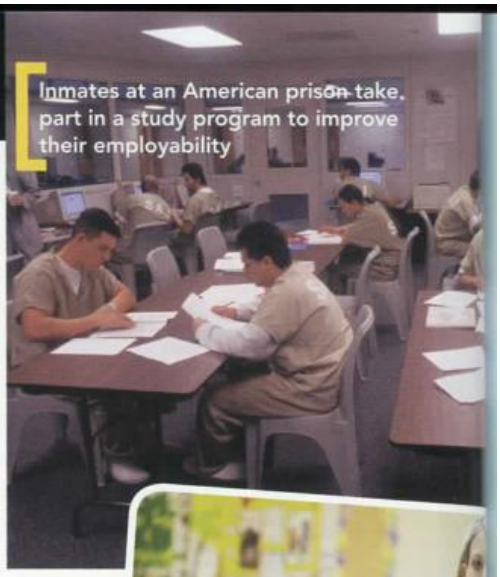
# 5 If At First You Don't Succeed...



Inmates at an American prison take part in a study program to improve their employability

## Reading

**A** What did you want to be when you were younger? Have you changed your mind since then? Why? Discuss with a partner.

**B** What do you think causes young people to join gangs? Look at the list below and discuss with a partner.

- neglected childhood
- the lure of power and money
- lack of support at school
- feelings of isolation
- few positive role models
- inadequate skills or qualifications
- high crime rate in the community
- violent films and song lyrics

**C** Read the text quickly. How do community and after-school programmes deter young people from joining gangs?



# Gangs: the new tribes

'What do you want to be when you grow up?' a class of fresh-faced 12-year-olds were asked upon commencing secondary school. Their new English teacher – Mrs Marcus – asked this question every year and it seemed to fire the imagination of every child. Usually there was a smattering of professions, vocations and trades, along with some interesting surprises. This lot did not disappoint. 1

It turns out they were a highly varied lot: doctor, nurse, lawyer, judge, electrician, archaeologist, businesswoman, vet, police officer, hairdresser, actor, shop assistant. There was trouble containing their enthusiasm, with some throwing out more than one idea. A few had non-specific ambitions, 'I don't know. I want to travel,' and 'I just want to go to university.' All of them had opinions, some stronger than others, but opinions nonetheless. 2

I'm particularly interested in the differences between that generation and the current one. 'Hopes and dreams,' she replies immediately. 'Whether your classmates achieved those things or not is irrelevant. The important thing is you had ideas about your future; you had aspirations. When I have asked that question in recent years, instead of setting their sights on becoming a scientist, a lawyer or an artist, the best some children could think of was going on the dole, being famous, or being the boss of a gang,' she says. 3

It is a vicious circle that becomes increasingly difficult to break. It was crucial for my peers and I that we knew people who worked and we could make decisions about our ambitions based on some knowledge. We had the benefit of seeing our parents, relatives and neighbours going to work, returning from work, talking about their jobs, or their time at university. These experiences informed our ideas, ambitions and, let's face it, our expectations, too. We wouldn't have dreamt of the alternative. After all, work and study were our means to get ahead and make our way in life. 3

This lies at the very core of a gang's appeal. The aimlessness of some youths' experience is replaced by the rigid system of rules, rituals, and codes of behaviour that members follow, and which gives them a purpose and adds much-needed structure to their lives. In many cases, the gang becomes a surrogate family, providing security, camaraderie and a sense of belonging. These powerful inducements exert a strange power over vulnerable teenagers. 5

I ask Margaret what it is that can drive such a change. 'I've known many young boys who have turned over a new leaf,' she says. 'The key is intervention at the grassroots level. Community programmes that keep kids off the streets and involve them in pro-social activities are great deterrents. Strong after-school programmes that meet children's needs for supervision are also successful in reducing attraction to gang-related activities. These cost money, though, and authorities are often not willing to spend,' she explains, 'and sadly, some kids fall through the cracks.' 6

