do. Workers work harder and longer, change their work tasks more frequently, and have more and more reasons to worry about job security.

Bosses, colleagues, family members, lovers, and friends expect instant responses to voice mail and e-mail messages. Even college students have become bound to their desks by an environment in which faculty, friends, and other members of the college community increasingly do their work online. Studies of time spent on instant messaging services would probably show staggering use.

This is not what technology was supposed to be doing for us. New technologies, from genetic research to the Internet, offer all sorts of benefits and opportunities. But, when new tools make life more difficult and stressful rather than easier and more meaningful - and we are, as a society, barely conscious of it – then something has gone seriously awry, both with our expectations for technology and our understanding of how it should benefit us.

21. According to the first three paragraphs, technological tools that were designed to make our lives easier ____.

- A. have brought us complete happiness
- B. have not interfered with our privacy
- C. have fully met our expectations
- D. have turned out to do us more harm than good

22. Which of the following is NOT true about technological tools, according to new surveys?

- A. They are being increasingly used.
- B. They bring more leisure to our life.
- C. They are used even during vacations.
- D. They make our life more stressful.

23. Which of the following is true, according to the passage?

- A. People have more opportunities to get access to technological applications.
- B. Students used to have to study more about technological advances.

- C. People now enjoy greater freedom thanks to the technological boom.
- D. Employees were supposed to make technology do what they expected.

24. The word “inconceivable” in the passage is closest in meaning to “_____”.

- A. unimaginable
- B. foreseeable
- C. unforgettable
- D. predictable

25. With the phrase “at a predictable time”, the author implies that _____.

- A. people wanted to be completely disconnected from their work
- B. people had to predict the time they were allowed to leave offices
- C. people used to have more time and privacy after work
- D. people were unable to foresee their working hours

26. It can be inferred from the fourth paragraph that _____.

- A. employees have more freedom to decide what time they start and finish work
- B. employers are more demanding and have efficient means to monitor employees
- C. it is compulsory that employees go to the office, even on days off
- D. life is more relaxing with cell phones and other technological devices

27. The word “They” in the fourth paragraph refers to _____.

- A. employers
- B. workers
- C. employees
- D. tasks

28. Which of the following could be the main idea of the fifth paragraph?

- A. The coming of new technological advances has spoiled family and social relationships.
- B. New technological advances have added more stress to daily life.
- C. New technological applications are wise entertainment choices of our modern time.
- D. New technological advances have reduced work performance.

29. This passage has probably been taken from _____.

- A. a fashion magazine
- B. a science review
- C. a political journal
- D. an advertisement

30. Which of the following could best serve as the title of the passage?

- A. Research on the Roles of Computers
- B. Changes at the Workplace
- C. Benefits of Technology
- D. Expectations and Plain Reality

KEY

Part 1

1. C	2. C	3. A	4.A	5.D
6.C	7.C	8.B	9.B	10.D

Part 2

11.B	12.C	13.A	14.C	15.B
16.D	17.A	18.C	19.C	20.B

Part 3

21.D	22.B	23.A	24.A	25.C
26.B	27.C	28.B	29.B	30.D