Reading Comprehension

1. Read the film reviews and choose the correct answers.

Your views, your reviews

Sea Slickers

It has been quite a while since their last film, but award-winning writers Rasmussen and Keen return to our screens in great form with this animated tale of adventure and romance on the high seas. The plot is not especially original or clever but the action is fast-paced, the humour smart and there is an interesting combination of familiar and new names amongst the cast. Beautifully drawn and animated and with a script full of jokes to appeal to all ages, this is a surefire summer hit for children aged 6 to 60.

Bullet Fast

Even the star-studded cast cannot do much with this very one-paced and predictable thriller. With no twists in the tail and little attempt at characterisation, this is chewing gum for the eyes and little more. If you like watching stars in an endless succession of (very impressive, it should be said) car chases and gunfights then this is the film for you, and there's no doubt that the names on the poster are enough to guarantee success at the box office. But if you're looking for clever dialogue and an intelligent plot then better look elsewhere.

The Other Side

When the studio announced plans to produce a new version of this classic film many people wondered why. After all, the original is seen by many as a near-perfect example of the horror genre, still scaring viewers decades after it was first shown. Now that the remake is out, after three years and tens of millions of dollars, viewers who see it can be forgiven for asking the same question because this is a worse film in every possible way. Do yourself a favour, find a cinema showing the original film and spend your money there. You won't regret it.

Against the Odds

This heartwarming biopic, based on real events, describes the troubles and triumphs of an autistic young man from a small town in Texas who grew up to be one of the United States' greatest writers. There are no stars in the film but, far from being a problem, this is actually beneficial as it makes the story the central element. It is a remarkable tale, a real life story more amazing than anything Hollywood could invent and watching his struggles in his early life at home and school and his refusal to give up on his dreams is both disturbing and inspiring, while the film's ending is one of the most emotional of the year. This is not a film for somebody looking for easy laughs or simple happy endings, but if you want to see an intelligent and emotionally powerful real-life story then this is the film for you.

Two in the Bag

Fans of Ryan Cooper and John Hill will be delighted to see them back together in this chaotic police comedy. The pair play two police officers investigating a series of disappearances but, as usual when these actors are paired together, the plot takes second place to a series of jokes and increasingly absurd situations. The film is rather a mixed bag, however, with a few genuinely hilarious moments but also many remarkably unfunny jokes along the way. Not their best film by a long way and recommended only for the pair's hottest fans.

1. The actors in *Sea Slickers* are

- ◯ all very famous.
- ◯ all not very famous.
- ◯ a mixture of famous and not famous.
- ◯ the same as in previous films.

4. The biopic *Against the Odds*

- ◯ would be better if there were famous actors in the film.
- ◯ contains a mixture of different emotions.
- ◯ has a happy ending.
- ◯ is a documentary.

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2. The thriller *Bullet Fast*

- ◯ is sure to be a commercial success.
- ◯ is well-written.
- ◯ is full of surprises.
- ◯ lacks famous actors.

3. Viewers of *The Other Side*

- ◯ were excited about the film before it was made.
- ◯ are bored of the original film.
- ◯ can see the original film for free.
- ◯ still do not understand why the film was made.

5. In *Two in the Bag*

- ◯ the actors appear together for the first time.
- ◯ the jokes are more important than the story.
- ◯ there are no funny jokes.
- ◯ the main character disappears.

2. Read the text and complete the gaps (1-5) with sentences (A-G). There are two extra sentences.

VERY SPECIAL OLYMPICS

A brief history of the Paralympic Games

The very beginning

The first official Paralympic Games were organised in Rome in 1960, in the week before the Olympic Games in the Italian capital. The Paralympic Games were much smaller than the Olympics but were still quite a large event, involving 400 athletes from 23 countries competing in almost 60 different events.

(1) --- After the Second World War, in 1948, a sports competition for injured veterans had been organised in England. Initially this was only organised for wheelchair bound British veterans, but other countries joined four years later and these events are generally seen as leading to the first official Paralympic Games.

The early years

(2) --- Other forms of disability were included from 1976 and the number of athletes and disciplines grew quickly. In recent decades the Paralympics have become more closely linked to the Olympics and from 1988 onwards both games have been organised in the same city, something that had not happened since Rome 1960. Since 1976 the Paralympic Winter Games have also been organised, and from 1992 the Winter Paralympics have been held in the same city as the Winter Olympics. Today the Paralympic movement is a worldwide movement which, apart from organising the games, is involved in education and science in the field of disabled sport and in publicising the achievements of disabled athletes.

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A serious business

In the first Paralympic Games there were no more than three athletes in each event, meaning every athlete stood on the podium. (3) --- Indeed, so serious is the fight for medals in the Paralympic Games that competitors have been caught cheating in various ways, including doping and even able-bodied athletes pretending to have disabilities. The Paralympic Games is without question an elite sporting competition and the Paralympic champion at three different distances, Oscar Pistorius of South Africa, a double amputee who runs with special 'blades' in place of his lower legs, qualified for the individual 400m at the able-bodied World Championships in 2011, reaching the second round of the competition. More remarkably still, he won a silver medal at the same games as part of his country's sprint relay team, also breaking the national record. Several other athletes have competed in both the Paralympics and the Olympics. Probably the most famous Paralympian is Trischa Zorn of the United States, a blind swimmer. Over a period of 24 years she won an incredible 55 Paralympic medals, including 41 gold medals. (4) ---

The games today

The Paralympic Games have grown to an impressive size. The numbers speak for themselves: in Beijing in 2008 there were almost ten times as many athletes as there had been at the first official games in 1960. A wide range of disabilities are today included in the games and a complex classification system is used to ensure fairness. (5) --- These include some variations of Olympic sports, such as wheelchair basketball, and some exclusively Paralympic sports, such as boccia (a sport similar to French boules) and goalball (similar to handball but played lying on the ground). The 2012 Paralympic Games is expected to be the largest and most extensively-broadcast in history, continuing the trend of increasing interest in the games each time they are held.

