READING COMPREHENSION C1

Read the following article. For questions 1-7 write the correct answer in the box next to each number.

WHEN I WENT OUT ONE APRIL MORNING

'You must try my home-made brandy,' said Jane, a diminutive 90-year-old with a wild nest of grey hair. 'It's a local speciality.' Before I could protest, she had sent her daughter to fetch the bottle. It was 9.30am. I was in a small village in Normandy and Jane had invited me into her garden after seeing me walk past with my rucksack. She'd done a lot of travelling she said and was curious to know where I was heading.

The bottle was placed before me, along with a small glass, and as I sipped at the fiery amber liquid under the mischievous eye of my host, I explained that I was starting out on a 2,000-kilometre trek from Calais to Cadiz. The writer Laurie Lee was to blame for this. The previous year, while travelling in South America, I had read his enchanting account of the journey he made in the 1930s when, as a curious young man, he'd left his quaint English village to find out what else the world had to offer. Lee took a boat to Vigo and walked through the heart of the country to the south coast, relying on the hospitality of locals.

What struck me about his trip was its freedom and simplicity. There I was with my laptop, mobile phone, credit cards, timetables. I had made every effort to take my life in England with me, and suddenly it felt very cumbersome. I resolved to make a similar journey to Lee's; I would leave the trappings of the 21st century behind me, live in the open air and rely on the kindness of strangers.

I'd been to France numerous times but this felt different. At the beginning of April I'd walked off the ferry at Calais in a good pair of boots, carrying a small tent, a sleeping bag, some clothes and a few other essentials. My only luxury was a small gas burner for brewing coffee. Lee paid his way busking with a violin, but since I lacked such skills I had to make do with good old-fashioned traveller's cheques and a planned budget of €5 a day.

Early on in the trip, I was so anxious about being stranded that I pitched my tent at half past four in what was effectively a large bush by the side of the road and shared the space with a small family of very active and disgruntled rats. But quickly I learnt to find better places to sleep.

Northern France in April is generally cold and wet and during a particularly bad downpour I stumbled gratefully into a small barn outside a small village called Hubersent. As I sat on the warm bales of hay trying to dry off, the farmer appeared and looked me over. I apologised for being there and pointed at the rain outside. He shrugged nonchalantly. 'Where are you going?' he asked. When I told him Spain he smiled as if we were sharing a joke and, after as much conversation as my French allowed, told me I was welcome to stay there for the night. Half an hour later his wife and two young children trooped in to see the Englishman who was walking to Spain. They brought soup, bread and water.

Gradually I learnt to knock on doors for water. The first time I tried this I managed to choose a house where the woman who came to the gate had her leg in plaster and hobbled out on a pair of crutches to see what I wanted. Embarrassed, I asked if she could possibly fill my empty bottle. 'Water? Here you are' she said cheerfully. A few times I was handed fruit and bread and one woman , after we had chatted and said goodbye, turned up five minutes later in her car to give me a hastily prepared packed lunch. At first I thought this was beginner's luck, but as I made my way south I found the same hospitality everywhere.

The further I got into my trip the more natural my way of life became. I washed in rivers and streams and learnt to get my bearings from the sun. I walked along bright white chalk tracks through peaceful vineyards and rarely had a problem finding somewhere to camp. Crossing the border into Spain was a moment of personal triumph – I had travelled through a whole country on foot, and now Spain lay sprawled out before me, scorched and dried by a relentlessly hot sun. I had reached the halfway point of my journey. It had taken 11 weeks, and in that time I'd met many friendly people, seen many wonderful sights and fallen in step with the natural world. But best of all I had discovered that **the spirit of Lee's journey** was alive after all.

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LIVEWORKSHEETS

1. The old Frenchwoman was keen to speak to the writer Because

A. she saw he was a young traveller
B. she liked to travel herself.
C. she was interested in his plans

2. The writer undertook his journey through France because he Wanted

A. to be close to nature.
B. to experience a sense of liberty.
C. to follow Laurie Lee's route.

3. Laurie Lee was able to earn money while travelling because

A. he gave music lessons.
B. he was a professional musician.
C. he was a street performer.

4. At first the writer would put up his tent in the afternoon because he was afraid

A. of being in remote places.
B. he would get lost
C. he might be attacked.

5. On finding the writer in his barn, the farmer's reaction was one of

A. comprehension
B. concern
C. indifference

6. As the writer's journey progressed he

A. could appreciate nature more.
B. improved his sense of orientation.
C. learnt to sleep anywhere.

7. The '***spirit of Laurie Lee's journey***' refers to

A. the travel adventures of a young man.
B. the kindness of strangers.
C. travel as a form of personal fulfilment.

LIVEWORKSHEETS