

Test section – Reading

Dealing with Short Answer questions

Activities

1. Surveying a text
2. Skimming a text for gist
3. Identifying keywords and synonyms/paraphrasing
4. Scanning a text
5. Reading for detail
6. Strategy analysis for dealing with Short Answer questions
7. Test practice

Aims

- To review key reading skills: surveying, skimming and scanning
- To help students develop a strategy for dealing with Short Answer questions

Learning outcomes

- Students will have reviewed and practised key reading skills.
- Students will have analysed a strategy for Short Answer questions.
- Students will have practised Short Answer questions.

Information about this section of IELTS

In the Reading test there are 40 questions, designed to test a wide range of reading skills. These include reading for gist, reading for main ideas, reading for detail, skimming, understanding logical argument and recognising writers' opinions, attitudes and purpose. The test takes 60 minutes.

The IELTS Academic Reading Test includes three long texts which range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. These are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers. They have been selected for a non-specialist audience but are appropriate for people entering university courses or seeking professional registration.

The IELTS General Training Reading Test has three sections. Section 1 may contain two or three short texts or several shorter texts. Section 2 comprises two texts. In Section 3, there is one long text. These texts include extract from books, magazines, newspapers, notices, advertisements, company handbooks and guidelines. These are materials you are likely to encounter on a daily basis in an English-speaking environment.

Time	60-90 minutes
Level	B1+
Class	Suitable for groups / large classes, F2F / Online
Interaction	Individual / pair work /small groups
Materials	Worksheets x 2 (attached)

Extra information



Short Answer questions

Test takers answer questions, which usually relate to factual information about details in the text. This is most likely to be used with a text that contains a lot of factual information and detail.

Test takers must write their answers in words or numbers on the answer sheet. Test takers must write their answers using words from the text. The instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers test takers should use in their answers, e.g., 'NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage', 'ONE WORD ONLY' or 'NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS'. If test takers write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark.

Numbers can be written using figures or words. Contracted words are not tested. Hyphenated words count as single words.

NB The questions are in the same order as the information in the text.

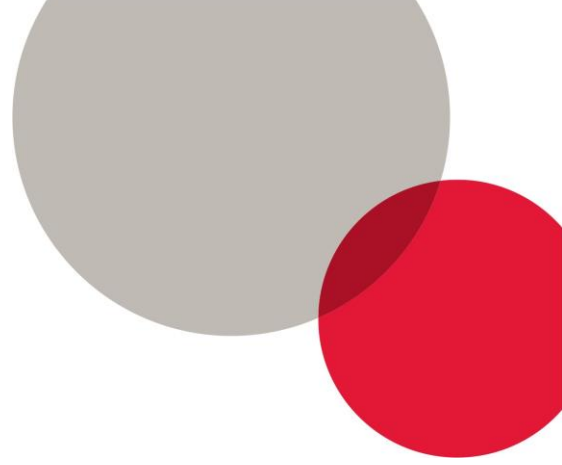
Task focus: Short Answer questions assess the test takers' ability to locate and understand precise information in the text.

Material: Worksheet 1

Time: 60-90 minutes

Procedure:

- introduce the focus of the lesson – dealing with Short Answer questions in the IELTS Reading Test.
- explain that these questions require test takers to use words/numbers **from the text** to answer the questions.
- tell students to look at worksheet, Exercise 1.
- draw students' attention to the fact that they will be answering questions 6-10, which means that there would have been a first set of questions (1-5). In reality, they would have already surveyed and skimmed the text in order to answer the questions but for the purposes of this lesson, they will begin by surveying and skimming.



Exercise 1

- elicit from students what they remember/understand by surveying a text (quickly looking at a text to establish extent, if there are titles, pictures, glossaries etc.
- tell students they have 20 seconds to survey the text.
- tell students to close or turn over their worksheets: Ask the following questions:

How long is the text? (about 1 1/4 pages)
Does it have a title? (Yes: A bar at The Folies)
Does it have any sub-titles/headings? (No)
Does it have any pictures or diagrams? (No)
Does it have a glossary? (No)

Exercise 2

- elicit from students what they remember/understand by skimming a text (reading first/topic sentences and final sentences to get an idea of gist and text organisation)
- tell students they have 60 seconds to skim the text and underline the topic sentences.
- get class feedback.

