

Reading PART 2

- A. You are going to read an extract from a newspaper article. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs A—G the one which fits each gap (7—12). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

On a Wing and a woof

Michael Cassell's close encounter with a paragliding puppy inspires a desire to try out the sport

I love dogs, but a dog's place is at your feet, not flying above your head. I was holidaying on the Côte d'Azur in France, and I couldn't quite believe what I was seeing. I think it was some form of terrier, although it was hard to tell because it wore goggles and a little bandana and was moving at some speed as it passed over the house.

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I kept my eye on the pair and saw them land on the beach, where they received warm applause from early bathers. I'm sure they were breaking every rule in the book and if the police had intervened I imagine the dog at least could have lost his licence.

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Paragliding, by contrast, relies entirely on thermic air and the skill of its pilot; to take to the skies on such a lightweight contraption is to soar free and silently in the arms of mother nature. The sport has spawned more than 650 clubs across France, and fans travel from across Europe to enjoy the mix of wild scenery and placid weather that the country offers. The most popular regions are the Alps, the Pyrenees and Corsica, and there are plenty of paragliding schools in those regions that will get beginners off the ground in two or three days.

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The Côte d'Azur, however, is not in itself natural paragliding country, and we have found ourselves under the flight path of a growing number of

enthusiasts simply because of the jagged ridge of red rock that towers three hundred metres above sea level behind our house — the best jumping-off spot for miles around.

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It's a forty-five-minute climb from the beach to this ridge-top and although the gliders weigh around 7kg, there are a harness and helmet and boots and other bits and pieces to carry as well. I calculate that each flight lasts about four minutes and some of the keenest fans trudge past my gate three or four times a day. I tucked in behind one group to watch them get ready for the jump.

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The reality, of course, is that with proper training and preparation paragliding is a very safe sport; there are accidents, but most are rarely that serious and usually occur on launching or landing. The group, however, knew their stuff. To forsake a long run and lift off for a virtual leap into space takes experience and supreme confidence.

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I'm not a natural-born daredevil and wouldn't myself have found that experience thrilling. But I am nevertheless sorely tempted to have a go — maybe on a gently sloping hillside. 'You'll need a medical certificate at your age,' declared one of the group, instantly extinguishing the flame of adventure. But then if puppies can paraglide, why shouldn't an old dog like me?

A. But this is no place for beginners. There are no gentle, grass-covered slopes to run down — the rocks are vertical and unyielding and anyone who leaps off them could easily get into difficulties unless they know What they are doing.

B. For the more courageous, the pleasures of advanced thermalling await, but if you are of a more timid disposition and want to hold someone's hand, you can take a tandem course; if you are a dog, the experience must be like sticking your head out of the car window and letting the wind beat your ears round the back of your head.

C. Not all of these untrained novices reach the beach, however. In recent days, one paraglider has landed on a neighbour's pool terrace, wrecking several terracotta pots and a previously unblemished flight record.

D. Despite such unexpected intrusions on my privacy, I've decided that paragliding, with or without the canine companion, is immensely superior to microlight flying, in which the airborne are propelled by a motor so clamorous and noisy that any idea of soaring serenely through the heavens is soon lost.

E. The biggest surprise was that they were not all strong, strapping young men, intent upon ticking off another item on some checklist of 'dangerous things to do before I die'. Of the Six preparing to jump, three were women and the average age appeared to be somewhere in the mid-thirties.

F. The puppy was paragliding a tiny, intrepid recruit to the sport that has taken off big time across the country. The creature was not on its own, thank goodness, but on a machine piloted by a young man who greeted me cheerily as they swooped beyond the end of the terrace and dived down the hillside.

G. There was one nasty moment when one of the women leapt and, instead of instantly catching the air beneath her canopy, plunged alarmingly down the face of the Cliff; but within seconds she had caught an updraft, was whooping gleefully and on her way.

