

BGE NYVK	C1	Reading Comprehension	
English for Business Communication		60 minutes	20 marks
Sample			

**Mark or write your answers on the task sheet first.
Then copy your answers on the Answer Sheet.**

Read the following texts and answer the questions.

Text 1

The supermarket food gamble may be up

The UK's clock has been set to Permanent Global Summer Time once more after a temporary blip. Courgettes, spinach and iceberg lettuce are back on the shelves, **(1)**.

But why would supermarkets be so keen to fly in substitutes from the US at exorbitant cost? Why would they sell at a loss rather than let us go without, or put up prices to reflect the changing market? The answer is that, in the past 40 years, a whole supermarket system has been built on the seductive illusion of this Permanent Global Summer Time. As a result, a cornucopia of perpetual harvest is one of the key selling points that big stores have over rival retailers.

..... **(2)**, speed and efficiency, it has two fatal flaws. First, it depends on the profligate use of finite resources – water, soil, and fossil fuels (with all their greenhouse gas emissions). The UK is the sixth largest importer in the world of virtual water – the water needed to produce our food elsewhere. Second, the system is built on the exploitation of cheap labour, mostly migrant, that has been socially disruptive and politically fraught. Migrant labour is not coincidental but structural to the just-in-time model, **(3)**.

Supermarkets expected water shortages to bring the first jolts to the system. Brexit and climate change have brought other potential shocks to the fore. Leaving the EU could be an opportunity for a radical rethink of the food system, **(4)**.

So when I see glossy magazine pictures and Instagram snaps of summer dishes conjured up in the middle of winter of ingredients flown in from distant climes, I wonder if, a couple of decades from now, we will look to ourselves like the late Victorian colonials photographed proudly next to dead lions and other game in Africa. **(5)**.

The Guardian

I. 3 Complete the text with the missing parts. Choose from list A)-F). You will not need one part. Capitals have been removed from sentence heads.

- A) but the government shows little sign of grasping it
- B) although the new supply system is miraculous in its scale
- C) and the panic over the lack of imported fruit and vegetables has been contained
- D) but when you take into account climate change
- E) they could hardly have imagined they were consuming their world out of existence
- F) which needs the extreme flexibility of a class of desperate workers to function

Text 2

'Smart Mirrors' Come to the Fitting Room

Since e-commerce began threatening stores last decade, retailers have been trying to make their locations operate more like the web. Yet despite splurging on the latest bells and whistles, they've mostly failed and fallen further behind their online rivals.

Oak Labs, a startup founded in 2015 by former EBay executives, is focused on fixing what's wrong with(6) retailing. The San Francisco-based company started with the dressing room. What happens inside those few square feet of real estate matters—a lot, in fact: Shoppers who use fitting rooms are almost seven times more likely to make a purchase than those who simply browse the sales floor,(7) research by Alert Tech.

Oak Labs' first product is a dressing-room mirror that can offer an experience like this: A woman enters with jeans and a blouse. Sensors read the radio-frequency ID tags on the clothes and display the items on a touchscreen embedded behind the glass. A recommendation engine suggests complementary pieces such as shoes and a belt. If an item doesn't fit or the color isn't right, the customer taps the mirror,(8) triggers a request on store clerks' mobile devices. The technology isn't designed to replace salespeople, says Healey Cypher, Oak's chief executive officer and a co-founder: 'We want to make their jobs easier, make them more(9).'

Retailers can buy one of Oak's mirrors for \$25,000 (the price falls for larger orders) and pay a monthly(10) for the software. Or they can sign a five-year(11) and pay \$7,000 to \$9,000 a year. The mirrors(12) tested by a handful of upscale retailers, including Ralph Lauren and Rebecca Minkoff. Early results show that people buy more while spending less time in the dressing room, Cypher says.

Those stats(13) as the company rolls out a feature in coming weeks that allows shoppers to wave their phones in front of the mirror and make a purchase using Apple Pay or Android Pay. If an item isn't available, a customer can access the retailer's website with a few taps of the mirror, purchase it, and(14).

