

Reading and Use of English Part 5

You are going to read an extract from a novel. For questions 1–6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Falcon Park was a typical English suburban road, some fifty years old. The individuality of the properties had increased over the years as successive owners had remodelled and added to their homes. Garages had been converted into kitchen extensions and lawns had become parking spaces while adventurous gardeners had experimented with rocks and olive trees or palm trees. About halfway along the southern side of the road was number 18. It was a detached house, double-fronted. The paintwork was in good order although it was not fresh. The concrete driveway was scarred with cracks and oil stains, and the space for parking had been extended with gravel. A yew hedge straggled across in front of the gravelled area. The curtains were firmly closed and the windows too. The place had an unloved air, unlike the majority of its neighbours.

It was a quiet morning. About eleven o'clock, a car drew up outside number 18. It was a grey saloon, not very new, not very clean. There were two men in it. They had an air of determination about them, with a hint of aggression. They could have been debt-collectors. The driver got out and walked to the front door. He rang the bell. It echoed and re-echoed inside the house. No one opened the door. The air was still and the house seemed deserted. The man took out his phone and called a number. He listened, then turned away from the house, went back to the car and drove away.

Around midday the sky clouded over and a nippy little wind started. The children who had been playing a fairly unenthusiastic game of football around various parked cars therefore decided at that point to take themselves off to see if the weekend sport had begun on television.

The street was almost empty when a large dark green van parked outside number 18 and three men in matching fleeces got out. The tallest of them approached a woman working in the garden of number 20 and asked her if she had a water meter.

'We've had a report that there may be a leak round here,' he explained.

line 26 The woman at number 20 was no doubt mindful of a crime prevention circular she had received very recently and said that she would expect them to know whether she had a water meter if they were genuine employees of the water company. The tall man from the van showed a card to the sceptical woman, which seemed to satisfy her. She went into her house and left them to it. The three men busied themselves in the driveway of number 18. They raised a manhole cover, then one man got a toolbox from the van, went round the side of the house and into the back garden. After a few minutes the front door opened and he appeared at it, signalling to his colleagues. The tall man closed the manhole cover, took another toolbox from the van and went to the doorstep. He glanced around, then he also entered the house, leaving the front door ajar. The third man reversed the van into the driveway.

line 33 Suddenly, the two men came running out of the house and scrambled into the van as it accelerated out of the drive and disappeared up the road, narrowly missing a teenager who was sauntering across it. Ten minutes later, a police car turned sharply into Falcon Park and drew to a halt outside number 18. Two uniformed officers got out and entered the house. Someone had forced the door on a locked cupboard in the study and the police found the contents scattered on the floor and in the kitchen at the end of the hall the frosted glass in the back door had been neatly removed and placed under a bush.

EXERCISE PRACTICE

- 1 Most of the houses in Falcon Park
 - A were almost identical.
 - B had large gardens.
 - C were well looked after.
 - D belonged to large families.
- 2 The writer suggests that the driver of the grey car
 - A had visited number 18 before.
 - B might threaten the residents in some way.
 - C had been invited to call by the owner.
 - D was upset when no one answered the door.

- 3 The children decided to go indoors because
- A there was a change in the weather.
 - B there were too many cars in the road.
 - C they had finished their game of football.
 - D they were missing the sport on television.
- 4 What made the woman at number 20 suspicious?
- A She had heard a news report about thieves.
 - B She didn't like the way the tall man spoke to her.
 - C She was surprised to be asked about her water meter.
 - D She knew nothing about a leak in the area.
- 5 What does 'it' in line 26 refer to?
- A the tall man's card
 - B the driveway of number 18
 - C the house next door
 - D the work they had to do

- 6 The word 'scrambled' is used in line 33 to emphasise the fact that the men were
- A trying not to make a noise.
 - B in a great hurry.
 - C out of condition.
 - D being chased by somebody.

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