What chance for rehabilitation do they have, I wonder, when they cling to their gangs even in these circumstances? Admittedly, the need for survival plays a role since those in prison rely on their fellow gang members for protection. After all, prison is no picnic and is possibly more dangerous an environment than the outside world. But even in here, there is hope. 7

'You can't make anyone succeed, but you can help them to see that success in life is possible outside of the narrow confines of the gang,' says Margaret. 'If we give young people opportunities to bring about a change in their circumstances, they can build a happy future.' Let's hope that the next time Margaret asks 'the question', there will be some scientists, entrepreneurs and plumbers in the group.



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**D** **Read the *Exam Close-up*. Then underline the linking and referencing expressions, and complete the *Exam Task* below.**

## Exam Task

You are going to read an extract from a magazine article. Seven paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs **A – H** the one which fits each gap (**1 – 7**). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

**A** Success, however, can be measured in a myriad of ways, and for those without traditional role models, gang culture becomes increasingly alluring as a way to make something of themselves. 'They're not inherently bad kids,' says Marcus, 'they just have no direction and no one to look up to. Were they to attach value to work and education, their whole outlook on life would change and they wouldn't need what gang membership provides.'

**B** Though there is no conclusive evidence, many critics of popular media believe exposure to violent films and song lyrics, particularly rap music, has a negative influence; glamorising gang life and encouraging at-risk youths to join gangs or to participate in gang-related crime as a means of gaining a sense of belonging and empowerment.

**C** Those who do join a gang inevitably end up in a downward spiral, losing any moral foundation they had and hurtling headlong into a life of violence and crime. And yet, even when they are placed in juvenile detention centres, or worse – in adult prisons – some maintain their allegiance to the gang and look upon their membership as a badge of honour; a mark of success, not failure.

**D** Thick and fast came the replies. 'Teacher,' said a bespectacled girl in the front row. Mrs Marcus smiled to herself. The prospective teachers always sat as close as possible to the board, eager and serious. 'Football player!' shouted a tall lad from the back, raising his arms in victory as though he'd just scored a winning goal against Argentina at the World Cup. Mrs Marcus knew he'd be a live wire in class. 'Prime minister,' said another, garnering a round of applause as well as ridicule from his classmates.

**E** How has it come to this? A recent report has found that children in some areas of the country have so little contact with working people that the concept of employment is almost foreign. They live in the so-called 'welfare ghettos' where more than half of the working-age population depends on out-of-work benefits. In many families, unemployment is intergenerational with grandparents and parents living on the dole.

**F** Thankfully, in many cases the lure is temporary. It becomes nothing more than a phase that plays to their fantasies of rebellion and desire for high drama, in part fueled by pop culture through music and films that glamorise thug life. In time, these wannabe gangsters find other interests and reject the values of the gang.

**G** Fast forward twenty years and Mrs Margaret Marcus is now teaching at an inner-city school in a large metropolis. Hoping to get some insight from this forty-year veteran of the education system, I'm interviewing her about the challenges faced by young people today. 'So you became a journalist instead of a teacher,' she says with a twinkle in her eye. Yes, I was that child in the specs long ago. Before getting down to business, we reminisce for a few moments about my classmates.

**H** There are many organisations that are working positively with young people in gangs, both inside and outside of detention, and helping them through some very difficult times in their lives. With this help they can stop their slide into crime and violence, and make the tough transition of evolving into productive, responsible and law abiding members of society.

**E** **Match expressions 1–6 from the text to meanings a–f.**

1 fire the imagination ☐
2 set your sights on something ☐
3 make your way in life ☐
4 turn over a new leaf ☐
5 fall through the cracks ☐
6 get down to business ☐

a be successful and make progress
b not be noticed or dealt with
c cause a strong emotion
d start talking about the subject to be discussed
e decide to achieve something
f start behaving in a better way

## Exam Close-up

**Linking & referencing expressions**

- Read all of the gapped text and think about what could logically follow each part without looking at the paragraph options.
- Look at the gapped text again and underline any linking and referencing expressions. Then do the same for the paragraphs options.
- Finally, compare the words you have underlined in the gapped text with those in the paragraphs and choose your paragraphs.