Tip Strip

- Read the main text first, ignoring the gaps, to get a general understanding of its subject matter and organisation.
- Read the text carefully around each gap. Look at the whole paragraph, before and after the gap.
- Read paragraphs A—G- Check for topic and language links with the paragraphs in the base text.
- Highlight words that relate to people,

places and events, and any time references. This Will help you to follow the development of the argument.

- Choose the best option to fit each gap. Make sure all the pronouns and vocabulary references are clear.

• Once you've finished, re-read the completed text to be sure that it makes sense with your answers in the gaps.

Question 7: The first line of text after the gap talks about 'the pair'. What is being

referred to? Which option tells you more about the flying dog? Look out for another way of saying 'small dog'.

Question 9: The previous paragraph is talking about paragliding schools. Which of the options also talks about learning to paraglide?

Question 12: Look at the text after the gap. What does 'that experience' refer to? Which of the options contains information about somebody having a thrilling experience?

- B. You are going to read an extract from a travel book. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs A—G the one which fits each gap (7—12). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

The long way home

On the last day, I walked down to the harbour. Having slept late, I had breakfast on my own and, as Charley was still sleeping, went for a wander. I wanted to get to the ocean; I needed to see the Pacific. I stumbled down the hill, through rows and rows of tenements, nodding, smiling and waving at the people I passed, eventually arriving at the waterfront. I turned round and lifted my camera to my eye and took a photograph.

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I walked on. The path led to the beach. Although it was the last day of June, it was the first day the sun had shone in Magadan that year. Three weeks earlier, it had snowed. But that day, the air was warm and soft, the sky a cloudless blue. Women wore bikinis and small children were running naked across the sands. Families were eating picnics or cooking on barbecues. I walked past them all, along the entire length of the beach, until I came to the harbour.

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All we knew then was that we wanted to get from London to Magadan. With the maps laid out in front of us, Charley and I drew a route, arbitrarily assigning mileage to each day, not knowing anything about the state of the roads. Time and again we were told by experienced travellers that our plans were wildly optimistic and that we didn't know what we were letting ourselves in for. I'd never ridden off-road and Charley had never properly camped. The chances of failure were high, they said.

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I thought back to the day a month or so earlier when we had been in Mongolia. It was mid-afternoon and we were riding through a beautiful valley. I pulled over and got off my bike. Charley, ahead of me, stopped, too. He swung his bike around and rode back towards me. Before he even arrived, I could feel it coming off him: why are we stopping? We're not getting petrol, we're not stopping to eat: why are we stopping?

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It was where we were going to stop at in the middle of an afternoon so that we could cool our sweaty feet in the water while catching fish that we'd cook that evening on an open fire under a star-speckled sky. I'd seen that spot half an hour earlier. There was no question at all that it was the one. A beautiful expanse of water and nobody for hundreds of miles. And we'd ridden straight past it.

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Then we got back on our bikes and moved on. A few weeks later, we arrived at the first big river in Siberia. It was too wide, too fast and too deep to cross on a motorbike. There was a bridge, but it had collapsed.

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I understood now that it didn't really matter that we hadn't stopped beside that cool, fast-flowing Mongolian river. The imperfections in our journey were what made it perfect. And maybe we wouldn't be in Magadan now if we'd not had that burning desire to keep going. After all, the river would always be there. Now that I knew what was out there, I could always return.

A. Yet here we were in Magadan, as far around the globe from home as it was possible to go, and we'd arrived one day ahead of our schedule.

B. We then guessed our way from west to east, across two continents, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, as far as it was possible to ride a motorbike in a straightish line.

C. I walked away from Charley. I didn't want to tell him it was because we'd passed the place. The place that had been in my dreams. The place we'd fantasised about months before we'd even set off from London. A place with a river of cool, White water and a field nearby to pitch our tents.

D. There it was: Magadan, Siberia. The place that had been in my dreams and thoughts for two years, like a mythical City forever beyond my reach. I wanted to capture it, somehow hold on to it, take a part of it with me when Charley and I began the long journey back.

