


**The
FRENCH
SPIDER-MAN**

While no one is looking, Frenchman Alain Robert jumps up an office building and starts to climb the wall. He hangs from balconies, crawls along ledges and grips the edges of the glass and concrete. There's no rope and no safety net – he's using only his bare hands! By the time he's halfway up, a crowd has gathered on the pavement below. After an hour, he reaches the top and the crowd sighs with relief.

Alain has climbed over 85 of the tallest structures in the world, including the Eiffel Tower, the Empire State Building and the Petronas Twin Towers in Malaysia. One of his first climbs was at the age of twelve. He didn't have his flat keys and his parents were out, but he was able to climb up the outside of the building – seven storeys high – and crawl through a window. Nowadays he can manage eighty storeys but, amazingly, Alain suffers from vertigo – he feels dizzy when he's up high! He has fallen seven

times, suffering dozens of broken bones, which has left him partly disabled. But this doesn't stop Alain. "I only think about what I can do, not what I can't do," he says.

So why does he do it? Apart from raising awareness about world issues such as climate change, Alain wants people to see their environment differently. He says, "Maybe they think their building is ugly, this big tower with lots of glass – the opposite of a natural landscape. But for me, it's a kind of urban mountain. So I use the place where they work, and I make it a kind of wonderland. Everywhere I climb, I see people who are happy."

After a climb, Alain often leaves in handcuffs. What he does is sometimes illegal, but most of the time he just gets a fine. The police say he can't climb public buildings, but the only thing that stops this daredevil is rain! When it's wet, Alain can't grip the slippery surfaces. In 2002, he got stuck on the 35th floor of London's Canary Wharf Tower when it started to rain. Alain risks his life every time he climbs a new building. His nickname may be Spider-Man, but he is no superhero. He's just an ordinary man living a very dangerous life!

You can see videos of Alain in action on YouTube.

1. Read and for questions 1-6, choose the best answer.

1. When Alain Robert climbs a structure, _____.

1. he rests on his way to the top.
2. many people watch him begin.
3. he doesn't use any safety equipment.
4. he enjoys looking down at the crowd

2. When he was young, Alain climbed up to his flat because _____.

1. it was the only way he could get in.
2. his parents lost their key.
3. his parents encouraged him to do it.
4. he wanted to see if he could do it.

3. Alain has a problem with _____.

1. crowds.
2. heights
3. confidence

4. doctors

4. Alain climbs skyscrapers because he wants to _____.

1. shock people.
2. challenge himself.
3. make city life more exciting.
4. change people's thinking.

5. Alain didn't reach the top of the Canary Wharf Tower because _____

1. he slipped and injured himself.
2. the weather stopped him.
3. he felt too dizzy halfway up.
4. the police stopped him and arrested him.

6. The purpose of this text is to _____

1. give information about Alain Robert.
2. criticise Alain Robert.
3. encourage people to support Alain Robert.
4. stop people from trying dangerous activities.

2. Complete the sentences about Alain Robert using words from the box in the correct form.

ledge, concrete, rope, safety net, bare hands, gather, sigh with relief, vertigo, broken bone, raise awareness, urban, illegal, get a fine, daredevil, slippery surface, get stuck, nickname

1. Alain's _____ is 'Spider-Man'.
2. Crowds of people _____ to watch him when he climbs up a building.
3. The people _____ when Alain reaches the top of a building safely.
4. Alain doesn't use a _____ or rope to climb a building.
5. He wants to _____ about climate change and other issues,
6. The police sometimes arrest Alain, but he doesn't usually go to prison – he _____.
7. It's very dangerous to climb up a _____ when it rains.
8. Alain is a _____ what he does is very dangerous, but he enjoys it!

3. Fill in:

broken	surface	net	awareness	relief
risks	public	suffers	issues	bare

1. slippery _____	6. sigh with _____
2. raise _____	7. safety _____
3. _____ bones	8. _____ from vertigo
4. _____ his life	9. _____ hands
5. world _____	10. _____ building

