READING COMPREHENSION

The Human Calculator

Best-selling author, educator and maths genius Scott Flansburg has an absolutely amazing ability in maths. He has been teaching it for most of his adult life and has inspired many young people to enjoy the subject. He has been nicknamed 'The Human Calculator' as he can calculate any mathematical equation in his head faster than a calculator. What makes this achievement even more astounding is the wide range of calculations which he can perform, seemingly effortlessly – subtraction, division, addition, multiplication, square roots – all in his head almost instantly with the accuracy of a calculator. Now that is ultimate brain power!

In 2001, he took on his first Guinness Book of World Records challenge, of which he still holds the record. He had to keep adding the same number, chosen at random, to itself more times in 15 seconds than someone could do with a calculator. He passed the test and the Guinness Book of World Records listed him as the 'Fastest Human Calculator' both in 2001 and in 2003, when he broke the record again.

American-born Scott has been fascinated by numbers ever since he was a child. He was nine years old when he first discovered his mental calculation abilities. He had been able to solve his teacher's questions without needing to write down the calculations.

He began noticing different patterns with numbers, which then helped him make links in his brain and subsequently make calculations quicker.

Scott has appeared on many TV programmes such as an American show called *Stan Lee's Superhumans*, where he featured as 'The Human Calculator'. During the show, they analysed his brain activity and, interestingly, discovered that while Scott was doing complex maths problems he in fact used a different part of his brain, something unknown before.

Scott also uses his talent to not only entertain but also to educate people. He set out to show others that they already have the ability to perform difficult maths problems without a calculator. Scott aims to boost young people's confidence and self-esteem with maths, believing that there are many effective strategies you can use to be good at maths. He says that many children find maths boring, and when they encounter a challenge, they just give up. However, Scott believes that children just need to find a strategy to process the information in a way that works best for them. Maths is highly personal, and if you find your own strategy, you might find it rewarding, stimulating and fun.

a. What is the general idea of the article?

A It's mostly about getting better at using calculators.
B It's mostly about how you can improve at Maths.
C It's mostly about an astonishing mathematical ability.
D It's mostly about world records.

b. Choose the best answer according to the article

1 Scott Flansburg can ...
  A estimate the answers to maths equations extremely quickly.
  B use a calculator to solve any maths equation.
  C do complex maths calculations without a calculator.
  D teach maths to anyone.

2 When Flansburg was a child ...
  A he realized he was smarter than his teachers.
  B he found a way of doing calculations mentally.
  C he discovered how useful calculators are.
  D he noticed something changing in his brain.

3 Due to his amazing skill, Flansburg has ...
  A been on TV to entertain people with his ability.
  B broken a Guinness World Record.
  C taught others how to be better at maths.
  D all of the above.

4 Flansburg believes ...
  A everyone should use a calculator.
  B he's the only one who can calculate quickly.
  C that maths has always been taught badly.
  D anyone can be good at maths.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Listen to the interview about the adventurer Helen Thayer. Choose the correct answer.

1- Why did Helen want to become an adventurer?
   a. Because she saw it in the movies.
   b. Because she went on expeditions with her parents.
   c. Because she was inspired by her first climbing experience.

2- How did she decide to travel solo to the North Pole?
   a. It was a bet with a friend.
   b. She liked the idea and took two years to plan the journey.
   c. She had always wanted to travel to the North Pole.

3- Why was she advised against travelling there alone?
   a. To avoid the danger of polar bears.
   b. To avoid feeling lonely.
   c. To avoid being alone in case of an emergency.

4- What distance did she cover on her journey?
   a. 317 miles on foot
   b. 370 miles on foot
   c. 670 miles on foot

5- What characteristics of the personalities of adventurers are mentioned? Tick the ones you hear:
   They are highly motivated
   They need to have an inquisitive nature
   They don't believe in routines
   They need to be able to expect the unexpected
   They believe in meticulous preparation
   They need to be able to cope with mental challenges
   They know the importance of committing to a goal despite the setbacks
   They are always fit