

IELTS Academic Reading Sample 104 - Johnson's Dictionary

Johnson's Dictionary

For the century before Johnson's Dictionary was published in 1775, there had been concern about the state of the English language. There was no standard way of speaking or writing and no agreement as to the best way of bringing some order to the chaos of English spelling. Dr Johnson provided the solution.

There had, of course, been dictionaries in the past, the first of these being a little book of some 120 pages, compiled by a certain Robert Cawdray, published in 1604 under the title *A Table Alphabeticall of hard usuall English wordes*. Like the various dictionaries that came after it during the seventeenth century, Cawdray's tended to concentrate on 'scholarly' words; one function of the dictionary was to enable its student to convey an impression of fine learning.

Beyond the practical need to make order out of chaos, the rise of dictionaries is associated with the rise of the English middle class, who were anxious to define and circumscribe the various worlds to conquer - lexical as well as social and commercial. It is highly appropriate that Dr Samuel Johnson, the very model of an eighteenth-century literary man, as famous in his own time as in ours, should have published his Dictionary at the very beginning of the heyday of the middle class.

Johnson was a poet and critic who raised common sense to the heights of genius. His approach to the problems that had worried writers throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was intensely practical. Up until his time, the task of producing a dictionary on such a large

The work was immense; filing about eighty large notebooks (and without a library to hand), Johnson wrote the definitions of over 40,000 words, and illustrated their many meanings with some 114,000 quotations drawn from English writing on every subject, from the Elizabethans to his own time. He did not expect to achieve complete originality. Working to a deadline, he had to draw on the best of all previous dictionaries, and to make his work one of heroic synthesis. In fact, it was very much more.

Unlike his predecessors, Johnson treated English very practically, as a living language, with many different shades of meaning. He adopted his definitions on the principle of English common law - according to precedent. After its publication, his Dictionary was not seriously rivalled for over a century.

After many vicissitudes the Dictionary was finally published on 15 April 1775. It was instantly recognised as a landmark throughout Europe. 'This very noble work,' wrote the leading Italian lexicographer, will be a perpetual monument of Fame to the Author, an Honour to his own Country in particular, and a general Benefit to the republic of Letters throughout Europe. The fact that Johnson had taken on the Academies of Europe and matched them (everyone knew that forty French academics had taken forty years to produce the first French national dictionary) was cause for much English celebration.

Johnson had worked for nine years, 'with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in

scale had seemed impossible without the establishment of an academy to make decisions about right and wrong usage. Johnson decided he did not need an academy to settle arguments about language; he would write a dictionary himself; and he would do it single-handed. Johnson signed the contract for the Dictionary with the bookseller Robert Dossley at a breakfast held at the Golden Anchor Inn near Holborn Bar on 18 June 1764. He was to be paid £1,575 in instalments, and from this he took money to rent 17 Gough Square, in which he set up his 'dictionary workshop'.

James Boswell, his biographer described the garret where Johnson worked as 'fitted up like a counting house' with a long desk running down the middle at which the copying clerks would work standing up.

Johnson himself was stationed on a rickety chair at an 'old crazy deal table' surrounded by a chaos of borrowed books. He was also helped by six assistants, two of whom died whilst the Dictionary was still in preparation.

Questions 1-3

Choose **THREE** letters from **A-H** and write them on your answer sheet.

Write your answers in boxes **1-3** on your answer sheet.

NB Your answers may be given in any order.

Which **THREE** of the following statements are true of Johnson's Dictionary?

- A** It avoided all scholarly words.
- B** It was the only English dictionary in general use for 200 years.
- C** It was famous because of the large number of people involved.
- D** It focused mainly on language from contemporary texts.
- E** There was a time limit for its completion.
- F** It ignored work done by previous dictionary writers.

the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow'. For all its faults and eccentricities his two-volume work is a masterpiece and a landmark, in his own words, 'setting the orthography, displaying the analogy, regulating the structures, and ascertaining the significations of English words'. It is the cornerstone of Standard English, an achievement which, in James Boswell's words, 'conferred stability on the language of his country'.

The Dictionary, together with his other writing, made Johnson famous and so well esteemed that his friends were able to prevail upon King George III to offer him a pension. From then on, he was to become the Johnson of folklore.

- G It took into account subtleties of meaning.
- H Its definitions were famous for their originality.

Questions 4-7

Complete the summary.

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

Write your answers in boxes **4-7** on your answer sheet.