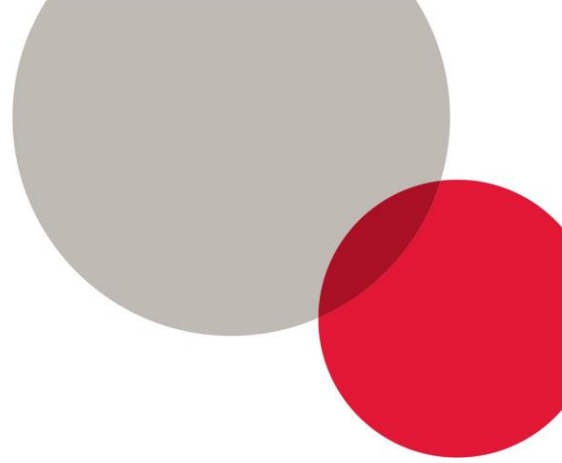
Answers

A One of the most critically renowned paintings of the 19th-century modernist movement is the French painter Edouard Manet's masterwork, A Bar at the Folies. Originally belonging to the composer Emmanuel Chabrier, it is now in the possession of The Courtauld Gallery in London, where it has also become a favourite with the crowds.

B The painting is set late at night in a nineteenth-century Parisian nightclub. A barmaid stands alone behind her bar, fitted out in a black bodice that has a frilly white neckline, and with a spray of flowers sitting across her décolletage. She rests her hands on the bar and gazes out forlornly at a point just below the viewer, not quite making eye contact. Also on the bar are some bottles of liquor and a bowl of oranges, but much of the activity in the room takes place in the reflection of a mirror behind the barmaid. Through this mirror we see an auditorium, bustling with blurred figures and faces: men in top hats, a woman examining the scene below her through binoculars, another in long gloves, even the feet of a trapeze artist demonstrating acrobatic feats above his adoring crowd. In the foreground of the reflection a man with a thick moustache is talking with the barmaid.

Intro

description
of painting



doing the painting

C Although the Folies (-Bergère) was an actual establishment in late nineteenth-century Paris, and the subject of the painting was a real barmaid who worked there, **Manet did not attempt to recapture every detail of the bar in his rendition.** The painting was **largely completed** in a private studio belonging to the painter, where the barmaid posed with a number of bottles, and this was then integrated with quick sketches the artist made at the Folies itself.

point of view

D Even more confounding than Manet's relaxed attention to detail, however, is the relationship in the painting between the activity in the mirrored reflection and that which we see in the unreflected foreground. In a similar vein to Diego Velazquez' much earlier work Las Meninas, Manet uses the mirror to toy with our ideas about which details are true to life and which are not. In the foreground, for example, the barmaid is positioned upright, her face betraying an expression of lonely detachment, yet in the mirrored reflection she appears to be leaning forward and to the side, apparently engaging in conversation with her moustachioed customer. As a result of this, the customer's stance is also altered. In the mirror, he should be blocked from view as a result of where the barmaid is standing, yet Manet has re-positioned him to the side. The overall impact on the viewer is one of a dreamlike disjuncture between reality and illusion.

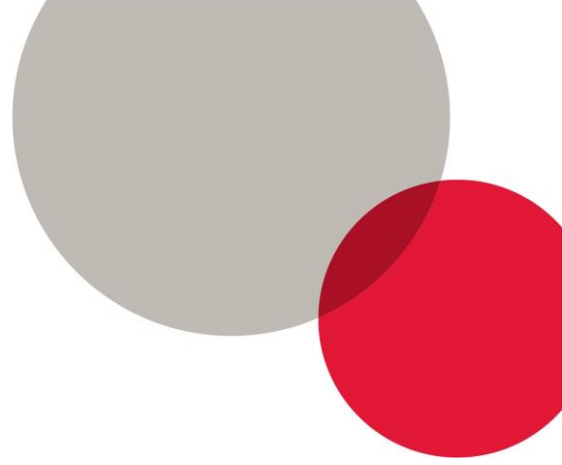
reason for viewpoint

E Why would Manet engage in such deceit? Perhaps for that very reason: to depict two different states of mind or emotion. Manet seems to be conveying his understanding of the modern workplace, a place – from his perspective – of alienation, where workers felt torn from their 'true' selves and forced to assume an artificial working identity. What we see in the mirrored reflection is the barmaid's working self, busy serving a customer. The front-on view, however, bears witness to how the barmaid truly feels at work: hopeless, adrift, and alone.

conclusion / discussion

F Ever since its debut at the Paris Salon of 1882, art historians have produced reams of books and journal articles disputing the positioning of the barmaid and patron in **A Bar at the Folies.** Some have even conducted staged representations of the painting in order to ascertain whether Manet's seemingly distorted point of view might have been possible after all. Yet while academics are understandably drawn to the compositional enigma of the painting, the layperson is always likely to see the much simpler, more human story beneath. No doubt this is the way Manet would have wanted it.

