Part 5

You are going to read an article about a woman who trains actors in fighting skills. 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**.

Kombat Kate

James Stanton meets 'Kombat Kate' Waters, who trains theatre actors in how to 'fight' on stage.

There must be few occasions when it would be really rude to refuse an invitation to head-butt someone you've just met! But I'm in one of those right now. I'm in a rehearsal room in a theatre with a group of actors, facing up to stage fighting director Kate Waters. I've already dragged her around the room and slapped her on the arm. Now she wants me to head-butt her. But fear not, this is all strictly pretend!

'Imagine there's a tin can on my shoulder,' she says. 'Now try to knock it off.' I lower my head as instructed, then lift it sharply, aiming for the imaginary can, hoping desperately that I don't miscalculate the angle and end up doing damage to her face. To my amazement, I get it right. 'That was good,' says Waters. 'Now maybe try it again without smiling.'

Waters, known in the industry as Kombat Kate, is showing me how actors fight each other without getting hurt, and that includes sword-fighting. (She inspires fierce devotion: when I tweet that I'm meeting Waters, one actress friend responds: 'She's amazing. She taught me how to be a secret service agent in two days.')

Perhaps the most famous play Kate has worked on recently was called *Noises Off*. She taught the cast how to fall down stairs without breaking any bones. One of the fight scenes is fairly close, Kate tells me, to the one we're trying out now. 'I've just slowed it down a bit,' she says tactfully, before inviting me to throw her against the wall. I obey, making sure I let go of her quickly, so she can control her own movement. Push your opponent too hard, and they will hit the wall for real. I watch her hit the wall before falling to the ground. She's fine, of course. 'That's my party trick,' she says with a grin. 'Works every time.'

Once the lesson is over Kate tells me how she became one of only two women on the official register of stage fight directors. Already a keen martial arts expert from childhood, Kate did drama at university, and one module of her course introduced her to stage combat. When she made enquiries about the possibility of teaching it as a career, she was told about the register and the qualifications she'd need to be accepted onto it.
22 It was no small order: as well as a certificate in advanced stage combat, she would need a black belt in karate and proficiency in fencing, a sport she'd never tried before.

But she rose to the challenge and taught the subject for several years at a drama college before going freelance and becoming a fight advisor for the theatrical world. The play she's working on is Shakespeare's Richard III. This involves a famous sword fight. With no instructions left by the great playwright other than – Enter Richard and Richmond: they fight, Richard dies – the style and sequence of the fight is down to Kate and the actors.

'I try to get as much information as possible about what a fight would have been like in a particular period,'
30 Kate explains. 'But because what I'm eventually doing is telling a dramatic story, not all of it is useful. The scene has to be exciting and do something for the audience.'

Ultimately, of course, a stage fight is all smoke and mirrors. In our lesson, Kate shows me how an actor will stand with his or her back to the audience ahead of a choreographed slap or punch. When the slap comes it makes contact not with skin but with air: the actor whacks his chest or leg to make the sound of the slap.

In the rehearsal room, I can't resist asking Kate how she thinks she would fare in a real fight. Would she give her attacker a hard time? She laughs, 'Oh, I'd be awful,' she says. 'I only know how to fake it.' I can't help thinking, however, that she's just being rather modest.

LIVEWORKSHEETS