

You are going to read an extract from a short story about a woman called Ma Parker. For questions 31–36, choose the best answer (A, B, C or D) according to the text.

The Life of Ma Parker

When the literary gentleman, whose flat old Ma Parker cleaned every Tuesday, opened the door to her that morning, he asked after her grandson. Ma Parker stood on the doormat inside the dark little hall, and she stretched out her hand to help her gentleman shut the door before she replied. 'We buried him yesterday, sir.' Poor old bird. She did look heartbroken. 'I hope the funeral was a – a – success,' he said. Ma Parker gave no answer. She bent her head and hobbled off to the kitchen.

It would take a whole book to describe the state of that kitchen. During the week the literary gentleman 'did' for himself. That is to say, he emptied the tea leaves now and again into a jam jar set aside for that purpose, and if he ran out of clean forks, he wiped over one or two on the towel. Otherwise, as he explained to his friends, his 'system' was quite simple, and he couldn't understand why people made all this fuss about housekeeping.

'You simply dirty everything you've got, get someone in once a week to clean up, and the thing's done.'

The result looked like a gigantic dustbin. Even the floor was littered with toast crusts, envelopes, cigarette ends. But Ma Parker bore him no grudge. She pitied the poor gentleman for having no one to look after him. Out of the smudgy little window you could see an immense expanse of sad-looking sky, and whenever there were clouds, they looked very worn, old clouds, frayed at the edges, with holes in them or dark stains like tea.

While the water was heating, Ma Parker began sweeping the floor. 'Yes,' she thought, as the broom knocked, 'what with one thing and another I've had my share of misfortune. I've had a hard life.'

Even the neighbours said that of her. Many a time hobbling home, she heard them, waiting at the corner, or leaning over their fences, say among themselves, 'She's had a hard life, has Ma Parker.' It was true and she wasn't in the least proud of it. A hard life!

At sixteen she'd left Stratford and come up to London as a kitchen maid. Yes, she was born in Stratford-on-Avon. Shakespeare? People were always asking her about him. But she'd never heard his name until she saw it at the theatre.

Nothing remained in her memory of Stratford except 'sitting in the fireplace to see the stars through the chimney' and 'Mother always had her joint of meat hanging from the ceiling'. And there was something – a bush at the front door – that smelt ever so nice. But the bush was very vague. She'd only remembered it once or twice in the hospital, when she'd been taken bad.

And that was an awful place – her first place of work in London. She was never allowed out. She never went upstairs except for prayers morning and evening. And the cook was a cruel woman. She used to snatch away her letters from home before she'd read them and throw them in the fire because they made her dreamy. And the beetles! Would you believe it? Until she came to London, she'd never seen a black beetle. Here Ma always gave a little laugh. Not to have seen a black beetle! Well! It was as if you said you'd never seen your own feet.

When that family sold up, she worked as 'help' at a doctor's house, and after two years there, running around from morning till night, she'd married her husband.

- 31 What do we learn about Ma Parker in the first paragraph?
- A She doesn't like cleaning the man's house.
 - B She is about to go to a funeral.
 - C There has been a death in her family.
 - D She works for a man who is ill.
- 32 What does the author suggest about the literary gentleman?
- A He never did anything for himself.
 - B He didn't think housework was a problem.
 - C He thought he was too important to do housework.
 - D He always had enough clean forks.
- 33 Ma Parker
- A felt sorry for the man.
 - B was shocked at how untidy the kitchen was.
 - C was sad whenever she entered the kitchen.
 - D wished the man had a wife.
- 34 Ma Parker's neighbours
- A annoyed her.
 - B were worried about her.
 - C understood what her life was like.
 - D were proud of her.
- 35 The author mentions Stratford-on-Avon to show that
- A Ma Parker came from a theatrical background.
 - B life there was completely different to life in London.
 - C Ma Parker didn't have pleasant memories of living there.
 - D Ma Parker's memories of the place were fading.
- 36 When Ma Parker thinks 'It was as if you said you'd never seen your own feet', she means
- A she thought the beetles were funny.
 - B the beetles made cleaning the house unpleasant.
 - C it was common to see beetles in London.
 - D beetles were always getting under her feet.

Part 6

You are going to read an article about a man who is an expert at using a yo-yo. Six sentences have been removed from the article. Complete the gaps (37-42) in the article with the sentences A-G. There is one extra sentence that you do not need to use.

SPIN DOCTOR

In his youth, Lawrence Sayegh dreamt of performing in vaudeville, but his career took a different spin. He became nine-time world champion and international master trickster of ... the yo-yo. He has wowed audiences in 26 countries, most states of the US, and on countless film and television screens. Today, at 64, he is still spinning, much to everyone's delight.

Sayegh says he was searching for a sport when he found the yo-yo. 'I was too short for basketball, too light for football, too nervous for baseball,' he says. **37** When the Duncan Yo-Yo Company began holding neighbourhood competitions in the 1940s, he won every contest within biking distance of his home. He became so good that Duncan eventually barred him from the contests.