In 1764 Dr Johnson accepted the contract to produce a dictionary. Having rented a garret, he took on a number of **4**....., who stood at a long central desk. Johnson did not have a **5**..... available to him, but eventually produced definitions of in excess of 40,000 words written down in 80 large notebooks. On publication, the Dictionary was immediately hailed in many European countries as a landmark. According to his biographer, James Boswell, Johnson's principal achievement was to bring **6**..... to the English language. As a reward for his hard work, he was granted a **7**..... by the king.

Questions 8-13

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 71?

In boxes **8-13** 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

- 8** The growing importance of the middle classes led to an increased demand for dictionaries.
- 9** Johnson has become more well known since his death.
- 10** Johnson had been planning to write a dictionary for several years.
- 11** Johnson set up an academy to help with the writing of his Dictionary.
- 12** Johnson only received payment for his Dictionary on its completion.
- 13** Not all of the assistants survived to see the publication of the Dictionary.

Answer:

1. C 2. D. 3. G 4. clerks / copying clerks 5. library 6. stability 7. pension 8. TRUE 9.
FALSE 10. NOT GIVEN 11. FALSE 12. FALSE 13. TRUE

IELTS Academic Reading Sample 105 - Urban planning in Singapore

Urban planning in Singapore

British merchants established a trading post in Singapore in the early nineteenth century, and for more than a century trading interests dominated. However, in 1965 the newly independent island state was cut off from its hinterland, and so it set about pursuing a survival strategy. The good international communications it already enjoyed provided a useful base, but it was decided that if Singapore was to secure its economic future, it must develop its industry. To this end, new institutional structures were needed to facilitate, develop, and control foreign investment. One of the most important of these was the Economic Development Board (EDB), an arm of government that developed strategies for attracting investment. Thus from the outset, the Singaporean government was involved in city promotion.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the government realised that, due to limits on both the size of the country's workforce and its land area, its labour-intensive industries were becoming increasingly uncompetitive. So an economic committee was established which concluded that Singapore should focus on developing as a service centre, and seek to attract company headquarters to serve South East Asia, and develop tourism, banking, and offshore activities. The land required for this service-sector orientation had been acquired in the early 1970s, when the government realised that it lacked the banking infrastructure for a modern economy. So a new banking and corporate district, known as the 'Golden Shoe', was planned, incorporating the historic commercial area. This district now houses all the major companies and various government financial agencies.

Singapore's current economic strategy is closely linked to land use and development planning. Although it is already a major city, the current development plan seeks to ensure Singapore's continued economic growth through restructuring, to ensure that the facilities needed by future business are planned now. These include transport and telecommunication infrastructure, land, and environmental quality. A major concern is to avoid congestion in the central area, and so the latest plan deviates from previous plans by having a strong decentralisation policy. The plan makes provision for four major regional centres, each serving 800,000 people, but this does not mean that the existing central business district will not also grow. A major extension planned around Marina Bay draws on examples of other 'world cities', especially those with waterside central areas such as Sydney and San Francisco. The project involves major land reclamation of 667 hectares in total. Part of this has already been developed as a conference and exhibition zone, and the rest will be used for other facilities. However the need for vitality has been recognised and a mixed zoning approach has been adopted, to include housing and entertainment.

One of the new features of the current plan is a broader conception of what contributes to economic success. It encompasses high quality residential provision, a good environment, leisure facilities and exciting city life. Thus there is more provision for low-density housing, often in waterfront communities linked to beaches and recreational facilities. However, the lower housing densities will put considerable pressure on the very limited land available for development, and this creates problems for another of the plan's aims, which is to stress environmental quality. More and more of the remaining open area will be developed, and the only natural landscape surviving will be a small zone in the centre of the island which serves as a water catchment area. Environmental policy is therefore very much concerned with making the built environment more green by introducing more plants – what is referred to as the 'beautification' of Singapore. The plan focuses on green zones defining the boundaries of settlements, and running along transport corridors. The incidental green provision within housing areas is also given considerable attention.

Much of the environmental provision, for example golf courses, recreation areas, and beaches, is linked to the prime objective of attracting business. The plan places much emphasis on good leisure provision and the need to exploit Singapore's island setting. One way of doing this is through further land reclamation, to create a whole new island devoted to leisure and luxury housing which will stretch from the central area to the airport. A current concern also appears to be how to use the planning system to create opportunities for greater spontaneity: planners have recently given much attention to the concept of the 24-hour city and the cafe society. For example, a promotion has taken place along the Singapore river to create a cafe zone. This has included the realisation, rather late in the day, of the value of retaining older buildings, and the creation of a continuous riverside promenade. Since the relaxation in 1996 of strict guidelines on outdoor eating areas, this has become an extremely popular area in the evenings. Also, in 1998 the Urban Redevelopment Authority created a new entertainment area in the centre of the city which they are promoting as 'the city's one-stop, dynamic entertainment scene'.

