Read the article and decide which statement (A, B, C or D) is true according to the text. Write the letter of the correct answer in the box provided.

Can the largest clean-up in history save the ocean?

It began in the summer of 2011, off the coast of Greece. Boyan Slat, 16 at the time, was on a family vacation, scuba diving. The teen's mind had always worked like a series of gears snapping into place. He first built treehouses, then zip lines, then rockets. As the teen swam, he noticed plastic. The bags and floating bits seemed to even outnumber the fish. This problem struck him as one that should be solved. He thought, "Why don't we just clean this up?" When the high school student started researching the issue, he discovered the severity of the problem.

We currently inhabit what some scientists call the Age of Plastic. Every year, humans discharge roughly 8 million metric tons into the oceans, where fish, mammals and birds mistake it for food. So by the year 2050, Slat's anecdotal observation that there were more plastic bags than fish in the ocean will actually be true. The plastic is carried by currents and congregates in five revolving water systems, called gyres, in the major oceans, the most infamous being the huge Pacific Garbage Patch, half way between Hawaii and California.

Slat realized that cleaning up the trash using a vessel and a boat would not be very practical because the plastic moves around. Yet, he did not see it as an obstacle. "It's a solution. Why move through the oceans if the oceans can move through you? Let the rotating currents do their work," he said. Slat spent hundreds of hours researching the problem and thought he could resell the collected plastic, making the enterprise sustainable. He was, however, still just a teenager who could not do it alone. But then organizers of a local Ted Talk event approached him, and he did a Ted Talk about his project. The video had more than 2.5 million views.

Most scientists drop everything to talk to the press. They at once provide whatever bit of information a journalist may request. Not so for Boyan Slat. People on his team are not immediately available for interviews. And while Slat now has a PR team, a nice website and a media campaign, he does not enjoy giving interviews. He appears bored when, on the phone with a reporter, he retells the Ocean Cleanup's origins story. It is a tale he has repeated ever since his YouTube video went viral, netting him a degree of celebrity that does not seem to interest him. If he had a choice, he would be busy engineering.

For Slat, whose youthful appearance has been both beneficial and harmful, such dedication has been crucial. The media, long drawn to the boy-genius-saves-planet narrative, has praised his work. But in the early days of the project, environmentalists mentioned his age, implying a degree of naïveté. They said the project underestimated both the power of the ocean and its own potential to harm the environment. One activist called it a "fool's errand." In 2013, Slat disappeared. He gave up college and ignored social obligations. He declined more than 400 interview requests. Instead, he launched a crowdfunding campaign, securing $90,000 that he said he would use to answer his critics and prove, once and for all, whether his idea could be done.

Following years of study, and seven expeditions into the gyres, the project has started to solidify. The study found that a barrier that is 100 kilometres long would clean up 42 percent of all the plastic in the North Pacific gyre in 10 years. By 2020, Slat hopes they will have collected enough information to move much deeper into the ocean, beginning the clean-up in earnest with a 100-kilometer barrier between Hawaii and California, in the heart of the North Pacific gyre.

www.washingtonpost.com

LIVEWORKSHEETS

0. As a child, Boyan Slat was interested in

A ☐ *Greek culture.*
B ☑ *constructing things.*
C ☐ *marine life.*

50. Seeing plastic in the sea, Slat thought the problem

A ☐ was impossible to solve.
B ☐ needed to be dealt with.
C ☐ was difficult to research.

51. Slat's thought that plastic bags outnumber fish

A ☐ was true at the time.
B ☐ is true now.
C ☐ will be true in the future.

52. A gyre is a

A ☐ system of circulating ocean currents.
B ☐ garbage patch between Hawaii and California.
C ☐ garbage-free area in one of the oceans.

53. Slat understood that

A ☐ he should use a vessel and a boat for the clean-up.
B ☐ the fact that the plastic moves around could be helpful.
C ☐ it is a big problem that the plastic moves around.

54. For Slat, talking to the press is

A ☐ very important.
B ☐ not helpful.
C ☐ rather unpleasant.

55. Journalists have

A ☐ given Slat a lot of attention.
B ☐ criticised Slat's project.
C ☐ called Slat a fool.

56. In 2013, Slat

A ☐ gave 400 interviews.
B ☐ started college.
C ☐ focused on his project.

57. By 2020, Slat hopes to

A ☐ have cleaned up 42% of the plastic in the North Pacific gyre.
B ☐ have organised 7 expeditions to the North Pacific gyre.
C ☐ start cleaning up the North Pacific gyre.

LIVEWORKSHEETS