Games: a Human History (C1)

A – Before you start
Answer the questions with a partner.
1. How many board games or card games can you name?
2. Which of them do you know how to play?
3. Are you good at them?
4. Have you ever played them online?
5. Do you think they could be played by a computer? Why (not)?

B – Listen and answer
Read these incomplete statements. Then listen (without reading) and complete them.
1. Bernard Suits defined playing games as "the voluntary attempt to overcome _____ _____."
2. Roeder's book examines checkers, _____, Go, backgammon, Scrabble, poker and _____.
3. According to Roeder, games are a form of _____ for skills that are useful in the real world.
4. Games are becoming increasingly important because people have more _____ _____.
5. Games have played an important role in the development of _____ _____.
6. In 1997, a computer named _____ _____ beat world chess champion Garry Kasparov.
7. With games like _____ and _____, it's still possible for humans to beat computers.
8. Roeder foresees the benefits of using the calculating power of machines along with the _____ and _____ of humans.

C – Read and answer
Read the article and answer the questions.
1. Why is Oliver Roeder's educational background relevant to the subject of his recent book?
2. What is the most obvious reason why people play games?
3. What skill do we develop through playing chess, according to Roeder?
4. How do games satisfy our desire to make decisions and have an impact?
5. Why did Bernard Suits think it would one day be possible for us to play games all day?
6. How was Deep Blue different from the AI projects of today?
7. How can humans use AI when playing games of chance?
8. What can't AlphaGo do? Why?

D – Learn it! Use it!
Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense, or change from singular to plural.)
1. There are no decent hotels near the port. We'll have to look for one _____.
2. When Alice began to _____ _____ quantum physics, she became really interested in it.
3. Long before 2020, scientists had _____ that one day a virus would cause a pandemic.
4. Julie's parents questioned the _____ of her decision to use all her savings to open a café.
5. We didn't have a view of the sea from the cottage because it was _____ by the trees.
6. The two _____ with this keyboard are that it's small and the keys aren't very responsive.

E – Ready for the C1 ADVANCED English Test? (Reading and Use of English, Part 3)
Use the word in brackets to form a word that fits in the space given.
1. People have used games to relate to each other _____ (THROUGH) history.
2. In his book, Oliver Roeder looks at some of the world's most _____ (ENDURE) games.
3. He observes that in the game of poker we use hidden information and _____ (DECEIVE).
4. Games give us decision-making opportunities that we wouldn't _____ (OTHER) have.
5. AI is good at games in which the best moves are a mathematical _____ (CERTAIN).
6. Even if machines play better than humans, it's still _____ (ENJOY) to play against them.
7. As AI conquers new games, the response is anger, _____ (DENY), but then acceptance.
8. Roeder describes the calculating power of machines as raw and _____ (EMOTION).

F – Write about it
Write about a traditional board or card game that's popular in your country. Mention:
- what kind of game it is;
- when it originated;
- how many people can play it;
- what the aim of the game is;
- whether it can be played online;
- why you think it would/wouldn't be fun to play against a computer in this game.

Answers

B – Listen and answer

1. unnecessary obstacles   2. chess – bridge   3. practice   4. leisure time   5. artificial intelligence.   6. Deep Blue   7. poker – backgammon   8. wisdom – intuition

C – Read and answer

1. He studied artificial intelligence as well as game theory.   2. They are fun.   3. We develop the skill of planning ahead.   4. They put us in positions that we might not have access to in our real lives; for example, the role of a general leading an army into battle.   5. He predicted a world in which all our material needs are met by machines.   6. Deep Blue could only play chess, whereas the AI projects of today use neural networks that are modelled after the human brain, so they can be used in other more important fields.   7. They can use it to learn how to play more efficiently and boost their chances.   8. It can't teach others because it can't explain why it's doing certain things.

D – Learn it! Use it!

1. elsewhere   2. delve into   3. foreseen   4. wisdom   5. hidden   6. issues

E – Ready for the C1 ADVANCED English Test?

1. throughout   2. enduring   3. deception (*deceit* is also possible, but it has a very negative connotation, as it suggests malevolence)   4. otherwise   5. certainty   6. enjoyable   7. denial   8. emotionless