

**Read the text about four impostors and for questions 1 – 15, choose from the people (A-D). The people may be chosen more than once.**

Which person 1) deceived people for financial gain?

2) had to act younger than his real age?

3) met a member of a royal family?

4) tried to make people's lives better?

5) spent some time in prison?

6) invented a story about an accident?

7) was not an easy person to get on with?

8) did not want to stop working?

9) changed his name several times?

10) made many public appearances in Europe?

11) has a role in a film about his life?

12) was born over 200 years ago?

13) went to university?

14) gave advice to businesses on stopping fraud?

15) was an early environmentalist?

## **IMPOSTORS**

### **A Doctor James Barry**

James Barry was a surgeon in the British army. Having graduated from Edinburgh University in 1812, he served in India, South Africa and the West Indies. Although he was a difficult and argumentative person who was always getting into trouble with his superiors, Barry worked hard to improve conditions for the troops and for ordinary people wherever he was staying. For example, when he was stationed in Cape town, South Africa, he developed ways of improving the town's supply of clean water. Barry retired in 1864 – apparently against his wishes – and returned to England. After his death in 1865, the post-mortem examination revealed that James Barry was in fact a woman. It is not clear why Barry chose to live as a man. Nobody is even sure what Barry's real name was. But one thing is certain: at that time, a woman could not have had a career as an army doctor. Being an impostor allowed Barry to help thousands of people around the world.

### **B Frédéric Bourdin**

The pupils at Jean Monnet College in Pau, southwest France, believed everything that their new 15-year-old classmate, Francisco, told them. He claimed that he had just arrived in France from Spain. He said that he had been an orphan since 2000, when his parents had died in a car crash, and that he had spent three months in a coma after the accident. But it was all a lie. Francisco was in fact a 31-year-old Frenchman called Frédéric Bourdin. The school only realised the truth when one of the teachers saw Bourdin on TV, in a documentary about impostors. The school principal, Claire Chardourne, said that the pupil had appeared a bit older than his classmates, but she also said that Bourdin had played the part of a 15-year-old brilliantly. 'He told me he had awful scars which he wanted to hide. I gave him special

permission to wear a cap. That is how he concealed his true age,' she said. Bourdin has confessed that he loved the attention he could get by pretending to be a youngster. 'In Pau, I got what I wanted. I loved the kids and the people who took care of them. They treated me like one of them.'

### **C Frank Abagnale**

In 1964, at the age of 16 Frank Abagnale ran away from home to New York City. He used various cons to get money from banks, changing his identity when he discovered his tricks. For two years he lived as Frank Williams and pretended to be an airline pilot with Pan Am. Wearing a pilot's uniform which he had tricked Pan Am head office into giving him, he used his forged ID card to travel around the world free on Pan Am planes. Later, he changed his name to Frank Connors, moved to Georgia, and posed as a doctor, even though he had no qualifications. When his fiancée realised that he was an impostor, she called the police and Frank had to disappear. But he soon re-emerged with a forged Law Diploma from Harvard University and got a job working for the Attorney General in Louisiana, over a period of five years, Abagnale used eight different identities and committed fraud in 26 different countries. His luck finally ran out in 1969, when he was arrested in France. After spending several years in jail, Abagnale was released and began a new, legitimate, and very successful career as a consultant to banks on how to prevent fraud. He also wrote a best-selling autobiography which was made into – Catch Me If You Can – starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hanks. Abagnale himself appears briefly in it but, of course, he does not play himself!

### **D Grey Owl**

In 1935, Londoners flocked to see a man called Grey Owl give lectures about the natural world. This unusual character would stand in front of his audience in full North American Indian dress and begin with these words: 'You are tired with years of civilisation. I come to offer you – What? A single green leaf.' Grey Owl was so popular in England that he gave over 200 lectures in four months and addressed 250,000 people about the beauty and significance of the wild. His second lecture tour, in 1937, was an even bigger success – he even gave a private talk to the king of England and Buckingham Palace. What his audiences did not know, however, was that Grey Owl was not a genuine North American, but rather from Hastings on the south coast of England, and his real name was Archibald Belaney. As a boy, young Archie had been fascinated by stories of the Canadian wilderness and the life of the people who lived there. So at the age of 18, he left England and went to live and work in Northern Ontario, Canada, where he pretended to be the child of a Scottish father and an Apache mother. It was only after his death that his true identity became public and his reputation suffered badly as a result. But although Grey Owl was fraud, he did a lot to educate and inspire people about the natural world.