In conclusion, the economic development of Singapore has been very consciously centrally planned, and the latest strategy is very clearly oriented to establishing Singapore as a leading 'world city'. It is well placed to succeed, for a variety of reasons. It can draw upon its historic roots as a world trading centre; it has invested heavily in telecommunications and air transport infrastructure; it is well located in relation to other Asian economies; it has developed a safe and clean environment; and it has utilised the international language of English.

Question 14-19

Complete the summary below using words from the box.

Singapore

When Singapore became an independent, self-sufficient state it decided to build up its **14**, and government organisations were created to support this policy. However, this initial plan met with limited success due to a shortage of **15**.....and land. It was therefore decided to develop the **16**.....sector of the economy instead.

Singapore is now a leading city, but planners are working to ensure that its economy continues to grow. In contrast to previous policies, there is emphasis on **17** In addition, land will be recovered to extend the financial district, and provide **18**.....as well as housing. The government also plans to improve the quality of Singapore’s environment, but due to the shortage of natural landscapes it will concentrate instead on what it calls **19**

decentralisation	fuel	industry	industry
hospitals	loans	deregulation	service
trade	transport	entertainment	recycling
labour	tourism	hygiene	beautification

agriculture

Question 20-26

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 70?

In 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.

20 After 1965, the Singaporean government switched the focus of the island’s economy.

a)

21 The creation of Singapore’s financial centre was delayed while a suitable site was found.

a)

22 Singapore’s four regional centres will eventually be the same size as its central business district.

a)

23 Planners have modelled new urban developments on other coastal cities.

a)

24 Plants and trees are amongst the current priorities for Singapore’s city planners.

a)

25 The government has enacted new laws to protect Singapore's old buildings.

a)

26 Singapore will find it difficult to compete with leading cities in other parts of the world.

a)

Answer:

14. Industry 15. Labour 16. Service 17. Decentralisation 18. Entertainment 19. Beautification 20.

TRUE 21. FALSE 22. NOT GIVEN 23. TRUE 24. TRUE 25. NOT GIVEN 26. FALSE

IELTS Academic Reading Sample 106 - Light pollution

Light pollution

Light Pollution is a threat to Wildlife, Safety and the Starry Sky

A

After hours of driving south in the pitch-black darkness of the Nevada desert, a dome of hazy gold suddenly appears on the horizon. Soon, a road sign confirms the obvious: Las Vegas 30 miles. Looking skyward, you notice that the Big Dipper is harder to find than it was an hour ago.

B

Light pollution—the artificial light that illuminates more than its intended target area—has become a problem of increasing concern across the country over the past 15 years. In the suburbs, where over-lit shopping mall parking lots are the norm, only 200 of the Milky Way's 2,500 stars are visible on a clear night. Even fewer can be seen from large cities. In almost every town, big and small, street lights beam just as much light up and out as they do down, illuminating much more than just the street. Almost 50 percent of the light emanating from street lamps misses its intended target, and billboards, shopping centers, private homes and skyscrapers are similarly over-illuminated.

C

America has become so bright that in a satellite image of the United States at night, the outline of the country is visible from its lights alone. The major cities are all there, in bright clusters: New York, Boston, Miami, Houston, Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago - and, of course, Las Vegas. Mark Adams, superintendent of the McDonald Observatory in west Texas, says that the very fact that city lights are visible from on high is proof of their wastefulness. "When you're up in an airplane, all that light you see on the ground from the city is wasted. It's going up into the night sky. That's why you can see it."

D

But don't we need all those lights to ensure our safety? The answer from light engineers, light pollution control advocates and astronomers is an emphatic "no." Elizabeth Alvarez of the International Dark Sky Association (IDA), a non-profit organization in Tucson, Arizona, says that overly bright security lights can actually force neighbours to close the shutters, which means that if any criminal activity does occur on the street, no one will see it. And the old assumption that bright lights deter crime appears to have been a false one: A new Department of Justice report concludes that there is no documented correlation between the level of lighting and the level of crime in an area. And contrary to popular belief, more crimes occur in broad daylight than at night.

