

IELTS Academic Reading Sample 53 - Is There Really a War on Drugs?

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1 – 13 which are based on Reading Passage 53.

Is There Really a War on Drugs?

A

In our contemporary society, the media constantly bombards us with horror stories about drugs like crack-cocaine. From them, and probably from no other source, we learn that crack is immediately addictive in every case, we learn that it causes corruption, crazed violence, and almost always leads to death. The government tells us that we are busy fighting a war on drugs and so it gives us various iconic models to despise and detest: we learn to stereotype inner-city minorities as being of drug-infested wastelands and we learn to "witchhunt" drug users within our own communities under the belief that they represent moral sin and pure evil. I believe that these titles and ideals are preposterous and based entirely upon unnecessary and even detrimental ideals promoted by the government to achieve purposes other than those they claim.

B

In Craig Renarman's and Harry Levine's article entitled "The Crack Attack: Politics and Media in America's Latest Drug Scare," the authors attempt to expose and to deal with some of the societal problems that have resulted from the over-exaggeration of crack-cocaine as an "epidemic problem" in our country. Without detracting attention away from the serious health risks for those few individuals who do use the drug, Renarman and Levine demonstrate how minimally detrimental the current "epidemic" actually is.

C

Early in the article, the authors summarize crack-cocaine's evolutionary history in the U.S. They specifically discuss how the crack-related deaths of two star-athletes which first called wide-spread attention to the problem during the mid 1980's. Since then, the government has reportedly used crack-cocaine as a political scapegoat for many of the nation's larger inner-city problems. Thefts, violence, and even socioeconomic depression have been blamed on crack. They assert that the government has invested considerably in studies whose results could be used to wage the constant "war on drugs" while to politicians, that war has amounted to nothing more than a perceptual war on poverty and urban crime.

D

Since politicians have had little else of marketable interest to debate over the years, this aggressive attack on drugs has existed as one of their only colorful means by which to create debate, controversy, and campaign fuel. In other words, when balancing the budget and maintaining an effective foreign policy became too boring to handle, Reinarman and Levine assert that the "crack epidemic" became the focus of politicians with the

intent of luring public interest to their flashy anti-drug campaigns.

E

Finally, in addition to the media's excess attention on the 'war against drugs,' Reinerman and Levine make the point the constant coverage of crack in the news media has only been counterproductive to the alleged goals of any anti-drug program. With descriptions of the "crack high" that glorify it considerably-the politically-charged media campaigns to fight drugs have worked somewhat ironically as huge advertising campaigns for crack-increasing public awareness and stimulating the interests of venturesome junkies.

F

While Reinerman and Levine are rather adamant about their findings, they do maintain an overt respect for the reality that crack has had other causal factors and outcomes besides those described by them. Their main concern seems to be calling for a more realistic spotlight to be placed upon the problem- so that we can begin to deal with it as no more and no less than what should be.

G

The "war on drugs" is indeed based upon an exaggeration of facts. Although it is also evident that substances such as crack-cocaine may serve to pose great health risks to those that use them, there is not any widespread "epidemic" use of the drug nor any validity to the apparent myths that it causes such immediate devastation and is life-wrecking in every single case.

It is obvious that we do indeed need to maintain a greater and more focused emphasis on the important and more widespread problems in society. Important energies and well-needed monies are being diverted from them to fight in an almost-imaginary battle against a controlled substance. Conclusively, we should allow drugs like crack-cocaine receive their due attention as social problems, but let them receive no more than that!

Questions 1–4

Choose the appropriate letter A–D and write your answers in boxes 1–4 on your answer sheet.

1. From the media we learn that crack-cocaine ...

- A. gives us various iconic models to despise and detest.
- B. represents moral sin can evil.
- C. is addictive in every case, causes corruption and violence and almost always leads to death.
- D. bombards us with horror.

2. According to Craig Renarman and Harry Levine, ...

- A. crack-cocaine is an 'epidemic problem' in our country.
- B. crack-cocaine does not pose serious health risks for users.
- C. the current 'epidemic' is really very serious.
- D. the current 'epidemic' is not so serious despite the serious health risks for the few individual users.

3. Based on Paragraph C, we know that ...

- A. crack-cocaine became widely known as a problem since the mid -1980s.
- B. crack-cocaine has caused many problems –from thefts, violence to socio-economic depression.
- C. the government has invested little fighting the 'war on drugs'.
- D. drugs have led to political as well as social problems.

4. Politicians use the drug issue ...

- A. to attack the drug dealers at the market.
- B. to lure the public interest to their flashy anti-drug campaign.
- C. to balance the budget and maintain an effective foreign policy.
- D. to attack drug users only.

Questions 5–6

Complete the table below describing the causes and effects. Write your answers in boxes 5–6 on your answer sheet.

CAUSES	EFFECTS
<i>Example</i>	<i>Answer</i>
<i>crack-cocaine</i>	<i>corruption, violence and deaths</i>
media's excess attention on the 'war against drugs'5.....
Politically-charged media campaigns to fight drugs6.....

Questions 7–13

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading Passage 123?

In boxes 7-13 on your answer sheet write

YES if the statement agrees with the writer

NO if the statement does not agree with the writer.

NOT GIVEN if there is no information about this in the passage

7. In our contemporary society, people all over the world should launch a war on drugs.
8. Drug users within our own communities represent moral sin and pure evil.
9. The 'war on drugs' waged by the government is really a perceptual war on poverty and urban crimes.
10. Drug users may lead to poverty and divorce.
11. We should spend more money and maintain a more focused emphasis on the importance and more widespread problems in society rather than on an almost imaginary battle against drugs.
12. We should not pay too much attention to drug users, instead, we should fight against the drug dealers.
13. Drugs like crack-cocaine has received much more attention than is necessary.

Answer:

1. C
2. D
3. A
4. B
5. counterproductive to the alleged goals of any anti-drug program
6. increasing public awareness and stimulating the interests of venturous junkies
7. No
8. No
9. Yes
10. Not given
11. Yes
12. Not given
13. Yes

