

I. 次の文章に関して、空欄補充問題と読解問題があります。答えとして、最も適切な選択肢を1～3あるいは1～4の中から選びなさい。尚、内容に関する[4]、[7]、[20]、[23]、[25]、[26]の設問の選択肢は、本文の後に与えられています。

Competition spurs many parents to rush their children. We all want our offspring to succeed in life. In a busy world, that means putting them on the fast track in everything-school, sports, art, and music. It is no longer enough to [1] (1.catch 2.keep 3.put) up with the Joneses' children; now, our own little darlings have to outpace them in every discipline.

The fear that one's kids may fall behind is not new. Back in the eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson warned parents not to hesitate: "Whilst you stand deliberating which book your son shall read first, another boy has read both." In the 24-hour global economy, however, the pressure to stay ahead is more [2] ( 1. beneficial 2. harmful 3. ferocious) than ever, leading to what experts call "hyper-parenting," the compulsive drive to perfect one's children. To give their offspring a head start, ambitious parents play Mozart to them in the womb, teach them sign language before they are six months old and use Baby Webster flash cards to teach them vocabulary from their first birthday. Computer camps and motivational seminars now even accept kids [3] (1. more young than 2.asyoungas 3.youngeras) four. Golf lessons start at two. [4] [ X ] the pressure to join the race is [5] ( 1. immense 2. encouraging 3. meaningless). The other day I [6] (1. came over 2. came across 3. came into) an advertisement for a BBC foreign language course for children. "Speak French at 3! Spanish at 7!" screamed the headline. "If you wait, it will be too late! "My first instinct was to rush to the phone to place an order. [7] My second instinct was to feel guilty for not having acted on the first.

In a highly competitive world, school is a battleground where the only thing that [8] (1. arises 2. matters 3. is threatening) is finishing top of the class. Nowhere is that more true than in East Asia, where education systems are built on the principle of "exam hell." Just to stay competitive, millions of kids across the region spend evenings and weekends at institutions called "cram schools." Devoting eighty hours a week to academic work is not uncommon.

In the headlong dash for higher international test scores, schools in the English-speaking world have been especially keen to [9] (1. imitate 2. examine 3. criticize) the East Asian model. Over the last two decades, governments have embraced the doctrine of "intensification," which means piling on the pressure with more homework, more exams and a rigid curriculum. Hard work often starts before formal education. At his nursery school in London, my son started learning-not very successfully-how to hold a pen and write at the age of three. Private tutoring is also [10] (1. rewarding 2. surviving 3. booming) in the West, for children of younger and younger ages. American parents hoping to win a place in the right kindergarten send their four-year-olds to be coached on interview techniques. Some London tutors take three-year-olds on without hesitation.

Intensification is not [11] (1. appealing 2. confined 3. significant) to schooling, either. After school, many children dash from one extracurricular activity to the next, leaving them no time to relax, play on their own or let their imaginations wander. No time to be slow.

Children increasingly pay a price [12] (1.of 2.at 3.for 4.on) leading rushed lives. Cases of five-year-olds suffering from upset stomachs, headaches, insomnia, depression and eating disorders brought on by stress are now not uncommon. Like everyone else in our always-on society, many children get too little sleep nowadays. This can make them jumpy and impatient. Sleep-deprived kids have more trouble making friends. [13] (1.Moreover 2.For example 3.However), they stand a greater chance of being underweight, since deep sleep causes the release of human growth hormone.

When it comes to learning, putting children on the fast track often does more harm than good. The American Academy of Pediatrics warns that specializing in a sport at too young an age can cause physical and psychological damage. The same [14] (1.goes 2.comes 3.makes 4. does) for education. A growing body of evidence suggests that children learn better when they learn at a slower pace. Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, professor of child psychology at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, recently tested 120 American preschool kids. Half went to nursery schools that stressed social interaction and a playful approach to learning; the rest attended nursery schools that rushed them towards academic achievement, using what experts call the "drill and kill" style of teaching. Hirsh-Pasek found that children from the more relaxed, slower environment [15] ( 1. turned out 2. made for 3. came to) less anxious, more eager to learn and better able to think independently.

