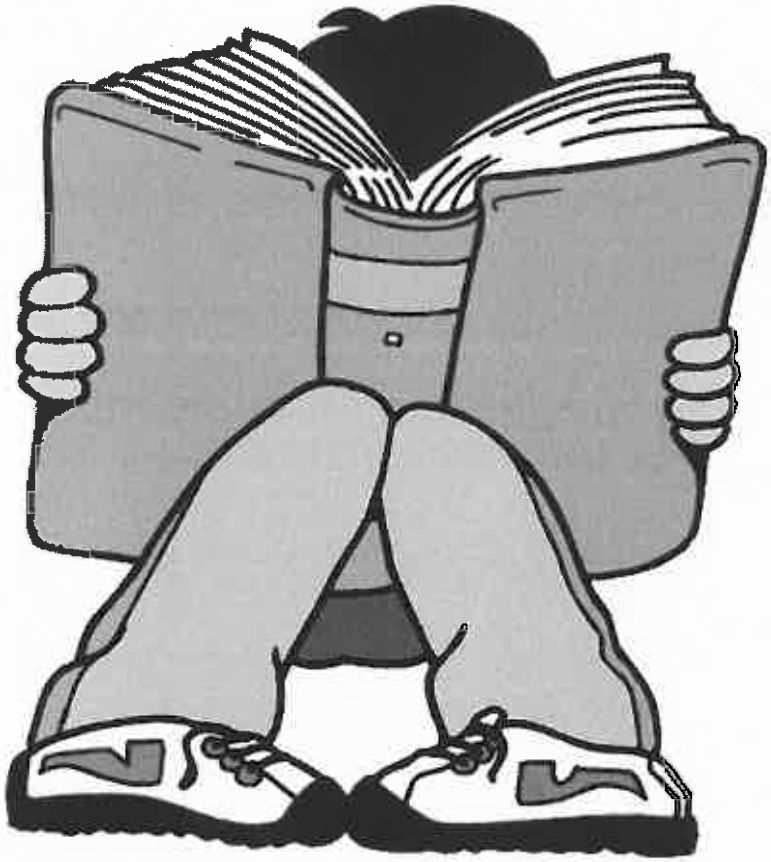
AYR ACADEMY

Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation

N5: Pupil Booklet



Papers Enclosed

- **The Case for US and Them**
- **Come Fly With Me**
- **Hey Parents**
- **On the Spot**

The Case for US and Them

There's a long history of guardians of the English language battling bravely against creeping Americanisms, but the reality is that it's a two-way process.

"Cops?" My wife's lip curled up into a smug little sneer. "Where do you think we are? Boston?"

I could, at that moment have pointed out that Glasgow does share a grid system of streets which makes it a convenient stand-in for the average American city, but figured this would only delay chastisement for a linguistic dalliance with my current "Americanism" of choice; for I'm ashamed to admit that I have an unconscious habit of referring to the police by an American slang. Still, it is preferable to referring to them as the police "service" which has replaced the word "force", probably on the grounds that it sounds friendlier. To my mind, a service is optional—you can either choose to make use of it or not—and yet the role of the police is to enforce the law, obedience to which is not at all optional.

I don't mind certain Americanisms, those words and phrases that wheedle their way into everyday usage such as "talented" and "reliable". You weren't aware that both words originally hailed from across the Atlantic? OK. Neither was I until I researched this article and discovered that, in the 19th century, these new, American terms were at first described as "barbarous" and "vile" —but were soon accepted into British English.

When the Founding Fathers set sail for America, the English they spoke upon landing would have been identical to that spoken in Plymouth, but over the decades and centuries subtle differences have emerged. These were first codified by Noah Webster, a linguist from Connecticut who familiarised himself with 26 languages, and wrote *An American Dictionary of English Language* in 1828. It was he who struck out the "u" from colour and the extra "l" from travelled, and sneakily swopped a "c" for an "s" in defence. But they wouldn't let him have his way with women, which he wished to spell "wimmen".

If the appearance of American words caused mild consternation to people in the early 19th century, it was probably just as well that they were long dead when the marshalled forces of American English began to lay siege to our nation during our darkest hour. When movies (yes, that could be described as an Americanism, but is also, I would argue, accurate when used to describe an American film) developed sound and recorded dialogue in the 1930s, American words and phrases poured from the cinema screen into British ears, as they also did when hundreds of thousands of American soldiers descended on English towns and villages during the war.

There are those who cannot stand "Americanisms". A few years ago the BBC encouraged listeners to write in with their foulest examples which included "bi-weekly" instead of fortnightly (surely bi-weekly should be used for any occurrence whose frequency is twice a week?); "eaterie", "hike" (as in to raise prices), "going forward" and "you do the math" which, to my mind, is particularly callous, bullying the letter 's' away from his friends m, a, t and little h. Others were enraged by the insertion of redundant words, as in "I got it *for* free", or by the counter-intuitive "I could care less", which in its literal meaning indicates that you do care a reasonable amount but this could be lessened. Then we come to the aural and linguistic atrocity of "my bad" for "my fault". The utterances of a repentant three-year-old should never form the basis of an adult's vocabulary!

Yet if I have a current pet hate among "Americanisms" it is the phrase "reaching out". I recently sent an e-mail to a company in Los Angeles who said they could not be of assistance but thanked me for "reaching out". Have you ever heard a more belittling collision of two words? To "ask" (in which both parties are on an equal footing) has been usurped by a phrase which elevates one party and reduces the other: I was the pitiful party drowning in a quicksand of my own ignorance but bravely "reaching out" as if towards the security of a branch or vine.

