

# Mind over matter?

1/ Listen and read:

## A FIREWALKING

Walking across burning coals or red-hot stones has a long tradition. 1 ☐ It became popular in Europe and the USA in the 1970s, and many people went on training courses to learn the skill. They believed that firewalking was good for their **mind** and body and might even give them mystical powers. Actually, the ability to walk over hot coals has more to do with physics than mind over **matter**. The heat doesn't pass quickly from the coals to the walkers' feet, particularly if they keep moving. If you do it properly, there is little risk of injury.

2 ☐ In 2002, 30 managers from the KFC fast food chain went on a team-building **trip** which included firewalking. Twenty of them had to go to hospital in order to get medical treatment for burnt soles. They used red hot wood instead of coal.

## B HYPNOSIS

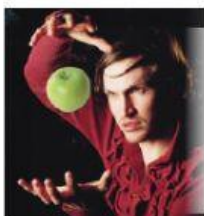
In the 1770s, a doctor called Franz Mesmer started to **treat** his patients in Paris with a strange new technique: he held their thumbs, pressed their stomachs, and then played music on an instrument made of glass. 3 ☐ Mesmer didn't know it, but he was using a form of hypnosis. These days, hypnosis still has medical uses, but most people are familiar with it because of stage hypnotists. These performers ask for volunteers from the audience so that they can hypnotise them. In this **state**, the volunteers do all kinds of strange and funny things: they eat onions as if they were apples, or they act like animals or giant babies. The hypnotist seems to have control over their minds. Although the main purpose is entertainment, some people find the idea of mind control worrying. The British Government even passed a law in 1952 in order to protect the public from irresponsible hypnotists! 4 ☐ Most scientists believe stage hypnotism does not involve real mind control. The volunteers are extroverts who want to help the performer to put on a good **show**.

## C TELEKINESIS

In the nineteenth century, scientists became interested in the possibility that some people had the power to move a physical **object** without touching it. They named this power telekinesis, and over the years several people have claimed to have it. In 1980, American James Hydrick became famous overnight after appearing on a TV show. Millions watched him as he made the pages of a book **turn** without touching them. 5  But James Randi, an American magician, was sceptical. He knows the different tricks people use when they pretend to have psychic powers. Randi appeared on a live TV show with Hydrick in order to test his claims. He put small pieces of polystyrene around a book and then challenged Hydrick to turn the pages using telekinesis, without moving the polystyrene. Hydrick couldn't do it. Later, Hydrick publicly admitted that he had never had special powers. So, how did the pages move? Simple: he blew them! But he had practised blowing hard without moving his lips or chest.

2/ Match the pictures to the texts:

A



B



C



3/ Match the sentences with the gaps in the texts (write letters a-f into the gaps)

- a However, using the wrong materials can be a disaster.
- b On the other hand, many people doubted that his powers could be genuine.
- c It has been part of ceremonies in many different countries for at least 3,000 years.
- d Most viewers were convinced that he had genuine psychic powers.
- e Many of these patients showed dramatic improvements.
- f In fact, this was probably unnecessary.

**3/ Write A, B or C to the questions.**

Which mind-over-matter activity:

- 1 is sometimes used by doctors?
- 2 caused an injury?
- 3 did ordinary people start practising?
- 4 was first studied in the 1800s?
- 5 often takes place on stage?
- 6 was an American performer suspicious of?

**4/ Answer the questions**

- 1 Why did people go on training courses? [Text A]
- 2 Why did the managers go to hospital? [Text A]
- 3 Why did the performers ask for volunteers? [Text B]
- 4 Why did the British Government pass a law in 1952?  
[Text B]
- 5 Why did Randi appear on a live TV show with Hydrick?  
[Text C]