

READING COMPREHENSION B2.2

Read the following newspaper article about a 'mystery visitor' who inspects hotels for a guide book, and answer questions 1-7 on the next page by typing A, B, C or D in the box next to each number.

The Hotel Inspector

*Sue Brown judges hotels for a living.
Christopher Middleton watched her in action.*

One minute into the annual inspection and things are already going wrong for the Globe Hotel. Not that they know it yet. The receptionist reciting room rates over the phone to a potential guest is still blissfully unaware of the identity of the real guest she is doggedly ignoring. 'Hasn't even acknowledged us,' Sue Brown says out of the corner of her mouth. 'Very poor.' It is a classic arrival-phase error, and one that Sue has encountered scores of times in her 11 years as an inspector. 'But this isn't an ordinary three-star place,' she protests. 'It has three *red* stars, and I would expect better.'

To be the possessor of red stars means that the Globe is rated among the top 130 of the 4,000 listed in the hotel guide published by the organisation she works for. However, even before our frosty welcome, a chill has entered the air. Access from the car park has been via an unmanned door, operated by an impersonal buzzer, followed by a long, twisting, deserted corridor leading to the hotel entrance. 'Again, not what I had expected,' says Sue.

Could things get worse? They could. 'We seem to have no record of your booking,' announces the receptionist, in her best sing-song *how-may-I-help-you* voice.

It turns out that a dozen of the hotel's 15 rooms are unoccupied that night. One is on the top floor. It is not to the inspector's taste: stuffiness is one criticism, the other is a gaping panel at the back of the wardrobe, behind which is a large hole in the wall.

When she began her inspecting career, she earned an early reputation for toughness. '*The Woman in Black*, I was known as,' she recalls, 'which was funny, because I never used to wear black. And I've never been too tough.' Not that you would know it the next morning when, after paying her bill, she suddenly reveals her identity to the Globe's general manager, Robin Greaves. From the look on his face, her arrival has caused terror.

Even before she says anything else, he expresses abject apologies for the unpleasant smell in the main lounge. 'We think there's a blocked drain there,' he sighs. 'The whole floor will probably have to come up.' Sue gently suggests that as well as sorting out the plumbing, he might also prevail upon his staff not to usher guests into the room so readily. 'Best, perhaps, to steer them to the other lounge,' she says. Greaves nods with glum enthusiasm and gamely takes notes. He has been at the Globe for only five months, and you can see him struggling to believe Sue when she says that this dissection of the hotel can only be for the good of the place in the long run.

Not that it's all on the negative side. Singled out for commendation are Emma, the assistant manager, and Trudy, the young waitress, who dished out a sheaf of notes about the building's 400-year history. Dinner, too, has done enough to maintain the hotel's two-rosette food rating, thereby encouraging Greaves to push his luck a bit. 'So what do we have to do to get three rosettes?' he enquires. Sue's suggestions include: 'Not serve a pudding that collapses.' The brief flicker of light in Greaves' eyes goes out.

It is Sue Brown's unenviable job to voice the complaints

the rest of us more cowardly consumers do not have the courage to articulate. 'Sometimes one can be treading on very delicate ground. I remember, in one case, a woman rang to complain I'd got her son the sack. All I could say was the truth, which was that he'd served me apple pie with his fingers.' Comeback letters involve spurious allegations of everything, from a superior attitude to demanding bribes. 'You come to expect it after a while, but it hurts every time,' she says.

Sue is required not just to relate her findings to the hotelier verbally, but also to send them a full written report. They are, after all, paying for the privilege of her putting them straight. (There is an annual fee for inclusion in the guide.) Nevertheless, being singled out for red-star treatment makes it more than worthwhile. So it is reassuring for Greaves to hear that Sue is not going to recommend that the Globe be stripped of its red stars. That is the good news. The bad is that another inspector will be back in the course of the next two months to make sure that everything has been put right. 'Good,' smiles Greaves unconvincingly. 'We'll look forward to that.'

CAE 2: Eoi Zamora 2006

- 1 When Sue Brown arrived at the hotel reception desk,
- A) the receptionist pretended not to notice she was there.
 - B) she was not surprised by what happened there.
 - C) she decided not to form any judgements immediately.
 - D) the receptionist was being impolite on the phone.
- 2 On her arrival at the hotel, Sue was dissatisfied with
- A) the temperature in the hotel.
 - B) the sound of the receptionist's voice.
 - C) the position of the room she was given.
 - D) the distance from the car park to the hotel.
- 3 What does the writer say about Sue's reputation?
- A) It has changed.
 - B) It frightens people.
 - C) It is thoroughly undeserved.
 - D) It causes Sue considerable concern.
- 4 When talking about the problem in the main lounge, Robin Greaves
- A) assumes that Sue is unaware of it.
 - B) blames the problem on other people.
 - C) doubts that Sue's comments will be of benefit to the hotel.
 - D) agrees that his lack of experience has contributed to the problem.
- 5 When Sue makes positive comments about the hotel, Robin Greaves
- A) agrees with her views on certain members of his staff.
 - B) becomes hopeful that she will increase its food rating.
 - C) finds it impossible to believe that she means them.
 - D) reminds her that they outweigh her criticisms of it.
- 6 Angry reactions to Sue's comments on hotels
- A) are something she always finds upsetting.
 - B) sometimes make her regret what she has said.
 - C) are often caused by the fact that hotels have to pay for them.
 - D) sometimes indicate that people have not really understood them.
- 7 When Sue leaves the hotel, Robin Greaves
- A) is confident that the next inspection will be better.
 - B) feels he has succeeded in giving her a good impression.
 - C) decides to ignore what she has told him about the hotel.
 - D) tries to look pleased that there will be another inspection.