## Ideas Focus

- 'It's fine to celebrate success but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure.' Do you agree?
- Do you still have the same aspirations you held as a child? Why? / Why not?





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## Vocabulary

**A** **Circle the correct words. Then complete the sentences with the words below.**

adversity aspiration determination fulfillment
inspiration perseverance prevalence setback

1 Marty is a director who grew up on the mean / nasty / rude streets of New York City, and he draws _____ from that environment for his films.

2 Ryan always believed that his dogged _____ to succeed was due to the fact that he came from a broken / closed / single home.

3 Ruby's dream was to be a singer, but this _____ was because she was looking for a fast / quick / speedy track to celebrity, fame and fortune.

4 Dean had warm / high / rosy hopes for the future, despite considerable difficulties. He never gave up and, in the end, his _____ paid off.

5 This is a crude / raw / rough inner-city neighbourhood with high unemployment and the _____ of gangs.

6 Her future looked gritty / bleak / harsh, but she overcame _____ to become a successful entrepreneur.

7 It was tough to accept that his hopes were bashed / dashed / smashed, and that he would never witness the _____ of his dreams.

8 Although they suffered an initial _____ in their fundraising attempt, it wasn't enough to blunt / dampen / lessen their spirits.

**B** **Match the words 1–6 with the words a–f that are roughly opposite in meaning.**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | aptitude | a | anguish |
| 2 | backbone | b | attainment |
| 3 | failure | c | criticism |
| 4 | hope | d | ineptitude |
| 5 | initiative | e | irresolution |
| 6 | recognition | f | lethargy |

**C** **Complete the sentences with some of the words from B.**

1 The young assistant took the _____ of scheduling a meeting with the manager for her own six-month review.

2 His _____ in managing the finances of the family business led to its inevitable collapse.

3 The caste system of social stratification in India bars the lowest classes from the _____ of position or power.

4 With the phenomenal success of her fifth book, Veronica finally received the _____ she so richly deserved.

5 The athlete's joy on finishing the race first, turned to _____ when he was disqualified over an irregularity.

6 Brody's got no _____ . He needs to toughen up if he wants to succeed in the cut-throat world of politics.

7 Though Jules himself had little _____ for sport, he was able to recognise raw talent in others and became a successful sports agent.

8 Amelia couldn't summon the energy or the interest to leave the house. There was a definite air of _____ about her.



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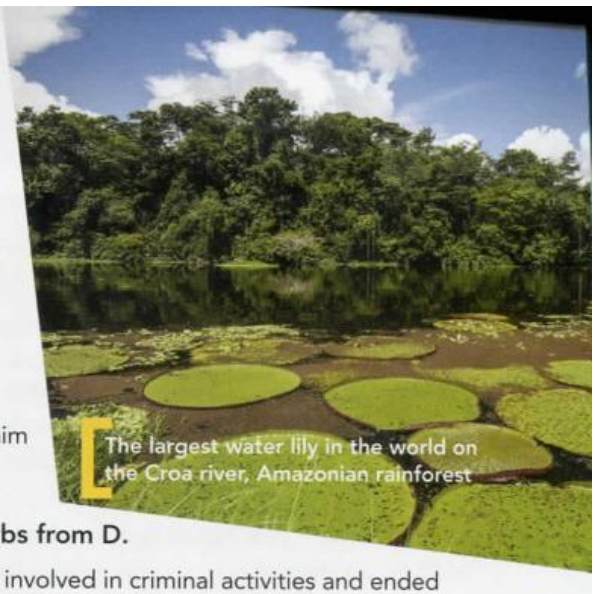
## Phrasal verbs

