READING B2

8

Part 5

You are going to read an extract from a novel in which a young woman called Caitlin talks about her life on an island. For questions **31 – 36**, choose the answer (**A**, **B**, **C** or **D**) which you think fits best according to the text.

Mark your answers **on the separate answer sheet**.

We live on the island of Hale. It's about four kilometres long and two kilometres wide at its broadest point, and it's joined to the mainland by a causeway called the Stand - a narrow road built across the mouth of the river which separates us from the rest of the country. Most of the time you wouldn't know we're on an island because the river mouth between us and the mainland is just a vast stretch of tall grasses and brown mud. But when there's a high tide and the water rises a half a metre or so above the road and nothing can pass until the tide goes out again a few hours later, then you know it's an island.

We were on our way back from the mainland. My older brother, Dominic, had just finished his first year at university in a town 150 km away. Dominic's train was due in at five and he'd asked for a lift back from the station. Now, Dad normally hates being disturbed when he's writing (which is just about all the time), and he also hates having to go *any*where, but despite the typical sighs and moans – why can't he get a taxi? what's wrong with the bus? – I could tell by the sparkle in his eyes that he was really looking forward to seeing Dominic.

So, anyway, Dad and I had driven to the mainland and picked up Dominic from the station. He had been talking non-stop from the moment he'd slung his rucksack in the boot and got in the car. University this, university that, writers, books, parties, people, money, gigs..... And when I say talking, I don't mean talking as in having a conversation, I mean talking as in jabbering like a mad thing. I didn't like it .....the way he spoke and waved his hands around as if he was some kind of intellectual or something. It was embarrassing. It made me feel uncomfortable – that kind of discomfort you feel when someone you like, someone close to you, suddenly starts acting like a complete idiot. And I didn't like the way he was ignoring me, either. For all the attention I was getting I might as well not have been there. I felt a stranger in my own car.

As we approached the island on that Friday afternoon, the tide was low and the Stand welcomed us home, stretched out before us, clear and dry, beautifully hazy in the heat – a raised strip of grey concrete bound by white railings and a low footpath on either side, with rough cobbled banks leading down to the water. Beyond the railings, the water was glinting with that wonderful silver light we sometimes get here in the late afternoon which lazes through to the early evening.

We were about halfway across when I saw the boy. My first thought was how odd it was to see someone walking on the Stand. You don't often see people walking around here. Between Hale and Moulton (the nearest town about thirty kilometres away on the mainland), there's nothing but small cottages, farmland, heathland and a couple of hills. So islanders don't walk because of that. If they're going to Moulton they tend to take the bus. So the only pedestrians you're likely to see around here are walkers or bird-watchers. But even from a distance I could tell that the figure ahead didn't fit into either of these categories. I wasn't sure how I knew, I just did.

As we drew closer, he became clearer. He was actually a young man rather than a boy. Although he was on the small side, he wasn't as slight as I'd first thought. He wasn't exactly muscular, but he wasn't weedy-looking either. It's hard to explain. There was a sense of strength about him, a graceful strength that showed in his balance, the way he held himself, the way he walked....

LIVEWORKSHEETS

31 In the first paragraph, what is Caitlin's main point about the island?

A It can be dangerous to try to cross from the mainland.
B It is much smaller than it looks from the mainland.
C It is only completely cut off at certain times.
D It can be a difficult place for people to live in.

32 What does Caitlin suggest about her father?

A His writing prevents him from doing things he wants to with his family.
B His initial reaction to his son's request is different from usual.
C His true feelings are easily hidden from his daughter.
D His son's arrival is one event he will take time off for.

33 Caitlin emphasises her feelings of discomfort because she

A is embarrassed that she doesn't understand what her brother is talking about.
B feels confused about why she can't relate to her brother any more.
C is upset by the unexpected change in her brother's behaviour.
D feels foolish that her brother's attention is so important to her.

34 In the fourth paragraph, what is Caitlin's purpose in describing the island?

A to express her positive feelings about it
B to explain how the road was built
C to illustrate what kind of weather was usual
D to describe her journey home

35 In 'because of that' in line 31, 'that' refers to the fact that

A locals think it is odd to walk anywhere.
B it is easier for people to take the bus than walk.
C people have everything they need on the island.
D there is nowhere in particular to walk to from the island.

36 What do we learn about Caitlin's reactions to the boy?

A She felt his air of confidence contrasted with his physical appearance.
B She was able to come up with a reason for him being there.
C She realised her first impression of him was inaccurate.
D She thought she had seen him somewhere before.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Part 6

You are going to read a newspaper article in which a former ballet dancer talks about the physical demands of the job. Six sentences have been removed from the article. Choose from the sentences **A – G** the one which fits each gap (**37 – 42**). There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

Mark your answers **on the separate answer sheet**.

Good preparation leads to success in ballet dancing



A former classical ballet dancer explains what ballet training actually involves.

What we ballet dancers do is instinctive, but instinct learnt through a decade of training. A dancer's life is hard to understand, and easy to misinterpret. Many a poet and novelist has tried to do so, but even they have chosen to interpret all the hard work and physical discipline as obsessive. And so the idea persists that dancers spend every waking hour in pain, bodies at breaking point, their smiles a pretence.

As a former dancer in the Royal Ballet Company here in Britain, I would beg to question this. **37** With expert teaching and daily practice, its various demands are easily within the capacity of the healthy human body. Contrary to popular belief, there is no need to break bones or tear muscles to achieve ballet positions. It is simply a question of sufficient conditioning of the muscular system.

Over the course of my dancing life I worked my way through at least 10,000 ballet classes. I took my first at a school of dance at the age of seven and my last 36 years later at the Royal Opera House in London. In the years between, ballet class was the first thing I did every day. It starts at an early age, this daily ritual, because it has to. **38** But for a ballet dancer in particular, this lengthy period has to come before the effects of adolescence set in, while maximum flexibility can still be achieved.

Those first classes I took were remarkably similar to the last. In fact, taking into account the occasional new idea, ballet classes have changed little since 1820, when the details of ballet technique were first written down, and are easily recognised in any country. Starting with the left hand on the barre, the routine unrolls over some 75 minutes. **39** Even the leading dancers have to do it.

These classes serve two distinct purposes: they are the way we warm our bodies and the mechanism by which we improve basic technique. In class after class, we prove the old saying that 'practice makes perfect'. **40** And it is also this daily repetition which enables us to strengthen the muscles required in jumping, spinning or lifting our legs to angles impossible to the average person.

The human body is designed to adapt to the demands we make of it, provided we make them carefully and over time. **41** In the same way, all those years of classes add up to a fit-for-purpose dancing machine. This level of physical fluency doesn't hurt; it feels good.

42 But they should not be misled: there is a difference between hard work and hardship. Dancers have an everyday familiarity with the first. Hardship it isn't.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

A Through endless tries at the usual exercises and frequent failures, ballet dancers develop the neural pathways in the brain necessary to control accurate, fast and smooth movement.

B The ballet shoe offers some support, but the real strength is in the muscles, built up through training.

C As technology takes away activity from the lives of many, perhaps the ballet dancer's physicality is ever more difficult for most people to imagine.

D Ballet technique is certainly extreme but it is not, in itself, dangerous.

E The principle is identical in the gym – pushing yourself to the limit, but not beyond, will eventually bring the desired result.

F No one avoids this: it is ballet's great democratiser, the well established members of the company working alongside the newest recruits.

G It takes at least a decade of high-quality, regular practice to become an expert in any physical discipline.

LIVEWORKSHEETS