READING PASSAGE 3

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 27—40, which are based on Reading Passage 3 below.

Museums of fine art and their public

The fact that people go to the Louvre museum in Paris to see a reproduction anywhere leads us to question some assumptions about the role of museums of fine art in today's world

One of the most famous works of art in the world is Leonardo Da Vinci's Mona Lisa. Nearly everyone who goes to see the original will already be familiar with it from reproductions（ ）, but they accept that fine art is more rewardingly viewed in its original form.

However, if Mona Lisa was a famous novel, few people would bother to go to a museum to read the write's actual manuscript（ ） rather than a printed reproduction. This might be explained by the fact that the novel has evolved precisely（ ） because of technological developments that made it possible to print out huge numbers of texts, whereas oil paintings have always been produced as unique objects. In addition, it could be argued that the practice of interpreting（ ） or 'reading' each medium（ ） follows different conventions. With novels, the reader attends mainly to the meaning of words rather than the way they are printed on the page, whereas the 'reader' of a painting must attend just as closely to the material form of marks and shapes in the picture as to any ideas they may signify（）.

Yet it has always been possible to make very accurate facsimiles（ ） of pretty well any fine art work. The seven surviving versions of Mona Lisa bear witness to the fact that in the 16th century, artists seemed perfectly content to assign the reproduction of their creations to their workshop apprentices（ ） as regular 'bread and butter' work. And today the task of reproducing pictures is incomparably（ ） more simple and reliable, with reprographic techniques that allow the production of high-quality prints made exactly to the original scale（ ）, with duplication（ ） of the surface relief of the painting.

But despite an implicit（ ） recognition（ ） that the spread of good reproductions can be culturally valuable, museums continue to promote the special status of original work .

Unfortunately, this seems to place severe limitations on the kind of experience offered to visitors.

One limitation is related to the way the museum presents its exhibits. As repositories of unique historical objects , art museums are often called ‘treasure houses’. We are reminded of this even before we view a collection by the presence of security guards, attendants, ropes and display cases to keep us away from the exhibits. In many cases, the architectural style of the building further reinforces（ ） that notion. In addition, a major collection like that of London’s National Gallery is housed in numerous（ ） rooms, each with dozens of works, any one of which is likely to be worth more than all the average visitor possesses（ ）.In a society that judges the personal status （）of the individual so much by their material worth, it is therefore difficult not to be impressed by one’s own relative ‘worthlessness’ in such an environment.

Furthermore, consideration of the ‘value’ of the original work in its treasure house setting impresses upon the viewer that, since these works were originally produced, they have been assigned a huge monetary（ ） value by some person or institution more powerful than themselves. Evidently（ ）, nothing the viewer thinks about the work is going to alter that value, and so today’s viewer is deterred（ ） from trying to extend that spontaneous（ ）,immediate（ ）,self-reliant （ ） kind of reading which would originally have met the work.

The visitor may then be struck by（ ） the strangeness of seeing such diverse paintings, drawings and sculptures brought together in an environment for which they were not originally created. This ‘displacement effect’ is further heightened by the sheer（ ） volume of exhibits. In the case of a major collection, there are probably more works on display than we could realistically（ ） view in weeks or even months.

This is particularly distressing（ ） because time seems to be a vital factor in the appreciation of all art forms. A fundamental difference between paintings and other art forms is that there is no prescribed（ ） time over which a painting is viewed. By contrast, the audience encounters（ ） an opera or a play over a specific time, which is the duration of the performance. Similarly, novels and poems are read in a prescribed temporal sequence, whereas a picture has no clear place at which to start viewing, or at which to finish. Thus art works themselves encourage us to view them superficially（ ）, without appreciating the richness of detail and labour that is involved.

Consequently, the dominant critical（ ） approach becomes that of the art historian, a specialised academic approach devoted to ‘discovering the meaning’ of art within the cultural context of its time. This is in perfect harmony with the museum’s function, since the approach is dedicated to seeking out and conserving ‘authentic’ （ ）, ‘original’ readings of the exhibits. Again, this seems to put paid to that spontaneous, participatory（ ） criticism which can be found in abundance （ ） in criticism of classic works of literature, but is absent from most art history.

The displays of art museums serve as a warning of what critical practices can emerge when spontaneous criticism is suppressed. The museum public, like any other audience, experience art more rewardingly when given the confidence to express their views. If appropriate works of fine art could be rendered（ ） permanently （ ） accessible to the public by means of high-fidelity （ ）reproductions, as literature and music already are, the public may feel somewhat less in awe（ ） of them. Unfortunately, that may be too much to ask from those who seek to maintain and control the art establishment（ ）.