

Mini TOEFL iBT - READING

READING SECTION DIRECTIONS

The Reading section measures your ability to understand academic passages in English. You will read passages and answer questions about them. Answer all questions based on what is stated or implied in the passage.

There are three passages in a full TOEFL iBT test. You should allow 20 minutes to read each passage and answer the questions about it.



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Continental Drift Theory

[1] Near the beginning of the twentieth century, German meteorologist Alfred Wegener noted that if one were to put the Atlantic coasts of Africa and South America together, they would fit much like a two gigantic jigsaw puzzle pieces; he found similar connections between living organisms found in India, Australia and Antarctica—scientists had been finding nearly identical species of plants and the bones of ancient animals on separate continents, separated only by oceans or other large bodies of water. **These observations led Wegener to propose a startling, new and controversial theory: all the current disparate continents of the world were once one, huge mega-landmass some 200 million years ago.**

[2] Wegener knew that any new theory regarding continent-formation that was based simply on the jigsaw fit of the continents could easily be explained away. To strengthen the case for such an unusual theory, he pulled together information from diverse fields such as geology, geography, biology and paleontology. He used geological maps made by respected authorities to demonstrate the **uncanny** match of geological formations like mountain ranges between eastern South America and western Africa. Wegener also questioned why coal deposits, commonly associated with tropical climates, would be found near the North Pole and why the plains of Africa would show surprising evidence of glaciers. On top of that, Wegener presented examples where fossils of exactly the same prehistoric reptile species were distributed where you would expect them to be if central South America and southern Africa had once been side-by-side. In 1912, he published his theory of “Continental Drift”—where he theorized that continents slowly move around the globe, pulling away from each other and pushing into each other over millions of years—and faced an immediate and harsh **backlash** from the scientific community.

[3]“Continental Drift” challenged then-accepted theories and facts in the fields of geology, geophysics, zoogeography and paleontology. One of Alfred Wegener's critics, the geologist R. Thomas Chamberlain, suggested just that if the scientific community were to embrace Wegener's hypothesis then many widely-held theories related to geology would have to be thrown away. To counter Wegener's theory, Chamberlain proposed alternative explanations for what Wegener saw. To explain the unusually-similar distribution of fossils in Africa and South America, Chamberlain proposed there may once have been a network of land bridges between the different continents, such as the narrow strip of land in Central America connecting North and South America. To explain the existence of fossils of temperate species being found in arctic regions, he proposed the existence of warm water currents connecting the polar regions to the equatorial zones of the Earth. Reactions by scientists such as Chamberlain eventually shut down serious discussion of the concept of Continental Drift. Modern scientists now look at these explanations as desperate attempts to prevent the Wegener's ideas from gaining supporters, but at the time they did help to **dampen** support for continental drift.

[4] Wegener's theory did have its **rough edges**. Wegener did not have a solid explanation for how Continental Drift could have occurred. He proposed that a combination of the centrifugal force caused by the rotation of the Earth and the tidal attraction of the Sun and the Moon may cause the continents to move slowly over time. Unfortunately, Wegener knew these explanations were inadequate. Wegener himself really did not believe that he had the correct explanation for the mechanism, but that this should not stop all discussion of his hypothesis. Wegener's critics never presented strong arguments that Continental Drift couldn't have happened.

[5] Wegener's theory did gain some support in 1929, when British geologist Arthur Holmes suggested a possible process for continental drift based on the idea that the Earth's mantle* undergoes ‘thermal convection’. This is based on the fact that as a substance is heated its density decreases and rises to the surface until it is cooled and sinks again. Holmes believed that this repeated heating and cooling of semisolid rock under the Earth's surface and could result in an upward-and-downward current which may be enough to cause continents to move. Arthur Holmes suggested that this thermal convection was like a conveyor belt and that the uprising pressure could break apart a continent and then force the broken pieces to move away from each other in opposite directions, carried by the convection currents. Despite this possible explanation for the process of continental drift, Holmes' idea received very little attention at the time.

[6] Not until the 1960's did Holmes' idea—and, therefore, Wegener's original theory—begin to be studied by more scientists. Greater understanding of the ocean floor and the discoveries of features like mid-oceanic ridges and geomagnetic phenomena related to these ridges, and the association of island arcs and oceanic trenches occurring together and near the edges of continents, suggested convection might indeed be at work. These discoveries and more led Harry Hess of Princeton University to publish similar a hypothesis based on thermal convection currents, which he called "sea floor spreading". This idea was basically the same as that proposed by Holmes over 30 years earlier, but now there was much more evidence to further develop and support the idea. The theory of continental drift finally gained the acceptance of the greater scientific community Wegener had sought nearly half a century earlier.

