Reading

Still life

The other day, I was walking through the city when a silver statue caught my eye. It was a statue of a man in a suit looking into the distance. I wondered why so many people were standing there looking at it. Suddenly it turned its head and looked right at me before tapping me on the shoulder with its umbrella. I jumped and laughed. It was, of course, a living statue – and it had scared the life out of me!

Living statues are street performers who make their money by dressing up to look as if they're made of stone, metal, glass or wood. They stand still for long periods of time, moving now and then to remind people that they are actually real people. It's an artistic tradition that started more than five hundred years ago, when groups of actors started performing *tableaux vivants*. These were still and silent groups of people in costumes who were arranged to represent a particular scene or event.

Nowadays, most living statues work alone. Matt Walters has been working as a living statue for over 25 years. He usually dresses as a chimney sweep, covered from head to toe in very dark grey paint. He does all his make-up himself. 'Covering myself in paint and using the right stuff to get it all off again afterwards costs me about £10 a day,' he says, but he won't tell me how much he earns as a living statue when I ask him.

I hope it's a lot. Working as a human statue is a demanding job. Passers-by can be rude, and living statues are regularly pushed or even attacked by members of the public. Standing still for long periods of time isn't easy and it can cause health problems. Walters is helped by the fact that he's a marathon runner. He can drop his heart rate down to just 28 beats per minute, so people don't see him breathe.

Living statues have a lot of fun too. Chris Clarkson performs as a Greek statue who has a fountain of water. 'One day, I could see two children who wanted me to splash them,' he says. 'So I did, and the audience loved it. I got a lot of money. Then their dad came to collect them, so I decided to get him too. It turned out not to be their dad – but a police officer! Luckily, he had a good sense of humour.'

1

Read the text. Are the sentences true (T), false (F), or not given (NG)?

1 The silver man with an umbrella was the first living statue the writer had ever seen.
T F NG

2 The only reason that living statues move is because they get so uncomfortable. T F NG

3 A make-up artist covers Matt in paint.
T F NG

4 The writer asked Matt Walters how much money he makes as a living statue. T F NG

5 People don't always treat living statues kindly.
T F NG

6 Matt Walters has trained as an actor.
T F NG

7 He can control how fast he breathes.
T F NG

8 The police officer was angry when Chris Clarkson threw water at him.
T F NG

2 Choose the best answer for each question.

1.What surprised the narrator one day in the city?
a) Seeing many people looking at the sky.
b) A silver statue suddenly moving.
c) Finding a lost umbrella on the street.
d) Hearing a loud noise from a statue.

2.According to the text, what is a living statue?
a) A statue made of living plants.
b) A performer who dresses as a statue.
c) An old statue that has been repaired.
d) A statue that moves by itself.

3.How long have groups of people been performing tableaux vivants?
a) For about fifty years.
b) For more than five hundred years.
c) Since Matt Walters started working.
d) Only in modern times.

4.What does Matt Walters use to look like a statue?
a) Stone and metal.
b) A special silver suit.
c) Dark grey paint and make-up.
d) An umbrella and a hat.

5.How much does Matt Walters earn daily?
a) About twenty pounds.
b) He doesn't spend any money.
c) About ten pounds.
d) It's not mentioned in the text.

6.What is mentioned as a difficulty of being a living statue?
a) The weather conditions.
b) The public's behavior.
c) Forgetting to move.
d) The cost of the costume.

7.What happened when Chris Clarkson was performing as a Greek statue with a fountain?
a) People gave him a lot of money.
b) Two children came to splash him with water.
c) A police officer wanted to arrest him.
d) The fountain stopped working.

8.What did two children's father do when he came to collect his children?
a) He was angry at Chris.
b) He joined in the performance.
c) He turned out to be a police officer.
d) He didn't say anything.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3 Read the questions 1-5 and match with A-E.

1 So, what do the three photos have in common? ☐
2 What do you think of this one? ☐
3 Do you like that one? ☐
4 So, which one should we choose? ☐
5 Do you agree? ☐

A No, I don't. If I'm honest, I think it looks a bit boring.
B Yes, I do. 100%. I think we've made the right decision.
C They all show different kinds of presents.
D To be blunt, I think it's awful!
E I don't know. Personally, I don't really think any of them are suitable.

LIVEWORKSHEETS