

# Reading Test 3

## The Resurgence of Vernacular Architecture in the 21st Century

**A.** The architectural landscape of the modern era has long been dominated by the "International Style," characterized by glass skyscrapers and steel frames that look identical whether situated in Riyadh or Reykjavik. However, as the global climate crisis intensifies, a growing movement of architects is looking backward to move forward. This movement, known as vernacular architecture, focuses on using local materials and traditional techniques that have been refined over centuries to suit specific climates and environments.

**B.** Historically, buildings were constructed using whatever was immediately available: mud, stone, timber, or thatch. These materials were not chosen out of a lack of ambition, but because they offered the best thermal performance for their respective regions. For instance, the thick adobe walls found in arid climates act as a thermal mass, absorbing heat during the blistering day and releasing it slowly at night when temperatures drop. This natural regulation of internal climates is something modern air-conditioning attempts to replicate at a massive energy cost.

**C.** One of the primary drivers behind the shift back to traditional methods is the concept of "embodied carbon." This refers to the total greenhouse gas emissions generated during the mining, manufacturing, and transportation of building materials. While concrete and steel are incredibly versatile, their production is responsible for nearly **10%** of global carbon dioxide emissions. In contrast, local materials like bamboo or rammed earth require minimal processing and almost no long-distance haulage, significantly reducing the environmental footprint of a new structure.

**D.** In Southeast Asia, architects are increasingly revisiting the design of the traditional stilt house. By elevating the living quarters above the ground, these structures allow for maximum cross-ventilation, which is essential in humid, tropical climates. Furthermore, the elevation provides a natural defense against seasonal flooding—a threat that is becoming more frequent due to rising sea levels and erratic weather patterns. Modern iterations of these designs often incorporate lightweight, sustainable timber and solar-integrated roofing.

**E.** Similarly, in Northern Europe, the use of "green roofs"—a technique dating back to Viking-era sod houses—has seen a massive revival. These roofs are covered with vegetation, which provides exceptional insulation during harsh winters and reduces the "urban heat island" effect in the summer. Beyond temperature control, these living roofs manage rainwater runoff and provide vital habitats for urban biodiversity, proving that ancient solutions can solve multifaceted modern problems.

**F.** The challenge, however, lies in scaling these traditional methods to meet the needs of a rapidly urbanizing population. Critics argue that while a mud-brick house is sustainable, it

cannot easily be transformed into a high-density apartment complex. To address this, "hybrid architecture" has emerged. This approach combines the structural integrity of modern engineering with the ecological wisdom of the past. Cross-laminated timber (CLT), for example, allows for the construction of wooden "plyscrapers" that are as fire-resistant and sturdy as concrete but far more sustainable.

**G.** Furthermore, the revival of vernacular architecture is not merely an environmental endeavor; it is a cultural one. The homogenization of global cities has led to a loss of regional identity. By incorporating local craftsmanship and traditional aesthetic motifs, architects are able to create buildings that resonate with the history of the land and its people. This fosters a sense of belonging and ensures that architectural heritage is preserved in a functional, living capacity rather than being relegated to museums.

**H.** Economic factors are also beginning to favor the vernacular. As the cost of fossil fuels and raw industrial materials fluctuates, the predictability of local sourcing becomes more attractive to developers. Although traditional methods can sometimes be more labor-intensive, the long-term savings on energy bills and maintenance often outweigh the initial investment. Governments in several countries have started offering subsidies for buildings that meet high "passive design" standards, further incentivizing the use of traditional logic.

**I.** Ultimately, the future of the built environment may not be found in high-tech gadgets or energy-hungry smart systems, but in a deeper understanding of our surroundings. The marriage of ancient wisdom and modern technology offers a pathway toward a truly sustainable civilization. As we continue to navigate the uncertainties of the 21st century, the lesson from our ancestors is clear: to build for the future, we must first respect the constraints and opportunities of the local environment.

## Questions 1 – 8

The reading passage "**The Resurgence of Vernacular Architecture in the 21st Century**" has nine paragraphs, **A–I**.

Choose the correct heading for paragraphs **B–I** from the list of headings below. Write the correct number, **i–xi**, in boxes **1–8** on your answer sheet.