A. The rules are detailed and precise.

B. Now, however, the level of competition is intense.

C. To put this in perspective, the next-best Olympic or Paralympic athlete has less than half of this.

D. At the moment there are 21 different Paralympic Games disciplines.

E. In actual fact, this was not the first such event.

F. After the first official Paralympics the movement grew rapidly.

G. This has continued ever since.

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3. Read three descriptions of the streets. Match descriptions A–C with sentences 1–4. One of the descriptions matches two sentences.

Shopping therapy

A. Fifth Avenue, New York

For many years, Fifth Avenue was home only to the most luxurious department stores and the most expensive fashion and jewellery brands. Luxury boutiques such as Tiffany & Co., Chanel, Versace and Prada lined the avenue. Despite a recent invasion by affordable brands such as the Disney Store, Adidas, Nike and H&M, this major thoroughfare in the heart of Manhattan remains New York's top shopping street and one of the best in the world. It is still home to designer boutiques and landmark department stores that compete with each other to create the most spectacular window displays at Christmas time.

B. Avenue Montaigne, Paris

In between the famous Champs Elysées and the banks of the River Seine, Avenue Montaigne is the most upscale shopping street in Paris. Whereas other parts of this elegant city have been overrun by mainstream fashion brand stores such as Zara and Mango, Avenue Montaigne retains its dedication to luxury with the presence of many high-end fashion brands, both French and international. Lined with elegant buildings, it is here where those who can afford it come to spend lavishly. It is also where you begin to realise that the French capital truly is the epicentre of sophistication and style.

C. Via Montenapoleone, Milan

Running parallel to the remains of the ancient Roman city walls which date to over 1,700 years ago, this street became the focus for the 2002 'Made In Italy' campaign to celebrate Italian creativity and promote Milan as the capital of fashion. All of the top Italian and international designers, together with the most exclusive Italian shoe stores, maintain boutiques here. Though the goods on offer are too expensive for the average person to afford, window shopping costs nothing. In addition to running stores here, many of the world's top fashion brands also have their headquarters on this street.

Which text mentions

1. an organised attempt to bring attention to a place? ---

2. a street which caters to those who are on a budget? ---

3. an activity that does not involve spending money? ---

4. distinctly different shopping areas of a city? ---

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4. Read the text and decide if the statements are true or false.

Making music

Many teenagers dream of having a hit single and becoming a famous musician but Rihanna actually made her dream come true. By the time she was seventeen, she had released her first album and had an international smash hit with her first single *Pon de Replay*. Today she is a successful singer with fans all over the world.

Rihanna was born Robyn Rihanna Fenty in 1988 in Saint Michael, Barbados. She grew up there with her two younger brothers. As a child, she loved singing. She formed her first group with two friends from secondary school when she was just fifteen. In 2004 friends introduced the group to American record producer Evan Rogers, who was on holiday in Barbados. Rogers thought Rihanna could be a big star in America so she moved there aged sixteen to pursue her music career while she finished school.

Rihanna lived with Rogers and his wife and recorded a demo of four songs during the school holidays. As a result of the demo, she signed up with Def Jam Recordings and started work on her first album, *Music of the Sun*. It came out in 2005 and got into the top ten. Over 69,000 copies of the album were sold in the first week alone. It went on to sell over two million copies worldwide and Rihanna quickly became a big star. Her second album, *A Girl Like Me*, came out a year later and included the song *SOS*, which was her first number one hit in America.

In 2007 Rihanna brought out her third album, *Good Girl Gone Bad*, which had more dance tracks than the first two albums. It featured five top ten hits, including three number one singles in America and the worldwide hit *Don't Stop the Music*. The album was nominated for nine Grammy Awards and won Best Rap Sung Collaboration for the song *Umbrella*, which she sang with rapper Jay-Z. Her fourth album, *Rated R*, came out in 2009, followed by her fifth album, *Loud*, in 2010. These featured five international hit singles.

Rihanna has sold more than fifteen million albums and forty-five million singles worldwide, and had nine number one singles between 2005 and 2010, the most of any artist at the same time. However, she manages to find time for her charity work, too. She has performed in several concerts to raise money for charity and in 2006 she created her Believe Foundation to help sick children. She also took part in Gucci's campaign to raise funds for children in Africa.

	True	False
1. Rihanna's first single was a hit only in America.	○	○
2. There were three other singers in the first group she was in.	○	○
3. Rihanna didn't make the demo during term time.	○	○
4. Her third album was very similar to the first two albums.	○	○
5. Between 2005 and 2010 Rihanna had more number one hits than any other singer at that time.	○	○

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