

## READING SECTION

### Instructions to Candidates

- You have 30 minutes to complete this section of the test.
- There are 3 reading passages and 30 questions to answer.
- You should aim to spend about 10 minutes on each reading passage. The texts don't necessarily get harder, so you may answer the questions in any order.
- You may not look at notes or use a dictionary during this exam.
- Put your answers on the answer sheet provided. Write only the letter (e.g. 'a') in the space provided, not the whole answer. Make sure that you fill in the correct column on the answer sheet.

## TEXT ONE

### Election of the Boden Professor of Sanskrit in 1860

Few Events in the history of Oxford University have rippled its usually placid academic waters as much as the hotly contested election to the position of Boden Professor of Sanskrit did in 1860.

The first candidate for the position was Max Muller, a German-born Oxford professor of comparative philology, the scientific study of language. He had been working on the *Rig Veda*, an ancient collection of Sanskrit Vedic religious hymns, and he had an outstanding international reputation for the quality of his scholarship. For Muller, the comparative study of Sanskrit texts was a worthwhile end in itself. The second candidate was Monier Williams, who prior to 1860 had spent the last 14 years teaching Sanskrit to employees of the British East India Company, the officially-sanctioned organ of British colonial-commercial predominance in India. Williams also worked on much later Sanskrit material than Muller, and regarded the study of Sanskrit as a means to an end: as a useful tool for the conversion of Indians to Christianity. He also disdained the 'continental' school of Sanskrit philology that Muller exemplified and which he believed lacked focus and a practical application.

The controversy around the election emerged against the background of recent events in British India. Three years previously, in 1857, the infamous 'Indian Rebellion', in which the native population of India rose up against the colonial powers, stirred public debate back in the United Kingdom about the sort of role Britain should play in India. There were those who felt that India should be totally dominated, and 'civilised' by the colonial presence, and this included conversion to Christianity and the abandonment of indigenous religions. Others felt that the colonial authorities should be more sensitive to local cultures, and even that the study of Indian culture could have a 'civilising' effect on Britain. Obviously, the former position was associated with supporters of Williams, and the latter position with those who favoured Muller's election to the post.

1. What is this reading passage about?
  - a. The study of Sanskrit
  - b. The British colonial presence in India
  - c. Two different professors of Sanskrit in 19<sup>th</sup> century England
  - d. The controversy around filling a particular, high-profile job
2. What is the meaning of the word placid in paragraph one?
  - a. Soft
  - b. Calm
  - c. Aggressive
  - d. Made of plastic
3. According to paragraph one, which of the following is true?
  - a. The controversy of the election was expected
  - b. There was an earthquake at the same time as these events

- c. There is a river in Oxford with rippling waters
  - d. The controversy disturbed the peace of the university
4. How does the text characterize the approaches of Muller and Williams?
- a. Muller was anti-Christian
  - b. Muller was not as concerned with the practical use of his research
  - c. Williams was not a good teacher
  - d. Williams though Muller was the best of the 'continental' school
5. What does **candidate** refer to in paragraph one?
- a. Someone hoping to be the next professor of Sanskrit
  - b. Someone who wants to be president
  - c. Someone who wants to be Prime Minister
  - d. An older male
6. According to paragraph two, which of the following is true?
- a. There were sanctions against the British in India.
  - b. The British imposed sanctions on India.
  - c. The British government ruled India through the East India Company.
  - d. The East India Company still exists.
7. What is the meaning of **disdained** in paragraph two?
- a. Loved
  - b. Admired
  - c. Had a low opinion of
  - d. Criticised
8. According to paragraph three, which of the following is true?
- a. The controversy around the election was linked to previous events
  - b. The British no longer felt they should remain in India
  - c. The British had lost control of India by 1860
  - d. The government stepped into the controversy between Williams and Muller
9. What does the author mean by using '**civilising**' in paragraph three?
- a. That British people were no more civilised than Indians
  - b. That academic knowledge of other cultures was seen as a mark of civilisation
  - c. That the Indians were less civilised than the British
  - d. That civilisation is a myth
10. What does **former position** refer to in paragraph three?
- a. The view that India should be dominated
  - b. The view that the British should be more sensitive

