

**Select Readings, Second Edition**  
**Pre-Intermediate, IELTS™-style Final**

Read the passage and answer **Questions 1–15** which follow.

**My Peace Corps Experience**

by Jason Gilbert

**Section A**

*The beginning of the Peace Corps goes back to 1960, when then Senator John F. Kennedy challenged students to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. From that inspiration grew an organization in the United States federal government devoted to world peace and friendship. Some 200,000+ volunteers later, the Peace Corps is still going strong today.*

**Section B**

Like many new graduates, I left university full of hope for the future but with no real idea of what I wanted to do. My degree, with honors<sup>1</sup>, in English literature had not really prepared me for anything useful. I knew I wanted to make a difference in the world somehow, but I had no idea how to do that. That's when I found out about the Peace Corps.

I started my journey as a Peace Corps volunteer by learning as much about the job as possible. I read as much as I could about the experiences of previous volunteers. I knew I would have to give up two years of my life and receive very little pay. I knew it would be a lot of hard work, and that I would be away from my family and friends for a very long time. In short, I did not take my decision to apply for the Peace Corps lightly. Neither did my family.

Eventually, however, I won the support of my family, and I sent in all the paperwork needed for application. After several months and countless interviews, I finally received my assignment. I would be going to a small village located a few hours from the capital city of Colombo in Sri Lanka. Where? What? Sri Lanka? I had no idea. But I was about to find out.

**Section C**

Stepping off the plane in Colombo for my three-month training course, I was immediately hit by two things: the heat and the smell. Firstly, it was hot. I mean, *really* hot! Growing up in northern Maine had not prepared me for the intense heat of tropical Sri Lanka.

Doing my best to get used to the heat, I was suddenly hit by something else. Though I would learn to *love* that smell over the next two years, my first experience with the earthy, spicy, incredibly strong aroma of curry nearly overpowered me.

The sensory overload<sup>2</sup> did not stop there. The people, sounds, colors, and cars—it was all new to me. And I welcomed it with the excitement of a small child with a new toy.

**Section D**

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<sup>1</sup> **with honors** with very high grades

<sup>2</sup> **sensory overload** too many things entering the senses at once

After completing my training, I was sent to the place where I would be spending the next two years of my life. The village was small and badly in need of decent housing. Though the people of the village were poor, they offered their homes, hearts, and food as if I were part of their own family.

I was assigned to lead a small team of local people in building a new schoolhouse for the village. The work was hard, but when the building was standing proudly on the site, we all felt a sense of fulfillment. For the next year or so, I taught in that same schoolhouse. But I sometimes think I learned more from my students than they did from me.

Sometime during that period, I realized that all those things that had seemed strange or unusual to me no longer did. And before I knew it, I returned to the U.S. a different man. The Peace Corps had changed my life forever.

#### QUESTIONS 1–4

*The Reading Passage has 4 sections A–D.*

*Choose the best headings for sections A–D from the list of headings below.*

*Write the correct number i–viii in boxes 1–4 on your answer sheet.*

- i Arriving in Sri Lanka: sensory overload
- ii How I used my degree in English literature
- iii How I learned to teach
- iv Two hard but wonderful years
- v An introduction to the Peace Corps
- vi Sri Lanka experiences unusual heat
- vii How I got into the Peace Corps
- viii John F. Kennedy's greatest challenge

- 1 Section A
- 2 Section B
- 3 Section C
- 4 Section D

#### QUESTIONS 5–8

*Which FOUR of the following are true about Jason's experience in the Peace Corps?*

*Write the correct letters A–F on your answer sheet.*

- A Jason's family immediately agreed with his idea to enter the Peace Corps.
- B Jason had read information about other volunteers before joining the Peace Corps.
- C The village where Jason worked needed better housing when he arrived.
- D Jason had never experienced living in a tropical place before Sri Lanka.
- E Jason led a team of other American volunteers in Sri Lanka.
- F Although he didn't like it at first, during his stay, Jason got to love curry.

### QUESTIONS 9–12

Complete the summary of the reading. Choose ONE word from the Reading Passage for each blank.

After Jason graduated from university, he found out about the Peace Corps, and he decided he wanted to try it. It was not an easy **(9)**\_\_\_\_\_ for him or his family, but after several months and interviews, he received an assignment to go to Sri Lanka. Arriving in Sri Lanka, Jason knew right away that this place was incredibly different from his home in Maine. But he was filled with **(10)**\_\_\_\_\_ as he started his training. After his three-month training, Jason went to work in a small village, where he led a group of **(11)**\_\_\_\_\_ people. They built a schoolhouse, where Jason taught over the next two years. The experience gave him a great sense of **(12)**\_\_\_\_\_. After his assignment was over, Jason returned to the U.S. a different man.

### QUESTIONS 13–15

Choose the correct letter, **A**, **B**, **C** or **D**. Write your answers in boxes 13–15 on your answer sheet.

- 13** When Jason graduated from university, he
- A** knew he wanted to join the Peace Corps.
  - B** didn't know that he wanted to make a difference in the world.
  - C** worked as a teacher of English literature.
  - D** wasn't sure what kind of job he should look for.
- 14** Jason started his journey to the Peace Corps by
- A** going to several months of interviews.
  - B** getting his family to agree to let him send in his application.
  - C** learning as much as he could about what the Peace Corps does.
  - D** saving up enough money to spend two years in Sri Lanka.
- 15** The villagers in Sri Lanka made Jason feel
- A** a sense of fulfillment.
  - B** as if he were part of their own family.
  - C** in need of decent housing.
  - D** poor but proud.