E

For drivers, light can actually create a safety hazard. Glaring lights can temporarily blind drivers, increasing the likelihood of an accident. To help prevent such accidents, some cities and states prohibit the use of lights that impair night-time vision. For instance, New Hampshire law forbids the use of “any light along a highway so positioned as to blind or dazzle the vision of travelers on the adjacent highway.”

F

Badly designed lighting can pose a threat to wildlife as well as people. Newly hatched turtles in Florida move toward beach lights instead of the more muted silver shimmer of the ocean. Migrating birds, confused by lights on skyscrapers, broadcast towers and lighthouses, are injured, sometimes fatally, after colliding with high, lighted structures. And light pollution harms air quality as well: Because most of the country’s power plants are still powered by fossil fuels, more light means more air pollution.

G

So what can be done? Tucson, Arizona is taking back the night. The city has one of the best lighting ordinances in the country, and, not coincidentally, the highest concentration of observatories in the world. Kitt Peak National Optical Astronomy Observatory has 24 telescopes aimed skyward around the city’s perimeter, and its cadre of astronomers needs a dark sky to work with.

H

For a while, that darkness was threatened. “We were totally losing the night sky,” Jim Singleton of Tucson’s Lighting Committee told Tulsa, Oklahoma’s KOTV last March. Now, after retrofitting inefficient mercury lighting with low-sodium lights that block light from “trespassing” into unwanted areas like bedroom windows, and by doing away with some unnecessary lights altogether, the city is softly glowing rather than brightly beaming. The same thing is happening in a handful of other states, including Texas, which just passed a light pollution bill last summer. “Astronomers can get what they need at the same time that citizens get what they need: safety, security and good visibility at night,” says McDonald Observatory’s Mark Adams, who provided testimony at the hearings for the bill.

I

And in the long run, everyone benefits from reduced energy costs. Wasted energy from inefficient lighting costs us between \$1 and \$2 billion a year, according to IDA. The city of San Diego, which installed new, high-efficiency street lights after passing a light pollution law in 1985, now saves about \$3 million a year in energy costs.

J

Legislation isn’t the only answer to light pollution problems. Brian Greer, Central Ohio representative for the Ohio Light Pollution Advisory Council, says that education is just as important, if not more so. “There are some special situations where regulation is the only fix,” he says. “But the vast majority of bad lighting is simply the result of not knowing any better.” Simple actions like replacing old bulbs and fixtures with more efficient and

better-designed ones can make a big difference in preserving the night sky.

**The Big Dipper: a group of seven bright stars visible in the Northern Hemisphere.*

Question 1-5

The first six paragraphs of Reading Passage 69 are lettered A-F.

Choose the most suitable headings for paragraphs A-F from the list of headings below.

NB *There are more headings than paragraphs, so you will not use them all.*

List of Headings

- i Why lights are needed
- ii Lighting discourages law breakers
- iii The environmental dangers
- iv People at risk from bright lights
- v Illuminating space
- vi A problem lights do not solve
- vii Seen from above
- viii More light than is necessary
- ix Approaching the city

Example

Answer

Paragraph A ix (Approaching the city)

- 1 Paragraph B
- 2 Paragraph C
- 3 Paragraph D
- 4 Paragraph E
- 5 Paragraph F

Question 6-9

Complete each of the following statements with words taken from the passage.

Write **ONE** or **TWO WORDS** for each answer.

- 6 According to a recent study, well-lit streets do not..... or make neighbourhoods safer to live in.
- 7 Inefficient lighting increasesbecause most electricity is produced from coal, gas or oil.
- 8 Efficient lights.....from going into areas where it is not needed.
- 9 In dealing with light pollutionis at least as important as passing new laws.

Questions 10-13

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 69?

In boxes **8-13** 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

10 One group of scientists find their observations are made more difficult by bright lights.

11 It is expensive to reduce light pollution.

12 Many countries are now making light pollution illegal.

13 Old types of light often cause more pollution than more modern ones.

Answer:

1. viii 2. vii 3. vi 4. iv 5. iii 6. DETER CRIME 7. AIR 8. BLOCK LIGHT 9. EDUCATION 10.
YES 11. NO 12. NOT GIVEN 13. YES

IELTS Academic Reading Sample 107 - The People of Corn

The People of Corn

Maize is Mexico's lifeblood – the country's history and identity are entwined with it. But this centuries-old relationship is now threatened by free trade. **Laura Carlsen** investigates the threat and profiles a growing activist movement.

