

IELTSFever Academic IELTS Reading Test 123

Reading Passage 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1-13, which are based on the IELTSFever Academic IELTS Reading Test 123 Reading Passage Animal minds: Parrot Alex below.

Animal minds: Parrot Alex

{A} In 1977 Irene Pepperberg, a recent graduate of Harvard University, did something very bold. At a time when animals still were considered automatons, she set out to find what was on another creature's mind by talking to it. She brought a one-year-old African gray parrot she named Alex into her lab to teach him to reproduce the sounds of the English language. "I thought if he learned to communicate, I could ask him questions about how he sees the world."

{B} When Pepperberg began her dialogue with Alex, who died last September at the age of 31, many scientists believed animals were incapable of any thought. They were simply machines, robots programmed to react to stimuli but lacking the ability to think or feel. Any pet owner would disagree. We see the love in our dogs' eyes and know that, of course, they have thoughts and emotions. But such claims remain highly controversial. Gut instinct is not science, and it is all too easy to project human thoughts and feelings onto another creature. How, then, does a scientist prove that an animal is capable of thinking - that it is able to acquire information about the world and act on it? "That's why I started my studies with Alex," Pepperberg said. They were seated - she at her desk, he on top of his cage, in her lab, a windowless room about the size of a boxcar, at Brandeis University. Newspapers lined the floor; baskets of bright toys were stacked on the shelves. They were clearly a team-and because of their work, the notion that animals can think is no longer so fanciful.

{C} Certain skills are considered key signs of higher mental abilities: good memory, a grasp of grammar and symbols, self-awareness, understanding others' motives, imitating others, and being creative. Bit by bit, in ingenious experiments, researchers have documented these talents in other species, gradually chipping away at what we thought made human beings distinctive while offering a glimpse of where our own abilities came from. Scrub jays know that other jays are thieves and that stashed food can spoil; sheep can recognize faces; chimpanzees use a variety of tools to probe termite mounds and even use weapons to hunt small mammals; dolphins can imitate human postures; the archerfish, which stuns insects with a sudden blast of water, can learn how to aim its squirt simply by watching an experienced fish perform the task. And Alex the parrot turned out to be a surprisingly good talker.

{D} Thirty years after Alex studies began; Pepperberg and a changing collection of assistants were still giving him English lessons. The humans, along with two younger parrots, also served as Alex's flock, providing the social input all parrots crave. Like any flock, this one - as small as it was, had its share of drama. Alex dominated his fellow parrots, acted huffy at times around

Pepperberg, tolerated the other female humans, and fell to pieces over a male assistant who dropped by for a visit. Pepperberg bought Alex in a Chicago pet store where she let the store's assistant pick him out because she didn't want other scientists saying later that she'd particularly chosen an especially smart bird for her work. Given that Alex's brain was the size of a shelled walnut, most researchers thought Pepperberg's interspecies communication study would be futile.

{E} "Some people actually called me crazy for trying this," she said. "Scientists thought that chimpanzees were better subjects, although, of course, chimps can't speak." Chimpanzees, bonobos, and gorillas have been taught to use sign language and symbols to communicate with us, often with impressive results. The bonobo Kanzi, for instance, carries his symbol-communication board with him so he can "talk" to his human researchers, and he has invented combinations of symbols to express his thoughts. Nevertheless, this is not the same thing as having an animal look up at you, open his mouth, and speak. Under Pepperberg's patient tutelage, Alex learned how to use his vocal tract to imitate almost one hundred English words, including the sounds for various foods, although he calls an apple a "banerry." "Apples taste a little bit like bananas to him, and they look a little bit like cherries, so Alex made up that word for them," Pepperberg said.

