TASK 4

Jobs which have disappeared into the history books

1 Gas lamplighter

From 1807 gas lighting played a crucial role in keeping crime down across the UK. So, virtually every town and city suburb had a lamplighter who'd begin an illuminating patrol at dusk, then another at dawn when he'd put out the flame. The beginning of the job's end was in 1879 when the first electric street lighting was unveiled in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and by the early 20th century they had replaced virtually all gas lamps. A handful of gas lamps still remain, often in city centres, but most are now fitted with self-lighting devices.

2 Resurrectionist

It sounds like a religious cult, but they were actually just people (called graverobbers) paid to dig up dead bodies for scientific experiments. Dissections on the dead took place as early as the 3rd century BC, then as medicine quickly advanced in the 1700s and 1800s, the demand for bodies increased. But a scandal ensued when hundreds of families were left heartbroken after it was revealed that graverobbers had been digging up their loved ones. The resurrectionists were then dealt a blow by the 1838 Anatomy Act which allowed people to leave their bodies for scientific experimentation.

3 Knocker up

Right up to the 1920s, many people still paid to be woken up by having their door or window knocked on at a specified time. Young boys, women, and even policemen would use a truncheon, a long stick or sometimes a pea shooter, to rouse sleepers and earn some extra money. They weren't allowed to leave the doorstep until they were sure they'd done their job – a risky business when their bleary-eyed employers' first act of the day was to empty their full bed pan out of the window. Thankfully the invention of alarm clocks signaled the end for this profession.

4 Aircraft listener

As recently as the 1930s, Britain's only defence against invading aircraft were military ears, though the men who had to listen for the enemy did have a number of peculiar devices they could use. During the First World War they employed "war tubas" designed to funnel the sound of approaching engines into a single pair of headphones. They also developed sound mirrors, which were giant concrete discs that bounced sounds onto a central point where they were picked up by a microphone. But by the Second World War the RAF had, thankfully, developed radar – an innovation which helped defeat Hitler's Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain.

5 Moirologist

In the 19th century, when funerals were a status symbol as well as a fond farewell, wealthier families often felt that they needed to hire status-boosting professional criers. The hired mourners would often include a sad-looking young boy, a job Oliver Twist briefly had in Charles Dickens' classic tale of Victorian poverty. Not surprisingly, paying pretenders to pay their respects quickly fell out of fashion by the 1900s.

6 Rat catcher

Though the idea of catching smelly and often disease-ridden creatures might not hold much appeal, it was a common job for centuries. One Londoner, Jack Black, even gained celebrity status in the mid 19th century after falsely claiming he was Queen Victoria's personal rat catcher. They were mostly caught, often with the help of terriers, to keep their numbers down. But the animals were also sold on to posh ladies who thought keeping them in gilded cages was fashionable. Thankfully, the trend died out and local authorities found more effective ways of keeping the streets free from rats.

Which job _____?

A	got you paid for disturbing people
B	helped prevent crime
C	was mentioned in a book
D	is still possible to find nowadays
E	was the only protection against the attacks from air
F	brought fame to one of the workers
G	required a degree
H	made some people feel sad

LIVEWORKSHEETS