THE PUZZLE OF MASQUERADE

Read the article about an unusual storybook. Five sentences have been removed. Which sentence (A – F) fits each gap (1 – 5)? There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

Everyone likes a good story, but few tales have thrilled readers more than Masquerade, a storybook written and illustrated by the British artist Kit Williams. As soon as it was published in 1979, people realized Masquerade was a storybook unlike any other. It was a work of fiction with a fascinating puzzle attached: each detailed painting in the book held a clue that could lead the reader to real buried treasure – an intricate piece of gold jewellery in the shape of a hare.

In the days before social media, no one could have predicted the effect Masquerade's publication would have. The story caused an international sensation, started the UK's biggest ever treasure hunt, and sold over a million copies worldwide. Overnight, Kit Williams, the shy artist, became world-famous. [1]____ It would be three years until the jewel's hiding place was revealed.

William's had set a difficult and thrilling challenge. The book's fifteen paintings were decorative with plenty of details designed to lead the readers in the wrong direction. The story follows Jack Hare on a special journey to deliver a precious jewel from the moon to the sun with whom she, the moon, was in love. [2]____ The jewel in the story is, of course, the real jewel that Williams had handcrafted from gold and precious stones. He had buried it in a special case with the message, 'I am the keeper of the jewel of the Masquerade, which lies waiting safe inside me for you ... or eternity' written on it.

In order to solve the main part of the puzzle, you had to look carefully at each of the fifteen paintings. Then you had to draw a line from the eye of each character Jack Hare meets through their hand or paw to a word at the edge of the page. When you put the first letters of each word together, they read, 'Close by Ampthill'. This gave away the location, Ampthill, a small town Williams had once lived near.

The puzzle was first solved by two physics teachers, but despite this they did not end up with the treasure. [3]____ This is because Williams had intended the edge of a shadow from the statue in the park to indicate where the treasure was buried – but only at twelve noon on the day of either the Spring or Autumn equinox (when day and night are equal). The two teachers realised this so they decided to come back at the equinox in March.

But before they could return, the treasure was found by a man known as Ken Thomas. However, Masquerade fans soon became suspicious because he would not talk about or share what he'd found. They began to think that perhaps he had not solved the puzzle at all. Then several years later, a newspaper printed a story which revealed that 'Thomas' was actually operating under a false name. He knew Williams' ex-girlfriend who had apparently guessed the location of the treasure based on a visit she and Williams had once made to Ampthill together. [4]____

The golden hare was sold privately and disappeared. Williams was very upset and stayed away from the media, but he continued painting and creating artworks. Then, over twenty years later, Williams returned to public life with an exhibition of his art. [5]____ The makers of the documentary wanted to know what had happened to the golden hare which had not been seen for twenty years. They traced its owner, and he agreed to display it at Williams' exhibition. When Williams saw the hare again, he said he felt emotional but proud. While Masquerade had had a disappointing ending, for many, the wonder and fascination of it lives on. There are websites devoted to the genius of Williams' work, which explain how to solve each of the complex puzzles, and Ampthill still remains a popular destination for Masquerade fans decades later.

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A. Although they dug in the park where the jewel was buried, they couldn't find it.

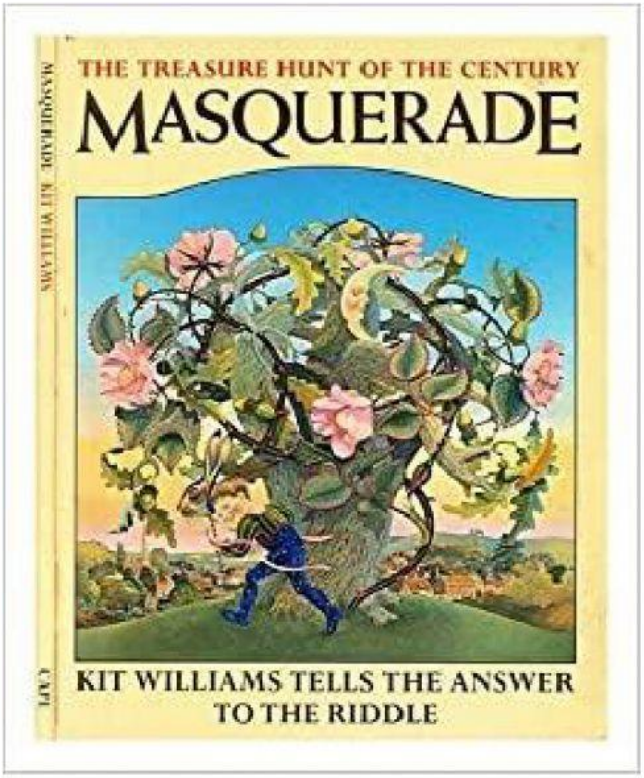
B. This received a lot of publicity and he agreed to feature in a BBC TV documentary.

C. Over the next two years, he received more than a hundred letters a day, but he would not give away his secret.

D. Copies of the first edition of Masquerade are now sold for over £300 each.

E. Sadly, it seemed the puzzle had not genuinely been solved after all.

F. Along the way, he meets various animals and people who give him difficult puzzles to solve.



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