{F} It sounded a bit mad, the idea of a bird having lessons to practice, and willingly doing it. But after listening to and observing Alex, it was difficult to argue with Pepperberg's explanation for his behaviors. She wasn't handing him treats for the repetitious work or rapping him on the claws to make him say the sounds. "He has to hear the words over and over before he can correctly imitate them," Pepperberg said, after pronouncing "seven" for Alex a good dozen times in a row. "I'm not trying to see if Alex can learn a human language," she added. "That's never been the point. My plan always was to use his imitative skills to get a better understanding of avian cognition."

{G} In other words, because Alex was able to produce a close approximation of the sounds of some English words, Pepperberg could ask him questions about a bird's basic understanding of the world. She couldn't ask him what he was thinking about, but she could ask him about his knowledge of numbers, shapes, and colors. To demonstrate, Pepperberg carried Alex on her arm to a tall wooden perch in the middle of the room. She then retrieved a green key and a small green cup from a basket on a shelf. She held up the two items to Alex's eye. "What's same?" she asked. Without hesitation, Alex's beak opened: "Co-lor." "What's different?" Pepperberg asked. "Shape," Alex said. His voice had the digitized sound of a cartoon character. Since parrots lack lips (another reason it was difficult for Alex to pronounce some sounds, such as ba), the words seemed to come from the air around him, as if a ventriloquist were speaking. But the words - and what can only be called the thoughts - were entirely his.

{H} For the next 20 minutes, Alex ran through his tests, distinguishing colors, shapes, sizes, and materials (wool versus wood versus metal). He did some simple arithmetic, such as counting the yellow toy blocks among a pile of mixed hues. And, then, as if to offer final proof of the mind inside his bird's brain, Alex spoke up. "Talk clearly!" he commanded, when one of the younger birds Pepperberg was also teaching talked with wrong pronunciation. "Talk clearly!" "Don't be a

smart aleck," Pepperberg said, shaking her head at him. "He knows all this, and he gets bored, so he interrupts the others, or he gives the wrong answer just to be obstinate. At this stage, he's like a teenager; he's moody, and I'm never sure what he'll do."

Questions 1-6

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

In boxes 1-6 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE	if the statement is True
FALSE	if the statement is false
NOT GIVEN	If the information is not given in the passage

- (1) Firstly, Alex has grasped quite a lot of vocabulary.
- (2) At the beginning of study, Alex felt frightened in the presence of humans.
- (3) Previously, many scientists realized that animals possess the ability of thinking.
- (4) It has taken a long time before people get to know cognition existing in animals.
- (5) As Alex could approximately imitate the sounds of English words, he was capable of roughly answering Irene's questions regarding the world.
- (6) By breaking in other parrots as well as producing the incorrect answers, he tried to be focused

Questions 7-10

Complete the following summary of the paragraphs of Reading Passage, using no more than three words from the Reading Passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes 7-10 on your answer sheet.

After the training of Irene, Parrot Alex can use his vocal tract to pronounce more than _____ 7 _____, while other scientists believe that animals have no this advanced ability of thinking, they would rather teach _____ 8 _____ Pepperberg clarified that

she wanted to conduct a study concerning
 _____ **9** _____ but not to teach him to talk. The store's
 assistant picked out a bird at random for her for the sake of avoiding
 other scientists saying that the bird is
 _____ **10** _____ afterwards.

Questions 11-13

Answer the questions 11-13 below.

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

- (11). What did Alex reply regarding the similarity of the subjects shown to him?
- (12). What is the problem of the young parrots except Alex?
- (13). To some extent, through the way he behaved, what can we call him?

Reading Passage 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 14-26, which are based on the IELTSFever Academic IELTS Reading Test 123 Reading Passage London Swaying Footbridge below.

London Swaying Footbridge

{A} In September 1996 a competition was organized by the Financial Times in association with the London Borough of Southwark to design a new footbridge across the Thames. The competition attracted over 200 entries and was won by a team comprising Arup (engineers), Foster and Partners (architects) and the sculptor Sir Anthony Caro.