This type of technology could help stores catch up to(15). Rebecca Minkoff, which has Oak's mirror at two of its shops, learned that a leather jacket was tried on 70 times in a week but never purchased. Half the shoppers asked for a different size using the touchscreen, meaning there was a fit issue.

Even with the promise of new data and a sales boost, the likelihood of a product such as this going mainstream remains an open question.

bloomberg.com

II. Choose the best alternative A) B) or C) to fill each gap in the text.

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 6. A) online | B) click-and-mortar | C) brick-and-mortar |
| 7. A) in spite of | B) according to | C) within |
| 8. A) that | B) which | C) what |
| 9. A) friendly | B) useful | C) effective |
| 10. A) licensing fee | B) lump sum | C) depository |
| 11. A) warranty | B) contract | C) draft |
| 12. A) are being | B) should be | C) might have been |
| 13. A) had improved | B) improved | C) may improve |
| 14. A) have it delivered | B) deliver it home | C) had it delivered |
| 15. A) data-rich e-commerce | B) less informed outlets | C) well-known websites |

Text 3

Gig economy companies trying to have their cake and eat it, say workers

Companies operating in the gig economy are ‘having their cake and eating it’ by treating workers like staff while avoiding the tax and regulations on employing people on full-time contracts, according to a study.

A survey of workers in the gig economy found that most believed their employers were exploiting a lack of regulation to grow quickly. Almost two-thirds said the government should step in to guarantee basic employment rights.

The survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the trade body for human resources staff, found that although workers are classified as self-employed, many were concerned about the level of control exerted over them by the businesses they worked for.

‘This is supported by the data, as just four in 10 gig economy workers, or 38%, say that they feel like their own boss, which raises the question of whether some are entitled to more employment rights,’ the report said.

The gig economy has become a focus of concern following the commercial success of companies such as Amazon, the ride hailing firm Uber and the delivery service Deliveroo. These companies employ workers on short-term contracts that can last just a few hours, allowing them to avoid paying employers national insurance, sickness and holiday pay.

Earlier this week the chancellor reversed an increase in national insurance on self-employed workers after critics, many on the Tory backbenches, said it was a tax on the gig economy and budding entrepreneurs.

The CIPD, however, found that most people it classified as gig economy workers were permanent employees, students or unemployed people taking jobs to top up their incomes and accepting hourly pay rates averaging between £6 and £7.70 an hour.

Peter Cheese, the CIPD’s chief executive, said: ‘Our research suggests that some gig economy businesses may be seeking to have their cake and eat it by using self-employed contractors to cut costs, while at the same time trying to maintain a level of control over people that is more appropriate for a more traditional employment relationship.’

‘Many people in the gig economy may already be eligible for basic employment rights, but are confused by the issue of their employment status. It is crucial that the government deals with the issue of employment status before attempting to make sweeping changes, else they risk building foundational changes on shifting sands.’

The Guardian

III. ¹⁶⁻²⁰ Answer the following questions according to the text in no more than 5 words.

- 16.** Who is in the focus of the CIPD survey?
- 17.** What explains the recent high profile of gig economy companies?
- 18.** Which advantage of self-employment seems to be in danger?
- 19.** What basic employment rights might be guaranteed to staff?
- 20.** What should be clear before the government makes big decisions?

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KEY

Text 1	
1.	C
2.	B
3.	F
4.	A
5.	E
Text 2	
6.	C
7.	B
8.	B
9.	C
10.	A
11.	B
12.	A
13.	C
14.	A
15.	A
Text 3	
16.	workers in the gig economy/ gig economy workers/ workers on short-term contracts/ self-employed workers(contractors)
17.	they grow quickly/ their commercial success
18.	to feel like your own boss (no/low control exerted by employer)
19.	(...)insurance, sickness and holiday pay
20.	their employment status