**Example:** Paragraph **A:** **ix** (The prevalence of global uniformity)

### List of Headings

- **i** The financial incentives of local sourcing
- **ii** A solution for high-density urban living
- **iii** Adapting ancient insulation for modern cities
- **iv** The heavy environmental toll of industrial materials
- **v** Building for moisture and flood resistance
- **vi** Natural temperature regulation in arid climates

- **vii** Reclaiming regional identity through design
- **viii** The transition toward hybrid construction methods
- **ix** The prevalence of global uniformity
- **x** The future: A synthesis of old and new
- **xi** The limitations of stone-based architecture

1. Paragraph **B** \_\_\_\_\_

2. Paragraph **C** \_\_\_\_\_

3. Paragraph **D** \_\_\_\_\_

4. Paragraph **E** \_\_\_\_\_

5. Paragraph **F** \_\_\_\_\_

6. Paragraph **G** \_\_\_\_\_

7. Paragraph **H** \_\_\_\_\_

8. Paragraph **I** \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions 9 – 14

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

In boxes **9–14** 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

**9.** The "International Style" of architecture varies significantly depending on the local climate of the city.

**10.** The production of concrete and steel accounts for approximately one-tenth of the world's carbon dioxide emissions.

**11.** Building a modern stilt house is currently the most expensive method of sustainable construction in Southeast Asia.

**12.** Green roofs in Northern Europe serve a dual purpose of temperature control and supporting local wildlife.

**13.** Modern cross-laminated timber has been found to be less resistant to fire than traditional concrete.

**14.** Some governments provide financial support to developers who utilize passive design principles.

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# The Woman Who Mapped the Metamorphosis: Maria Sibylla Merian

**A** In an era when the natural sciences were dominated by armchair scholars who rarely ventured into the field, Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717) stood out as a radical anomaly. A German-born naturalist and scientific illustrator, Merian defied the social conventions of the 17th century to document the natural world with unprecedented precision. While her contemporaries were focused on classifying dried specimens in cabinets of curiosity, Merian was interested in the living process. Her work would eventually revolutionize the field of entomology and challenge the prevailing scientific myths of her time.

**B** Merian's fascination with insects began in her youth in Frankfurt. At the age of thirteen, she started collecting and raising silkworms, observing their life cycles with meticulous detail. This was a period when the scientific community largely believed in "spontaneous generation"—the idea that insects emerged fully formed from rotting mud or decaying matter. Through her patient observations and subsequent illustrations, Merian provided visual proof that insects underwent a structured, multi-stage transformation, or metamorphosis, from egg to larva, pupa, and finally, adult.

**C** What set Merian apart from other illustrators of the 1600s was her holistic approach to ecology. Rather than drawing an insect in isolation against a white background, she depicted her subjects alongside the specific plants they fed upon. This introduced the concept of the food chain and ecological niches long before these terms were officially coined. Her first major work, *The Wondrous Transformation of Caterpillars*, showcased this "ecological" style, blending artistic beauty with a level of empirical data that was rare for the period.

**D** In 1699, at the age of 52—an age when most of her peers were expected to lead quiet, domestic lives—Merian embarked on one of the most daring scientific expeditions in history. Funded by her own illustrations and a small grant from the city of Amsterdam, she traveled to Suriname in South America. Her goal was to study tropical insects in their natural habitat. This journey made her one of the first European naturalists to conduct a dedicated overseas expedition for purely scientific research, independent of colonial or commercial interests.

**E** The conditions in Suriname were grueling. Merian faced intense heat, humidity, and the constant threat of tropical diseases. Despite these hardships, she spent two years trekking through the rainforests, aided by the knowledge of enslaved people and Indigenous inhabitants. She documented species that were entirely unknown to Europeans, including giant spiders, colorful butterflies, and exotic reptiles. Her records were not merely visual; she took extensive notes on the behavior, diet, and defense mechanisms of the creatures she encountered.

**F** Upon her return to Amsterdam in 1701, Merian published her masterpiece: *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium*. The book featured large, hand-colored engravings that were as scientifically accurate as they were aesthetically stunning. It was a sensation across Europe, reaching both the scientific elite and the general public. Even the great Swedish taxonomist Carl

Linnaeus would later cite her work in his descriptions of several hundred species. Her ability to translate complex biological cycles into accessible visual narratives was unparalleled.

**G** Despite her undeniable contributions, Merian's reputation suffered in the century following her death. As science became increasingly professionalized and restricted to men in academic institutions, her work was often dismissed as "amateur" or "merely decorative." Some critics questioned the accuracy of her more unusual observations, such as her depiction of a spider eating a bird—a claim that was only verified by modern scientists over 150 years later. Her status as a woman in a male-dominated field meant her legacy was frequently marginalized.

