6a

Read

A. Discuss.

- Look at the pictures accompanying the text below. Have you ever heard of parkour or freerunning? What do you know or can you guess about it?
- Do you like extreme physical activities? Why / Why not?

B. Read the text quickly. What is the writer's attitude towards parkour and freerunning? Choose a, b or c.

a. He/She has a positive attitude.
b. He/She has a negative attitude.
c. He/She does not express an opinion.

The Urban Playground

No doubt you've seen them somewhere, leaping impossibly high walls, diving through gaps, falling from great heights, rolling over and carrying on. They look like they are being chased by someone, but in fact they are traceurs* and they are practising one of the fastest growing extreme sports, freerunning or parkour.

This sport was created in the 1980s by a couple of bored adolescents, David Belle and Sebastien Foucan, who enjoyed climbing, running and jumping around the streets of their Parisian neighbourhood. They were passionate about learning how to go over, under or through any obstacles that they met on the way. Slowly their acrobatic running developed into an actual sport as more and more people joined them.

In 2003 a documentary was broadcast in the UK called *Jump London*. This followed a group of *traceurs* including Foucan, running around famous landmarks. The sport was introduced to the English-speaking world as freerunning, but Foucan and Belle had already decided that parkour and freerunning were two different sports. Freerunning involves more spectacular tricks and somersaults, which are not really necessary, whereas in parkour, *traceurs* try not to overdo it. For them the important thing is to overcome an obstacle. However the basic techniques and moves are similar and are commonly confused. Today, Foucan and Belle enjoy worldwide fame and have starred in films and adverts. *Traceurs* are commonly seen on TV and in music videos and there are even computer games where you navigate a *traceur* moving through an urban environment.

Parkour, more than freerunning, is not only a way to improve physical fitness, but also a way of thinking. In a similar way to martial arts philosophy, it gives you the ability to overcome your fears and control your mind. There is no list of moves or techniques for parkour, because each obstacle a *traceur* faces is a new challenge. And the way a *traceur* deals with the obstacle will depend on body type, weight, speed and strength. Parkour is not a competitive sport; there are no opponents to beat. It is about interacting with the environment around you, which in the modern world is more than often the inner city.

Any environment where there are obstacles is appropriate for parkour or freerunning. No equipment is needed, but obviously strong trainers and comfortable clothes should be worn. Parks, playgrounds and shopping malls are popular places, but city councils are also beginning to provide young people with safe places to practise. Many schools in London have introduced parkour classes, and the response has been very positive. And it's not only sporty kids who are keen. As the popularity of parkour and freerunning grows, more and more young people are getting active and learning how to benefit from the urban playground.

PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT THIS WITHOUT PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION.

***traceur* derives from the French verb *tracer* which means 'to trace', but in Parisian informal language it also means 'to go fast'**

LIVEWORKSHEETS

C. Read again and write T for True or F for False.

1. 'Traceur' means 'to be chased'. ○
2. Parkour was invented by two young people from Paris. ○
3. Parkour and freerunning involve completely different moves. ○
4. Parkour helps people gain control over body and mind. ○
5. Parkour teaches people to interact with others as well as with the environment. ○
6. Parkour and freerunning can be practised anywhere there are obstacles. ○
7. Parkour is very popular with active students mostly. ○

D. Find words / phrases in the text and match them with the definitions below.

1. jump (introduction): _____
2. continue (introduction): _____
3. very impressive (paragraph 2): _____
4. connected with a town / city (paragraph 2): _____
5. somebody who plays against another in a game, sport, etc. (paragraph 3): _____
6. suitable (paragraph 4): _____

E. Discuss.

- What's your opinion about parkour and freerunning?
- Do you think it should be taught in schools? Why/ Why not?

LIVEWORKSHEETS