The fake hairdresser remembers

Some years ago, a British TV company came up with an idea for a reality TV show. People with no experience would be trained in a profession in a very short period of time, then would try and pass themselves off as the real thing with the general public. The show was called *Faking It*, and the format has since been imitated the world over. One of the first contestants was Gavin Freeborn, a twenty-three-year-old farmer's son, who trained with celebrity hairdresser Trevor Sorbie in London. Gavin remembers the experience.

'I was at university, studying for a degree in agriculture, when some friends mentioned that a TV company had advertised for people to take part in *Faking It*. They were looking for someone who'd never picked up a pair of scissors or thought of hairdressing as a career, which I certainly hadn't. I reckoned it would be a laugh. Having spent my school holidays shearing sheep on my parents' farm, I was used to the idea of haircutting, but obviously it's harder doing it on people – because they have an opinion about it!'

'I'd never been to London before and it was so busy that I felt a bit overwhelmed at first. Meeting Trevor for the first time, he seemed really strict, but once he realised I was taking the challenge seriously we got on like a house on fire and they often had to stop filming because we couldn't stop giggling. Fortunately, I didn't have to do any of the washing or sweeping floors other people new to the business have to do. I went straight into blow-drying and cutting instead.'

'At first I practised on a dummy's head, which was a welcome safety net, but I did make a really bad mistake halfway through filming when I was cutting one real man's hair. I'd been shown how to use clippers to get a cropped effect but hadn't been warned to angle the comb. I ended up shaving off a huge patch of hair! He couldn't see what I'd done, but the camera crew couldn't stop laughing, so it was obvious I'd made a mistake. Luckily, I managed to rectify the situation and told the client, who was alright about it, so I forgave them.'

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‘By the day of my final test, I knew I was capable but I felt sick with nerves. I didn’t want to let Trevor down. But even though I failed to convince the client that I was a real hairdresser, she approved of the haircut and the judges were impressed by it, too. It didn’t worry me at the time but, looking back now, I think it was a bit unfair that I was penalised for taking too long – and hour-and-a-half – when I’d been taught the most important thing was to ensure your client walks out of the salon feeling like a million dollars.’

‘After the programme, I went home for a week but I decided to come back to London because I’d fallen in love with the buzz of the city. People in town kept stopping and staring at me as if I was famous. I found this unnerving at first, but with time I got used to it. There were a few comments about me being too full of myself, but I took no notice.’

‘When I agreed to do *Faking It*, I had no idea how much I was signing my life away, but I couldn’t say I have any regrets. The thing is that I’ve discovered growing up on a farm doesn’t mean I can’t work in a creative field. What’s more, I’ve now got choices I didn’t realise I had, which is brilliant. Although I still keep in contact with everyone from Trevor’s salon, and we all go out when I’m in London, I’m hardly a celebrity anymore.’

1 Why did Gavin first apply to be on the programme?

A He thought it would be fun.

B He liked the idea of going to London.

C His friends managed to talk him into it.

D He had some experience of hairdressing.

2 How did Gavin feel about the hairdressing mistake he made one day?

A sorry that the client was dissatisfied

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B relieved that the client didn't notice it

C pleased that he was able to find a solution

D annoyed by the reaction of the camera crew

3 How did Gavin feel on the day of his final test?

A unsure if he was good enough

B worried that he might not succeed

C unconvinced that the client was really happy

D disappointed by the feedback from the judges

4 Thinking about the final test now, Gavin feels that he

A was too slow in completing the haircut.

B didn't take enough notice of his client's wishes.

C was unjustly criticised for one aspect of his performance.

D should have paid some attention to things he'd been taught.

5 What does the word 'it' in line 33 refer to?

A people making comments about Gavin

B people looking at Gavin in the street.

C Gavin feeling proud of himself

D Gavin feeling uncomfortable

6 Looking back on the whole experience, Gavin now

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A wishes he'd thought more carefully before applying.

B realises that his life is different as a result.

C appreciates his farm upbringing more.

D accepts that it's helped him socially.

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