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Most of us associate robots with films such as *Star Wars*, *I, Robot* or *AI*, but in reality they have more to do with social issues and politics rather than science fiction. The term robot first made its appearance in a play entitled *Rossum's Universal Robots* written almost a century ago by a Czechoslovakian playwright by the name of Karel Čapek. Čapek got the name robot from the Slavic word “robota” which means forced labour. In his play, he portrays a society where robots which look human are mass-produced to work in the place of people.

Čapek's story was well received by the critics but never really got credit for being the source of the notion of robots. The play has a significant relevance to our society today, as humanoid type robots are being created to fulfil a wide range of tasks. Robot engineers are not only developing mindless worker drones, but are attempting to create human-like companion robots for people. Consequently, the question of what actually makes us human is the subject of lively debate.

In the USA, sociable robotics is developing at a relatively rapid rate and a human companion type of robot could soon be a reality. Japanese researchers see a very bright future for these robots who will serve as friends or family to the lonely. Nevertheless, one needs to ask

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if a human being can have a relationship with a machine in the same way as they do with other people or animals, and if so, what effect this could have on our society. The success of robot toys or virtual pets suggests that this type of relationship is possible. Research shows that children tend to have similar relationships with humans as with non-humans whereas the same is true for adults only with pets or when the robot is designed to look like a child. This is probably because robots display superficial emotions and cannot as yet replace human touch. But will these machines one day succeed in replacing humans?

Some paint a very dark picture of a robot society and predict that artificially intelligent machines will take control of the entire planet and dominate the human race. However, robot technology is still in its infancy and the idea of them taking over the world is pure fantasy to most of us, including scientists. In fact, most robots can only perform very basic tasks and even the most advanced robot that is presumably capable of expressing over forty different emotions seems to do so in a totally random manner independently of what is going on around it.

In spite of the simplicity of today's robots, robotic technology is impacting our everyday lives in a dramatic way. Nowadays, our robots are becoming more and more like those portrayed in Čapek's work. In a society where human relationships are so often strained, it is no surprise that the possibility for human-robot relationships is increasing.

1. When most people think of robots, they tend to think of _____.
A. politics
B. science fiction
C. films
D. social issues
2. Robots were first portrayed _____.
A. as humans
B. in a play
C. as Czechoslovakians
D. in a film
3. Most critics ignored the fact that _____.
A. robots are important in our society.
B. robots can do a lot of tasks.
C. Čapek came up with the idea of robots.
D. humanoid robots are being created.
4. Many people are questioning what _____.
A. a robot really is
B. a human really is
C. a humanoid robot is.
D. a companion really is
5. Japanese researchers think that robots could be of use _____.
A. to families
B. to engineers
C. as servants
D. to people who live alone

6. Adults tend to have good relationships with _____.
 A. virtual pets B. childlike robots
 C. non-humans D. robot toys
7. Advanced robots still only _____.
 A. perform basic tasks.
 B. react to emotions just like humans.
 C. express emotions randomly.
 D. express up to forty emotions.
8. What is the writer's conclusion?
 A. Robots are not important enough to really affect our lives.
 B. He's concerned about the robots' future role in society.
 C. He can understand the robots' role in society.
 D. He thinks the robots' role has been dramatised.



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**CAN YOU PROVE WHO YOU ARE?
 APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEPTIVE**

The film *Catch Me If You Can* told the story of Frank Abagnale, who sold the Eiffel Tower and passed \$2.5 million worth of bad cheques while posing as an airline pilot or a surgeon. In the film, Abagnale appears as a rather amiable crook, but of course in reality fraudsters aren't amiable, glamorous or daring: they're just thieves whose lifestyle is paid for by other people's money. And these days, fraudsters can do more than just steal your cash: they can steal your identity too.

