

MID YEAR EXAM: FCE

UNITS 1-5 GOLD FIRST

READING

Read the article about football fans. Six sentences have been removed from the article. Choose from the sentences A–H the one which fits each gap (1–6). There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

Grown men with their heads buried in each other's shoulders or hidden behind shaking hands. Young mothers shouting with joy. This is what last Saturday's penalty shoot-out for the European Cup produced. 1 _____ Then you'll see what passion does to people. And, while having an ugly side, it is in fact more likely to enrich our lives and make us better people.

Today, supporters are gathering for the big match. Fans who could not afford the fare to travel abroad have sold their car. 2 _____ And many will turn up without any accommodation or even a match ticket. Despite this, they will be relieved just to be there, to be part of it all. It might sound like madness but, as one who is going and is incredibly excited about it, I can tell you I feel extremely fortunate.

Passion should not be confused with obsession. There are those who live in a dream state, madly in love with someone they will never meet – because he is a dead singer or a famous actor who is unlikely ever to visit their hometown – and therefore unable to form real relationships. However, there are also ordinary people – sensible parents, husbands, employees and employers – whose interests are much more healthy and straightforward. 3 _____

Maybe some people are incapable of finding a passion, but if so they are missing out. Passions are deep, full of joy and pain, teaching you how to sob when you feel hurt, how to deal with disappointment, how to sing with enthusiasm in public (not easy). Because of them you might end up hugging a complete stranger or making new friends. 4 _____ They are a great way for families to bond together; many dads insist that they are spending their time fishing or playing chess because their child is keen, when actually they are delighted to become absorbed by something outside home, job and money worries.

Explosions of joy are normally thin on the ground. The birth of your child, your wedding day, a pay rise are all lovely and a reason to do something special, but they do not happen every week. If you happen to follow a football or rugby team, there are celebrations all the time.

For some, a passion can be switched on and off – which is better than not having a passion at all, I suppose. Witness the behaviour that tennis brings about at the annual two-week UK tennis tournament at Wimbledon. Calm, controlled middle-aged women are suddenly prepared to camp overnight on damp pavements in London and squeal encouragement. 5 _____

In the end, what defines us as human is not only language. 6 _____ Passions are a rehearsal for life, a distraction from boredom and most of all they are fun – even when they let you down.

"All you need is love (and a scarf)", *The Times*, 25/05/2005 (Rudd, A.), copyright © The Times, 2005, www.nisyndication.com

- A Their emotions are also linked to forces they cannot control, but they are to be admired for it.
- B It is the ability to care about something that does not directly affect our health or wealth or importance.
- C They help you to feel part of a community and have something to tease your neighbour about.
- D In spite of their differences, they will all become a part of the same experience.
- E Otherwise cool, fashionable students are happy to wave at the TV cameras while wearing silly hats and sunglasses that spurt water.
- F If you missed the semi-final, then try and catch the European Cup Final on television tomorrow.
- G Others have borrowed from relatives they once promised themselves they would never borrow from again.

2 Read the text below and choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

- 1 In paragraph 1 we learn that Joe Swanberg's films are
 - A usually low-budget costume dramas.
 - B rarely seen in cinemas.
 - C often bought on DVD.
 - D made for young people in the city.
- 2 What impact has technology had on the movie business, according to paragraph 2?
 - A Small independent film-makers are struggling to find an audience.
 - B Audiences are still enjoying blockbuster films.
 - C Fewer young people are attracted to the industry.
 - D There is more choice available in the middle market area.
- 3 According to paragraph 3, blockbuster success is because people
 - A prefer to see famous actors in films.
 - B like watching and talking about reality shows.
 - C only watch films recommended to them by friends.
 - D are reluctant to see films they've never heard of.
- 4 Paragraph 5 indicates that people may
 - A be confused by the choice presented to them.
 - B choose niche films because of their availability.
 - C not understand all the different formats available.
 - D prefer to listen to music than watch films these days.
- 5 What does 'they' refer to in paragraph 6?
 - A consumers
 - B media companies
 - C television programmes
 - D movie industry decision-makers
- 6 What does paragraph 7 say about the situation nowadays?
 - A Consumers are benefiting from it.
 - B There is hardly anything good on television.
 - C Making programmes is easier than before.
 - D Better films and TV programmes are being made.

The future of entertainment

More than ever, media is separating into mass market blockbusters on the one hand and 'niche' products – attracting small groups of people with similar interests – on the other. Everything else is struggling to compete.

Joe Swanberg makes films about the romantic lives of young people in the city. He shoots quickly with a digital camera and asks actors to wear their own clothes. His low-budget films are hardly ever shown in cinemas. By keeping his costs down and distributing digitally, Mr Swanberg is making a living.

Technology was expected to help young people like him. A few years ago it was predicted that the internet would vastly increase the supply of small independent films and other niche media products and increase their audiences. That has certainly happened. However, so has the opposite. Blockbusters are also tightening their grip on audiences, whether it's in the area of film, music, television or books. The growth of both niche products and huge sell-out successes has been at the expense of the things in the middle, which are just quite popular – the near-misses.

There are several reasons why big hits still do so well. As in the past, people still want to have something to talk about with their friends. Which is why talent shows such as *American Idol* do pretty much as well as they did ten years ago, and why the latest blockbuster still breaks new records at the box office. Research shows that people still choose blockbusters more often than less well-known books and films. This is probably because people tend to try only things they have heard of – which for many people means media-hyped blockbusters.

Furthermore, all the technology that has made niche content so much more accessible has also proved handy for pushing blockbusters. Missed the last popular film? Don't worry, because there will be other chances to see it, in a wide variety of formats.

Blockbusters are doing well not in spite of the fact that people have more choice in entertainment, but because of it. Imagine walking into a music shop which has more than 10 million songs, as iTunes does, all of them arranged alphabetically. Making up your mind would be impossible! So, rather than having to decide, it's much easier to just grab what everybody is talking about.

Is this increasingly more common separation into blockbusters and niches good or bad? It certainly makes life harder for media companies. In a world where entertainment choices are growing, it is more important than ever to make a big impact with your product. If it isn't a hit, it will have to fight for attention together with thousands – perhaps millions – of other offerings. The possibility of failing can make people anxious and more conservative. Television programmes must be successful quickly or they will be cancelled. It is becoming even harder to talk the decision-makers in the movie industry into approving films if *they* are not confident there is a demand for them.

These days, with so many options, there is rarely nothing good on television. So the media industry must raise its game. Intelligent people naturally wish that more money were available to produce the kind of music, films and television programmes they like. The problem is that everybody has different ideas about exactly what they want to watch. Some may love watching a programme about the history of dance; others may want to spend an hour being told how to look after pet snakes. But not many want to do either of these things, which explains why such programmes are niche products. There are only a few things that can be guaranteed to delight large numbers of people. They are known as blockbusters.

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