Good Duck, Charlie!

One of the first Hollywood film stars was the British actor Charlie Chaplin. Chaplin was born in London in 1889. He had a very poor and unhappy childhood. He left school when he was very young and worked in a number of jobs to survive. Then, he started to perform in a variety theater as a comic actor.

In 1913, he emigrated to America because he wanted to be a film actor. He entered the film industry and invented the character of Charlie the Tramp (Charlot in Italian), a funny short man with a black mustache and a bowler hat, well known for his "duck like" walk style. He was brilliant, and the comic character he created is still famous all over the world. It utilizes the comedy of manners, the comedy of humours and also the comedy of errors. His walking style focuses on the false pride in it every now and then with weird bends in the movement. The bend is not only funny enough to make people laugh at him but to laugh at themselves, at their own errors. The 'ever-idiot' Tramp walks like animals - like a duck in a lonely street. Why does he? Why can't he be very human in walking consciously to show the world the false pride? He may prefer to walk like animals to be funny without a penny.

Chaplin made wonderful comedy films like The Golden Rush, City Lights, Modern Times and The Great Dictator. Almost all these films were silent, that is they didn't have spoken dialogues or a soundtrack, but subtitles helped to tell the story. A pianist sometimes played the piano too – fast music for the exciting parts and slow music for the sad parts.

By 1919, Chaplin was rich and he started the United Artists studios with some other famous Hollywood stars. He lived in the USA for many years, but the government didn't like his political opinions as they thought he was a socialist. So, in 1952, when Chaplin tried to return to the USA after a journey to London, the Americans did not allow him back. Then Chaplin decided to live in Switzerland until his death in 1977. He returned to the US only once in 1972 when he received a special Oscar for his life's work. This was Hollywood way of saying sorry to one of its greatest stars.

CHOOSE THE CORRECT OPTION.

1. When Chaplin was a child his family was _____
   a. sad.
   b. poor.
   c. happy.
   d. rich.
2. He worked _____
   a. as a comedian.
   b. as a theatre director.
   c. in lots of cinemas.
   d. in a Broadway theatre.
3. Charlot is the name _____
   a. of an Italian actor.
   b. of a British actor.
   c. of a comic character.
   d. of a funny comedian.
4. After 1952 Chaplin lived _____
   a. in the USA.
   b. in Hollywood.
   c. in London.
   d. in Europe.

READ AND WRITE TRUE OR FALSE

1. Chaplin's difficult upbringing prevented him from pursuing a career in the performing arts.
2. The text suggests that Chaplin's physical comedy had both humorous and symbolic meanings.
3. The text implies that Chaplin used humor not only for entertainment but also to encourage audiences to reflect on human behavior.
4. According to the text, Chaplin's comedy often encouraged audiences to laugh at their own mistakes.
5. Receiving a special Oscar in 1972 symbolized a change in Hollywood's attitude towards Chaplin.
6. The author's description of the Tramp's animal-like walk suggests that appearing ridiculous can be an effective way of exposing human vanity.

LIVEWORKSHEETS