READING and SPEAKING

1 Read the text and fill in the gaps in the summary below. You may use one or two words for each gap.

SWEET SIXTEEN

John Oliver takes a critical look at what it's like being sixteen.

It isn't easy being sixteen. It's a time of conflicting feelings and desires. You want to go out and have fun, have a social life, have a boyfriend or a girlfriend, maybe start a serious relationship. At the same time, important public exams are clouding the horizon[1] and your school work is becoming more and more demanding. At home you want your parents to treat you like an adult yet you still depend on them for food and practical help. It's also a time when friendships can be unstable as you experiment with your own self-image. You may feel a sense of loss as you drop your old friends or are yourself dropped by them. These feelings of pressure and conflict at school, at home and amongst your peers are not generally helped by those tactless adults who tell you to 'make the most of the best years of your life because it's all downhill after you leave school'.

The fact is that 16-year-olds today are a lot busier than those adults were 30 or 40 years ago. You seek your pleasures more actively and cram a lot more into[2] your lives. You're impossibly busy (when you are not in one of your well-earned Sunday morning comas) trying to get homework done, revising for a science test, playing in a match, rehearsing for a play, looking your best for your new boyfriend / girlfriend or going to a friend's party. Many of you are trying to solve your constant money shortage by doing a part-time job. At the same time, your parents are suddenly expecting more help from you at home, with washing-up, babysitting and other domestic duties. You realise that you have to establish priorities[3], but you find it hard, especially when your parents want to do it for you.

It is the difference between your own and your parents' priorities that makes family life explosive when you're sixteen. Many parents don't worry too much about whether their child is popular, having a good social life or going out with friends. Instead, they emphasise the importance of doing well at school and getting good exam results. You know that they're right, up to a point - that you have to have qualifications to get anywhere in this competitive world. But at the same time you realise that however brilliantly you do in your exams, you won't be happy if you haven't got any friends. You also know that if you don't collect new experiences, and take social and emotional risks, you will not become an independent and self-reliant adult.

Sex can be another cause of conflict between 16-year-olds and their parents. At the age of 16 it becomes legal in Britain for heterosexuals to have sex. However, this legal milestone does not bring with it a sense of liberation for all teenagers. For those who are shy with the opposite sex and don't have a boyfriend / girlfriend, it can actually cause a feeling of failure. Those who do want a sexual relationship face practical difficulties. Quite apart from a fairly prevalent fear of AIDS, there are very few 16-year-olds whose parents allow them to bring their boyfriend / girlfriend home for the night.

What words of comfort or useful advice can we give to teenagers? You, not your parents, must decide on your priorities even if you won't always make the right choices. But try to keep your options open[4] by balancing school work, social life, relationships and hobbies. Living with your parents won't last forever. So, while you are with them, make the most of not having to pay electricity and heating bills. Enjoy having a fridge full of food and your laundry done for you. And remember, being sixteen only lasts a year.

GLOSSARY

[1]**clouding the horizon:** spoiling the future; [2]**cram...into**: pack tightly into; [3]**priority:** a thing that is regarded as more important than others; [4]**to keep one's options open:** to avoid making a decision now, so that one still has a choice later

Summary

It's difficult to be sixteen. Firstly, you would like to be treated as a(n) [1]..... . Still you cannot be totally [2]..... of your parents because they provide you with money and food. Secondly, it's the time when you may feel [3]..... as your friendships break up. Thirdly, teenagers nowadays have more [4]..... than their parents used to have. Moreover, they often take part-time jobs because they are constantly [5]..... of money. Furthermore, when you are sixteen you are often in [6]..... with your parents because of the difference between your own and your parents' priorities. You understand that you have to be [7]..... if you want to get a good job, so you must study hard, also you know that new experiences, social and emotional risks will help you to become a(n) [8]..... adult. Another reason teenagers and their parents [9]..... about is sex. Though it is legal in Britain to have sex when you are 16, still very [10]..... parents let their children bring their boyfriend / girlfriend home for the night. To sum up, though you lack experience and practice of life it is you who has to make [11]..... and be responsible for them. Very often you may be faced with a difficult [12]..... of your priorities, nevertheless, try to give equal impo different parts of your life. So enjoy living with your parents and having no problems with [13]..... [14]..... and piles of various [15]..... .

LIVEWORKSHEETS

READING and SPEAKING

Read the text and fill in the summary with the proper words that suit the content of the text. The words should not be necessarily taken from the text. Use one or two words only.