*Earth's mantle: a region of hot, dense, semisolid rock in the interior of the Earth between the inner core and the outer surface.

- **Question 1** Which of the following best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in Paragraph 1? Incorrect choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.
- (A) Because it looked like the various continents could fit together like pieces of a puzzle, Wegener came to believe that they had surprisingly once been a single continent in the distant past.
 - (B) Wegener felt that his theory better explained how continents had been connected millions of years ago.
 - (C) Wegener used new and unusual research to support his theory that all the continents of the world had had once been part of a giant, super-continent.
 - (D) After looking at the shape of the continents, Wegener theorized that all the continents of the world would one day be connected.
- **Question 2** The word *uncanny* in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to
- (A) natural
 - (B) strange
 - (C) unknown
 - (D) incorrect
- **Question 3** What can be said about Wegener's explanation for the mechanism of Continental Drift?
- (A) He believed it was sufficient to explain the movement of continents.
 - (B) It relied on the motion of the Earth as a cause for the movement of continents.
 - (C) It could also explain the movement of ocean tides.
 - (D) He believed the Earth's rotation was enough to cause the movement of continents.
- **Question 4** The word "dampen" in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to
- (A) lessen
 - (B) move
 - (C) excite
 - (D) increase

- **Question 5** What was R. Thomas Chamberlain's opinion of Wegener's theory of Continent Drift?
- (A) It was a theory that many scientists might accept if more evidence could be presented.
 - (B) It was compatible with widely-held theories at the time.
 - (C) There were alternate hypotheses that could explain Wegener's evidence for Continental Drift.
 - (D) It opened up interesting questions about continent formation that should be examined.
- **Question 6** According to the passage, all of the following can be said of Arthur Holmes' theory explaining a mechanism for Continental Drift EXCEPT:
- (A) It involved the effect of variations in temperature deep under the Earth's surface.
 - (B) It was greatly supported by later research conducted in the 1960's by other scientists.
 - (C) Wegener and Holmes worked together to create a hypothesis for the process of Continental Drift.
 - (D) He believed that thermal convection caused continents to move away from each other.
- **Question 7** The word "backlash" in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to
- (A) acceptance
 - (B) opposition
 - (C) review
 - (D) reversal
- **Question 8** Why does the author mention "land bridges" in paragraph 3?
- (A) To present information supporting Wegener's theory of Continent Drift
 - (B) To explain how water currents move water to the arctic regions from the equator
 - (C) To highlight evidence that contradicts Wegener's theory of Continental Drift
 - (D) To introduce a possible explanation for the spread of animal species across various continents
- **Question 9** What can be inferred from paragraph 6 about the theory of thermal convection?
- (A) More scientists became open to Holmes's hypothesis in the 1960's.
 - (B) Hess's theory of mantle convection was nearly identical to Wegener's theory.
 - (C) It only relied on new ocean floor data collected in the 1960's.
 - (D) Later theories proposed a different mechanism for continental drift.
- **Question 10** The phrase "rough edges" in paragraph 4 is closest in meaning to
- (A) erroneous ideas
 - (B) lack of evidence
 - (C) incomplete explanations
 - (D) opposing viewpoints

- **Question 11** Look at the four squares in paragraph 5, **A**, **B**, **C**, and **D**, which indicate where the following sentence could be added to the passage. Where would the sentence best fit?

Because of this, they exposed Wegener to ridicule because they clearly could not generate enough force to actually move landmasses as large as continents.

Wegener's theory did have its rough edges. **A** Wegener did not have a solid explanation for how continental drift could have occurred. **B** He proposed that a combination of the centrifugal force caused by the rotation of the Earth and the tidal attraction of the Sun and the Moon may cause the continents to move slowly over time. Unfortunately, Wegener knew these explanations were inadequate. **C** Wegener himself really did not believe that he had the explanation for the mechanism, but that this should not stop discussion of a hypothesis. Wegener's critics never presented strong arguments that Continental Drift couldn't have happened. **D**

- (A) **A**
- (B) **B**
- (C) **C**
- (D) **D**

- **Question 12** An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by selecting the answer choice that express an important idea in the passage. Some sentences do not belong in the summary because they express ideas that are not presented in the passage or are minor ideas in the passage.