- c. The discussions taking place in public life
- d. William's former job as a teacher of Sanskrit

## TEXT TWO

### House Martins

The Common House Martin (*Delichon Urbicum*), or simply house martin – as it is better known in Britain – is a species of passerine migratory bird. The house martin breeds in Europe, North Africa or the more temperate parts of Asia, and winters in sub-Saharan Africa or in tropical locations. The house martin feeds on insects which it catches in flight, and this accounts for its migration to areas where flying insects are abundant. As well as being a predator, the house martin is hunted by the Eurasian Hobby (a kind of falcon). The species is targeted both by internal parasites and external mites, but due to the large numbers and global range, this species is not endangered but rather thrives.

The name house martin, as well as the bird's Latin designation *urbicum*, point to the fact that this species tends to congregate near places of human habitation. In its breeding grounds, the house martin fashions a closed-cup nest out of mud-pellets under the eaves or roofs of houses. This long history of co-habitation with humans has earned the house martin literary and cultural fame. For instance, Shakespeare is clearly describing the house martin when Banquo points out bird nests hanging from the eaves of Macbeth's castle to Duncan: ....'this bird/Hath made his pendant bed and procreant cradle/Where they most breed and haunt.' For unknown reasons, house martins have an unjustified reputation for aggression, and are rumoured to gather en masse to attack sparrows that approach their nests, or else to hole them up inside the nests.

House martins are also featured in heraldry. The 'martlet', a word which is believed to represent the house martin, is commonly depicted on many coats of arms. Instead of feet, the martlet has tufts of feathers, which allude to the fact that house martins are rarely seen landing. For this reason, the martlet is often featured on the coats of arms of second or younger sons of a family, because they, too, are 'landless'.

11. What is this reading passage about?
  - a. Birds in English culture
  - b. Migratory birds
  - c. A species of bird
  - d. Humans and birds
12. What is the meaning of the word **temperate** in paragraph one?
  - a. Soft
  - b. Calm
  - c. Neither too warm nor too cold
  - d. Warm
13. According to paragraph one, which of the following is true?
  - a. The house martin changes location a lot during the year
  - b. The house martin spends summer in one place and winter in another

- c. The house martin is a vicious hunter
  - d. Numbers of house martins in the world are falling
14. How does the text characterize the relationship between humans and house martins
- a. Co-dependent
  - b. Humans see house martins as a pest
  - c. Human beings have mentioned house martins in literature
  - d. Humans constantly fight with house martins
15. According to paragraph two, which of the following is true?
- a. House martins are aggressive birds
  - b. House martins are not aggressive birds
  - c. House martins have been seen attacking sparrows
  - d. Macbeth was a fan of house martins
16. What is the meaning of **fashions** in paragraph two?
- a. Builds
  - b. Keeps up to date with
  - c. Destroys
  - d. Lives in
17. Where do the words in *italics*, in paragraph two, starting with **this bird**, come from?
- a. A letter from one friend to another
  - b. A play
  - c. A text book
  - d. A manuscript in a castle
18. What is the meaning of **hole them up** in paragraph two?
- a. Seal them inside
  - b. Hurt them
  - c. Hide them
  - d. Attack them
19. According to paragraph three, which of the following is true?
- a. The house martin is generally seen in the air
  - b. House martins are important to noble families
  - c. The house martin is a symbol of success
  - d. House martins don't have feet
20. Who does' **they**' refer to in paragraph three?
- a. Martlets
  - b. House martins

- c. Second sons
- d. Rich families

21. In paragraph three, why has the author put 'landless' in quotation marks ("")?

- a. It's not a real word
- b. It's a play on words, linking two very different concepts
- c. It's a foreign word
- d. It's a quotation from another author

### TEXT THREE

#### Tyrant or Heroine? Ranaivalona I

While the monarchies of Europe in the early nineteenth century are well-known, as is the history of European colonial domination in Africa, the monarchies of Africa's few **sovereign** states at this time are rarely studied. Although the Ethiopian Empire is better known to Western scholars, the state of Madagascar also had a highly developed monarchical state system at this time, and in this era of rapid European expansion, the rulers of Madagascar found themselves adopting similar policies of isolationism and domestic repression in order to repel growing European influence in their kingdoms.