<https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/free-ielts-practice-tests/reading/academic>



Exercise 3

- put students into pairs to choose one or two words to summarise the contents of each paragraph using the information in the topic sentences.
- get class feedback.
- explain that writing these notes in the margin of the test paper (for the test on paper) or adding a note box (for the test on computer) makes finding the correct paragraph to look for answers much quicker.

Suggested answers in text above.

Exercise 4

- students work in pairs or small groups.
- tell students to read questions 6-10 and discuss which paragraph they would read first to find the answers. Tell them NOT to answer the questions at this stage.
- get class feedback and ask students to say why they chose a particular paragraph.

Possible answers

6 Who was the first owner of A Bar at the Folies?

This is slightly difficult but it is general information so probably in the introduction. (Also, if students have established that Q7 is in paragraph B, then the answer to Q6 must be earlier in the text)

7 What is the barmaid wearing?

Paragraph B which describes painting.

8 Which room is seen at the back of the painting?

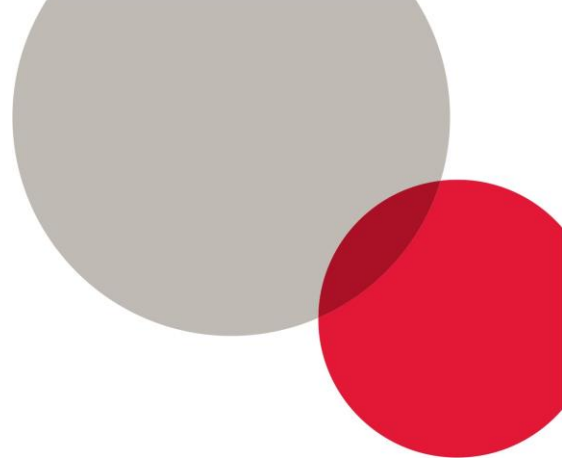
Paragraph B which describes painting.

9 Who is performing for the audience?

Paragraph B which describes painting.

10 Where did most of the work on the painting take place?

Paragraph C which describes doing the painting.



Exercise 5

- students work in pairs.
- tell students to look at questions 6-10 again.
- get them to underline/highlight the key words in the questions. (Key words = those words or their rephrasing/synonyms are the words they will **scan** for in the appropriate paragraph.
- get class feedback.

Answers

6 **Who** was the **first owner** of A Bar at the Folies?

7 **What** is the **barmaid wearing**?

8 **Which room** is seen at the **back** of the painting?

9 **Who** is **performing** for the audience?

10 **Where** did most of the **work** on the painting **take place**?

Exercise 6

- put students into pairs or small groups.
- tell them to think of other ways of saying the key words – synonyms/paraphrasing.
- get class feedback.

Possible answers

Who - a name (look for capital letters) or a title

first – earliest / primary / original

owner – proprietor

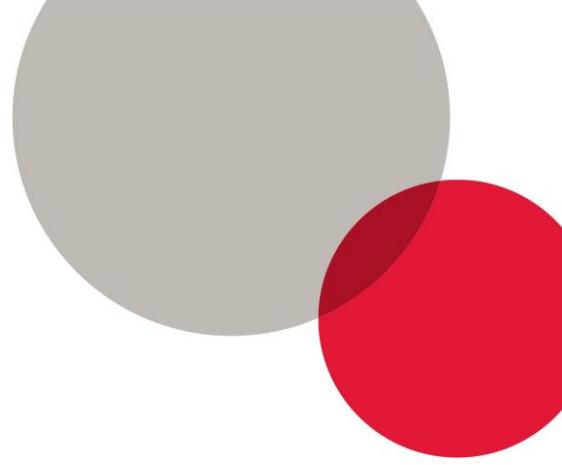
room – bar / entry / hall / dining area

performing – acting / doing / presenting

where/work – studio / atelier / hotel / family home

Exercise 7

- Elicit what scanning means. (looking through appropriate part of the text for specific words).
- Students work alone. They scan the appropriate parts of the text for the answers to the questions.
- Get class feedback. Put up their suggestions on the board before giving the correct answers.



Answers

6 Emmanuel Chabrier

7 (a) black bodice

8 auditorium

9 (a) trapeze artist

10 (a) private studio

- get students to look at the instructions (NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS / Taken from the text).
- tell them to look at their answers and see if any of them 'break' the rules.
- emphasise that even if they get the right information but write 4 words, or use their own words, they will lose the mark.

Exercise 8

- students work in pairs.
- get them to look at their highlighted key words in the questions and to find the equivalents in the answers in the text.

