Read the text and complete it with the phrases below. There are two extra phrases that you do not need.

alongside	**among**	**towards**	**bearing in mind**
beyond	**concerning**	**throughout**	**prior to**

The Success Myth

Where do great musicians, great mathematicians and great sportspeople get their talent? For decades now, we have assumed that most of them are simply born with a talent that ordinary people do not have. When baseball legend Ted Williams claimed that his achievements had nothing to do with natural ability but were 'the result of practice, practice, practice', people assumed that he was merely being modest. But scientists now believe that there was a good deal of truth in what he said.

_____ the last century, it was accepted that we inherit many of our traits from our parents via their DNA, that each of us inherits a fixed amount of intelligence – a fixed IQ – and that most of us are doomed to be mediocre. But now it is accepted that our genes interact with their surroundings, getting turned on and off all the time. 'There are no genetic factors that can be studied independently of the environment,' explains Michael Meaney of McGill University. 'And there are no environmental factors that function independently of our genes.' They work _____ each other. In other words, although each of us is born with a fixed set of genes, we have from birth the capacity to develop in a number of distinctly different ways.

Our personalities, our intelligence and our talents are ultimately determined by the interaction of our genes with the environment we grow up in, by the life we lead. Our genes clearly have a powerful influence over the formation and development of all physical and mental traits from height to eye colour to intelligence. However, they hardly ever determine precisely what those characteristics will be. Intelligence and talent are not innate, pre-determined or unchangeable.

How does this view of the role of genes change our understanding of individual talent and abilities? _____ this new way of thinking, it was assumed that we simply inherited our talents and abilities. Does it now mean that genes don't matter, that we all have the potential to be like, say, Lionel Messi or Gary Kasparov? Such a claim flies in the face of reason. The genes we inherit clearly matter, as do genetic differences between individuals. These differences often give people a real advantage in terms of particular abilities, such as hand-eye coordination or the ability to grasp complicated mathematical concepts. But it is also true that Lionel Messi would not have become the supreme footballer he is, nor Gary Kasparov a chess genius, without huge encouragement from their parents from an early age, and without putting in thousands of hours of practice. They could have turned out entirely different people. Talent researchers Kevin Rathunde and Samuel Whalen agree. 'High academic achievers are not necessarily born 'smarter' than others,' they write in their book *Talented Teenagers*, 'but work harder and develop more self-discipline.'

There is strong evidence to suggest that few of us ever come close to achieving our true potential. This is a big idea to swallow, _____ how much effort has gone into persuading us that each of us inherits a fixed amount of intelligence, and that most of us are destined to be mediocre.

Do you have the potential to develop into a world-class athlete, a virtuoso musician or a brilliant Nobel Prize-winning scientist? It would be foolish to suggest that anyone can do or become anything. But the new science tells us that it is equally foolish to think that mediocrity is built into most of us, or that any of us can know what we are really capable of until we have spent an enormous amount of time and effort exploring our limits. Our abilities are not set in genetic stone. They can be developed _____ childhood, far into adulthood. What counts is our attitude _____ them; what

we do with them. With humility, with hope and with extraordinary determination, greatness is something to which anyone – of any age – can aspire.

Read the text again and choose the correct answer.

1. Which is true about Ted Williams?
    a. He claimed that he had no natural ability at all.
    b. He believed that his success was due to hard work.
    c. His own explanation of his achievements has been rejected by scientists.
    d. He lied about his natural talent.

2. During the 20th century, it was widely believed that
    a. intelligence has very little to do with DNA.
    b. genes do not affect behaviour because they are sometimes 'switched off'.
    c. our genes interact with our environment.
    d. the majority of people are of average intelligence and can do nothing about it.

3. According to the article,
    a. it's impossible to understand why some people have particular talents and some do not.
    b. we have a fixed set of genes and can therefore only develop in one direction.
    c. genes have a significant effect on physical and mental characteristics, but do not precisely determine them.
    d. our personalities and intelligence are determined by the life we lead rather than our genes.

4. Kevin Rathunde and Samuel Whalen suggest that
    a. we could all be geniuses if we worked hard enough.
    b. supreme talent is the result of inherited natural talent followed by hard work.
    c. genetic factors alone determine ability.
    d. most of us are doomed to be mediocre.

5. The author of the article
    a. is optimistic about young people's capacity to explore their potential.
    b. believes that it is easy for children to achieve greatness.
    c. believes that we can never really know what we are capable of.
    d. believes that it is foolish for young people to be too ambitious.