GREASE

Greasy spoons very rarely appear in guidebooks, but they are an essential part of life in the UK, especially for people living in the bigger cities. Current's Sam Jordisan sings the praises of this great British institution.*

Café life in Britain

In London, the capital city of the greasy spoon, there are hundreds and hundreds, fuelling the population with bacon, eggs and sausages. These small restaurants are so common and everyday - like baked beans or phone boxes - that they are barely even noticed, but if greasy spoons were removed, the country would be on its knees.

Greasy spoon cafés are so called because any cutlery that comes into contact with the food on offer is immediately coated with a sticky, greasy layer of lard*. It almost seems like an oily mist hangs in the air, as if fat drips from the walls. More calories can be found in a cup of tea in a good greasy spoon than in a whole meal at a normal restaurant.

The setting

Greasy spoons are generally found slightly away from the main streets of most towns, on the shabbier* roads. Always a bit dirty and down at heel, they usually have large (grease coated) glass windows, a plastic sign with the name of the café - usually containing the name of the owner eg Mario's, Bob's Place, Rita's Café - and a huge menu offering a wide variety of artery clogging* delights.

Inside they are generally clean, functional and scruffy*. You'll see old wooden seats, tables covered with cracked linoleum and plain walls. Each table has on it a bottle of brown sauce, tomato ketchup and vinegar, and pots of salt and pepper. In the background, behind a chipped counter, are huge gleaming tea urns* and a steaming kitchen where the gruff* chefs work their magic.

The people

In a typical greasy spoon, you will find people from all walks of life. Poets, drop-outs*, hurrying businessmen, students lazing around with huge mugs of tea. Some read novels, some stare into space, and others catch up on the day's news. There will be young couples staring into each other's eyes or lonely old men coming out for a change of scene. At weekends there will always be large groups of friends, recovering from a night on the town. They are all united by one thing: the food. They are all looking for some seriously stodgy grub*.

The food

The meals are dangerously unhealthy, and absolutely delicious. All kinds of fried food can be bought for incredibly low prices. The centrepiece is usually the traditional English breakfast. Although it's called a breakfast, it takes a brave soul to eat it first thing in the morning, because it is huge. At least two pieces of bacon, two sizzling sausages, two fried eggs (sunny side up), fried mushrooms, baked beans and bread soaked in hot oil and fried. The very finest greasy spoons will also offer several pieces of black pudding - surprisingly tasty, considering that it's made from - wait for it - dried pigs' blood and lard.

The English breakfast is full of meat and fat. If you want something less filling, there's still a lot to choose from; particular specialities are bacon or fried egg sandwiches (or of course, bacon and egg sandwiches). There is also often a range of vegetarian sausages and burgers.

Greasy spoons have some devoted followers. Tapping 'Greasy Spoon' into an internet search engine* will bring up a hundreds of entries. One of the best sites is http://www.greasy spoon.co.uk/. With pictures, reviews, menus and stories, it's the next best thing to going to a greasy spoon café yourself. But of course, nothing can beat going to a real one - especially on an empty stomach.

Summary

Greasy spoons is a common name of cheap small restaurants where you can get fried [1]..... such as bacon, eggs, baked beans, fried mushrooms, sausages and others. British people have got so [2]..... to these restaurants that if they disappeared the country would be very distressed.

Greasy spoon cafés are so called because the [3]..... that touches the food on offer immediately becomes greasy. Even a cup of tea here has more [4]..... than a whole meal in a regular restaurant.

Greasy spoons are situated off the main roads. They usually have large glass windows and a [5]..... with the name of the café owner. The [6]..... of these cafés is also very similar in all the places and rather primitive as it contains wooden seats and tables, covered with linoleum and plain walls. A bottle of sauce, tomato ketchup, vinegar and pots of salt and pepper is a [7]..... on each table. In the background one can see huge tea urns and a kitchen with unfriendly chefs working their magic.

People of all social classes are [8]..... of greasy spoons. One can come across a poet, a hurrying businessman, a student, an old pensioner or a couple of young people here.

They all are led by one goal: food. The meals are extremely unhealthy and fantastically delicious. What is more important - the [9]..... are unbelievably low. The traditional English breakfast is usually the [10]..... meal. Some of the best cafés offer black pudding, which is made from dried pigs' blood and lard. If you prefer something easier you can order bacon and fried egg sandwiches. People who don't like meat can get some [11]..... offers.

Greasy spoons have become so popular that they have even got their [12]..... with pictures, stories and menus. But, of course, the best thing is to visit a real one especially if you are hungry.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2 Read the text and fill in the summary given below with one or two suitable words.

DISTANT ENCOUNTERS

The Internet is fast becoming the contact medium for the new millennium.