{B} The bridge opened to the public on 10 June 2000. Up to 100,000 people crossed it that day with up to 2000 people on the bridge at any one time. At first, the bridge was still. Then it began to sway just slightly. Then, almost from one moment to the next, when large groups of people were crossing, the wobble intensified. This movement became sufficiently large for people to stop walking to retain their balance and sometimes to hold onto the hand rails for support. It was decided immediately to limit the number of people on the bridge, but even so the deck movement was sufficient to be uncomfortable and to raise concern for public safety so that on 12 June the bridge was closed until the problem could be solved.

{C} The embarrassed engineers found the videotape that day which showed the center span swaying about 3 inches side to side every second. The engineers first thought that winds might

be exerting excessive force on the many large flags and banners bedecking the bridge for its gala premiere. What's more, they also discovered that the pedestrians also played a key role. Human activities, such as walking, running, jumping, swaying, etc. could cause horizontal forces which in turn could cause excessive dynamic vibration in the lateral direction in the bridge. As the structure began moving, pedestrians adjusted their gait to the same lateral rhythm as the bridge. The adjusted footsteps magnified the motion - just like when four people all stand up in a small boat at the same time. As more pedestrians locked into the same rhythm, the increasing oscillations led to the dramatic swaying captured on film.

{D} In order to design a method of reducing the movements, the force exerted by the pedestrians had to be quantified and related to the motion of the bridge. Although there are some descriptions of this phenomenon in existing literature, none of these actually quantifies the force. So there was no quantitative analytical way to design the bridge against this effect. An immediate research program was launched by the bridge's engineering designers Ove Arup, supported by a number of universities and research organizations.

{E} The tests at the University of Southampton involved a person walking on the spot' on a small shake table. The tests at Imperial College involved persons walking along a specially built, 7.2m-long platform which could be driven laterally at different frequencies and amplitudes Each type of test had its limitations. The Imperial College tests were only able to capture 7-8 footsteps, and the 'walking on the spot' tests, although monitoring many footsteps, could not investigate normal forward walking. Neither test could investigate any influence of other people in a crowd on the behavior of the individual being tested.

{F} The results of the laboratory tests provided information which enabled the initial design of a retro-fit to be progressed. However, the limitations of these tests was clear and it was felt that the only way to replicate properly the precise conditions of the Millennium Bridge was to carry out crowd tests on the bridge deck itself. These tests done by the Arup engineers could incorporate factors not possible in the laboratory tests. The first of these was carried out with 100 people in July 2000. The results of these tests were used to refine the load model for the pedestrians. A second series of crowd tests was carried out on the bridge in December 2000. The purpose of these tests was to further validate the design assumptions and to load test a prototype damper installation The test was carried out with 275 people.

{G} Unless the usage of the bridge was to be greatly restricted only two generic options to improve its performance were considered feasible The first was to increase the stiffness of the bridge to move all its lateral natural frequencies out of the range that could be excited by the lateral footfall forces, and the second was to increase the damping of the bridge to reduce the resonant response.

Questions 14-17

Choose FOUR letters, A-H.

Write the correct letters in boxes 14-17 on your answer sheet.

Which **FOUR** of the following situations were witnessed at the opening ceremony of the bridge?

- (A) The frequency of oscillation increased after some time.
- (B) All the engineers went to see the ceremony that day.
- (C) The design of the bridge astonished the people.
- (D) Unexpected sideways movement of the bridge occurred.
- (E) Pedestrians had difficulty walking on the deck.
- (F) The bridge fell down when people tried to retain their balance
- (G) Vibration could be detected on the deck by the pedestrians.
- (H) It was raining when the ceremony began.

Questions 18-22

Complete the following summary of the paragraphs of Reading Passage 2, using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the Reading Passage for each answer

Write your answers in boxes 18-22 on your answer sheet.

After the opening ceremony, the embarrassed engineers tried to find out the reason of the bridge's wobbling. Judged from the videotape, they thought that **18**.....and **19**.....might create excessive force on the bridge. The distribution of **20**.....resulted from human activities could cause **21**..... throughout the structure. This swaying prompted people to start adjusting the way they walk, which in turn reinforced the **22**.....