In 2003, Hirsh-Pasek co-authored *Einstein Never Used Flash Cards: How Our Children REALLY Learn and Why They Need to Play More and Memorize Less*. The [16] (1. field 2. debate 3. volume) is packed with research uncovering the myth that "early learning" and "academic acceleration" can build better brains. "When it comes to raising and teaching children, the modern belief that faster is better and that we must make every moment count is simply wrong," says Hirsh-Pasek. "When you look at the scientific evidence, it is clear that children learn better and develop more [17] (1.specific 2.rounded 3.unbalanced) personalities when they learn in a more relaxed, less hurried way."

In East Asia, the punishing work ethic that once made the region's schools the envy of the world is clearly backfiring. Pupils are losing their edge in international test scores, and failing to develop the creative skills needed in the information economy. Increasingly, East Asian students are rebelling against the study-till-you-drop mentality. Crime and suicide rates are rising, and truancy, [18] (1.priorseenas 2.asoncelike 3.well-knownlike 4. once seen as) a Western problem, has reached epidemic proportions. Over a hundred thousand Japanese primary and junior high students play hooky for more than a month each year. Many others refuse to go to school at all.

Not long ago, the New Yorker magazine published a cartoon that summed up the growing fear that modern youngsters are being [19] (1. stripped 2. denied 3. ignored) a real childhood. Two elementary school boys are walking down a street, books under their arms, baseball caps on their heads. With a world-weariness beyond his years, one says, [20] "So many toys-so little unstructured time."

We have been here before. Like much of the Slow movement, the battle to give children back their childhood has roots in the Industrial Revolution. Indeed, the modern notion of childhood as a time of innocence and imagination [21] (1. led upto 2. grew out of 3. made up for) the Romantic movement, which first swept across Europe in the late eighteenth century. Until then, children were considered mini-adults who needed to be made employable as soon as possible. In education, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the French philosopher, rang in the changes by attacking the tradition of teaching the young as though they were grown-ups. In Emile, his landmark treatise on schooling children in accordance with nature, he wrote: "Childhood has its own way of seeing, thinking, and feeling, and nothing is more foolish than to try to substitute ours for theirs." In the nineteenth century, reformers turned their sights on the evils of child labor in the factories and mines that powered the new industrial economy. In 1819, Coleridge [22] ( 1. may 2. could 3. should) describe the children working in English cotton factories as slaves. By the late 1800s, Britain was starting to move children out of the workplace and into the classroom, to give them a [23] "proper childhood."

Today, educators and parents around the world are once again [24] (1. keeping 2. giving 3. taking) steps to allow young people the freedom to slow down, to be children. In my search for interviewees, I post messages on a few parenting websites. Within days, my inbox is crammed with emails from three continents. Some are from teenagers lamenting their haste-ridden lives. An Australian girl named Jess described herself as a "rushed teen" and tells me, "I have no time for anything!" But most of the emails come from parents thrilled about finding new and various ways in which their kids can decelerate.

## Questions

[4] Which phrase might most suitably fill in the gap at [X]?

1. With everyone fast-tracking their kids,
2. Since everyone wants to fast-track other kids,
3. Though others fast-track themselves,
4. So that everyone could fast-track their kids,

[7] What does the underlined sentence mean?

1. Immediately thereafter, I worried that I had made a mistake.
2. On reflection, I decided to follow my first instinct.
3. All of a sudden, I felt bad that I had made the call.
4. I should not have made the call to prevent my feelings of guilt.

[20] Which of the following sentences could be used to sum up the ideas in the underlined phrase?

1. Our toys all take such along time to play with!
2. They might be numerous, but none of our toys are structured!
3. We might have a lot of toys, but we have no time to play with them!
4. We have so many toys that we have no free time left!

[23] Why does the author use the punctuation marks (" ") around the underlined words at?

1. Nineteenth-century authors always used such marks around these words.
2. The author wants to explain the idea behind the words.
3. The author doubts that the phrase is appropriate.
4. The author wants to stress that childhood is respectable.

[25] According to the last paragraph, most parents send responses to the author because

1. they are disappointed to know there are no efficient ways to alter their children's stress.

2. they are lamenting their teenagers' rushed lives.
3. they agree with the author about their advice on slowing their children's lives.
4. they appreciate how the author's advice has slowed their children's lives.

[26] Which of the following would make the most appropriate title for this essay?

1. The Most Efficient Way of Raising Children
2. Raising Children in an Unhurried Manner
3. Freedom in Child Education
4. Progress in Rushing Children