Task – Unit 2

Unit 2 Talents

Reading and Use of English Part 7

1 You are going to read a newspaper article about a child genius. For questions 1–10, choose from the sections (A–D). The sections may be chosen more than once.

Which paragraph

- says that the writer found it hard to establish rules? 1 ☐
- suggests that the writer controlled how Leo spent his leisure time? 2 ☐
- describes an incident which shocked the writer? 3 ☐
- gives an example of Leo's inventiveness? 4 ☐
- states that the writer believed some people thought he wasn't strict enough with Leo? 5 ☐
- refers to Leo's enquiring mind? 6 ☐
- gives examples of Leo's stubbornness? 7 ☐
- states that the writer finds parenting Leo difficult but worthwhile? 8 ☐
- suggests that the writer is confident that Leo will succeed in life? 9 ☐
- says that finding the right environment for Leo was key to his development? 10 ☐

CHILD GENIUS

Martin Buckley writes about his son Leo, a finalist on the TV series 'Child Genius'.

A

My 11-year-old son Leo is a finalist in Channel 4's 'Child Genius' competition. For me, it caps a decade spent learning how to raise a child whose intellect and independence of spirit simply aren't ordinary. It has been rewarding, but it hasn't always been easy. I was struck by Leo's curiosity and independence of thought almost as soon as he could speak. When I told little Leo something, he would hungrily analyze it and respond with a penetrating question. He learned to play Monopoly at four and was soon beating me; at six, he had read the *Odyssey*. He would do jigsaw puzzles without the pictures – because it was more challenging. In fact, for every game he played, he would make up new rules, ones that would make the games harder.

B

Leo's IQ was tested on his 11th birthday. It scored him in the top 0.01 per cent of his age group. So yes, he is bright. I think I only fully admitted that to myself after I saw those results. Not having other children, I had no real way of measuring Leo's intelligence. And, also, I have to admit that part of me just wanted a standard kid. Every parent wants their child to socialize well and make friends, not to be a genius and potentially difficult. Discipline was challenging. Explaining to Leo that he needed to sit in a given place, eat a given meal, follow a given routine, he would invariably ask, 'Why?'. And, often, he'd refuse. By the time he was four, it was sometimes hard to tell if he was wildly creative, or merely wild. I felt isolated, because many parents and teachers assumed that Leo was allowed to do just as he liked. The opposite was true. We worked daily to impose routines. But Leo was reluctant to go along with anything just because he was asked to.

C

There are of course other downsides to having a very bright child. Not least of these is dealing with the education system. I've seen state schools that are content to be of average standard, and expensive private schools with equally average teachers that don't make allowances for students who have different needs, which I find alarming. I will never forget the ignorant teacher who, in my hearing, patronized my six-year-old when he referred to Shakespeare as a poet. 'He wrote prose,' she snapped. Eventually, we found the right school for him. His frustration has gone, he has matured, he has strong friendships, and his grades are mainly 'A's. At last, he's just an intelligent, appropriately stimulated child, and achieving his potential.

D

'Child Genius' has very much cast me in the role of the pushy parent, but I would argue that I have simply been discriminating. Leo has seen little live television in his life; instead, good stuff on DVDs and as many books as he has wanted. At six, he was reading versions of the classics written for teenagers, and last week we watched *Coriolanus* together. Shakespeare's language was not a barrier for him. This September, Leo goes to a highly academic secondary school, and he plans to go to university. He's strong in maths and English, and a keen actor. What will he become, I wonder: a barrister, a doctor, a journalist? I tell him he can be anything he wants to be, and I believe it. The programme has confirmed my belief that raising a really bright child is a task society neither really understands nor supports.

LIVEWORKSHEETS