**D** **Match the phrasal verbs to their meanings.**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | think ahead | a | become friends with |
| 2 | leap at | b | become unwillingly involved |
| 3 | hold someone back | c | condemn to failure |
| 4 | fall in with | d | make a careless mistake |
| 5 | write off | e | stop from being successful |
| 6 | set out | f | make future plans |
| 7 | slip up | g | start an activity with a particular aim |
| 8 | get caught up in | h | accept enthusiastically |



The largest water lily in the world on the Croa river, Amazonian rainforest

**E** **Complete the sentences with the correct form of the phrasal verbs from D.**

1 Troy _____ a bad crowd from the neighbourhood, got involved in criminal activities and ended up in prison.
2 While investigating a story, the young journalist _____ something very dangerous.
3 Don't _____ just yet. Their first album wasn't a hit, but I have a feeling they're going to be huge.
4 The intern was let go because he _____ and sent the confidential documents to a rival company.
5 He had hopes and dreams, but remaining in the small country town of his birth _____ .
6 Forward planning is the key to success, so let's _____ to the new year and make some decisions.
7 Chris _____ with the aim of becoming the youngest ever person to win an Olympic gold medal.
8 Offered a place on the Amazon expedition, the young adventurer _____ the chance to see the rainforest.

## Collocations & Expressions

**F** **Complete the sentences with the verbs in the correct form.**

blow fall get go hold make pick pluck stand throw

1 The business failed, and all their time, effort and money _____ down the drain.
2 Shayna finally _____ up the courage to quit her job and travel the world.
3 'Keep going! Don't _____ in the towel!' shouted the coach to his players.
4 Lana is _____ a real go of it in London. She's found a great job and a flat.
5 If you're not committed to your craft, you _____ no chance of succeeding in film-making.
6 It's time you _____ your act together and stopped sitting around doing nothing.
7 The tennis player's performance in the final _____ well short of everyone's expectations.
8 Grant _____ his chances of getting into university by partying instead of studying.
9 Rescue crews don't _____ out much hope of finding the missing climbers.
10 After suffering a major setback, it's often very difficult to _____ up the pieces.

**G** **Match the expressions to their definitions.**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | put yourself down | a | people don't change |
| 2 | be sucked in by | b | say negative things about yourself |
| 3 | sort your life out | c | believe someone who is trying to trick you |
| 4 | turn over a new leaf | d | boast by saying overly positive things about yourself |
| 5 | big yourself up | e | change the way you generally behave (for the better) |
| 6 | a leopard doesn't change its spots | f | be proactive about making positive changes in your life |

## Ideas Focus

- 'If you fail at something, you should give up and do something else instead.' Do you agree? Why? / Why not?
- Do you think parents should put constant pressure on their kids to do well? Why? / Why not?





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**H** **Complete these sentences with the expressions from G in the correct form.**

put yourself down  be sucked in by  sort your life out
turn over a new leaf  big yourself up  a leopard doesn't change its spots

1 Apparently her brother has left the gang and is now a model citizen. He's _____ .
2 My poor old nan _____ a scam – she was told she'd won £8,000, but had to pay £1,000 to get access to the money, and of course the £8,000 never materialized!
3 It's no surprise he was promoted. He's always _____ and our boss believes it!
4 You haven't got a job, you're living with your parents, you don't have a boyfriend, and you've got loads of debts. You really need to _____ .
5 Did you hear that Tracy's in prison again? I think she tried to change, but I guess _____ .
6 Don't be depressed – you've done really well this year at school, so stop _____ .

## Prepositions

**I** **Circle the correct words.**

1 If you'd taken my advice then, in / on all likelihood you wouldn't be in trouble now.
2 By / In retrospect, it would have been better had we never started our own business.
3 He's made mistakes, but to / with his credit, he acknowledges they were his fault.
4 James is for / in awe of self-made millionaires and wants to emulate them
5 She bought a lottery ticket at / on impulse and was astounded when she won!
6 Don't worry. I'm sure good times are just around / past the corner for you.
7 The chef knew his reputation was for / at stake when he opened his second restaurant.