His parents, however, were sceptical of their son's talent. 'They were both born in Damascus. They had a mom-and-pop grocery store and were very much of the old school: work, work, work; make something of yourself,' he says. The yo-yo didn't seem to offer a career path for Larry. But after he graduated from high school, the president of Duncan Yo-Yo contacted Sayegh and offered him a job. **38**

Duncan sent its new recruit off to demonstrate the company's product in the South and Southwest of the United States, and in Europe. In 1952, the company showed Sayegh off at a press conference in Paris. At the time, Sayegh says, the yo-yo was even more popular in Europe than in the US. **39** He was a huge hit. *Actualités*, the French newsreel played in movie houses before

the feature, filmed Sayegh and his yo-yo tricks in settings all around Paris and put him onscreen all over the country.

Two years later, Sayegh won his first world championship in another competition sponsored by Duncan. Over the next eight years, until Duncan went out of business and the contest folded with the company, he won every year. In 1958, Ford Motor Company demonstrated its product's unbeatably smooth ride to prospective buyers in Australia by filming Sayegh, yo-yos spinning, atop the roof of a moving car in Tasmania. Today, he can still carry on a conversation while tossing yo-yos with both hands in elaborate configurations - and he can nestle a yo-yo into your shirt pocket from across the room with a flick of his wrist. **40**

When Duncan Yo-Yo went out of business, Sayegh began manufacturing yo-yos of his own patented design. He embeds six weights on each side to give them balanced mass for good momentum and links the halves with a maple-wood axle. **41** He runs the shop alone and has produced more than a million yo-yos, all of which he has sold through private shows and television appearances.

These days, the yo-yo is enjoying a resurgence in popularity and children are showing off their spinning skills in malls from Seattle to Saudi Arabia. **42** 'Fifty per cent in my shop and fifty per cent doing shows. This is nice, quiet solitude,' he says, surveying his factory domain. 'On the other side, it's hectic all over the place.'

Developing Your Talents

- A** He may also be the only person in the world who can send two yo-yos flying off in different directions while doing the limbo.
- B** Sayegh finds himself living in what he calls the best of both worlds.
- C** The family agreed he should take it.
- D** It wasn't always obvious he had this skill.
- E** But from the beginning, he seemed to have a special knack for the spinning toy on a string.
- F** There, he demonstrated tricks of his own devising, with such names as 'Pistol Pete' and 'Overhand Crossfire', both of which involved two yo-yos and multiple crossings of the strings.
- G** His assembly line, a mesmerising contraption of bicycle parts, sewing-machine parts and industrial castoffs, allows him to single-handedly turn out one brightly coloured plastic yo-yo every forty-five seconds.

Part 7

You are going to read an article about four people who have taken up a hobby or interest. For each of the questions **43–52**, choose one of the people (**A–D**). You can choose the people more than once.

Which person

- thinks their interest is becoming more popular?
- says they never used to think they would be good at an activity?
- says their interest requires a lot of practice?
- says other people have liked their work?
- says they find another activity difficult?
- took up an activity because of a friend?
- believes they will benefit from using different equipment?
- compares the skills they need in one interest with the skills they need in another interest?
- says their creative interests were interrupted by other things?
- believes they don't fit a stereotype?

Developing your Talents

How a hobby or interest can transform lives.

A Colin Bartley

I'd shown an interest in art as a teenager and people often complimented me on my work and they'd tell me I should develop my talent. But as often happens with young people, creative interests are put to one side as we struggle with our academic subjects or start to take an interest in girls. Anyway, I never really did any painting for many years. I sometimes picked up a pencil and paper and did some drawing, but even then, it was only to kill time. Then a mate of mine persuaded me to go to evening classes with him. It was only a couple of hours every week but it gave me the chance to do some painting and there were no distractions. I'm really enjoying myself. I don't think I'll ever earn money from it but that's not the reason I'm doing it.

B Madeleine Curry

I started writing about five years ago when I did a short course at my local college. I then spent a year studying creative writing part-time at university. I used to be a photographer and in some ways the two activities share similarities. Writers are always observing everyday events, hoping to get an idea for their next story, much like a photographer is always looking for that great shot. Today, writers have the chance to self-publish and there's no barrier to getting your novel into the hands of readers. Because of this, more and more people are taking up writing. Some say the drawback is you don't have the satisfaction of a publisher saying your book is good enough for them to publish. But if people buy your book and the feedback is positive, that's all the praise you need.

C Grayson Collins

Believe it or not, I'm a builder by profession, not the most likely of occupations for an amateur dancer. When I was growing up, nobody in my family showed any interest in dancing and I wasn't any different. That all changed when Karen and I got married. Karen is mad about Latin dancing and we started going to classes together. I'd never done it before so we were put into separate groups but I discovered I have a talent for it. The teacher reckons I have a natural rhythm and feel for Latin dancing. That doesn't mean it comes easily. I have to do the dances again and again before I get them right but I enjoy learning new routines, especially now I'm dancing in the same group as my wife. I'm trying to get my friends to take it up as well. I know they'd enjoy themselves if they gave it a try.

D Sophie Macpherson

I started designing websites about six years ago. At first it was just a hobby but I found myself enjoying it. It's the blend of design along with the need for a mathematical eye for coding that appeals to me. It comes naturally to me, unlike the guitar, which I've been trying to play for years with little success. Over time I found myself getting quite a few jobs, and before I knew it I didn't have enough time to do both web design and my full-time job. So I left my job and set up my own business. I've recently taken out a business loan to invest in new hardware and software. Hopefully, it will enable me to take my design skills to a higher level. I think I'm lucky. I'm doing a job I enjoy, earning enough money to get by and I'm able to feed my creativity at the same time.