

Reading and Use of English Part 5

1 You are going to read a magazine article about Irish folk dancing. For questions 1–6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

- 1 What did the stage show *Riverdance* achieve?
 - A It showed Irish competition dancing at its best.
 - B It demonstrated how complicated Irish dancing is.
 - C It presented traditional dances from all over the world.
 - D It introduced Irish dancing to an international audience.
- 2 Why do some individual dresses cost so much money?
 - A They are made of very heavy material.
 - B The pattern of each dress is different from every other.
 - C They are made of very expensive material.
 - D They are created by top designers.
- 3 What do we find out about the competition judges?
 - A They are looking for perfection.
 - B They are sympathetic if a dancer makes a mistake.
 - C They only watch one dancer at a time.
 - D They pay great attention to all the dancers.
- 4 How does the writer compare Irish dancing with other sports?
 - A She thinks it is more competitive than other sports.
 - B She thinks performance matters less than in many other sports.
 - C She thinks experience is more important than in other sports.
 - D She thinks there is more pressure on the participants than in other sports.
- 5 What is important about Irish dancing to the dancers themselves?
 - A the honour of winning competitions
 - B their beautifully designed costumes
 - C working hard and making good friends
 - D the fact that they are representing their country
- 6 What do people appreciate most about dance competitions?
 - A the uniqueness of the dancers' costumes
 - B the teamwork shown by groups of dancers
 - C the fact that the dancers look beautiful
 - D the fact that the performers are talented athletes

Judging by



1 Traditional Irish folk dancing, which is well known for its colourful costumes and elaborate steps, has become very glamorous since the stage show *Riverdance* made it recognizable all over the world. What many people do not know about, however, is competition dancing and the importance of appearance in competitions. Appearance, which can include costume, make-up, shoes and posture, can make up 40–50% of the dancer's total score.

Solo competition dresses often run to thousands of dollars because of the intricately embroidered designs which are unique to each dress. The older and more experienced a dancer is, the heavier her make-up and the more elaborate her dress. Dresses, shoes and make-up are all marks of status.

Dancers begin preparing for competitions up to a week in advance by applying fake tan to their legs. Then, for almost an hour and a half before performing, they perfect themselves – applying make-up, attaching wigs, and gluing their socks to their legs to prevent them from falling down. It seems incredible that the couple of hours a dancer spends preparing for a competition are almost equal in points to the months, or even years, that she spends perfecting and memorizing complicated steps.

In competition, dancers will perform different steps in a line of a dozen or more dancers. A judge will watch several dancers at once, but if the judge perceives a single imperfection in the dancer's appearance or in her performance, he will move on to watch a better dancer. If a dancer cannot catch and hold the attention of the judge, she has no chance of winning a medal or even a place.

appearances



The pressure this inspires can affect a dancer negatively because she is consequently more worried about what people think of her, instead of just doing her best. By emphasizing costume and appearance generally, competitive Irish dance has become part of the cut-throat show business industry. Irish dance instructors often give this advice: 'Whatever happens, don't cry; it will ruin your make-up.' Pressure to perform is a key element in any sport, and is often a positive factor in an athlete's overall experience. In modern-day competitive Irish dance, however, the pressure of appearance can have a very negative impact on a dancer's career.

Nonetheless, when asked what Irish dancing means to them, most dancers will answer 'close friends and hard work'. Though almost half of a dancer's score is determined by her appearance, the aspects of the sport that don't receive points, such as sportsmanship, friendships, tradition, community and artistry, still remain of the greatest importance. These are the central ideas that are represented in Irish dance. In fact, the designs on a solo dress have their origins in these ideas: those Celtic designs were created to represent certain symbols, such as unity and friendship.

Because of the very visual nature of dance, external beauty, form, and expression obviously have a large place in the sport. And, although the sheer complexity of costume preparation may seem intimidating, in the drama of competitive Irish dance, it is legitimate. Visually, the true attraction of dance competition is the athleticism and skill of the dancers, both as individuals and as teams. In the end, the emphasis on appearance will only negatively affect the sport if it becomes more important than the other aspects of competitive Irish dance.

Grammar

1 Choose the correct form of the verb to complete these sentences.

- a Can I ring you back? *I drive / I'm driving* to work at the moment.
- b *You always tell / You're always telling* me what TV programmes I should watch. It's really annoying.
- c Do you know who this hat *belongs / is belonging* to?
- d Normally *I work / I'm working* at home, but this week *I travel / I'm travelling* all over the country.
- e *I don't usually eat / I'm not usually eating* meat, but this beef *tastes / is tasting* delicious.
- f Did I tell you that my sister *expects / is expecting* a baby?

2 Complete this email with the correct form of the verb in brackets. All verbs should be in either the present simple or the present continuous tense. Sometimes both tenses are possible.



Rome!

To: Ed

Subject: Rome!

Hi Ed,

I told you I was going to Rome, didn't I? Well, I'm actually here now. It's a fantastic city. The sun (a) _____ (shine) every day and it never (b) _____ (seem) to rain. The people are very friendly, and most of them (c) _____ (speak) English very well. I (d) _____ (try) to speak Italian, but I (e) _____ (know) I (f) _____ (make) lots of mistakes.

I (g) _____ (spend) a week here with some friends I'm at university with, and we (h) _____ (visit) as many of the ancient sites as we can. I'm sure everyone (i) _____ (know) what the Colosseum is like because they've seen it on TV or in films, but it (j) _____ (look) even more impressive in real life. It's a huge tourist attraction.

I'll give you a ring as soon as I (k) _____ (get) back. We (l) _____ (leave) here on Saturday morning and (m) _____ (arrive) back in London just after lunch.

Hope all's well.

Polly