E. I thought Charley would be itching to get ahead, impatient with the hold-up. But he was in his element. He knew that someone or something would be along to help. The delays were the journey. We'd get across it when we got across it.

F. I sat down for five minutes, just needing to look at the countryside around us. The countryside that we often didn't have time to take in because we were always so intent on keeping to our schedule.

G. There, I climbed up on to the quay and sat on a mushroom-shaped bollard. An Alsatian came over and sat next to me. I scratched its head for a while, gazed out at the ocean and thought back to the day when Charley and I had sat in a little workshop in west London, surrounded by motorbikes, with dreams of the open road in our heads.

- C. You are going to read an extract from a magazine. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs A—G the one which fits each gap (7—12). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

Call of the wild

What can wild animals tell us about the way life should be lived? Well, take the example of the whitethroat. You could say that it's a rather drab little bird with a rather ordinary and tuneless little song. Or, on the contrary, you could say the whitethroat is a messenger of excitement and danger a thrilling embodiment of life and risk and defiance of death.

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Whitethroats, however, are mostly lurkers and skulkers. You'll usually find them well hidden in a nice thick prickly hedge, their brown plumage picked out with the small vanity of, yes, a White throat. The male bird sings a jumble of notes thrown together any Old how, a song that is generally described as 'scratchy'. A whitethroat is not normally a bird that hands out thrills to human observers. But all the same, it is a bird that lives by the thrill and is prepared to die by the thrill.

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Or not, of course. A small bird that makes such a big racket and then flies into the open Will Clearly excite the interest of every bird of prey within earshot. And that is part of the point: 'Come on, you hawks! Have a go if you think you're hard enough!'

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But I can't help wondering how the bird feels about this. Does he do it because he is a clock, a feathered machine that has been wound up by the passing of the seasons to make this proven

ancestral response? Or does he do it because making a springtime song flight is the most wonderfully thrilling thing to do?

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And it is there in aspects of human behaviour, too. I have spoken to mountaineers, powerboaters, Grand Prix drivers, parachutists and jockeys, and they all say the same thing. It's not something they do because they have a death wish. The exact opposite is the case — risk makes them feel more intensely, more gloriously alive. They take risks because they love life. It is part of the contradiction of being ourselves. We thrill to danger. We can't resist it. We love safety and security and comfort, yet we seek risk and adventure.

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That's why we watch films and identify with risk-taking heroes and feisty heroines in all kinds of precarious situations. It's why we pass the time on a long journey by reading a thriller in which the main character dodges death by inches all the way to our destination. And it explains why we support a football team; knowing that the more we care, the more we Will find both excitement and despair.

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But if home is so great, why did we ever leave it? And if adventure is so great, why did we come back? It is because our nature — our human, mammalian, animal nature — insists that we love both; that one is not complete without the other.

- A. And so, like the whitethroat, we all seek danger, even if we don't take the actual risks ourselves. In other words, although we've spent ninety-nine percent of that history as hunter-gatherers, the deepest parts of ourselves are still wild.
- B. And the whitethroat tells us that we don't have the monopoly on this feeling it is something that other living creatures understand just as well. A liking for danger is part of our inheritance as mammals, as animals.
- C. Because every now and then in springtime he will leave that little leafy home of his and launch himself skywards so moved by his own eloquence that he must take to the wing and fly up, singing all the time, before gliding gently back down to safety.
- D. You must make your own mind up on these issues — but one thing you can't avoid is that this deliberate annual courting of danger is part of the way the whitethroat lives his life.
- E. Of course, it's not the same for everybody, not to the same extent. Most of us enjoy different levels and different forms of risk at different times, just like the whitethroat in his hedge. And it is all the better for the time afterwards, when we have risked and survived and returned safe and sound.
- F. The glories of the whitethroat's song demand this exhibition: the better and bolder and louder the song flight, the more likely the male is to attract a nice mate and keep that patch of prickly territory for himself. That's the evolutionary reason for it, anyway.
- G. You might take this opposite view because what the whitethroat shows us, amongst many other things, is why humans love tigers, love going on safari, love winter sports and fast cars, love riding horses and, above all, love all the vast, wild open spaces left on this planet. Most other creatures will give you the same message, too, if you study them. But the whitethroat does it in a specially vivid way.

