ЧИТАННЯ
11 клас
Text 1

Read the text and decide whether the statements are TRUE or FALSE.

The Attention Economy: Who Owns Your Time?

In the digital world, attention has become a valuable resource. Every notification, recommendation, and headline competes for it. Although users rarely pay directly for many online services, they contribute something equally valuable: their time and mental engagement. This has created the *attention economy*, in which companies compete to capture and retain people's attention for as long as possible.

The business model behind many digital platforms is relatively straightforward: the longer users remain online, the more advertisements they see and the more information companies can collect about their behavior. Algorithms analyze browsing histories, preferences, and reactions to predict what will keep people engaged. As a result, the content presented is not necessarily the most informative or reliable, but often the most likely to provoke a response. Emotionally charged videos and sensational headlines may attract more attention than carefully researched explanations.

Platforms also use features such as infinite scrolling and automatic video playback to remove natural stopping points. Unlike traditional media, which usually have identifiable beginnings and endings, these services encourage continuous consumption. Each new item promises something interesting or surprising, making it difficult to stop even when users have already spent more time online than intended. Frequent interruptions can also undermine concentration. Constantly switching between studying, messaging, and checking updates may create the impression of multitasking, but the brain actually shifts rapidly between activities, making sustained thinking more difficult.

Nevertheless, blaming technology itself would be simplistic. Digital platforms provide access to education, professional opportunities, and communities that might otherwise be difficult to reach. The problem lies largely in the commercial incentives shaping their design and use. This raises an important ethical question: who should

protect people's attention? Although self-discipline matters, individuals are not on equal terms with companies employing specialists to influence their behavior. Greater transparency, more responsible design, and stronger digital education could help users make more informed choices.

One way to respond to these challenges is to become more aware of how digital habits are formed. Users can, for example, turn off nonessential notifications, set limits on particular applications, or choose specific times to check messages. Such measures may help people regain some control over their daily routines, but they are not a complete solution. Personal strategies are most effective when supported by platforms that respect users' time and make it easier to make conscious choices.

Ultimately, attention is closely connected to our ability to think independently and decide what deserves our time. The challenge is not to reject technology, but to use it without surrendering control over our priorities. In an economy built around capturing attention, the most important skill is learning to give it deliberately.

Statements	**TRUE**	**FALSE**
1. The longer users remain on digital platforms, the more advertisements they see and the more information companies can collect about their behavior.		
2. The text suggests that emotionally charged content may attract more attention than carefully researched explanations.		
3. The author suggests that infinite scrolling makes it easier for users to recognise when they have spent enough time online.		
4. The text argues that frequently switching between different activities may create an illusion of multitasking while making sustained concentration more difficult.		
5. The author believes that individuals alone should be held responsible for managing their attention, regardless of how digital platforms are designed.		

Text 2

Read the text and choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D).

The Myth of Meritocracy

We are often told that success is the natural reward for talent, determination and hard work. The idea is deeply appealing: if everyone is judged according to their abilities and achievements, those who make the greatest effort will rise to the top. This belief is known as *meritocracy* – a system in which people advance on the basis of individual merit rather than family background, wealth or social connections. Yet the apparent fairness of this principle conceals a more complicated reality: people do not begin their lives with equal opportunities to demonstrate what they can achieve.

Consider two equally talented students with similar ambitions. One has access to experienced teachers, private tutoring, a quiet place to study and parents who can afford to support further education. The other must combine schoolwork with family responsibilities and has limited access to educational resources. Both may work equally hard, but their chances of achieving the same results are hardly identical. Their eventual achievements may appear to reflect differences in ability or effort, when they also reflect circumstances largely beyond their control.

This does not mean that personal effort is irrelevant or that achievement is simply determined by privilege. Persistence, discipline and individual decisions matter enormously. However, treating success as proof of superior ability – and failure as evidence of insufficient effort – ignores the influence of social and economic conditions. It can also lead to a particularly damaging assumption that those who struggle have somehow earned their disadvantages. In this way, the language of merit can turn inequality into something that appears justified.

The belief in meritocracy also influences how societies define fairness. Rewarding people for their achievements may seem reasonable, but the question of what counts as merit is less straightforward than it first appears. Are we rewarding intelligence, effort, creativity or simply the ability to perform well under particular conditions? A society that values academic qualifications above practical skills, for example, may overlook individuals whose abilities are equally valuable but less easily

measured. The criteria used to identify talent are not always neutral; they often reflect the priorities and expectations of those who design them.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is not to abandon the idea of merit, but to reconsider what genuine fairness requires. Recognising individual achievement should go hand in hand with ensuring that people have meaningful opportunities to develop their abilities. This involves addressing barriers to education, widening access to professional opportunities and questioning whether existing measures of success reward talent or merely reflect advantage. Hard work deserves recognition, but it should not be used to explain away every difference in people's circumstances. A fair society does not promise everyone the same outcome; it gives everyone a more realistic chance to succeed.

Questions

Choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D).

1. What is the main contradiction explored in the first paragraph?

A. Although meritocracy promises equal treatment, people do not have equal opportunities to demonstrate their abilities.

B. Although talent is important, modern societies increasingly reward wealth rather than professional achievement.

C. Although hard work is widely admired, people are becoming less willing to make sacrifices for success.

D. Although social background influences education, individual ability is impossible to measure objectively.

2. Why does the author introduce the example of the two students in the second paragraph?

A. To demonstrate that family support is more important than academic ability.

B. To illustrate how unequal circumstances can influence the outcomes of equally capable and motivated individuals.

C. To suggest that students with fewer resources are generally more determined to succeed.

D. To argue that educational achievement depends mainly on access to private tutoring.

3. What does the author suggest about the relationship between success and personal merit in the third paragraph?

A. Success is primarily determined by circumstances, making individual effort relatively unimportant.

B. People who fail usually lack the persistence required to overcome their disadvantages.

C. Judging people's abilities solely by their achievements can overlook the influence of circumstances beyond their control.

D. Social inequality is unavoidable because people differ in their willingness to work hard.

4. What is the purpose of questioning what counts as merit in the fourth paragraph?

A. To argue that academic qualifications should no longer influence professional opportunities.

B. To suggest that practical abilities are always more valuable than academic knowledge.

C. To demonstrate that individual talent cannot be assessed through any reliable criteria.

D. To show that the standards used to recognise achievement may favour certain abilities while overlooking others.

5. Which statement best expresses the author's conclusion?

A. A genuinely fair society should ensure identical outcomes regardless of individual effort or ability.

B. Merit should remain important, but fairness also requires people to have meaningful opportunities to develop their potential.

C. Social background should be the main consideration when distributing educational and professional opportunities.

D. The concept of meritocracy should be abandoned because individual achievement cannot be separated from privilege.

Vocabulary in Context

Choose the option (A, B, C or D) that is closest in meaning to the bold word or expression as it is used in the text.

6. Yet the apparent fairness of this principle **conceals** a more complicated reality…

A. exposes

B. distorts

C. masks

D. simplifies

7. This does not mean that personal effort is **irrelevant** or that achievement is simply determined by privilege.

A. immaterial

B. insufficient

C. inappropriate

D. unnecessary

8. It can also lead to a particularly **damaging** assumption that those who struggle have somehow earned their disadvantages.

A. controversial

B. detrimental

C. misleading

D. excessive

9. The criteria used to identify talent are not always **neutral**…

A. consistent

B. impartial

C. explicit

D. flexible

10. Perhaps the greatest challenge is not to **abandon** the idea of merit, but to reconsider what genuine fairness requires.

A. relinquish

B. reinforce

C. substantiate

D. consolidate