READING PASSAGE 1

Manhattan's Skyscrapers Race to the Top

The rise of New York's skyscrapers: 1890 – 1960s

During the late 19th and 20th centuries, New York City and the skyline of Manhattan, the most famous of the city's five boroughs, or districts, were radically transformed. New technology, stronger building materials, and abundant labor allowed the towers of Manhattan to rise - eventually becoming the tallest in the world.

The race to the sky began in 1854, when inventor Elisha Otis demonstrated his elevator safety brake to curious crowds in New York. No matter how many times a man cut through cables holding the elevator platform high above gasping onlookers, Otis would descend just a few inches before safely stopping. Along with Otis's elevator, other innovations laid the groundwork for the future. In 1855 Henry Bessemer patented his process for producing a new kind of strong and low-cost steel. Plate glass, produced in volume from the 1850s, and electric lighting in the 1880s also contributed to the rise of the skyscraper.

Technology alone did not create the Manhattan skyline. Other essential factors included an increasing population, soaring property values, rivalry, geology, vanity, and greed. In 1871, when Chicago developers built the first so-called 'skyscraper', New York entrepreneurs responded - but they had a geological advantage. While Chicago was built on muddy soil, Manhattan stood on solid granite. And because Manhattan was surrounded by water, there was little room for ambitious new buildings to grow unless they looked upward.

The first tall buildings to rise in New York City appeared in the late 1800s. Completed in 1890, the 94-meter New York World Building was the tallest in the world until the Manhattan Life Insurance Building surpassed it four years later, setting the fast pace and ambitious character of future Manhattan skyscrapers.

These buildings were striking achievements, but perhaps the most stunning was the Woolworth Building, completed in 1912. At 222 meters, the Woolworth became the world's tallest building. Upon its completion, this architectural wonder was soon as much a symbol of New York City as the famous Statue of Liberty. It promised freedom and very big dreams.

As parts of New York began to resemble man-made mountain ranges, concerns over the nature of skyscrapers grew. From the sidewalks, streets felt increasingly like canyons. To counteract this, from 1916, city authorities issued zoning laws that stipulated that tall buildings must become narrower at higher levels - causing Manhattan's skyscrapers to resemble multi-layered wedding cakes.

In 1928, construction began on one of New York's most iconic structures: the Chrysler Building. Walter Chrysler, a motor-industry leader, incorporated several unique features into his building's design. Much of the building's distinctive ornamentation resembled features of the automobile from which Chrysler made his fortune. Upon completion, the Chrysler building was the world's tallest, at 319 meters high.

The Chrysler Building's time at the top would be short. Just 11 months after the Chrysler's completion in May 1930, the 102-story Empire State Building became the world's tallest building. It was opened by the U.S. president to great acclaim. At 381 meters, the tower matched the ambition of the New York financier John J. Raskob, who commissioned the legendary skyscraper.

Unfortunately, the American economy crashed as the Empire State Building rose at record speed. Not even the building's famous appearance in the 1933 movie King Kong could boost its fortunes. Unable to find tenants, Raskob's magnificent structure was mockingly called the 'Empty State Building.' It took World War II to fill the building with government agencies. Even then, a B-25 bomber almost brought it down, crashing - accidentally - between the 78th and 80th floors in dense fog on July 28, 1945. Five years later, the Empire State Building finally turned a profit. The building itself was an architectural marvel, remaining the world's tallest skyscraper for 40 years.

In the years following World War II, architecture in New York transformed again. Instead of decorative designs, buildings started to favor a modern look with a sleek design and also gleaming surfaces. Completed in 1952, the United Nations Building was constructed in this style. Designed by the Swiss architect Le Corbusier, the slim tower was like nothing the city had seen before. The trend toward modern lines continued into the 1950s. By the time the Seagram Building was completed in 1958, rectilinear office buildings - with their straight up-and-down walls – were to become typical. With its unique bronze exterior, it was not the tallest building in New York, but it became a model for designing other office towers built from the 1960s onward.

Le Corbusier is often cited as the villain behind this move towards less elegant architecture, yet when he visited New York in 1935 and witnessed the physical impact of skyscrapers for the first time, he said: 'The skyscrapers of New York are romantic, a gesture of pride... but the street has been killed...'. Today his observation hardly seems true: Manhattan's skyscrapers failed to kill the street. In fact, New York City remains one of the world's great walking cities, its avenues and streets lined by towering giants born of a golden age of opportunity and ambition.

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 if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

1. Construction of tall buildings in New York City started in the twentieth century.
2. An important force in the development of Manhattan's skyscrapers was the increasing price of land.
3. Chicago was a better place to build skyscrapers than New York.
4. The New York World Building took four years to complete.
5. In 1912, the Woolworth Building was visited as often as the Statue of Liberty.
6. In its early years, the Empire State Building was a commercial failure.
7. The Empire State Building was the first skyscraper to be featured in a film.
8. Le Corbusier is frequently considered responsible for changing New York's architecture

Questions 9 – 16 Complete the table below.

Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the passage for each answer. Write your answers in boxes 9-16 on your answer sheet.

YEARS	DEVELOPMENT
1854	Elisha Otis introduced New Yorkers to a new invention - a **9** ..... for elevators.
1855	Henry Bessemer created a way of making **10** ..... that was sturdy and inexpensive.
1890	The New York World Building was completed.
1916	New **11** ..... required that the upper floors of buildings were smaller in area than the lower floors.
1928	Some of the decorations on the Chrysler Building looked like **12** .... parts.
1945	An aeroplane lost in **13** .. .. hit the Empire State Building
After 1945	After 1945 New buildings featured straight lines as well as shiny **14** .....
1958	The shape of the Seagram Building was a **15** ..... for other office blocks in New York
Today	Despite its tall buildings, New York is still an ideal place for **16**.....