FIRST Reading and Use of English Part 2 – The truth about the stone of destiny?

For questions **1 – 8**, read the text below and think of the word which best fits each gap. Use **only one word** in each gap. There is an example at the beginning (**0**).

The truth about the Stone of Destiny?

Stone of Destiny is fake, claims Alex Salmond

Scottish First Minister, Alex Salmond, shocked Scotland yesterday ***0*** when *he claimed that the Stone of Destiny, one of Scotland's most famous relics, was a medieval fake.*

Scottish, English and British monarchs have been crowned on the ancient coronation stone

1 the 9th century. It spent 700 years under the chair in Westminster Abbey

2 it was seized in 1296 by King Edward I, and was finally returned to Scotland 12 years ago. It has since been viewed at Edinburgh Castle by tens of thousands of people, and is regarded as a symbol of Scottish independence.

3 to legend, Jacob used the ancient stone as a pillow when he dreamt of a ladder to heaven.

But Scotland's First Minister **4** convinced that it may be no more than a worthless lump of Perthshire sandstone. He believes it was passed off as the original coronation stone when Edward stormed Scone Abbey in 1296.

Mr Salmond said, 'If you're the abbot of Scone and the strongest and **5** ruthless king in Christendom is charging towards you in 1296 to steal Scotland's most sacred object, do you wait until he arrives or do you hide yourself and the stone somewhere convenient in the Perthshire hillside? I think the second myself.'

He is not even convinced that the 'fake' stone stolen from Scone was the same one that was returned to Scotland by Michael Forsyth, the then Tory Scottish Secretary, in 1996.

On Christmas Day 1950, the Stone of Destiny was stolen from below the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey by a group of radical nationalist students. There have long been rumours that a Glasgow stonemason, Baillie Robert Gray, made copies of the stone when he was asked to repair it after it broke in two during the raid. After a brief sojourn north of the border it was later handed back to British authorities and was used in the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

'There's no question that Bertie Gray made copies,' said Mr Salmond. 'It's like the Loch Ness monster, it's certainly a puzzle and a mystery **6** is best not definitively answered.'

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Ian Hamilton, now a Scottish magistrate, one of the four students **7** stole the relic 58 years ago, said he remained convinced it was the real thing.

'If it had been a substitute for Edward to carry off, it must **8** been produced when the king (Robert the Bruce) regained his kingdom. It wasn't,' said Mr Hamilton, whose book, *The Stone of Destiny*, is published this week.

A spokesman for Westminster Abbey said she had always believed the stone was genuine.

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