On a mountain top in southern Mexico, Indian families gather. They chant and sprinkle cornmeal in consecration, praying for the success of their new crops, the unity of their communities and the health of their families. In this village in Oaxaca people eat corn tamales, sow maize plots and teach children to care for the plant. The cultural rhythms of this community, its labours, rituals and celebrations will be defined – as they have been for millennia – by the lifecycle of corn. Indeed, if it weren't for the domestication of teocintle (*the ancestor of modern maize*) 9,000 years ago mesoamerican civilization could never have developed. In the Mayan sacred book, the Popol Vuh, the gods create people out of cornmeal. The 'people of corn' flourished and built one of the most remarkable cultures in human history.

But in Mexico and Central America today maize has come under attack. As a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Mexico has been flooded with imported corn from north of the border in the US. The contamination of native varieties with genetically modified imported maize could have major consequences for Mexican campesinos (*farmers*), for local biodiversity and for the world's genetic reserves.

A decade ago Mexican bureaucrats and business people had it all figured out. NAFTA would drive 'uncompetitive' maize farmers from the countryside to work in booming assembly factories across the country. Their standard of living would rise as the cost of providing services like electricity and water to scattered rural communities would fall. Best of all, cheap imported maize from the US – the world's most efficient and most heavily subsidized producer – would be a benefit to Mexican consumers.

Unfortunately, it didn't turn out that way. There weren't quite enough of those factory jobs and the ones that did materialize continued to be along the US border, not further in Mexico. And despite a huge drop in the price farmers received for their corn, consumers often ended up paying more. The price of tortillas – the country's staple food – rose nearly fivefold as the Government stopped domestic subsidies and giant agribusiness firms took over the market. Free trade defenders like Mexico's former Under-Secretary of Agriculture Luis Tellez suggest: 'It's not that NAFTA failed, it's just that reality didn't turn out the way we planned it.' Part of that reality was that the Government did nothing to help campesinos in the supposed transition. Nor did NAFTA recognize

inequalities or create compensation funds to help the victims of free trade – unlike what occurred with economic integration in the European Union.

Basically, Mexico adopted a sink-or-swim policy for small farmers, opening the floodgates to tons of imported US corn. Maize imports tripled under NAFTA and producer prices fell by half. The drop in income immediately hit the most vulnerable and poorest members of rural society. While more than a third of the corn grown by small farmers is used to feed their families, the rest is sold on local markets. Without this critical cash, rural living standards plunged.

Maize is at the heart of indigenous and campesino identity. José Carrillo de la Cruz, a Huichol Indian from northern Jalisco, describes that relationship: 'Corn is the force, the life and the strength of the Huichol. If there were a change, if someone from outside patented our corn, it would end our life and existence.'

The good news is that the free-trade threat to Mexico's culture and food security has sparked a lively resistance. 'In Defence of Corn', a movement to protect local maize varieties, is not a membership organization but a series of forums and actions led by campesinos themselves. It's a direct challenge to both free trade and the dictums of corporate science.

The farmers' tenacity and refusal to abandon the crop of their ancestors is impressive. But larger economic conditions continue to shape their lives. Rural poverty and hunger have soared under free trade – and placed a heavier burden on women left to work the land. The battle for food sovereignty continues. Movement leaders insist that the Government reassess its free trade policies and develop a real rural development programme.

Questions 1-5

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage **68**?

In boxes **1-5** on your answer sheet, write

YES if the statement agrees with the information.

NO if the statement contradicts the information.

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

1 After NAFTA, a lot of corn from the USA has been sold in Mexico.

2 Following NAFTA, Mexican business people tried to stop maize farmers from working in factories throughout the country.

3 The Mexican farmers were paid a lot less for their corn after NAFTA.

4 Many Mexican farmers wanted to leave Mexico after the Free Trade Agreement.

5 The Mexican farmers were not able to do anything to help themselves after the Trade Agreement.

Questions 6-10

Complete the summary below.

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

*Write your answers in boxes **6-10** on your answer sheet.*

For thousands of years, corn has been a very important **6**..... in the Mexican culture. After the North American Free Trade Agreement, **7** corn has been imported from the USA in very large amounts. Mexican business people hoped that this would mean that Mexican farmers had to get jobs in factories and that their **8** would increase. Instead of this result, the farmers suffered from the low price of corn and people had to pay more for their corn. The farmers wish that the government had **9**..... them during this time. As a result of the hardship, the farmers have organised themselves by forming a **10**

Answer:

1. YES 2. NOT GIVEN 3. YES 4. NOT GIVEN 5. NO 6. CROP 7. GENETICALLY
MODIFIED 8. STANDARD OF LIVING 9. HELPED 10. MOVEMENT