Answers (see highlights in text above)

6 **Who** was the **first owner** of A Bar at the Folies?

7 **What** is the **barmaid wearing**?

8 **Which room** is seen at the **back** of the painting?

9 **Who** is **performing** for the audience?

10 **Where** did most of the **work** on the painting **take place**?

Exercise 9

- students work alone and put the stages of this strategy into the correct order.
- get class feedback.

Answers

6, 4, 5, 2, 7, 3, 1

Material: Worksheet 2 (optional in-class or can be set as homework)

Time: 10-20 minutes

Procedure:

- draw attention to the test practice questions on Worksheet 2.
- tell students to use the same strategy on questions 4-8.
- allow time for students to work alone, answering questions 4-8. You may wish to get them to transfer their answers to a separate piece of paper, particularly if they are preparing to sit the IELTS test on paper.
- allow time for students to check in pairs, remind them to justify their answers with information from the text.
- get class feedback. You could invite students to write their answers on the board as an opportunity to consolidate the importance of accurate spelling and adherence to instructions.

Answers

General Training Reading sample task

- 4 pieces of metal
- 5 (on) the bottom
- 6 \$5
- 7 (the) Retailing Manager
- 8 \$50,000

NB: Words in brackets are optional - they are correct, but not necessary

https://www.ielts.org/-/media/pdfs/115026_general_training_reading_sample_task_-_short-answer_questions.ashx

Reading Skills – Short Answer questions

Worksheet 1

A strategy for Short Answer questions

- 1 *Survey this text and then answer the questions your teacher asks you.*
- 2 *Work alone. Skim the text and underline or highlight the topic sentence in each paragraph.*

A bar at The Folies (Un bar aux folies)

One of the most critically renowned paintings of the 19th-century modernist movement is the French painter Edouard Manet's masterwork, *A Bar at the Folies*. Originally belonging to the composer Emmanuel Chabrier, it is now in the possession of The Courtauld Gallery in London, where it has also become a favourite with the crowds.

The painting is set late at night in a nineteenth-century Parisian nightclub. A barmaid stands alone behind her bar, fitted out in a black bodice that has a frilly white neckline, and with a spray of flowers sitting across her décolletage. She rests her hands on the bar and gazes out forlornly at a point just below the viewer, not quite making eye contact. Also on the bar are some bottles of liquor and a bowl of oranges, but much of the activity in the room takes place in the reflection of a mirror behind the barmaid. Through this mirror we see an auditorium, bustling with blurred figures and faces: men in top hats, a woman examining the scene below her through binoculars, another in long gloves, even the feet of a trapeze artist demonstrating acrobatic feats above his adoring crowd. In the foreground of the reflection a man with a thick moustache is talking with the barmaid.

Although the Folies (-Bergère) was an actual establishment in late nineteenth-century Paris, and the subject of the painting was a real barmaid who worked there, Manet did not attempt to recapture every detail of the bar in his rendition. The painting was largely completed in a private studio belonging to the painter, where the barmaid posed with a number of bottles, and this was then integrated with quick sketches the artist made at the Folies itself.

Even more confounding than Manet's relaxed attention to detail, however, is the relationship in the painting between the activity in the mirrored reflection and that which we see in the unreflected foreground. In a similar vein to Diego Velazquez' much earlier work *Las Meninas*, Manet uses the mirror to toy with our ideas about which details are true to life and which are not. In the foreground, for example, the barmaid is positioned upright, her face betraying an expression of lonely detachment, yet in the mirrored

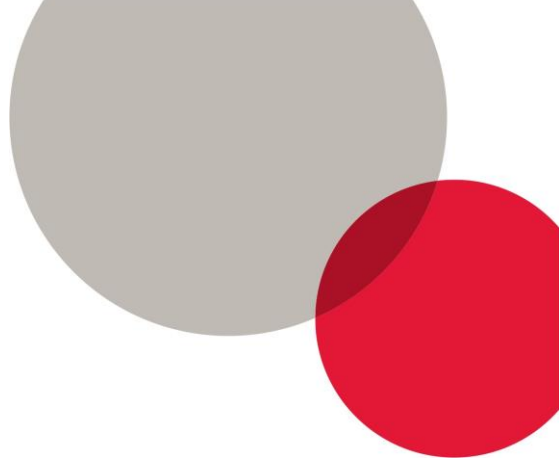
reflection she appears to be leaning forward and to the side, apparently engaging in conversation with her moustachioed customer. As a result of this, the customer's stance is also altered. In the mirror, he should be blocked from view as a result of where the barmaid is standing, yet Manet has re-positioned him to the side. The overall impact on the viewer is one of a dreamlike disjuncture between reality and illusion.