In 2003, Derek Bond, a 72-year-old retired civil engineer, found out how dreadful modern fraud can be. As he stepped off a plane at Cape Town airport, he was arrested and thrown into jail. It was worrying enough that he could have been mistaken for a "most wanted" criminal. But what made matters worse was that, despite having an impeccable reputation in his home town, it took three weeks for Mr Bond's family

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to convince the authorities that they had made a mistake. Away from people who knew him, Mr Bond's reputation was based solely on the contents of a police file. And if that file said that Derek Bond, a man of medium height and build, was actually Derek Lloyd Sykes, a conman responsible for a multimillion-dollar fraud in Texas, then who could prove that it wasn't true?

Mr Bond was the victim of identity theft or impersonation fraud, where a thief assumes your identity and uses it to steal directly from you or to commit crimes using your name. Drug trafficking, money laundering, illegal immigration, benefit fraud – in the world of organised crime, a fake ID is a licence to print money. Even more worrying is the fact that there is now a ready market among the world's terrorists for stolen identities. As more people shop and bank online or by phone, the opportunities for fraudulent use of credit cards or other personal information grows. The business of identity theft is booming, and for those it affects, the consequences can be catastrophic.

Under existing financial regulations, banks and credit organisations are required to "know their customers" before they can open an account. This means they have to request specific proofs of identity before they allow them to start spending: usually proof of name and address, and a photo ID, such as a passport or driver's licence.

This sounds satisfactory, but in reality it's far from foolproof. The problem is that identity theft isn't rocket science. In theory, all a thief needs is a few snippets of information – such as a discarded phone bill or a credit card receipt – to start using your name.

In fact, "bin diving" is the most usual way for thieves to get information. In an extensive survey, a credit checking agency examined the contents of 400 rubbish bins. One in five contained enough sensitive information to commit identity fraud. Every time we buy or sell goods, we provide information about ourselves on paper. Receipts, invoices and bills all contain sensitive personal information. But identity thieves don't even need to get their hands dirty. How often do we hand over cheques and credit or debit cards? How many of us buy by phone or shop online? All it takes is one dishonest employee, and we can say goodbye to our hard-earned cash.

1. The main purpose of this article is to _____.
A. tell the stories of Frank Abagnale and Derek Bond.
B. describe the dangers of identity theft.
C. explain how to steal someone's identity.
D. advise readers how to avoid having their identity stolen.

2. The writer says that real life fraudsters _____
A. are just ordinary likeable people.
B. live a glamorous lifestyle.
C. are criminals who cheat other people.
D. are not as bad as they seem.
3. In Cape Town, it was difficult for Derek Bond to establish his innocence because _____
A. his correct details were in a police file.
B. he had a bad reputation in Cape Town.
C. there was proof that he was a criminal.
D. nobody knew him personally there.
4. What development does the writer consider to be a particularly disturbing aspect of identity theft?
A. Terrorists will start stealing people's identities.
B. Terrorists will become involved in the buying and selling of false identities.
C. There will be a great demand from terrorists for false identities.
D. Identity theft will become a form of terrorism.
5. According to the article, having a false identity enables criminals to _____
A. steal even more personal information.
B. organise their criminal activities better.
C. obtain licenses of different kinds.
D. make large amounts of money.
6. The current security systems used by banks and other financial organisations _____
A. are not completely reliable.
B. have proved to be effective.
C. are perfectly acceptable.
D. have existed for a long time.
7. Criminals commonly collect information about individuals by _____
A. stealing their credit cards.
B. reading through their telephone bills.
C. going through things people have thrown away.
D. contacting a credit checking agency.
8. Members of the public should be particularly careful about using credit or debit cards because _____
A. criminals may find a way of stealing them.
B. corrupt staff may pass on their details to criminals.
C. online systems may not be secure.
D. criminals may listen to people giving their details on the phone.



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They died where they stood. Violently, with almost no warning. Wealthy women in their jewels. Armed soldiers. Babies. Almost 2,000 years ago a seaside town in southern Italy had the misfortune to be in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius – one of Europe's active volcanoes – at the wrong time. The 16,000 inhabitants of the Roman towns of Herculaneum and neighbouring Pompeii who were buried beneath 30 metres of dust on an August night in AD 79 bear silent witness to the destructive force of volcanoes.

