Extra training

Reading

Task 128

Read the text and for statements 1-7 choose the correct answer or option.

Caught in the Act

Even if you're looking carefully, you might miss it; it's only a stray strand of hair, after all. But to me, as a forensic scientist, this is what I live for; this is the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. This microscopic human trace might be the one vital piece of evidence that leads to the arrest and imprisonment of the criminal, the one who, without realising it, left his calling card behind at the scene of the crime. One single strand of hair contains all the criminal's DNA and, once matched, can lead all the way back to his door.

And that is my job. I'm a forensic scientist - 'forensic' just means relating to the legal system - and I collect and analyse evidence that is then used to catch a whole range of criminals committing any number of illegal acts. A member of the public might jump to the conclusion that all I work on are murders, but my field of investigation includes burglaries, arson, simple cases of forgery or more advanced Internet offences. Since time began, criminals have always found new ways of breaking the law, but I have complete faith in my subject. It doesn't matter what the crime is, science will get to the bottom of it and as technology continues to improve, the chances of getting away with it become slimmer and slimmer.

Perhaps the most famous forensic scientist of all was Sherlock Holmes. His methods of investigation, popularised in numerous books, films and television series, included close observation, rigorous examination of evidence and logical deduction. This is where I got my inspiration from. Reading the stories and watching the films fascinated me when I was younger and they still do today. I took all available science courses at school and then moved on to criminology at university. After graduating at the top of my class, it was then a small step to the police and I'm now head of the forensic investigation department.

In many ways the job hasn't changed all that much from the fog-filled streets of Holmes' London. The most useful tool for any scientist is still a keen mind, a good eye that connects the apparently unconnected and a skilful reading of the evidence. A crime scene is not that different to a story. It is a narrative with a beginning, in which the criminal enters the house; a middle, when the crime is committed; and a climax, as the criminal leaves the crime scene. My job is to make sure that the ultimate end is the capture of the villain.

Of course, there is a new style of fictionalised forensics on television nowadays that uses the most cutting-edge technology available and suddenly the job is the focus of a huge amount of attention with relevant university courses filling up faster than ever before. But don't be fooled by what you see on television. The job is vastly different from the one seemingly done by the heroes of a weekly TV show. First of all, the forensic scientist isn't the first one at the scene of the crime; we're usually there much later. Also, forensics can be a time-consuming and lengthy procedure. TV takes one hour to solve the crime; we can take weeks, months, even years. DNA analysis takes a long time, no matter how technologically advanced we are. But having said all that, the basic methods we use are the same as our TV counterparts.

Take fingerprinting, for example. A person's fingerprint is unique; the lines and shapes that pattern the fingertips are individual and belong to no-one else. The grease that comes off our skin at all times of the day leaves a patterned mark on everything we touch. We can make a copy of that mark and, hopefully, match it to the recorded fingerprints of known criminals. This is common knowledge and even the most simple-minded crook knows enough to wear a pair of gloves or wipe down everything he touches. But what about the traces that can't be seen, the traces that can't be wiped down?

At every second of every day your body is shedding microscopic pieces of skin; household dust is mostly made up of your dead cells. You are constantly renewing hairs, old ones fall and new ones grow back; the clothes you wear leave behind the smallest signs of where you've been and what you've been doing. This is called DNA fingerprinting and when gathered together, all of these things serve to build up a picture that is more conclusive than any eye-witness statement. Evidence doesn't lie when it faces a jury. Facts don't forget or get confused. Science states the case. And that is inescapable.

1. In the first paragraph, the writer suggests that ____

1. he is well-paid for the work he does.
2. criminals help in solving the crime.
3. criminals are often forgetful.
4. he follows criminate to their homes.

2. What changes have occurred recently?

1. There is more crime nowadays.
2. More criminals are being caught.
3. His job is getting more difficult.
4. He has more work than ever before.

3. Why did the writer become a forensic scientist?

1. Because of a childhood role model,
2. Because he was good at science.
3. Because of his enthusiasm for books.
4. Because he wanted to be a policeman.

4. The writer compares a crime scene to a story to ____

1. describe how he finds evidence.
2. make him feel more like a hero.
3. show how to commit a crime.
4. explain how events are connected.

5. Watching crime shows on television, viewers get the idea that____

1. doing the job will make them famous.
2. the forensic scientist heads the investigation.
3. solving a crime takes very little time.
4. forensic science is a popular university course.

6. What does not the writer say about fingerprinting?

1. Most people understand the technique.
2. Unwashed hands are easier to fingerprint.
3. Criminals try to avoid leaving fingerprints.
4. No two sets of fingerprints are the same.

7. What does the writer believe about forensic science?

1. It is a reliable method of solving crime.
2. It often disagrees with personal accounts.
3. It relies too much on the ageing process.
4. It is not used enough in criminal investigations.