

Reading:

CAE Part 2

Gapped text

- 1  If you have a computer:
- how often do you use it and what for?
- If you don't have a computer:
- in what ways, if any, do you think your life would improve if you had one?
- 2 You are going to read an article about someone who does not have a computer. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs A–G the one which fits each gap (1–6). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

UNPLUGGED

Martin Newell explains why he shuns computers and remains a devotee of 'snail mail'.

I am an Internet. That is, I have no desire to be on the Internet. I am, of course, well aware of the Internet. Boy, am I aware of the Internet! The world is being overrun by people setting up websites, talking www-slash-dot.coms and worrying about updating and upgrading.

1

In fact, if I wanted to, I could sit in front of the computer, ordering whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted, 24 hours a day, and pay for it all electronically. But I don't have a computer. My friends, who look upon me as a 'technological oddity', find it hard to believe that I can still find work. I can't drive a car, won't fly and won't travel abroad any more. I don't even have a mobile phone.

2

As a congenital sender and receiver of snail mail, I can only remember about two occasions in twenty-odd years when a letter has gone astray. Exactly how many bits of info has your machinery swallowed this month, brave internaut? There is the access to information, though. While doing some research on a fairly esoteric subject earlier this year, I was told by a friend that 37 Internet pages existed upon the matter. He downloaded them for me.

3

As for the actual equipment itself, computers are so unattractive and bulky. Buying a laptop I can understand, because you can put it away. But all that dreadful grey-white office junk in your living space?

4

I almost upgraded to a computer once but decided that a piano would be more fun, so I spent the money having one fork-lifted up into my first-floor living room. While others are getting neck-ache and headaches and running up their phone bills, I've almost figured out how to play the first few bars of 'Return to Sender.'

5

It strikes me, though, that the main reason the Internet exists is not as a medium for spreading the joys of music, but more for the purpose of shopping and advertising. Now I know a little bit about shopping, because I get on my bicycle and go to the greengrocer's every once in a while.

6

But perhaps by doing things in this quaint, old-fashioned way, I'm missing out on some of the financial benefits of the whole computer culture. Companies are constantly undercutting each other. Full-page newspaper ads are currently offering me the whole kit and caboodle and telling me that I can get myself connected and surfing, all for under a thousand pounds. Wow! What a bargain. I could get an electric organ fork-lifted up here for that.

Seriously, though, there is, I suppose, an outside chance I will be forced onto the Internet one day. By that time, however, it will have devolved into one tiny little module about the size of an answering machine, cost about fifty quid, and be instant, as well as idiot-proof for people like me.

- A** There's also this marvellous little alternative to buying books on the Net: it's called my local bookshop. It has human beings working in it. Whenever I want a particular book, I just walk down there or telephone them, and they find it for me. Within a day or two I always have it.
- B** The information was largely superficial and in one or two cases, written by someone who I suspect was not entirely of this planet. In the end I went to the local reference library, where a reassuringly stern librarian plonked a huge pile of books on the table in front of me and said: 'That should be a start.' I had everything I needed within an hour.
- C** It has not escaped my attention that you can buy and sell houses on the Internet. You can book holidays, buy a pool-table and, so I hear, even get a divorce on the Internet. Were my dog to fall seriously ill, I could even consult a vet on the Internet. Or maybe he's called the Intervet.
- D** Friends like these will spend hours, days even, in front of their ugly state-of-the-art computers. As they listen to music being broadcast online from all four corners of the globe, they are subjected to a constant bombardment of advertisements encouraging them to buy, buy, buy: Well, bye bye, friends.
- E** While we're on the subject, I hear that we can now download our music from the Net. I have only recently completed the costly operation of replacing my vinyl record collection with CDs. I hope this does not mean that these, too, will soon be obsolete.
- F** My own word-processor, with VDU, keyboard and printer all in one unit, is much more compact. It can be quickly shoved in the cupboard when I'm not using it. In fact, even this is too ugly for me so I glued a piece of tapestry on the space between the keyboard and the screen to make it look more homely.
- G** 'But how will we get hold of you?' people ask, in a tone I usually associate with anguished parents pleading with a runaway daughter calling from a phone-box. Well, you can telephone me. Or fax me. Or you could try writing me a letter.

Reacting to the text

Do you agree with the writer's stance? Why/Why not?

Which of the following are best done with a computer and which in the 'quaint, old-fashioned way'? Give reasons for your opinions.

consulting reference works	shopping
writing letters	booking holidays
storing photographs	playing games

'By that time, however, it will have devolved into one tiny little module about the size of an answering machine...' How do you think computers will develop in the future?