Questions 23 – 26

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

Research programs launched by universities and organizations

Universities/People	Activity
Test at 23	Limited ability to have 7-8 footsteps
Walking on the spot at Southampton	Not enough data on 24
Crowd test conducted by 25	Aim to verify 26

Reading Passage 3

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 27-40, which are based on the IELTSFever Academic IELTS Reading Test 123 Reading Passage Decision, Decision ! below.

Decision, Decision !

Research explores when we can make a vital decision quickly and we need to proceed more deliberately

{A} A widely recognised legend tells us that in Gordium (in what is now Turkey) in the fourth century BC an oxcart was roped to a pole with a complex knot. It was said that the first person to untie it would become the king of Asia. Unfortunately, the knot proved impossible to untie. The story continues that when confronted with this problem, rather than deliberating on how to untie the Gordian knot. Alexander, the famous ruler of the Greeks in the ancient world, simply took out his sword and cut it in two - then went on to conquer Asia. Ever since, the notion of a 'Gordian solution' has referred to the attractiveness of a simple answer to an otherwise intractable problem.

{B} Among researchers in the psychology of decision making, however, such solutions have traditionally held little appeal. In particular, the conflict model of decision making proposed by psychologists Irving Janis and Leon Mann in their 1977 book, Decision Making, argued that a complex decision making process is essential for guarding individuals and groups from the peril of 'group-think'. Decisions made without thorough canvassing, surveying, weighing, examining and reexamining relevant information and options would be suboptimal and often disastrous. One foreign affairs decision made by a well-known US political leader in the 1960s is typically held up as an example of the perils of inadequate thought, whereas his successful handling of a later crisis is cited as an example of the advantages of careful deliberation. However, examination of these historical events by Peter Suedfield, a psychologist at the University of British Columbia, and Roderick Kramer, a psychologist at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, found little difference in the two decision-making processes; both crises required and

received complex consideration by the political administration, but later only the second one was deemed to be the effective.

{C} In general, however, organizational and political science offer little evidence that complex decisions fare better than simpler ones. In fact, a growing body of work suggests that in many situations simple 'snap' decisions will be routinely superior to more complex ones -an idea that gained widespread public appeal with Malcolm Gladwell's best-selling book *Blink* (2005).

{D} An article by Ap Dijksterhuis of the University of Amsterdam and his colleagues, 'Making the Right Choice: the Deliberation-without-attention Effect', runs very much in the spirit of Gladwell's influential text. Its core argument is that to be effective, conscious (deliberative) decision making requires cognitive resources. Because increasingly complex decisions place increasing strain on those resources, the quality of our decisions declines as their complexity increases. In short, complex decisions overrun our cognitive powers. On the other hand, unconscious decision making (what the author refers to as "deliberation without attention") requires no cognitive resources, so task complexity does not affect effectiveness. The seemingly counterintuitive conclusion is that although conscious thought enhances simple decisions, the opposite holds true for more complex decisions.

{E} Dijksterhuis reports four simple but elegant studies supporting this argument. In one, participants assessed the quality of four hypothetical cars by considering either four attributes (a simple task) or 12 attributes (a complex task). Among participants who considered four attributes, those who were allowed to engage in undistracted deliberative thought did better at discriminating between the best and worst cars. Those who were distracted and thus unable to deliberate had to rely on their unconscious thinking and did less well. The opposite pattern emerged when people considered 12 criteria. In this case, conscious deliberation led to inferior discrimination and poor decisions.

{F} In other study, Dijksterhuis surveyed people shopping for clothes ("simple" products) and furniture ("complex products"). Compared with those who said they had deliberated long and hard, shoppers who bought with little conscious deliberation felt less happy with their simple clothing purchase but happier with the complex furniture purchases. Deliberation without attention actually produced better results as the decisions became more complex.