## Exam Close-up

**Dealing with words that have similar meanings**

- The four answer options are often words that have similar meanings. These can be discrete words or words that form part of an expression.
- Read the words before and after the gap to see whether they form part of an expression, and then see which option best completes the gap.
- You may have to read more of the sentence to understand the meaning required before you choose a discrete option.

**J** **Read the *Exam Close-up*. Then complete the *Exam Task* below.**

## Exam Task

For questions **1 – 8**, read the text below and decide which answer (**A**, **B**, **C** or **D**) best fits each gap.

### Cheating in sport

For athletes, the desire to win is of the **(1)** _____ importance. Sportsmen and women compete for the glory associated with being number one. But why do some athletes **(2)** _____ to cheating?

There are a variety of reasons. Some have a fear of failure. Others want a(n) **(3)** _____ playing field because they are convinced everyone else is cheating. In such cases, they feel they are merely **(4)** _____ the rules, not breaking them.

Then there's the financial motive when large sums of money and high-profile reputations are on the **(5)** _____. Lucrative sponsorship deals are offered to winners, not losers. Such deals are worth millions and athletes will go to great **(6)** _____ to secure them.

To prevent the problem from **(7)** _____, anti-doping agencies are carrying out more tests. The result is that a number of champion athletes have been exposed as drugs cheats and **(8)** _____ of their titles. It remains to be seen if this will be enough of a deterrent.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A absolute | B highest | C ultimate | D utmost |
| 2 | A apply | B resign | C resort | D aspire |
| 3 | A level | B even | C straight | D uniform |
| 4 | A shaping | B bending | C pulling | D twisting |
| 5 | A balance | B edge | C line | D limit |
| 6 | A lengths | B means | C methods | D pains |
| 7 | A expanding | B extending | C elevating | D escalating |
| 8 | A removed | B stripped | C erased | D separated |






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# 5 If At First You Don't Succeed...

## Listening

**A** **Look at the picture. What kind of list is a bucket list? What sort of things do people write on their lists? What would you write on yours?**

**B** **Read both sets of expressions. Match 1–6 with a–f based on their general meaning. Which expressions are more informal?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Don't knock it | ☐ | a She had time to write _____ . |
| 2 | You don't have to | ☐ | b She had to overcome her _____ new things. |
| 3 | It won't look like | ☐ | c You shouldn't criticise something before _____ . |
| 4 | I got over | ☐ | d It isn't necessary to _____ . |
| 5 | I got round to | ☐ | e Your list probably won't resemble _____ . |
| 6 | I had a go at | ☐ | f She tried making _____ for the first time. |

**C** 5.1 **Now listen to the recording and complete the sentences in B.**



**D** **Read the *Exam Close-up*. Then read the *Exam Task* below and think about what you might hear.**

**E** 5.2 **Now listen and complete the *Exam Task*.**

### Exam Close-up

**Paraphrasing**

- Spoken language tends to be less formal than written language, so the sentences you complete on the exam paper may be more formal than the English that you hear.
- The words you hear will never be exactly the same as the words in the question, so as you read the question, think of ways the idea could be expressed in other words.
- You should write the actual word or words you hear that complete the sentence, but avoid writing long, complicated answers.

### Exam Task

You will hear a blogger talking about her bucket list. For questions **1 – 6**, complete the sentences with a word or short phrase.

1 Emma has managed to overcome her _____ .
2 She says that normally she would do the most frightening activity _____ .
3 Just before she hit the ground she felt absolutely _____ .
4 Her next goal is to prepare to _____ .
5 She mentions that some activities combine self-improvement with _____ for charity.
6 Although she had always been meaning to do it, she says that she had never read a _____ before.
7 She says achieving things on your bucket list can lead to _____ .
8 She doesn't believe that items on a list are obligatory or that achievements should be a _____ .

**F** 5.3 **Listen again and check your answers.**



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