READING

The strange thing about society today is that, in spite of the demands for more and more freedom of expression and behavior, this trend is being accompanied by an ever-increasing reduction in the privacy of the individual. Privacy should be part of the concept of freedom: every individual should have the right to lead his or her personal life, without others intruding or necessarily knowing every detail of their private affairs. Somehow, in recent years, this concept has been largely ignored by those who have a desire to control others through the accumulation of data.

For indeed it is the computer that is at the heart of this threat to our privacy: the use of the computer means that a lot of information that previously went unrecorded is now being collected, saved and easily retrieved, something which simply had not been possible before. People do not take kindly to this information gathering but it is difficult to estimate how much is going on without our knowledge. Future developments in the art of surveillance, or snooping, are hardly likely to allay any fears about loss of privacy either. Already, tiny microphones can be used to listen in on private conversations from across the street or from the vibrations of window glass; with the trend for smaller and smaller electronic devices, we also may see one day video cameras the size of a large wasp that could fly into a room and land on a wall, recording everything that goes on in the room.

Naturally, there is another side to the coin, which is that of collecting data in order to protect society from criminal activity. Already, America, Britain, Canada and Australia are compiling national DNA databases of convicted criminals, and many other countries are thinking of following their example, although DNA databases that cover entire populations are still a controversial point.

151. According to the article, ...
- a the right to privacy is included in the right to freedom.
- b freedom and personal privacy are increasing at the same rate.
- c freedom is more important than privacy.
- d privacy is only an important issue for a few people.

152. Building up banks of data on people ...
- a is necessary in today's society.
- b is easier now than it used to be.
- c can only be done with our knowledge.
- d should not affect people's privacy.

153. According to the article the public ...
- a is not worried about problems of privacy.
- b thinks computers are useful for storing information.
- c is against personal information about them being stored.
- d thinks that what we don't know, we don't care about.

154. What does the article tell us about DNA databases?
- a They could help in the fight against crime.
- b They are already in use in most countries.
- c They are generally accepted without any problem.
- d They could increase our chances of privacy.

155. Future developments ...
- a should make us less worried about our privacy.
- b are moving towards electronic devices that are hardly noticeable.
- c will enable us to hear all conversations going on around us.
- d are dependent on the use of computers.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

To be honest, wherever you go in the world, if you scratch the surface of life in any small village or neighborhood, there you'll uncover all the passions known to mankind: jealousy, bitterness, spitefulness, prejudice, generosity, unselfishness ... and the list could go on and on endlessly. Fundamentally, the passions that rule our lives are the same, whether you live in a rural village in China or in a small, tightly knit community in any town or city. I say 'tightly knit' since passions rarely run high if you don't even know the people who live near you – as is often the case in modern cities! In the latter case, indifference to the fate of our neighbor usually replaces any potentially stronger emotion.

Such overriding passions have long been the subject of literature: there are examples in the works of the Greek playwrights, Shakespeare, Dickens, Balzac, Flaubert, Victor Hugo and right up to modern times. Characters are shown to be at the mercy of their feelings, torn between conflicting emotions or, on rare occasions, able to overcome certain passions in favor of more elevated ones. Needless to say, characters in literature are often exaggerated in order to make the point the writer wishes to get across to his or her audience; this is not to say, however, that the fundamental experience of the passion or emotion is falsified in any way. All of us, either at first or second hand, have had experiences of sibling rivalry, a desire for revenge, a feeling of helplessness in the face of an overwhelming fate, and this is what makes great literature great: the fact that it reflects the human condition as experienced by thousands of human beings throughout the world and throughout the ages.

156. According to the passage, ...
- a there are only a few passions that all people share.
- b people's passions are not immediately obvious at first glance.
- c there are no strong passions in small villages.
- d people feel very differently about things in China from other places.

157. The author points out that characters in literature ...
- a are usually unrealistic.
- b are usually the subject of modern writers.
- c are often shown to be controlled by their passions.
- d always show us how we should behave.

158. The author implies that, when we read literature, ...
- a we can recognize the emotions it expresses.
- b we find that the characters are exaggerated.
- c it's difficult to identify with the plot.
- d we cannot understand the emotions unless we have experienced them ourselves.

159. Life in large cities ...
- a means that people experience fewer passions.
- b is the subject of much of our best-known literature.
- c is the same as that of a rural village.
- d is more impersonal than in smaller communities.