{G} From there, however, the researchers take a big leap. They write: There is no reason to assume that the deliberation-without-attention effect does not generalize to other types of choices - political, managerial or otherwise. In such cases, it should benefit the individual to think consciously about simple matters and to delegate thinking about more complicated matters to the unconscious.

{H} This radical inference contradicts standard political and managerial theory but doubtless comforts those in politics and management who always find the simple solution to the complex problem an attractive proposition. Indeed, one suspects many of our political leaders already embrace this wisdom.

{I} Still it is there, in the realms of society and its governance, that the more problematic implications of deliberation without attention begin to surface. Variables that can be neatly circumscribed in decisions about shopping lose clarity in a world of group dynamics, social interaction, history and politics. Two pertinent questions arise. First, what counts as a complex decision? And second, what counts as a good outcome?

{J} As social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890 - 1947) noted, a 'good' decision that nobody respects is actually bad. His classic studies of decision making showed that participating in deliberative processes makes people more likely to abide by the results. The issue here is that when political decision makers make mistakes, it is their politics, or the relation between their politics and our own, rather than psychology which is at fault.

{K} Gladwell's book and Dijksterhuis's paper are invaluable in pointing out the limitations of the conventional wisdom that decision quality rises with decision-making complexity. But this work still tempts us to believe that decision making is simply a matter of psychology, rather than also a question of politics, ideology and group membership. Avoiding social considerations in a search for general appeal rather than toward it.

Questions 27-31

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

Write the correct letter in boxes 27 - 31 on your answer sheet.

Question 27 The legend of the Gordian knot is used to illustrate the idea that

- (A) anyone can solve a difficult problem
- (B) difficult problems can have easy solutions
- (C) the solution to any problem requires a lot of thought
- (D) people who can solve complex problems make good leaders

Question 28 The 'conflict model of decision making proposed by Janis and Mann requires that

- (A) opposing political parties be involved
- (B) all important facts be considered
- (C) people be encouraged to have different ideas
- (D) previous similar situations be thoroughly examined

Question 29 According to recent thinking reinforced by Malcolm Gladwell, the best decisions

- (A) involve consultation
- (B) involve complex thought

(C) are made very quickly

(D) are the most attractive option

Question 30 Dijksterhuis and his colleagues claim in their article that

(A) our cognitive resources improve as tasks become more complex

(B) conscious decision making is negatively affected by task complexity

(C) unconscious decision making is a popular approach

(D) deliberation without attention defines the way we make decisions

Question 31 Dijksterhuis's car study found that, in simple tasks, participants

(A) were involved in lengthy discussions

(B) found it impossible to make decisions quickly

(C) were unable to differentiate between the options

(D) could make a better choice when allowed to concentrate

Questions 32-35

Complete the summary using the list of words A–I below. Write the correct letter, A–I, in boxes 32–35 on your answer sheet.

Dijksterhuis's shopping study and its conclusions

Using clothing and furniture as examples of different types of purchases, Dijksterhuis questioned shoppers on their satisfaction with what they had bought. People who spent **32** _____ time buying simple clothing items were more satisfied than those who had not. However, when buying furniture, shoppers made **33** _____ purchasing decisions if they didn't think too hard. From this, the researchers concluded that in other choices, perhaps more important than shopping, **34** _____ decisions are best made by the unconscious. The writer comments that Dijksterhuis's finding is apparently **35** _____ but nonetheless true.

A more	B counterintuitive	C simple
D better	E conscious	F obvious
G complex	H less	I worse

Questions 36-40

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading Passage 3?

In boxes 36 - 40 on your answer sheet, write

YES	if the statement agrees with the writer
NO	if the statement does not agree with the writer
NOT GIVEN	if there is no information about this in the passage

(36) Dijksterhuis's findings agree with existing political and management theories.

(37) Some political leaders seem to use deliberation without attention when making complex decisions.

(38) All political decisions are complex ones.

(39) We judge political errors according to our own political beliefs.

(40) Social considerations must be taken into account for any examination of decision making to prove useful.