Passage 4 **Personality and appearance**

When Charles Darwin applied to be the "energetic young man" that Robert Fitzroy, the Beagle's captain, sought as his gentleman companion, he was almost let down by a woeful shortcoming that was as plain as the nose on his face. Fitzroy believed in physiognomy—the idea that you can tell a person's character from their appearance. As Darwin's daughter Henrietta later recalled, Fitzroy had "made up his mind that no man with such a nose could have energy". This was hardly the case. Fortunately, the rest of Darwin's visage compensated for his sluggardly proboscis: "His brow saved him."

The idea that a person's character can be glimpsed in their face dates back to the ancient Greeks. It was most famously popularised in the late 18th century by the Swiss poet Johann Lavater, whose ideas became a talking point in intellectual circles. In Darwin's day, they were more or less taken as given. It was only after the subject became associated with phrenology, which fell into disrepute in the late 19th century, that physiognomy was written off as pseudoscience.

First impressions are highly influential, despite the well-worn admonition not to judge a book by its cover. Within a tenth of a second of seeing an unfamiliar face we have already made a judgement about its owner's character—caring, trustworthy, aggressive, extrovert, competent and so on. Once that snap judgement has formed, it is surprisingly hard to budge. People also act on these snap judgements. Politicians with competent-looking faces have a greater chance of being elected, and CEOs who look dominant are more likely to run a profitable company. There is also a well- established "attractiveness halo". People seen as good-looking not only get the most valentines but are also judged to be more outgoing, socially competent, powerful, intelligent and healthy.

In 1966, psychologists at the University of Michigan asked 84 undergraduates who had never met before to rate each other on five personality traits, based entirely on appearance, as they sat for 15 minutes in silence. For three traits—extroversion, conscientiousness and openness—the observers' rapid judgements matched real personality scores significantly more often than chance. More recently, researchers have re-examined the link between appearance and personality, notably Anthony Little of the University of Stirling and David Perrett of the University of St Andrews, both in the UK. They pointed out that the Michigan studies were not tightly controlled for confounding factors. But when Little and Perrett re-ran the experiment using mugshots rather than live subjects, they also found a link between facial appearance and personality—though only for extroversion and conscientiousness. Little and Perrett claimed that they only found a correlation at the extremes of personality.

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading Passage? In boxes 1-5 on your answer sheet, write

YES if the statement agrees with the views of the writer
NO if the statement contradicts the views of the writer
NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to say that the writer thinks about this

1. Robert Fitzroy's first impression of Darwin was accurate.
2. The precise rules of "physiognomy" have remained unchanged since the 18th century.
3. The first impression of a person can be modified later with little effort.
4. People who appear capable are more likely to be chosen to a position of power.
5. It is unfair for good-looking people to be better treated in society.

LIVEWORKSHEETS