“Continental Drift” theorizes that continents are able to move around the globe.

- (A) Wegener believed Continental Drift was caused by a process of thermal convection under the Earth's surface.
- (B) It hypothesized that a land-bridge may once have connected Africa and South America.
- (C) It attempted to explain how and why similar plants and animals could be found on distant continents.

Mini TOEFL iBT - LISTENING (AUDIO)

LISTENING SECTION DIRECTIONS

The Listening section measures your ability to understand conversations and lectures in English. You will hear a conversation or lecture **only one time**, and you will answer some questions about them. The questions typically ask about the main idea and supporting details of the conversation and lecture. Some questions will ask about a speaker's purpose or attitude. Answer the questions based on what the speakers state or imply.

You may take notes while you listen. You may use your notes to help you answer the questions. Your notes will not be scored.

In some question, you will see an audio icon. This means that you will hear, but not see, part of the question.

You should answer each question, even if you must guess the answer.



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Questions 1 through 5.

Listen to a conversation between two students regarding a class presentation.

- **Question 1** What is the main purpose of the conversation?
 - (A) To organize a trip to a museum
 - (B) To go over material for a test
 - (C) To prepare for an oral report
 - (D) To find more material for a presentation

- **Question 2** According to the conversation, which of the following statements is true?
 - (A) The two students will meet tonight to finalize their presentation outline.
 - (B) The two students will likely meet the day before their presentation.
 - (C) The two students haven't collected all the photos they need for the presentation.
 - (D) The two students will meet with the professor tomorrow.

- **Question 3** Listen again to part of the conversation, then answer the question.
 - (A) She thinks the theory is unrealistic.
 - (B) She thinks the event happened in another location.
 - (C) She is unclear what the theory is trying to prove.
 - (D) She doesn't think he should include the information in the presentation.

- **Question 4** Listen again to part of the conversation, then answer the question.
- (A) Her experience at the museum may be put in a film.
 - (B) What she was able to do at the museum was uncommon.
 - (C) She is disappointed she wasn't able to find anything interesting during the excavation.
 - (D) She didn't know anyone else who was with her at the museum.
- **Question 5** According to the conversation, what did the woman do at the La Brea Tar Pit Museum last year?
- (A) Find the bones of a saber-toothed cat in the tar pits
 - (B) Meet the scientist who first studied the tar pits
 - (C) Find paintings of ancient animals found in the tar pits
 - (D) Search for animal and human remains in the tar pits

Questions 6 through 11.

Listen to part of a discussion in an American history class. The professor is talking about President Theodore Roosevelt.

- **Question 6** What are the main topics of the lecture?
- (A) How Roosevelt was able to pass laws protecting the environment
 - (B) How Roosevelt became president of the United States
 - (C) Why Roosevelt wanted to be president of the United States
 - (D) The kinds of legislation Roosevelt helped pass as president
- **Question 7** According to the professor, Roosevelt did all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) Write books about his life in the Dakotas
 - (B) Help increase competition among large companies
 - (C) Leave a position in government to join a war
 - (D) Run for political office in the American West
- **Question 8** According to the lecture, what did Roosevelt write about after the death of his wife and mother?
- (A) Life in the American West
 - (B) His career in politics
 - (C) The conservation of natural resources
 - (D) His experiences as a Rough Rider
- **Question 9** Listen again to part of the lecture. Then answer the question.
- What does the professor mean by this statement?
- (A) Roosevelt did not enjoy working with the Republican Party in New York.
 - (B) Roosevelt did not enjoy being the governor of New York.
 - (C) After Roosevelt was elected Vice-President, legislators in New York did not have to work with him anymore.
 - (D) The Republican Party in New York did not expect Roosevelt to become Vice-President.

- **Question 10** What were some of Roosevelt's accomplishments as President?
 - (A) Building a national highway network
 - (B) Higher standard for food safety
 - (C) More control of American waterways
 - (D) Increasing the number and size of national forests

- **Question 11** What can be inferred about Roosevelt's involvement in the Spanish-American War?
 - (A) It was instrumental in winning the war against Spain.
 - (B) It made him more famous in the U.S.
 - (C) He reluctantly became a soldier in the war.
 - (D) It led to him becoming Secretary of the Navy.