



La Mercè Festival – B2 English Reading Test

You are going to read a magazine article written by a boy who went to a festival called La Mercè in Spain. For questions 1-6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

La Mercè Festival by Adrian Jacobs

Last September, I attended the La Mercè festival in the city of Barcelona, Spain, with my family. I'd never been to the city before and was looking forward to spending a few days there. After checking in to our hotel, we wandered into the centre for our first look around the city I'd heard so much about. With the festival already in full swing, the footpaths were crowded, making it challenging to move with any speed around the sights. It was nothing I hadn't been warned about and we were in no rush. I could barely take my eyes off the beautiful old buildings as we walked along. All that fascinating history: I imagined all the stories the buildings would be able to tell if they had a voice. Traffic buzzed round us, filling the air with sounds of beeping horns, adding to the atmosphere.

The first event we attended was the building of 'human towers'. Different teams competed to create the tallest tower of people by standing on each other's shoulders. Then the youngest member of each group climbed up the outside to the very top. I gazed in awe at the height of the towers. They made it look easy but what an incredible amount of practice and teamwork the activity must need. Now and then, a tower would collapse to the gasps of the onlookers. The teams had clearly prepared for this eventuality, though, and caught each other easily. We stood and watched for ages, transfixed.

Next was the parade of the 'giants', where huge brightly painted figures were carried through the streets representing different neighbourhoods of the city. Kings and queens dressed in historical costumes hovered over the crowds, spinning and dancing in pairs to the tunes played on ancient instruments by bands of musicians. Children stared in wonder, their faces lighting up when they spotted a favourite character – that was a magical thing. I soon abandoned any attempt at filming the procession; it was far better just to store the images away in my memory instead.

That evening we saw what, for me, was the highlight of our whole trip: the 'fire run'. Another parade, but this one was a procession of huge five-breathing beasts – again, brightly painted – which were carried along the road, showering the spectators with sparks from fireworks attached to them. Spectators are advised to cover up as protection, but there's no real danger. Even so, I decided to stand well back away from it! It was an incredible sight and must have been great fun to participate in. The fire lit up the spectators in the darkness

and I recognised my own feelings of happiness on their faces. I snapped away with my camera, but when I looked at my pictures the next day, I'd just recorded a blur of movement.

Over the next couple of days we saw everything from a kite flying competition at the beach to an aerobatic show, sampled local specialities in seaside cafés and sang and (line 52) danced in the city's numerous squares. All too soon it was the last night of the festival. Together with thousands of other people, we stood ready to watch the final event: the closing of the festival with a magnificent fireworks display. It was as fantastic as all the other events had been and I knew that even if I never came back again, I'd go home having made the most of the celebrations I'd so longed to see, and having gained an insight into another culture.

- 1 How did Adrian feel when he saw the city of Barcelona for the first time?
 - A amazed at the number of visitors there
 - B excited by the interesting architecture
 - C annoyed by how noisy the city was
 - D pleased about how easy it was to get around
- 2 What does Adrian say about the 'human towers' event in the second paragraph?
 - A It made him feel nervous at certain moments.
 - B It continued for longer than he would have liked.
 - C It required a lot of skill on the part of the participants.
 - D It was not as impressive as he had expected it to be.
- 3 When Adrian saw the parade of giants in the third paragraph, he particularly liked
 - A trying to capture the figures on video.
 - B seeing other people's enjoyment of it.
 - C learning about the history of the activity.
 - D listening to the music which accompanied it.
- 4 During the 'fire run' in the fourth paragraph, Adrian
 - A thought it wise to keep at a distance from the parade.
 - B wished he was able to take part in the procession.
 - C managed to take some atmospheric photos.
 - D saw someone he knew in the crowds.
- 5 What does sampled in line 52 mean?
 - A checked

B experimented

C observed

D tried

6 How did Adrian feel at the end of the festival?

A hopeful that he would return in the future

B regretful that the experience was over

C satisfied to have fulfilled an ambition

D happy to be heading home