

IELTS Reading Practice Test - Academic Reading Test 002

City Parks: Evolution, Significance, and Tomorrow

A City parks have been an integral part of urban landscapes for centuries. Long before the establishment of contemporary skyscrapers or modern infrastructures, green spaces were used for public gatherings, recreation, and relaxation. Today, however, the role of parks is changing as cities become more densely populated and real estate prices skyrocket. Some consider them a luxury, while others see them as essential urban lungs. However, historical precedence suggests that city parks can adapt and continue to provide value, even in changing urban environments.

B The Luxembourg Gardens in Paris stands as a testament to the enduring importance of parks. Established in the early 17th century, it initially served as private grounds for Marie de' Medici, the widow of King Henry IV of France. Over time, it transformed into a public space. During the 18th century, the park incorporated more recreational facilities like tennis courts and puppet theaters. By the 19th century, it was also used for political rallies and public meetings. Today, it remains a favorite spot for both locals and tourists, showcasing the adaptability of such urban spaces.

C Central Park in New York City offers another example of the evolution of city parks. Designed in the mid-19th century by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, it was an answer to the city's rapid urbanization. While the park was initially a retreat for the city's elite, it later opened its gates to all New Yorkers, featuring playgrounds, zoos, and concert venues. Over the years, Central Park has been a space for activism, music festivals, and community gatherings, reflecting the city's evolving social fabric.

D Unlike the vast gardens and parks of previous centuries, the urban green spaces of the 20th and 21st centuries had to grapple with the challenges posed by rapid urban expansion. Many city parks began to feel the pressures of encroaching development, leading to debates about their relevance and utility.

E Modern architects and urban planners, however, recognize the multifaceted benefits of green spaces. There's a rising trend to incorporate biophilic design principles in urban planning, integrating natural elements into architectural designs. This includes rooftop gardens, vertical forests, and mini-parks or "parklets" in smaller urban gaps. Such innovations offer not just relaxation but also combat the urban heat island effect, improving the overall quality of life.

F Beyond recreation and relaxation, parks are now being viewed as potential solutions to environmental challenges. The "parks as lungs" concept is gaining traction. These green spaces can act as carbon sinks, absorbing CO₂ and purifying the air. Additionally, parks are increasingly seen as platforms for sustainable practices. For instance, Singapore's Gardens by the Bay, with its super-trees, incorporates photovoltaic cells to harness solar energy, and rainwater is collected for irrigation and fountain displays.

G There's also a growing emphasis on the health benefits of parks. With increasing concerns about mental health in urban environments, parks provide an oasis for mindfulness, relaxation, and physical activity. Medical studies consistently highlight the therapeutic effects of nature, with some cities even prescribing "nature time" as a treatment.

H Historically, city parks have always responded to the zeitgeist of their times. From offering respite from urban chaos, serving as sites for social change, or addressing environmental challenges, they've been dynamic entities. The future promises even more innovation, with urban parks integrating technology, sustainability, and public well-being. As cities continue to grow and evolve, so will the parks within them, reaffirming their place in the tapestry of urban life.

1. Complete the summary below.

Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the passage for each answer.

City Parks: Their Journey and Significance

City parks have played a crucial role in urban setups since ancient times, offering a venue for [1]_____, recreation, and rest. As urban areas are getting more populated, there's a debate about their [2]_____ in contemporary cities. Historical parks like the Luxembourg Gardens and Central Park show how parks have adapted to the changing [3]_____ and societal needs of their times. Today's parks are not just for leisure but are also seen as solutions to [4]_____ challenges and for promoting public health.

2. The Reading Passage has sections. Which section contains the following information? Enter the correct letter (A, B, C ...) in the blanks. You may use any letter more than once.

[1]____ An illustration of a park transitioning from a private area to a public gathering spot.

[2]____ Details of the role of parks in addressing rapid city expansion.

[3]____ The concept of integrating nature into modern architectural designs.

[4]____ The increasing significance of parks in mental well-being.

Next Questions:

Multiple Correct Answers.

- Choose multiple correct answers to complete the questions.

3. When mentioning the innovative solutions in urban green spaces in the 21st century, which TWO features does the writer mention?

- A) Massive playgrounds for children.
- B) Vertical forests integrated into buildings.
- C) Large water reservoirs for storage.
- D) "Parklets" to fill small urban spaces.
- E) Extensive jogging tracks.

4. Which TWO purposes of city parks, other than leisure, does the writer highlight?

- A) Serving as a tool for political campaigns.
- B) Act as potential carbon sinks.
- C) Hosting massive concerts and shows.
- D) Collecting rainwater for various uses.
- E) As a mode of transport within the city.

Answer Keys

Question	Answer
1	[1] gatherings [2] relevance [3] urban [4] environmental
2	[1] B [2] C [3] E [4] G

Question	Answer
3	B D
4	B D