Objects of terror and fascination since the beginning of human time, volcanoes take their name from Vulcan, the Roman god of fire. Today there are some 1,350 active volcanoes in the world. At any given moment, somewhere between one dozen and two dozen are throwing out ash and molten rock from the earth's core.

Approximately one billion people live in their dangerous shadows. Experts expect the number to rise. The rapid growth of population,

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greater competition for land and an increase in urban migration are driving more and more people to settle around volcanoes, significantly increasing the potential loss of life and property in the event of eruptions.

Despite major advances in technology, the ability to predict when a volcano might erupt remains imprecise. But meeting the challenge is vital because volcanoes are "people magnets." A recent study identified 457 volcanoes where there are one million or more people living within 100 kilometres. Many of these volcanoes – several in Indonesia and Japan, for instance – have surrounding populations greatly exceeding one million. Today, 3.75 million people live within 30 kilometres of the summit of Mount Vesuvius in the southern Italian city of Naples. "What do they do if it starts erupting? No one can imagine evacuating a city the size of Naples," said C. Dan Miller, chief of the US Geological Survey's Volcano Disaster Assistance Program. "Persuading people to move permanently out of hazard zones is not usually an option. Many of the land-use patterns are long established, and people just won't do it," Miller went on. "The only thing you can do is have systematic volcano monitoring to detect the earliest departure from normal activity."

Nowadays it is easier to predict volcanic activity, but evaluating the threat of eruption is frequently still difficult. Mexico City knows the problem well. The city, which has a population of more than twenty million, lies within 60 kilometres of the summit of Popocatepetl, a volcano which has erupted at least fifteen times in the last 400 years. The flanks and valleys surrounding "Popo" have been evacuated several times since 1994 in response to earthquakes and eruptions of volcanic ash and plumes of steam. Each time the mountain has settled down without a major eruption, although some activity has continued. Yet when, or if, a major eruption will occur next remains unknown.

"There could be weeks, months, or years between the time a volcano shows some activity and the time of its eruption," said Miller. "It may never erupt. Most people are willing to be evacuated once. But if nothing happens, the loss of credibility could cause people to ignore future warnings."

Volcanic eruptions, when they do come, are sometimes relatively slow and quiet. There was no loss of life when the world's largest active volcano erupted in 1984. The people who lived in the proximity of Hawaii's Mauna Loa volcano had plenty of time to get out of the way when it erupted in 1984. Its lava crept down the slope at about the speed of honey. At other times the eruption is sudden and violent, and evacuation unfortunately comes too late.

1. What happened when Mount Vesuvius erupted in AD 79?
 - A. The rich managed to escape.
 - B. It covered many towns with dust.
 - C. A few people were killed.
 - D. People were unprepared.
2. What do experts think will happen in the future?
 - A. More volcanoes will become active.
 - B. People will move away from volcanic areas.
 - C. More people will set up home near volcanoes.
 - D. Around one billion people will die in volcanic eruptions.
3. According to the article, what is the present situation regarding volcanic eruptions?
 - A. Eruptions are most likely to happen in Indonesia and Japan.
 - B. Experts can predict when there will be a volcanic eruption.
 - C. Most large cities have no appropriate evacuation plans in place.
 - D. People will be less affected than before.
4. What does "do it" (underlined) in paragraph 4 refer to?
 - A. go and live somewhere else
 - B. build farms on the land
 - C. force people to leave the area
 - D. leave the area until the danger has passed
5. What does the article say about Popocatepetl?
 - A. There was a major eruption in 1994.
 - B. Experts expect a major eruption within a few years.
 - C. Nobody knows whether it will erupt again.
 - D. People who live nearby are fed up with being evacuated.
6. Why was the eruption of Manna Loa less dangerous?
 - A. People had been evacuated from the area beforehand.
 - B. People were able to keep ahead of the lava.
 - C. Scientists had warned people well in advance.
 - D. It was not a major eruption.
7. What would be the most appropriate title for this article?
 - A. Volcanoes: Sleeping Threat for Millions.
 - B. Volcanic Eruptions and Other Natural Disasters.
 - C. Volcanic Activity in Italy.
 - D. Volcanic Eruption: A Study of Volcanic Behaviour.