**H** Today, Maria Sibylla Merian is recognized as a pioneer of both art and science. Her illustrations are celebrated not only for their beauty but for their role in establishing entomology as a credible scientific discipline. By bridging the gap between artistic intuition and rigorous observation, she changed the way we perceive the natural world. Her life serves as a testament to the power of curiosity and the importance of direct field observation, proving that the most profound scientific truths are often hidden in plain sight.

## Questions 15 – 21

The reading passage "The Woman Who Mapped the Metamorphosis: Maria Sibylla Merian" has eight paragraphs, **A–H**.

**Which paragraph contains the following information?**

Write the correct letter, **A–H**, in boxes **15–21** on your answer sheet. *NB: You may use any letter more than once.*

15. a description of the physical difficulties encountered during tropical field research
16. a reference to the source of funding for a major overseas trip
17. an explanation of a historical misconception regarding the origin of insects
18. a mention of a specific scientific claim that was not proven until long after her death
19. an example of how her work influenced a famous taxonomist
20. a comparison between Merian's methods and those of her stationary contemporaries
21. an account of how Merian's gender affected the long-term perception of her work

## Questions 22 – 28

Complete the summary below.

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

Write your answers in boxes **22–28** on your answer sheet.

## **The Life and Legacy of Maria Sibylla Merian**

As a young girl in Frankfurt, Maria Sibylla Merian spent time observing the development of **22** \_\_\_\_\_ which led her to challenge the theory of **23** \_\_\_\_\_. Through her detailed illustrations, she was able to prove that insects underwent a specific process known as **24** \_\_\_\_\_.

Unlike many other naturalists of the 17th century, Merian used a/an **25** \_\_\_\_\_ approach, showing insects together with the plants they consumed. This method of documentation effectively pre-dated the modern study of **26** \_\_\_\_\_. Later in her life, she traveled to South America, where she relied on the local knowledge of **27** \_\_\_\_\_ and Indigenous people to find new species. Although her work was highly regarded during her lifetime, it was later dismissed by some as being **28** \_\_\_\_\_ because of her gender and lack of formal academic status.

# The Conceptual Architecture of the Human Mind

**A** The debate surrounding how humans categorize the world is a cornerstone of cognitive science. For decades, the "Classical Theory" of categorization, rooted in Aristotelian logic, reigned supreme. This theory posits that categories are discrete entities defined by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. In this view, an object either belongs to a category or it does not, based on a clear-cut checklist of attributes. For instance, a "triangle" is defined strictly by having three sides and internal angles summing to 180 degrees. If a shape lacks even one of these, it is excluded. This binary approach suggests that the human mind operates like a digital processor, sorting data into rigid, pre-defined folders.

**B** However, in the mid-1970s, psychologist Eleanor Rosch challenged this rigidity with her "Prototype Theory." Rosch argued that most natural categories—such as "furniture" or "birds"—do not have clear boundaries. Instead, they are organized around a central 'prototype' or the most representative member of the category. According to Rosch, people find it easier to identify a robin as a bird than a penguin, despite both meeting the biological criteria. This suggests that human cognition is "fuzzy" rather than binary, relying on degrees of similarity to a mental ideal rather than an All-or-Nothing checklist.

**C** Building on Rosch's work, the researcher George Lakoff introduced the "Idealized Cognitive Models" (ICMs). Lakoff argued that categorization is not just about comparing physical traits, but about the complex mental stories we hold. His famous study of the word "mother" demonstrated that the category is not a single definition but a cluster of overlapping models: the birth mother, the genetic mother, the nurturing mother, and the legal mother. Lakoff's theory suggests that cognitive dissonance occurs when these models do not align, such as in cases of adoption. This moved the debate from simple visual recognition to the influence of social and cultural structures on thought.

**D** A contrasting perspective is offered by the "Exemplar Theory," championed by researchers like Douglas Medin. While Prototype Theory suggests we store a single "average" ideal of a category, Exemplar Theory posits that we store every specific encounter we have ever had. When we see a new animal and wonder if it is a "dog," we do not compare it to a generic, blurry "ideal dog." Instead, our brain performs a lightning-fast scan of every specific dog we have previously encountered. Medin argues that this accounts for our ability to recognize highly diverse categories where a single "average" would be impossible to calculate.

