

SECTION 3

STEPHANIE: Hello, Trevor.

TREVOR: Hello, Stephanie. You said you wanted to talk about the course I'm taking on literature for children.

STEPHANIE: That's right. I'm thinking of doing it next year, but I'd like to find out more about it first.

TREVOR: OK, well, as you probably know, it's a one-year course. It's divided into six modules, and you ⁽¹⁾ take all of them. One of the most interesting ones, for me, at least, was about the purpose of children's literature.

STEPHANIE: You mean, whether it should just entertain children or should be educational, as well.

TREVOR: Right, and whether the teaching should be factual – giving them information about the world – ⁽²⁾, teaching them values. What's fascinating is that the writer isn't necessarily ⁽³⁾ of the message they're conveying. For instance, a story might show a child who has a problem as a result of not doing what an adult has told them to do, implying that children should always ⁽⁴⁾ adults.

Q21

STEPHANIE: I see what you mean.

TREVOR: That module made me realise how important stories are – they can have a significant effect on children as they ⁽⁵⁾. Actually, it inspired me to have a go at it myself, just for my own interest. I know I can't compete with the really popular stories, like the Harry Potter books – they're very good, and even young kids like my seven-year-old niece love reading them.

Q22

STEPHANIE: Mm. I'm very interested in ⁽⁶⁾ in stories. Is that covered in the course?

TREVOR: Yes, there's a module on pictures, and how they're sometimes central to the story.

STEPHANIE: That's good. I remember some frightening ones I saw as a child and I can still see them ⁽⁷⁾ in my mind, years later! Pictures can be so powerful, just as powerful as words. I've always enjoyed drawing, so that's the field I want to go into when I finish the course. I bet that module will be really helpful.

Q23

TREVOR: I'm sure it will. We also studied comics in that module, but I'm ⁽⁸⁾ of their value, not compared with books. One of the great things about words is that you use your ⁽⁹⁾, but with a comic you don't have to.

STEPHANIE: But children are so used to ⁽¹⁰⁾ – on TV, video games, and so on. There are plenty of kids who wouldn't even try to read a book, so I think comics can serve a really useful purpose.

Q24

TREVOR: You mean, it's ⁽¹¹⁾ to read a comic than not to read at all? Yes, I suppose you're right. I just think it's sad when children don't read books.

STEPHANIE: What about books for girls and books for boys? Does the course go into that?

TREVOR: Yes, there's a module on it. For years, lots of stories, in English, at least, ⁽¹²⁾ that boys went out and did adventurous things and girls stayed at home and played with dolls. I was amazed how many books were ⁽¹³⁾ at just one sex or the other. Of course this reflects society as it is when the books are written.

Q25

STEPHANIE: That's true. So it sounds as though you think it's a good course.

TREVOR: Definitely.

TREVOR: Have you been reading lots of children's stories, to help you decide whether to take the course?

STEPHANIE: Yeah. I've gone as far back as the late seventeenth century, though I know there were earlier children's stories.

TREVOR: So does that mean you've read Perrault's fairy tales? *Cinderella*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and so on.

STEPHANIE: Yes. They ⁽¹⁴⁾ important, because no stories of that type had been written before, these were the first. Then there's *The Swiss Family Robinson*. Q26

TREVOR: I haven't read that.

STEPHANIE: The English name makes it sound ⁽¹⁵⁾ Robinson is the family's surname, but a more accurate translation would be *The Swiss Robinsons*, because it's about a Swiss family who are shipwrecked, like Robinson Crusoe in the novel of a century earlier. Q27

TREVOR: Well I never knew that!

STEPHANIE: Have you read Hoffmann's *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*?

TREVOR: Wasn't that the ⁽¹⁶⁾ for Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker*? Q28

STEPHANIE: That's right. It has some quite bizarre elements.

TREVOR: I hope you've read Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*. It's probably my ⁽¹⁷⁾ children's story of all time.

STEPHANIE: Mine too! And it's so surprising, because Wilde is best known for his plays, and most of them are very witty, but *The Happy Prince* is really ⁽¹⁸⁾ I struggled with Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* – three long books, and I gave up after one. Q29

TREVOR: It's extremely popular, though.

STEPHANIE: Yeah, but whereas something like *The Happy Prince* just carried me along with it, *The Lord of the Rings* took ⁽¹⁹⁾ than I was prepared to give it.

TREVOR: I didn't find that – I love it.

STEPHANIE: Another one I've read is *War Horse*.

TREVOR: Oh yes. It's about the First World War, isn't it? ⁽²⁰⁾ what you'd expect for a children's story. Q30

STEPHANIE: Exactly, but it's been very successful. Have you read any ...