

Multiple choice

You are going to read a magazine article about young people who have chosen to live with their parents again. For questions 1–6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Back to the nest

Spiralling property prices and the collapse of the labour market are forcing many young people (and some not so young) to move back in with their parents. But how are both generations coping with this living arrangement?

When stand-up comedian Nat Luurtsema hit the ripe old age of 28, she found herself living back in her parents' house in the Hertfordshire town of Watford. For six long months she languished amid the boy-band posters of her childhood bedroom, and traipsed round, like a reluctant toddler, after her mum in the supermarket. 'When I moved back I really felt I had messed up,' she says. 'I was so lonely I started blogging about it. That turned out to be my saving grace. Loads of people started getting in touch saying they were in the same position; I even had emails from high-flying corporate managers saying they were back with mum. The response was amazing. I stumbled upon a zeitgeist.' Luurtsema, it soon became clear, was part of a 'boomerang generation' – the group of young adults who have found themselves returning to the family nest.

There is something of a preoccupation with the living arrangements of these boomerangers right now. Currently one of the biggest shows in the States is *Girls*, written by 25-year-old Lena Dunham, about four twentysomethings adrift in a sea of unpaid internships and sofa-surfing in New York. Dunham, incidentally, wrote most of it while living at home with her own mum and dad. Then there's the cumbersomely titled *How to Live with your Parents for the Rest of your Life* – an entire sitcom built around the premise – which is currently being piloted on the ABC network. It's not surprising, then, that Luurtsema's blog was swiftly picked up by publishing company Hodder and turned into a book, entitled *Cuckoo in the Nest*. The figures speak for themselves. A US report published last month found that as many as three in ten are returning to the family nest – the highest proportion since the 1950s.

According to parenting expert Sue Atkins, the nature of the experience is dictated by how well a new set of boundaries is established. 'Given the chance, these young adults will revert back to being teenagers again,' she claims. In order to stop any regression, Atkins proposes that parents say 'This is a new phase of your life now and it's going to be different.' 'They have to sit down and have a conversation about them paying their way and what is acceptable and what is not. Then follow up on it and make sure they're not taken for a ride.'

It's interesting that, whatever the circumstances, everyone Nat talked to had a firm moving out date set – usually within a year-and-a-half – both for their own sanity and to avoid imposing on their parents. For Luurtsema, it was around the six-month mark that she knew her time in Watford had to come to an end. There's a moment in the book that says it all: she had just finished a gig and was hanging out backstage with comedians Richard Herring and Stephen Merchant when, absent-mindedly, she pulled from her bag a Tupperware box containing a packed lunch made by her mum. 'A heavy silence broke out, with undertones of pity,' she writes. Shortly after, she was gone.

Actress Gemma Swead, 27, moved back in with her parents after she'd been working in Los Angeles for three years. Having now been with them for a year and a half, she says 'There was no question about me going back. In fact, it was just kind of assumed I would. I am very, very close to both parents.' She concedes, however, that 'the fact that they want to know everything – not in a controlling way – means they can get a little bit on top of me. If I'm down, they will want to know if everything is all right. And they

repeat things just to make sure I've heard. So now, if one of them asks me the same question more than once I just pretend I didn't hear it. But at the same time I wouldn't change any of it. Right now I am totally focused on my career. I wouldn't be able to do what I'm trying to do without them.'

It does make you wonder what impact this might have in the future. Are we heading for

an era where adolescence stretches right through the twenties? Are these 'kids' going to be holding down jobs while still getting their shirts washed and meals cooked? Or will it create a new, modern family structure with stronger, more adult bonds between generations and a chance for some of your parents' terrible memories of you as a stropky teen to be extinguished?

- 1 When Nat Luurtsema began to blog about her experience of living at home, she
 - A felt humiliated by some of the comments she received.
 - B was relieved to discover that others were in a similar position.
 - C was surprised to be contacted by people she knew from work.
 - D felt reluctant about revealing all her personal details.
- 2 What does the writer suggest about Nat's Luurtsema's book in the second paragraph?
 - A The story it tells is more convincing than others on the same theme.
 - B The US public may be unreceptive to a British writer's experience.
 - C There are elements of it which come across as slightly clichéd.
 - D Its subject matter seems to be growing in popularity at the moment.
- 3 Parenting expert Sue Atkins maintains that adults who move back in with their parents
 - A tend to behave immaturely.
 - B need to set out their expectations.
 - C have to expect a degree of conflict.
 - D must recognize it is a temporary situation.
- 4 The writer refers to Nat's meeting with other comedians in order to
 - A make the point that children will always take parents for granted.
 - B show how adults' attitudes towards living with parents can vary.
 - C support the idea that the time spent living with parents must be limited.
 - D illustrate a particular benefit of returning briefly to the parental home.
- 5 What are we told about the actress Gemma Swead?
 - A She can be frustrated by the way that her parents express their concern.
 - B She resents the way her parents attempt to restrict her personal freedom.
 - C She intends to move out as soon as she has secured new employment.
 - D She had never expected to live with her parents again once she had left home.
- 6 The writer suggests that living arrangements in the future may mean that
 - A the next generation of adults has no sense of responsibility.
 - B the relationship between parents and adult children improves.
 - C the significance of the parental role will eventually diminish.
 - D adults will choose to delay having children of their own.