**Reading Passage 1**

Why computer games are good for your child

**A**  The idea of bringing computer games in the classroom seems likely to provoke more detentions than learning. Bu t that’s slowly changing. To some, children may be playing Sim City to others, they are learning geography. To some, they are playing fantasy football; to others, they are learning maths and strategy skills. Gaming, whether online, on a console or on a computer, is thought by many teachers and parents to be the classic signs of a modern wasted youth. Where once it was snooker halls, now it’s Lara Croft and her legions of imitators as the classic signs of a life frittered away.

**B** But some educationalists beg to differ, saying that gaming extends and improves a whole range of skills and aptitudes and can benefit learning. Indeed, in a survey for the technology and investment company Besta Future lab earlier this year, a third of teachers are already using computer games and believe they improve skills. Out of the survey of 1000 teachers, 91% thought they developed motor and cognitive skills, and 60% believed they would develop thinking skills and acquire specific knowledge. We are faced with a gaming generation of children who spend their time and money on online and computer games. At the very least, this makes them technically literate – often more so than their teachers, who can feel embarrassed on occasion by a perceived lack of skills compared to the kids in front of them. A report by the University of Bristol found that teachers were happy using computers at home, but wouldn’t take the risk of getting it wrong in front of a class of pupils and, party as a result, some 30% of teachers surveyed failed to make good use of computers in the classroom. Bit there is a growing feeling that games can be useful learning tools and do, in fact, help children develop their mental agility and even built social skills (children prefer gaming in small groups). For one thing, as any adult who has tried them will tell you, the games themselves are actually hard, requiring a significant number of skills – hand- eye coordination, multi- tasking, strategy and management of complex variables, communication literacy and problem solving, on top of the computer skills necessary.

**C**  Specific games can be used for specific subjects – schools do use SimCity (the simulation planning and strategy game), either as special education versions or as the commercial product, to help to teach geography. Others prefer to use games developed specifically for learning purposes. Researchers at the technology developers Nersta Future lab have, for example, developed Astroversity, a space rescue mission that gets children to collaborate in order to rescue victims after a disaster in a space station. Even a football management game requires the ability to interrogate huge databases of information and make complex decisions. And usually without the child noticing.

**D** And that can be the beauty of games in the classroom – the problem of motivating students can disappear when they are confronted with familiar and enjoyable tasks. It becomes far less difficult to persuade them to work on their own and in their own time. Pride and satisfaction becomes drivers in motivating children to perform well against each other and provide a way for children to interact with each other (off- screen) with gaming leagues and the like. Of course, assessment of games- based coursework can be difficult ( not least if you insist that it isn’t the winning that matters) and the application of games to the national curriculum can be tenuous.

**E** But they can also be used as a springboard for class discussion on issues which are on the list of learning objectives. Games such as The Sims can prompt discussions on areas of citizenship and government and on areas of science such as pollution, energy and global warming. Complex strategic decisions in planning games are best discussed a s a class and creation of a SimCity, for example, involves building a well – thought out infrastructure. Should it fail, the software gives instant feedback (in the form of a newspaper) and pupils learn instantly how their thoughts have succeeded or not, and can therefore discuss it and rethink for next time. The trick is to sop the thought processes that see the games as an end in themselves and keep plugging the games back into the real world and the curriculum.

**F** Of course, trying to co-pt games into the classroom is not without problems. For one, the games are built to obsess users – getting them so absorbed that turning away is a real problem. Engagement can be great – up to a point. Getting children to turn back to mainstream educational methods can be difficult and introducing such a youth culture into the classroom can be an issue - pupils may take it less seriously and parents could be horrified. The selection of games too can be an issue. But gaming companies and schools are already working together on a project called Teaching with Games which will test the use of commercial computer games. The Sims and its follow – ups, Roller Coaster and Knights of Honour, and help develop lesson plans to support the use of these and other games. It is due to conclude at the end of this year. By then, we ,ay already be further on the road to blurring the edges between gaming and learning just a little more.

**Questions 1-5**

Reading Passage 1 has six paragraphs **A-F**.Which paragraph contains the following information?

**NB** You may use any letter more than once.

1 How playing computer games can make students work more willingly.

2 An example of coorporation between computer game bussinessesand education authorities

3 Some difficulties in using computer games schools

4 A description of traditonal attitudes towards computer games

5 The uses of some games specially designed for education purposes

**Questions 6-9**

Complete the summary of Paragraph B.Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from Paragraph B for each answer.

Computer games are thought to contribute positively to learning by developing children's 6.........................More than nine out of ten teachers questioned believed than children can increase their 7..........................skills through gaming.A fear of appearing less 8............................. than the children they teach prevents many teachers from using computers in the classroom.Because children like to interact with each other with computer games they can also inrease their 9...........................skills while they approach intricate problems with sophisticated tactics.

**Questions 10-13**

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Paragraphs **A and B** of the text?Write:

**TRUE**  if the statementagreewith the information in the text

**FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information in the text

**NOT GIVEN** if the statement no information about the statement

10 The image of computer games inchildren's learning in improving.

11 Parents are now ready to welcome computer games into the classroom

12 Few teachers think computer games willl teach children any particular information

13 Games provide an encouraging new way to test what children have learned