160. What, according to the passage, is the outstanding characteristic of great literature?
- a It describes how people are driven by fate.
- b It is read by thousands all over the world.
- c The reader can identify with the experiences it describes.
- d It enables us to have first hand experience of the human condition.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

The question of prison sentences is a thorny problem and the subject of many heated debates. Of course there are those who wish to reduce the number of people inside our prisons, and rightly so in many ways, but we have to ask them, at whose expense? If it is at the expense of the law-abiding citizen, on what grounds can they justify their opinions? Surely our priority in society should be to protect the majority from a minority who have no respect either for the law or for the personal property of other people?

No one wishes to increase the potential for crime by sentencing people to prison who shouldn't really be there. However, if we wish to consider a proposed alternative to a prison sentence, for example a community based sentence, then we need to clarify the circumstances under which this could be a viable alternative, as well as looking at reconviction rates (that is, the number of those who re-offend). Indeed, for first or second time offenders, a community-based sentence could be a way of offering these early offenders a chance to reform; however, for persistent offenders who show no desire to reform, a prison sentence is very obviously both necessary and desirable. The government then has to provide the necessary number of places in the prisons.

The reconviction rates for community sentences and probation orders are a horror story in themselves, being near on 90% over a two-year period in comparison with reconviction rates for those discharged from prison sentences of between four and 10 years, which were 26%. Our main aim should therefore be to do something drastic to improve the reconviction rates for community sentences so that fewer people will have to be given prison sentences.

161. According to the passage, society should ...
- a justify its attitude towards reducing prison sentences.
- b be prepared for major expenses to cope with all the prisoners.
- c increase the prison population.
- d protect its citizens from the criminal minority.

162. The number of prison places provided ...
- a should match the demand.
- b should be a standard number.
- c varies according to reconviction rates.
- d shows that it is pointless to imprison so many criminals.

163. Community-based sentences ...
- a are ideal for long-term offenders.
- b should replace all prison sentences.
- c are a possible alternative for a certain type of offender.
- d are more expensive for society.

164. What do the reconviction rates show us?
- a The majority of prison sentences should last between two and four years.
- b Most prisoners re-offend after they are released from prison.
- c Two years is not enough to prevent criminals from re-offending.
- d Community sentences are not that effective in preventing criminal offences.

165. The author's opinion is that ...
- a criminals should only be given prison sentences if there are enough places in the prisons.
- b only those who really deserve prison sentences should be given them.
- c the crime rate is going down.
- d the majority of criminals who re-offend should be given prison sentences.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

BETWEEN 1843 AND 1869, more than half a million people followed the route across America to the West which is known as the Oregon Trail. The hope of these pioneers was to find new farmland (as well as gold, perhaps?) in the American West, an area inhabited only by Native American tribes. But the route west was through rough and largely inhospitable countryside, including the formidable Rocky Mountains, and the emigrants, of whom one in ten died on the way, faced real hardships. Most of them did the two thousand mile journey on foot, while their wagons were piled high with all their worldly goods! Their enemies, despite opinions to the contrary, were not the native tribes – at least not in the beginning – rather they were illnesses (such as cholera, which killed more emigrants than anything else), poor sanitation and accidents on the way.

Before setting out, the pioneers debated about which animal would be best to pull their covered wagons. Most of them decided on oxen, which were reliable for transport if rather slow. Others chose the mule, which was a faster animal but much less easy to handle than the ox. The horse had been rejected at the outset since it could not survive on the prairie grasses along the way. In any case, eventually the animals were replaced by machinery: in 1869, the transcontinental railroad was completed and the days of the Oregon Trail were over.

166. According to the passage, why did people go on the Oregon Trail?
- a in order to fight the Native Americans
- b because they wanted to see the surrounding countryside
- c because they were sure to find gold
- d in order to cultivate new areas of land

167. The majority of the pioneers ...
- a survived the journey.
- b traveled on wagons.
- c died of cholera.
- d were attacked by the native tribes.

168. When trying to decide which animal to use for the journey, most emigrants ...
- a thought horses would tire too easily.
- b chose the ox because it could pull the wagons easily.
- c chose the mule even though it was a difficult animal.
- d chose the ox because it could travel faster than the horse.

169. The wagons were used ...
- a to protect the pioneers from the Native Americans.
- b for the women and children to travel on.
- c to carry the pioneers' personal possessions.
- d to take them safely through the Rocky Mountains.

170. The role of the Oregon Trail came to an end ...
- a when the states in the west became part of the United States of America.
- b because of the battles with the Native Americans.
- c because it was too far to walk.
- d when an alternative way of getting across to the West became available.

LIVEWORKSHEETS