Paper 1: Reading (1 hour)

PART 1

You are going to read a newspaper article about an adventure centre. For questions 1–8, 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.

A family adventure centre

I'm focused. Completely terrified, but focused. I've got a tiny area to stand on and beneath me is a 10-metre drop. To make things worse, the totem pole that I'm trying to climb onto is shaking. With one knee bent on the top of the pole and the other foot next to it, I slowly stand up with my arms outstretched for balance. Once upright, my legs are still wobbling but an enormous smile has spread across my face. I shuffle my toes over the edge. And then I jump. Back on the ground, my knees won't stop quaking. But for the boys at Head 4 Heights, an aerial adventure centre in Cirencester, it's all in a day's work.

Head 4 Heights, one of the tallest climbing centres in Britain, opened two years ago. It's the only UK climbing centre open to the public year-round (the only days it closes are when winds exceed 70 mph, almost enough to blow you off a totem pole and into one of the lakes). The course was set up by Rod Baber, adventurer extraordinaire and holder of the world record for scaling the highest peak of every country in Europe in the shortest time. Rod's latest plan is to snag the record for North and South America as well, but in between he starts every day with a clamber round the Cirencester course. His favourite is the 'Trapeze' challenge: 'It still gets me every time. Eyes dilate, mouth goes dry and adrenalin goes everywhere.'

Although the course is only roughly the size of a tennis court, it packs a lot into a small space. There are four totem poles (of varying degrees of difficulty according to the holds attached to them), a stairway to heaven (a giant ladder with an increasing distance between the rungs), two freefall platforms and a trapeze jump. Plans for a new 30-metre pole are presently under way. All can be made easier or harder, according to ability, and incorporated into different challenges, which is why the course has proved a success with families, corporate days out and the armed forces. More than half who visit return for more and the centre now averages about 1,500 visitors a month.

All ages over five are welcome, but children are the most enthusiastic and 'far easier to teach than the bankers,' says Rod. Parents are usually more reluctant to join in. 'We hear all sorts of excuses,' says Rod. 'Everything from bad knees to "I haven't trimmed my toenails".' The oldest customer was a 78-year-old who arrived with his son and grandson. When the younger two decided to give it a miss, the grandfather set off to show them how it was done.

For the most part, though, people start off nervous and only gain confidence as they progress. 'Everything is kept very positive. We always tell people to look up not down and to take their time,' says Rod. 'We want to push people outside their comfort zone and into the adventure zone, but we don't want people to be pushed into the panic zone, which can be mentally damaging.'

Also reassuring is the 100 per cent safety record. The course was designed and built by Nick Moriarty, an expert in his field who has constructed 450 courses in 16 countries and trained 2,700 instructors. Key to the design is the safety-rope system, which ensures that if you do lose your balance or grip, your full-body harness will guarantee that you float, not fall, back to earth.

What isn't guaranteed, though, is family harmony. 'The Leap of Love' is usually left as the final challenge and involves two (similarly sized) people squeezing themselves onto a 'bird table' at the top of a totem pole, before jumping in tandem to grab a trapeze. Not everything always goes according to plan. Aside from not arguing, both people need to be careful not to unbalance each other and must jump at exactly the same time. 'We do have some people who have refused to speak to each other afterwards,' says Rod, 'but if you can both make it together, it's such a buzz.'

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1 One problem the writer describes in the first paragraph is that

A she keeps falling off the totem pole.
B she is trying to stand on top of a moving object.
C she cannot get her arms into the right position.
D she is too nervous to complete the climb.

1

2 What do we learn about Head 4 Heights in the second paragraph?

A It remains open even in quite windy conditions.
B Rod Baber got the idea for it while climbing mountains.
C It did not initially stay open throughout the year.
D It is aimed at people who don't have the chance to climb mountains.

2

3 What does Rod Baber say about the 'Trapeze' challenge?

A He does it more often than anything else on the course.
B He always fails to complete it.
C He continues to find it difficult.
D He takes a long time to recover after doing it.

3

The writer says that the main reason for the course's popularity is that

A the challenges it offers cannot be found anywhere else.
B new challenges are constantly being added.
C it can be completed in a fairly short time.
D it can be adapted for different people.

4

5 The people who 'decided to give it a miss' (column 2) are examples of people who

A find it difficult to do the course.
B are unwilling to do the course.
C are easily taught how to do the course.
D give up while they are doing course.

5

6 Rod says that the intention of the course is that people taking part

A learn how to deal with extreme fear.
B progress as quickly as possible.
C take risks they might not initially want to take.
D increase in confidence after repeated visits.

6

7 The writer uses the phrase 'Also reassuring' (column 3) to emphasize

A that people benefit from doing the course.
B how carefully the course has been constructed.
C that people should not be afraid to do the course.
D how enthusiastic Rod is about the course.

7

8 What is said about 'The Leap of Love'?

A Most people fail to do it successfully.
B It can cause people to fall out with each other.
C It is the hardest challenge on the course.
D Some people don't try hard enough to do it.

8

LIVEWORKSHEETS