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- 3 *Work in pairs. Summarise the content of each paragraph in a word or two and write those words in the margin next to the paragraph.*



- 4 *Work in a pair or small group. Look at questions 6-10 and discuss in which paragraph you think the answer might be. Use the topic sentences to guide you. Be prepared to explain your ideas.*
- 5 *Work alone. Read questions 6-10 and underline/highlight the key words. The key words are the ones you will scan for in the text. Compare your ideas with a partner.*
- 6 *Work in pairs. Think of synonyms or other ways of saying the key words in the questions.*

Questions 6–10

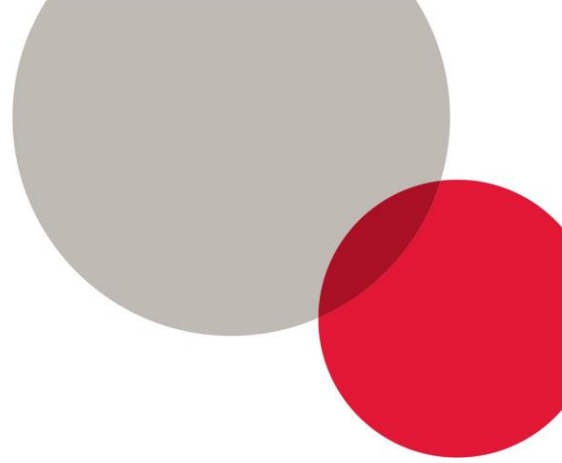
Answer the questions below.

Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

- 6 Who was the first owner of A Bar at the Folies?
- 7 What is the barmaid wearing?
- 8 Which room is seen at the back of the painting?
- 9 Who is performing for the audience?
- 10 Where did most of the work on the painting take place?

- 7 *Answer the questions. Go to the appropriate paragraph and scan for the key words or their synonyms.*
- 8 *Work in pairs. What are the synonyms/rephrasing of the key words below?*

- 6 first owner
- 7 (barmaid) wearing
- 8 room
- 9 performing
- 10 work / take place



9 *Put the following into the correct order to give you a strategy for dealing with Short Answer questions.*

- 1 Put your answers on the answer sheet (test on paper) or type in the answers on screen (test on computer).
- 2 Read the questions and underline the key words.
- 3 Scan the appropriate paragraphs to find the answers.
- 4 Skim each paragraph of the text and highlight the topic sentence.
- 5 Summarise the content and make a note in the margin or note box.
- 6 Survey the text to see how long it is, what titles and headings etc. there are.
- 7 Think about synonyms or other ways they may be expressed.

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Reading Skills – Short Answer questions

Worksheet 2

Test Practice

Use the strategy from Worksheet 1 to answer these questions.

Questions 4 – 8

Answer the questions below.

Choose NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the text for each answer.

- 4 What has been found in some Fancy Foods products?
- 5 Where can you find the batch number on the jars?
- 6 How much will you receive for an opened jar of contaminated Chicken Curry?
- 7 If you have eaten Chicken Curry from a jar with one of the batch numbers listed, whom should you contact?
- 8 What is the maximum reward Fancy Foods is offering for information about who contaminated their product?

IMPORTANT NOTICE: PRODUCT RETURN

Fancy Foods wishes to inform the public that pieces of metal have been found in some jars of Fancy Foods Chicken Curry (Spicy). The batches of the jars involved have numbers from J6617 to J6624. The batch number is printed on the bottom of each jar.

If you have any jars with these batch numbers, please return them (preferably unopened) to the supermarket where you purchased them. You can also return them to the factory (Fancy Foods Retailers, Blacktown). Fancy Foods will pay \$10 for each jar returned unopened and \$5 for each jar already opened.

No payment will be made for empty jars, which do not need to be returned. However, the Retailing Manager will be interested to hear from people who have consumed chicken curry from any of the above batch numbers. In particular, it will be helpful if they can give information about the place of purchase of the product.

Jars of Fancy Foods Chicken Curry (Coconut) and Fancy Foods Chicken Curry (Mango) have not been affected and do not need to be returned.

REWARD

Fancy Foods will pay a reward of \$10,000 to \$50,000 for information which leads to the conviction of any person found guilty of placing metal pieces in its products. If you have such information, please contact the Customer Relations Manager, Fancy Foods Retailers, Blacktown.

https://www.ielts.org/-/media/pdfs/115026_general_training_reading_sample_task_-_short-answer_questions.ashx