

Reading

- 1 You are going to read a newspaper article about a man who went diving in an ice-covered lake. Six sentences have been removed from the article. Choose from the sentences A–G the one which fits each gap (1–6). There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

Ice Diving

Nicholas Roe has a go at ice diving in the French Pyrenees.

Right up to the moment when I plunge through the ice into the freezing waters of a mountain lake high in the French Pyrenees my day has been quite normal. I enjoyed breakfast at my hotel in the little ski resort of Saint-Lary. Then came a fine walk in the snow. What exactly made me book an ice-dive?

Driving to nearby Piau-Engaly along winding roads, I struggle for an answer, climbing eventually onto a snowmobile for the final five-minute bounce across the ski slopes to the meeting place. **1** Except for my guide, Nicolas Chapelle, who asks me if I really want to do this. Against my better judgement, I say, 'Yes'.

I pick up a big iron bar and help him make a hole in the ice. **2** Deep in my stomach a bitter cold expands at the sight of that growing two-metre hole. Chapelle asks me to take off all my clothes, except for my underwear, and put on a big rubber suit. I feel a bit concerned. In theory, anyone can do this – divers, non-divers, even non-swimmers. Yet standing by that ice hole, it seems suddenly less easy.

I squeeze into the rubber gear like meat into a thick-skinned sausage, then put on the air tank, glancing over at ski runs full of bright figures rushing past. It's minus five out here, the water only seven degrees more.



Oh heavens. **3** Chapelle says: 'Relax, but stay strong. You'll be fine.' Yes, but ... oh, he's gone in.

Masked up and ready, his goggled-eyed face looking out above the lake surface, he signals me to follow. **4** Water cold enough to kill if not for my suit. And it feels ... ah, this curious sensation. I am not cold, not warm. I hover in the water, staring at the blue sunlight shining through the ice, lighting up the water.

Above me, the unbelievable roof of ice, marked now with a strange black fluid. **5** But I feel free; amazed, too. I am contained by water, covered by thick ice in a clear space with fish swimming – I see them, they're right here – while in the distance a mountain stream runs into the farthest end of the lake. I feel as if I'm in space; as if I'm swimming in a huge building.

Chapelle won't let go of my air tank. **6** However, it leaves me with a sense of annoyance because I want to twist and turn and enjoy this strange environment. Perhaps it's as well, then, that he steers me gently here, where I follow the fish for minutes; and here, where I stare back up at our escape hole and wonder at the blueness of the world.

Now we are heading back towards the light, breaking the surface where someone pulls me out. I am standing on ice, staring back into the water, barely able to believe that this is where I have been. And I can think about this for years. Which is, I now realise, why I came.

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| <p>A The lake surface slowly breaks up into chunks big enough to fill a world-beating cold drink, the rim of black water growing with each smash.</p> <p>B I find myself now sitting on the ice, staring in disbelief at my flippers hanging in the lake water.</p> <p>C This turns out to be my own breath collecting in mobile puddles, trapped, as I am trapped.</p> <p>D I pause occasionally on the way to watch the skiers go past the lake.</p> | <p>E There I find a fenced lake, a metal hut and nothing else.</p> <p>F This is irritating but possibly safer.</p> <p>G I'm afraid of looking afraid, so I plunge head-first, almost bashing Chapelle in the face, and together we sink, the water taking us down, down.</p> |
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