

READING PASSAGE 1

Answer Questions 1-16, which are based on Reading Passage 1.

The history of the picnic

Picnics became popular in France in the 18th century. A favourite pastime of the upper classes, they were initially purely indoor affairs, held at home or in hired rooms. It was assumed that invited guests would contribute – they could either bring a dish or pay a share of the overall cost. These picnics were often marked by conversation and wit and, as such, were associated with intellectual refinement. At larger gatherings, there was also music, with the result that ‘picnic’ came to mean the same as a ball or party. Picnics were, however, nothing if not adaptable. When the first restaurants appeared, picnickers quickly began going to them and having their picnics there.

The French Revolution in 1789 changed everything, with many wealthy French aristocrats fleeing abroad. Some went to Austria, others to Prussia or even America, but the majority chose to go to England. Settling mainly in London, some were now in need of money, but they did their best to maintain their old way of life – and in doing so, introduced the picnic to England. This led to several important developments. The first, and shortest-lived, was that the picnic became decidedly less refined and noisier. This was thanks to a group of around 200 wealthy young people who loved France and French culture and, in late 1801, founded the ‘Pic Nic Society’. Held in hired rooms on Tottenham Street in London, the society’s gatherings were intended to impress. Every member was required to bring a costly dish and something to drink. As The Times newspaper reported, each member tried to outdo the others in luxury and expense. After dinner, the principal entertainment was always a play. The productions were, admittedly, quite basic: the stage was small and crudely built, unlike in a theatre, and the actors were never professionals. But even so, they were wildly popular.

Another development in England in the 1800s was more profound. Picnics were adopted by the emerging middle classes and moved outside. What caused this change is unclear, but the most likely explanation is that the English simply applied a fashionable French word to a pre-existing practice, without being aware of what it meant. One of the results was that music ceased to be provided at picnics, which became just rather plain, open-air meals to which people were invited by a host. Another was that it became both more ‘genteel’ and – thanks to the idealisation of the countryside – more innocent.

In the decades which followed, this form of picnic found its way to the United States. As was only to be expected, it remained a refined activity most popular with the middle classes in cities; but unlike in England, its setting was associated more with a flight from civilisation than with childlike simplicity. Though still tinged with innocence, paintings of picnics by well-known American artists – such as those by Winslow Homer – tended, therefore, to contain fewer gently rolling fields than shown by English artists and instead had more gnarled trees and rough mountains.

Picnics in the open air were less well received elsewhere, however. Though the restoration of the French monarchy was accompanied by the return of picnicking to France, their indoor version still predominated, especially among the aristocracy. But the legacy of revolutionary equality in France also opened up the picnic there to others lower down the social scale. By the mid-19th century, even members of the working classes in France were starting to adopt the practice. When outdoor picnics eventually did begin to gain ground in France, they were regarded with considered suspicion. Perhaps because of a growing reaction in France against the Romantic idealisation of nature, they were not seen as innocent and wholesome, as they were in England and the United States.

In general, not until the early 20th century did the outdoor picnic prevail over the indoor kind. Particularly in England, the development of different forms of transport and the acceleration of social change made the countryside accessible to a far greater proportion of the population. Before long, the popularity of the picnic had grown so much that specialist picnic baskets were being produced for the mass market and their contents were becoming more standardised.

Over the last 100 years, picnics have undergone still further changes – largely as a result of the international availability of a huge variety of food to be transported over long distances. Picnics will undoubtedly continue to evolve in the future. Shifting patterns of trade will almost certainly continue to change the foods we pack for a picnic. But whatever happens, one thing is certain: as long as there are friends with whom to share a meal, there will be few things so pleasant as a picnic lunch.

Questions 1–8

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 1?

In boxes 1–8 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE	<i>if the statement agrees with the information</i>
FALSE	<i>if the statement contradicts the information</i>
NOT GIVEN	<i>if there is no information on this</i>

- 1 The first picnics in 18th-century France were held in parks.
- 2 People who attended early French picnics were expected to bring food or help with the expense.
- 3 The hosts of early French picnics often asked their guests to play music.
- 4 The picnic was brought to England by aristocrats escaping the French Revolution.
- 5 Many complaints were received about the noise at the first English picnics.
- 6 People who wanted to join the Pic Nic Society had to have the approval of existing members.
- 7 The picnics held by the Pic Nic Society were extravagant events.
- 8 The picnics given by the Pic Nic Society took place in theatres.

Questions 9–16

Complete the notes below.

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

Write your answers in boxes 9-16 on your answer sheet.

Changes in picnics

In England

- in the 1800s, picnics began to be held **9**
- picnics no longer usually included **10** for entertainment.

In the USA

- picnics were a favourite activity for people living in **11**
- American **12** of picnics were different from those by English artists

Return to France

- indoor picnics were still preferred by members of the **13**

20th century onwards

- new kinds of **14** meant that picnics in the countryside became more common
- **15** designed especially for use by picnickers were widely sold
- there is now greater **16** in the food that is used for picnics.