- D. You are going to read an extract from an account of a sailing race. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs A—G the one which fits each gap (7—12). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

Stiff breeze, no cocktails	
Victor Mallet set sail on the yacht Moonblue 2 in a three-day race across the South China Sea which turned out to be packed with incident and excitement. The sailing in the San Fernando Race was glorious; one of the best in the thirty-year history of the event. From the outset, all the front-runners were spared the windless calms that can cause such frustration in events like this. 7 Apart from the unaccustomed speed, a few other things about <i>Moonblue 2</i> took some getting used to for me. There was the novelty of being on such a luxurious cruiser-racer, and the overall excellence of the food and drink on board. I wasn't used to such luxury, and I can't recall racing in a boat where you can take a shower when your period of watch comes to an end. 8 Despite such minor inconveniences, the race had been going well, but suddenly we hit a problem. Peter, the normally cheery skipper and owner of <i>Moonblue 2</i>, was shouting almost angrily from somewhere below, demanding to know where the cocktail blender was. 9 Peter repeated his question in frustration, adding: 'Didn't anyone bring it back from the party at the yacht club?' We looked studiously into the darkness while we struggled to trim the sails and bring the boat under control. No, no one had brought it back from the pre-race party two nights earlier.	10 Once the penny had dropped, we realised it wasn't such a crazy request after all. It seemed that, not for the first time, the high-strength line connecting the Wheel to the rudder had snapped. Peter wanted the blender's long electric cable because it could be used to replace it. Just two hours later, three crew members — there were thirteen of us on board altogether — fixed the steering, not with the blender cable but with the help of a spare length of aerial cable, and we were able to continue racing. Part of the challenge of sailing for me is that anything can go wrong, even on a superbly equipped yacht such as <i>Moonblue 2</i>. 11 Such complicated yachts as <i>Moonblue 2</i> also require constant attention and minor adjustments to the steering, in contrast to an old-fashioned yacht that almost steers itself. For the crew on this trip, however, there were mercifully few sail changes during the race until the very end. But even at that stage, we still had one last small mishap to contend with. When we crossed the finishing line off San Fernando at midnight, two-and-a-half days after the start, a local captain who was supposed to guide us in to a safe anchorage took us straight on to a mudbank. 12 And of the eighteen starters, <i>Moonblue 2</i> was second to finish, a fantastic result overall — with or without the cocktail blender!

- A.** This had become apparent the previous weekend on a pre-race practice run. When the propeller had been entangled twice, first in rope and then again in industrial plastic, in the space of an hour. On each occasion, one of the crew had had to dive into the water with a knife and a pair of goggles to clear the debris.
- B.** But any large boat, however stylish, also has its drawbacks. In rough seas, it was tricky getting from one end of the spacious cabin to the other because the handholds were so far apart.
- C.** After all, the pre-race discussion had revolved largely around the issue of how just such a situation might be dealt with. Fortunately, however, an unexpected solution was at hand.
- D.** It could have been worse, however. Our Australian rival Stewth was led into a reef with a crunch, so we actually had quite a lucky escape.
- E.** To those of us out on deck, however, this didn't seem to be quite the moment for any kind of a drink. It was eight hours into the race, there was a stiff breeze, rough waves and the steering had just failed completely.
- F.** This wasn't an entirely enjoyable time for me, though, as in the initial thirty-six hours we were driven by a northeast monsoon wind that sometimes whipped up a rough and uncomfortable sea. On the plus side, however, we sped southwards under full sail, making amazing time.
- G.** A few uncomfortable moments passed, nobody wanting to break this piece of news to him. Then we suddenly saw what he was on about.