**E** The "Theory-Theory" (or the Representative Theory of Mind), supported by psychologists like Susan Carey, takes a different path. It suggests that children—and adults—categorize the world like miniature scientists. We do not just look at shapes or remember examples; we build "theories" about why things are the way they are. A child might categorize a "whale" as a fish based on its appearance, but once they learn the "theory" of mammals (breathing air, nursing young), their category shifts. Here, categorization is an intellectual act of causal reasoning rather than a mere sensory response.

**F** In the 21st century, the focus has shifted toward "Embodied Cognition," a theory popularized by Lawrence Barsalou. He argues that all the aforementioned theories share a flaw: they treat the mind as a "disembodied" computer. Barsalou's research suggests that when we categorize an object like a "hammer," our brain's motor cortex—the part responsible for physical movement—actually fires. We categorize things based on how our bodies would interact with them. In this framework, thought is not an abstract manipulation of symbols but a simulation of physical experience.

**G** Critics of the Embodied Cognition movement, such as Zenon Pylyshyn, maintain a "Connectionist" or "Computational" view. Pylyshyn argues that while physical sensations might accompany thought, the core of human reasoning remains propositional and symbolic. He warns that equating "thinking about a hammer" with "the muscle memory of swinging a hammer" oversimplifies the complexity of abstract logic. For Pylyshyn, the mind must have a "language of thought" (Mentalese) that operates independently of the physical body's sensory input.

**H** The ongoing synthesis of these theories suggests that the human mind is far more multifaceted than any single researcher has captured. Whether we rely on prototypes, specific exemplars, scientific theories, or physical simulations likely depends on the context of the task at hand. As neuroimaging technology improves, researchers are beginning to see that different parts of the brain may activate different "categorization engines" simultaneously. The quest to map this conceptual architecture remains one of the most profound challenges in understanding what it means to be human.

## Questions 29 – 34

Look at the following statements (Questions 29–34) and the list of researchers below.

Match each statement with the correct researcher, **A–F**.

Write the correct letter, **A–F**, in boxes **29–34** on your answer sheet.

**NB:** You may use any letter more than once.

### List of Researchers

- **A** Eleanor Rosch
- **B** George Lakoff
- **C** Douglas Medin
- **D** Susan Carey
- **E** Lawrence Barsalou
- **I** Zenon Pylyshyn

29. The human brain stores every individual encounter with an object rather than a single generalized ideal.
30. Categorization is a process of intellectual reasoning similar to how a scientist tests a hypothesis.
31. Concepts are often defined by complex, overlapping social and cultural narratives.
32. Thought is a mental simulation of physical interaction with the world.
33. Core reasoning relies on abstract symbols that function independently of sensory input.
34. Natural categories lack clear boundaries and are organized around a "best example."

## Questions 35 – 40

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

Write the correct letter in boxes **35–40** on your answer sheet.

**35. According to the "Classical Theory" of categorization,**

- A) categories are based on a "fuzzy" set of internal rules.
- B) an object must meet every specific requirement to belong to a group.
- C) the human mind prefers representative prototypes over rigid checklists.
- D) triangular shapes are the only objects that follow Aristotelian logic.

**36. Eleanor Rosch's research suggested that**

- A) humans find it equally easy to categorize all members of a group.
- B) natural categories have clearly defined and immovable boundaries.
- C) some members of a category are viewed as better examples than others.
- D) the "Classical Theory" is the most efficient way to process data.

**37. What did George Lakoff's study of the word "mother" illustrate?**

- A) Biological definitions are the only way humans categorize family roles.
- B) A single category can be comprised of several competing mental models.
- C) Social structures have very little impact on how we perceive language.
- D) Cognitive dissonance occurs when a person lacks a genetic mother.

**38. How does "Exemplar Theory" differ from "Prototype Theory"?**

- A) It suggests we store every specific instance rather than one average ideal.
- B) It claims that the brain is unable to calculate a single "average" for a category.
- C) It argues that we ignore previous encounters when seeing a new object.
- D) It focuses on how scientists test hypotheses rather than sensory data.

**39. Susan Carey's "Theory-Theory" proposes that categorization is**

- A) an automatic sensory response to physical shapes.
- B) a process that remains unchanged from childhood to adulthood.

- C) an intellectual task involving the understanding of cause and effect.
- D) primarily based on whether an animal breathes air or lives in water.

**40. Lawrence Barsalou's theory of "Embodied Cognition" emphasizes that**

- A) the brain functions exactly like a disembodied digital computer.
- B) abstract logic is more important than physical muscle memory.
- C) thinking about an object involves simulating a physical interaction with it.
- D) the motor cortex is only active when a person is physically moving.

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