

READING PASSAGE 1

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

An important language development

Cuneiform, the world's first known system of handwriting, originated some 6,000 years ago in Sumer in what is now southern Iraq. It was most often inscribed on palm-sized, rectangular clay tablets measuring several centimetres across, although occasionally larger tablets or cylinders were used. Clay was an excellent medium for writing. Other surfaces which have been employed—for example, parchment, papyrus and paper—are not long-lasting and are easily destroyed by fire and water. But clay has proved to be resistant to those particular kinds of damage.

The word 'cuneiform' actually refers to the marks or signs inscribed in the clay. The original cuneiform signs consisted of a series of lines—triangular, vertical, diagonal, and horizontal. Sumerian writers would impress these lines into the wet clay with a stylus—a long, thin, pointed instrument which looked somewhat like a pen. Oddly, the signs were often almost too small to see with the naked eye. Cuneiform signs were used for the writing of at least a dozen languages. This is similar to how the Latin alphabet is used today for writing English, French, Spanish and German, for example.

Before the development of cuneiform, tokens were used by the Sumerians to record certain information. For example, they might take small stones and use them as tokens or representations of something else, like a goat. A number of tokens, then, might mean a herd of goats. These tokens might then be placed in a cloth container and provided to a buyer as a receipt for a transaction, perhaps five tokens for five animals. It was not that different from what we do today when we buy some bread and the clerk gives us back a piece of paper with numbers on it to confirm the exchange.

By the 4th century BCE, the Sumerians had adapted this system to a form of writing. They began putting tokens in a container resembling an envelope, one made of clay instead of cloth. They then stamped the outside to indicate the number and type of tokens inside. A person could then 'read' what was stamped on the container and know what was inside.

Gradually, Sumerians developed symbols for words. When first developed, each symbol looked like the concrete thing it represented. For example, an image which resembled the drawing of a sheep meant just that. Then another level of abstraction was introduced when symbols were developed for intangible ideas such as 'female' or 'hot' or 'God'. Cuneiform, in other words, evolved from a way used primarily to track and store information into a way to represent the world symbolically. Over the centuries, the marks became ever more abstract, finally evolving into signs that looked nothing like what they referred to, just as the letters 'h-o-u-s-e' have no visual connection to the place we live in. At this last stage in the evolution of cuneiform, the signs took the form of triangles, which became common cuneiform signs.

As the marks became more abstract, the system became more efficient because there were fewer marks for a 'reader' to learn. But cuneiform also became more complex because society itself was becoming more complex, so there were more ideas and concepts that needed to be expressed. However, most linguists and historians agree cuneiform developed primarily as a tool for accounting. Of the cuneiform tablets that have been discovered, excavated and translated, about 75 percent contain this type of practical information, rather than artistic or imaginative work.

Cuneiform writing was used for thousands of years, but it eventually ceased to be used in everyday life. In fact, it died out and remained unintelligible for almost 2,000 years. In the late 19th century, a British army officer, Henry Rawlinson, discovered cuneiform inscriptions which had been carved into the surface of rocks in the Behistun Mountains in what is present-day Iran. Rawlinson made impressions of the marks on large pieces of paper as he balanced dangerously on the surrounding rocks.

Rawlinson took his copies home to Britain and studied them for years to determine what each line stood for, and what each group of symbols meant. He found that, in the writing on those particular rocks, every word was repeated three times in three languages: Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian. Since the meanings in these languages were already known to linguists, he could thus translate the cuneiform. Eventually, he fully decoded the cuneiform marks and discovered that they described the life of Darius, a king of the Persian Empire in the 5th century BCE.

Questions 1–5

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

In boxes 1–5 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 Cuneiform tablets were produced in different shapes and sizes.
- 2 When Sumerian writers marked the clay tablets, the tablets were dry.
- 3 Cuneiform was often difficult to read because of its size.
- 4 A number of languages adopted cuneiform.
- 5 Cuneiform signs can be found in some modern alphabets.

Questions 6–13

Complete the notes below.

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

Write your answers in boxes 6–13 on your answer sheet.

