You are going to read an extract from a novel. 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**.

Lucy gets a new job on a newspaper

It was a precarious period for her where her own fortunes were concerned. She had to rely on freelance work for six months after the quality weekly magazine folded. The regular salary cheque had always seemed derisively small, but now it was like lost riches. Doggedly, she wrote letters and telephoned and peppered editors with unsolicited articles and suggestions. Sometimes she struck lucky and got a commission. She wrote a profile of a woman politician who appreciated her fair-minded approach and tipped her off about a local government row in a complacent cathedral town. Lucy went there, investigated, talked to people and wrote a piece exposing a rich cauldron of corruption which was snapped up by a national daily newspaper. This in turn led to a commission to investigate the controversial siting of a theme park in the north of England. Her article was noticed by the features editor in search of something sharp and bracing on the heritage industry in general. She was getting a name for abrasive comment, for spotting an issue and homing in upon it. Anxiously, she scoured the press for hints of impending issues. In this trade, she saw, you needed not so much to be abreast of things as ahead of them, lying in wait for circumstance, ready to pounce.

But an article sold every week or two did not pay the bills. She began to contemplate, bleakly, a return to the treadmill of proofreading and copy-editing. And then one day she walked into the offices of the national daily which had taken her cauldron of corruption piece and whose features editor had since looked kindly upon her. Having handed over a speculative piece on the latest educational theories she'd written, she fell into conversation with an acquaintance and learned that one of the paper's regular columnists had fallen foul of the editor and departed in a cloud of dust. The column, traditionally addressed to matters of the moment and written so as to provoke attention and controversy, was untethered, so to speak. Lucy made the necessary phone call before her nerve went.

She was asked to submit a piece as a trial run which they published. 'Great,' they said. 'We'll let you know,' they said. 'Soon,' they assured her, 'really very soon.' She chewed her nails for a fortnight; a seasoned hack was given a trial run after her; she read his contribution which, she saw with absolute clarity, was succinct, incisive and original. Or just possibly anodyne, banal and plodding.

And then, the phone call came. She'd have a weekly column with her own by-line and her photograph, postage-stamp size, next to it. There'd be a salary cheque, and perhaps fame and success to follow that. Thinking more pragmatically, she realised that the job presented her with not only a wonderful opportunity but also the inevitable pressure of keeping up with the twists and turns of events to which she must supply a perceptive commentary.

'A start,' she said to her mother, Maureen, and Bruce, her step-father. 'It's a start anyway, but they could fire me at any moment.'

'Just let them try,' said Maureen belligerently. 'I think you're better with your hair a bit shorter. Or maybe that's not a very flattering picture. I think you're very clever. You did some lovely essays at school. I wonder if I've still got any of them somewhere.'

Later, when she was alone, Lucy thought that her appointment had probably been a piece of good fortune. She refused to allow the word luck. She was young yet, and this was something of a plum. She must have got the job on her merits, she told herself, along with whatever assistance there may have been from the inadequacies of others considered for the appointment, or the failure of further rivals to apply. What she was never to know was that in fact the editor had been on the verge of offering the column to the seasoned hack – had been about to pick up the phone – when the colleague he most disliked had walked into his office and spoken with satisfaction of the prospect of closer association with this old crony of his. The editor listened with some indignation, first at the assumption that this would be his decision, and then at the notion of these two ganging up under his nose. As soon as the colleague was out of the room he reached for the phone. And rang Lucy.

And so it began, that time during which she was so feverishly hitched to the affairs of public life that in retrospect it was to seem as though she hurtled from day to day with the onward rush of the news, denied any of the lethargy of individual existence.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1 After losing her job, how did Lucy feel about the salary she used to earn?

A She had been foolish to give it up.
B It had given her a sense of security.
C She should have appreciated it more.
D It represented a fair return for her work.

2 Lucy thinks the secret of success as a freelance journalist is to

A keep yourself informed about current affairs.
B adopt a controversial style of writing.
C identify future newsworthy situations.
D make as many contacts as possible.

3 What made Lucy decide to apply for a job on the national daily?

A She had a friend who worked there.
B She had impressed the features editor.
C She had gained a reputation for effective reporting.
D She had discovered some information about a vacancy.

4 It is suggested that Lucy's mother Maureen

A is forgetful and absent-minded.
B understands little about Lucy's job.
C has good critical judgement about writing.
D expects Lucy will have trouble with the editor.

5 On reflection, how did Lucy account for the fact that she got the job?

A She hoped it was because she deserved it.
B She was unable to understand how it happened.
C She thought her age had given her an advantage.
D She knew she was better than the many applicants.

6 The impression given of the editor is that he is

A anxious to please his colleagues.
B unable to make up his mind.
C prone to act on impulse.
D quick to take offence.

LIVEWORKSHEETS