Ranaivalona I became Madagascar's monarch after the death of her young husband in 1828. Immediately upon ascending the throne, she adopted a policy of economic self-sufficiency and political independence, and to these ends she brutally suppressed Madagascar's small but growing Christian minority, which had been converted by the efforts of the London Missionary Society. Although initially tolerant of Christianity for the first few years of her reign, the conversion of several high-ranking government officials caused a public backlash and Ranaivalona grew increasingly **wary of** the possible threat to her power posed by the growing number of Christians. In 1831 she enacted a ban on Christian marriages and baptisms within the military and government and, finally, in 1838 outlawed the practice of Christianity by her subjects (while allowing it to foreigners). Apart from the threat Christianity posed to ancestor worship and other traditions that were integral to the identity of the state, Ranaivalona also feared that conversion to Christianity could provide political inroads for foreign powers – particularly the British, who were competing with the French at that time to gain control over Madagascar.

Queen Ranaivalona I was despised by her foreign contemporaries, and in their reports on her activities, she was frequently depicted as a xenophobic tyrant, or even as totally mad. While this view is still held by some Malagasy\* Christians today, there are many in Madagascar who view her as a heroine for her endeavors to protect the island's cultural heritage. **Similarly**, many Western scholars have revealed a different story of Queen Ranaivalona – **one** of a strong political leader who astutely and effectively managed to keep her country independent in a period when almost every other African monarchy fell in the face of European colonialism.

\*Malagasy = from Madagascar

22. What is this reading passage about?

- a. Christianity in Madagascar
- b. A particular African Monarch
- c. Monarchy in Africa
- d. European colonialism

23. Which word is closest in meaning to **sovereign** in paragraph one?

- a. Coin
- b. King
- c. Independent



- d. Civilized
24. According to paragraph one, which of the following is true?
- a. Ethiopia and Madagascar adopting similar policies towards foreigners
  - b. Madagascar was more developed than Ethiopia
  - c. Madagascar's monarchy is well-known abroad
  - d. Madagascar needed European help
25. How does this text characterize Queen Ranavalona?
- a. As a weak leader
  - b. The text treats her in neutral terms
  - c. As a very cruel person towards her people
  - d. As a very frightened
26. According to paragraph two, which of the following is true?
- a. After 1838, foreigners could not practice Christianity in Madagascar
  - b. Ranavalona suppressed Christianity as soon as she became Queen
  - c. Ranavalona made Madagascar an independent country
  - d. A number of important people in government had become Christian
27. Which of the following is closest to the meaning of **wary of** in paragraph two?
- a. Angry at
  - b. Pleased with
  - c. Concerned by
  - d. Impressed by
28. What can you infer about the author's opinion from paragraph three?
- a. That Queen Ranavalona was definitely a tyrant
  - b. That a more balanced historical view of Queen Ranavalona is needed
  - c. There are many Malagasy Christians
  - d. That Queen Ranavalona should be excused for persecuting Christians
29. Why does the author use **similarly** in paragraph three?
- a. Because views of Ranavalona differ both in Madagascar and in the West
  - b. Because many people also like Ranavalona in Madagascar
  - c. Because Madagascar is so similar to Western countries
  - d. There are many Christians in the West, as well as Madagascar
30. Who does 'one' refer to in paragraph three?
- a. A story
  - b. A queen

- c. A country
- d. A political leader