The Development and Translation of Cuneiform

Before cuneiform

- tokens, for example, 6 _____ were often used
- the first tokens were kept in containers made of 7 _____
- tokens were used as a 8 _____ to give when selling something

By the 4th century BCE

- tokens were put in a container that looked like a clay 9 _____

Complex, abstract symbols developed

- at first, signs looked like what they indicated, e.g. 10 _____
- then signs became more abstract
- eventually, cuneiform signs shaped like 11 _____ were developed
- according to experts, cuneiform was mainly used for 12 _____

19th-century translation of cuneiform inscriptions by Henry Rawlinson

- Rawlinson found cuneiform inscriptions in the Behistun Mountains
- Rawlinson copied the inscriptions onto 13 _____
- Rawlinson realised that each word of the inscriptions appeared in three languages
- When translated, Rawlinson found that the writings were about a 5th-century BCE king

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判断题 (1–5)

题号	答案	题干翻译	详细定位 (原文)	定位句翻译	详细解释
1	TRUE	楔形文字泥板在形状和尺寸上有不同。	第1段: "...palm-sized, rectangular clay tablets... although occasionally, larger tablets or cylinders were used."	"...手掌大小的长方形泥板.....有时也会使用更大的泥板或圆柱。"	同时出现“尺寸不同 (palm-sized vs larger)”与“形状不同 (rectangular vs cylinders)”，与题干一致。
2	FALSE	苏美尔人刻画泥板时，泥板是干的。	第2段: "...impress these lines into the wet clay..."	"...把这些线条压进湿泥....."	原文明确是“湿”的 (wet)，题干说“干”，与原文相反。
3	TRUE	由于字的大小，楔形文字常常难以阅读。	第2段: "Oddly, the signs were often almost too small to see with the naked eye."	"奇的是，这些符号常常小到几乎肉眼难以看清。"	"too small to see" 表示因尺寸过小而难以辨认，与题干一致。
4	TRUE	有多种语言采用了楔形文字。	第2段: "...used for the writing of at least a dozen languages."	"...用于书写至少十来种语言。"	直接对应“多种语言”。
5	NOT GIVEN	一些现代字母表中能找到楔形文字的符号。	第2段 (对比句): "This is similar to how the Latin alphabet is used today for writing English, French, Spanish and German..."	"这与今天拉丁字母被用于书写多种语言类似。"	原文只是“类比使用方式”(类似于拉丁字母服务多种语言)，并未声称“现代字母表包含楔形文字符号”。非真非假，信息缺失→NG。

填空题 (6–13) (每空 ONE WORD ONLY)

题号	答案 (一词)	题干翻译	详细定位 (原文)	定位句翻译	详细解释
6	stones	例如，代币常常使用_____。	第3段: "...they might take small stones and use them as tokens..."	"...他们可能拿小石头当作物品....."	题干主语 "tokens, for example, ____ were often used" = “作为代币所用的东西”，原文例子即 stones。用复数对齐原文。
7	cloth	最初的代币被放在由_____制成的容器里。	第3段: "...placed in a cloth container..."	"...放在布制容器里....."	直接对应“made of cloth”。
8	receipt	代币被用作 (在出售时要给出的) 一种_____。	第3段: "...provided to a buyer as a receipt for a transaction..."	"...作为一笔交易的收据给买家....."	与题干 “to give when selling something” 语义一致。
9	envelope	到公元前4世纪，代币被放进看起来像黏土_____的容器。	第4段: "...putting tokens in a container resembling an envelope, and now made of clay..."	"...把代币放进类似信封的容器里，这种容器由黏土制成....."	题干已给出“clay”，需补容器外形 “envelope”。
10	sheep	起初，符号像它们所表示的事物，例如_____。	第5段: "...an image which resembled the drawing of a sheep meant just that."	"...像羊的图像就表示‘羊’。"	一词作例子最合适。
11	triangles	逐渐地，发展出形状像_____的楔形文字符号。	第5段: "...the signs took the form of triangles..."	"...这些符号呈三角形....."	复数与原文一致：一词作答。
12	accounting	据专家所言，楔形文字主要用于_____。	第6段: "...developed primarily as a tool for accounting."	"...主要作为记账/会计工具发展起来。"	首选 “accounting”。
13	paper	罗林森把铭文拓/摹到了_____上。	第7段: "...made impressions... on large pieces of paper..."	"...把拓印印在大张纸上....."	直接对应 “onto paper”。