Although sitting in front of a computer seems a particularly lonesome pursuit, the truth is that the vast majority of people who surf the Net are there in search of social interaction - real contact and companionship, not just information overload. The most fundamental law of contact on the Net is communication. The basis is always about pursuing some interest with like-minded people or just shooting the breeze* about nothing in particular.

Connecting people

These days you don't even have to leave your room to get in touch with people who have similar interests to yours right from the start. And, what's more, distance needn't be a problem. One of the best places to meet and greet people is IRC*. This collection of online forums or newsgroups contains postings from people who have asked for some info, and answers from those who have replied. If you learn how to use the anonymous posting programs that are around, you don't even have to reveal your real name or location. Another advantage is that since no one can see you, you certainly don't have to worry about looking your best all the time. Indeed, as on line goes virtual, you could create visual images of yourself that suit your mood or contactee. And it goes without saying that engaging in a heavy romance on line is the last word in safe sex. Cyberspace viruses may kill your computer but they won't kill you.

Near - yet far

There are, of course, drawbacks to this new medium. Ironically, the very technology that pulls most people together also keeps them apart. After a while, the safe sense of distance that, at first, seems so liberating to newbies* on the Net, can become an obstacle to letting the friendship develop further. Some may begin to feel that particularly human sense of unease that something is missing from a friendship conducted via* machines.

'As people, we need a tactile* physical presence to make a complete bond. We need to see their face, see their gestures and smell their breath,' points out psychologist Michelle Weil of Orange, California.

Nevertheless, on a romantic level, psychologists claim that the Net is a successful medium, particularly so for women, whose on-line affairs are conducted at a level of thoughts and feelings, not just appearances.

'It forces men to do something they don't normally engage in: communication,' says psychologist Al Cooper of the San Jose Marital and Sexuality Centre.

But when eye to eye contact is missing, what about the human urge to exaggerate, fantasize, or just plain lie? It's a fact that some marriages are truly made in cyberspace, but there are just as many romantic disappointments. Take the case of the unfortunate middle-aged man from Boston who thought he was having a steamy* Internet affair with a 23-year-old woman, only to discover that 'she' was an 80-year-old man in a Miami nursing home. The question is, how wrong was the deception*, given the satisfaction the two got from the romance before the truth was revealed.

Surfing the Net for contact, romantic or otherwise, also satisfies our need to daydream and liberate ourselves from our sometimes dreary* reality. Indeed it may be the closest we may ever get to reinventing ourselves and having more than one life.

Risks of the Net

But isn't that open to abuse? Couldn't people be misled and harmed? The answer to those questions is, in all probability, yes. But only as much as magazines, pictures, videos and the like have harmed us in the past. As with all other media, on-line communication does have its dark side but then, so does the telephone, if it's used improperly.

Until the Net is more carefully regulated, all surfers run the risk of lurkers* secretly tapping into their private Internet conversations and crackers* unlocking their passwords and accessing their most personal details. Navigators on the Net may get into murky* waters. Still, many people think it's worth the risk to reach out and be carried along on a wave of imagination, creativity, poetry and who knows -

Summary

The Internet is becoming the contact [1]..... for the new millennium. It may seem that sitting in front of a computer is a lonesome occupation. Actually, the greater part of people who surf the Net are looking for [2]..... and [3]..... . It is so pleasant to talk to people [4]..... the same ideas and interests with you. You can make [5]..... and get [6]..... just sitting at the computer. One of the best places to meet and greet people is IRC. If you know how to use the anonymous programs you don't have to reveal your real name or address. You can even have [7]..... on line not worrying about your looks. You can [8]..... to be and look whatever you like.

But, of course, [9]..... through this medium has got disadvantages as well. A pleasant sense of distance only at first seems liberating. Later you may begin feeling [10]..... of human physical presence. You want to see your Net partner's face and gestures or smell the breath. Despite [11]..... of real personal image, a romantic affair on the Net is quite possible, especially for women whose feelings are more [12]..... by words and thoughts, not just appearances. The Net makes men also do what they usually are unlikely to do - to communicate. There are even some cases of marriages in cyberspace, but there are quite many cases of [13]....., too. Imagine how distressed you would feel if your imaginary beloved person of 23 appeared to be an 80-year-old man or woman. On the other hand, surfing the Net for distant contacts helps us to [14]..... from dreary reality and reinvent ourselves.

We also have to [15]..... that the Net is open to abuse. People can be misled and harmed. But magazines, pictures, videos, the telephone can harm too, if used improperly. We have to be aware that lurkers can secretly tap our conversations, crackers can unlock our passwords and get [16]..... to our personal details. In spite of all these [17]..... millions of people think it's worth the risk to open the gate into the world of imagination, creativity, poetry and maybe romance.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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