It is, however, important to remember that words and phrases, like little linguistic cargo vessels, are constantly bobbing back and forth across the Atlantic. So while we shake our heads at people who use the term "the fall" instead of "autumn", the American linguist, Geoffrey Nunberg, is curling his lip in disdain at a friend who says that something is "spot on". He also thinks that the expression "will do" should be put into quarantine. There is even a blog, run by Ben Yagoda, professor of English at the University of Delaware, which tracks the appearance of British words in American English, and highlights words and phrases such as "cheeky", "sell by date" and "the long game", which, according to the BBC, was used by President Obama in a recent speech—and which is derived from the British card game, whist.

In the end, I accept that there is nothing to be done about "Americanisms" other than to make a personal choice about which ones, if any, you are prepared to admit into your everyday vocabulary. Personally, I'm happy to take the "lift" over the "elevator" but would prefer to live in an "apartment" rather than a "flat". Regardless, the English language will continue to evolve and it is impossible to build a fence around what has, over centuries, blended German, French, Dutch and Latin into its own rich stew of letters.

Adapted from an article by Stephen McGinty, in The Scotsman

MARKS

1. Explain two reasons for the effectiveness of the opening paragraph (line 1). 4

2. Explain in your own words why the writer believes the word "service" (line 6) is not an appropriate way to describe the police. 2

3. Look at the sentence beginning "If the appearance of American words . . " (lines 22-24).
Explain any way in which it helps to provide a link between ideas at this point in the article. 2

4. "There are those who cannot stand 'Americanisms' " (line 30).
As far as possible in your own words, explain some of the objections raised in the remainder of the paragraph. 4

5. Look at lines 40-45.

   (a) In your own words, explain why the writer dislikes the phrase "reaching out". 1

   (b) Explain, with reference to his use of language, how successful you think he has been in making clear his dislike. You should refer to two different examples. 4

6. The expression "It is, however, important to remember" (line 46) signals a turning point in the writer's argument.
Using your own words as far as possible, explain what the turning point is and go on to show how the writer's use of language illustrates his ideas at this point. 3

7. Consider the article as a whole. In your own words, identify the writer's attitude to "Americanisms" and give evidence to support your answer. 2

8. The writer creates a humorous tone at various points throughout this article.
Select one example and, by reference to his use of language, explain how effective you find it in presenting the writer's ideas. 2

9. By referring to the whole article, and using your own words as far as possible, identify the key points the writer makes about the growth, development and effects of "Americanisms". 6

Total 30 Marks

Come fly with me

In this passage, the writer reflects on his fascination with birds and flight.

I was going through Monken Hadley churchyard and there were lots (note scientific precision) of house martins whizzing round the church tower. House martins are dapper little chaps, navy blue with white, and they are one of the sights of the summer: doing things like whizzing round church steeples and catching flies in their beaks. Later in the season the young ones take up whizzing themselves, trying to get the hang of this flying business. So I paused on my journey to spend a few moments gazing at the whirligig of martins. It was nothing special, nothing exceptional, and it was very good indeed. Note this: one of the greatest pleasures of birdwatching is the quiet enjoyment of the absolutely ordinary.

And then it happened. Bam!

Gone.

From the tail of my eye, I saw what I took to be a kestrel. I turned my head to watch it as it climbed, and I waited for it to go into its hover, according to time-honoured kestrel custom. But it did nothing of the kind. It turned itself into an anchor. Or a thunderbolt.

No kestrel this: it crashed into the crowd of martins, and almost as swiftly vanished. I think it got one, but I can't swear to it, it was all so fast.

It was a hobby-hawk. Perhaps the most dashing falcon of them all: slim, elegant and deadly fast. Not rare as rare-bird-addicts reckon things: they come to Britain in reasonable numbers every summer to breed. The sight of a hobby-hawk makes no headlines in the birdwatching world. It was just a wonderful and wholly unexpected sight of a wonderful and wholly unexpected bird. It was a moment of perfect drama.

Birdwatching is a state of being, not an activity. It doesn't depend on place, on equipment, on specific purpose, like, say, fishing. It is not a matter of organic trainspotting; it is about life and it is about living. It is a matter of keeping the eyes and ears and mind open. It is not a matter of obsession, not at all. It is just quiet enjoyment.

Flight is the dream of every human being. When we are lucky, we do, quite literally, dream about flying. They are the best of all dreams—you are free, you are miraculous.

The desire to fly is part of the condition of being human. That's why most of the non-confrontational sports are about flying, or at least the defiance of gravity. Gymnastics is about the power of the human body to fly unaided; so is the high jump and the long jump. The throwing events—discus, shot-put and hammer—are about making something else fly: a war on gravity.

Golf always seems to me a trivial game, but every one of its legion of addicts will tell you that it all comes back to the pure joy of a clean strike at the ball: making it defy gravity. Making it climb like a towering snipe. Making it soar like an eagle, at least in the mind of the striker, as it reaches the top of its long, graceful parabola.

Think about it: all these sports are done for the joy of flying. Skating is a victory over friction, and it feels like victory over gravity; it feels like flying. Its antithesis is weightlifting: a huge and brutal event, the idea of which is to beat gravity. All the horsey events come back to the idea of flight: of getting off the ground, of escaping human limitations by joining up with another species and finding flight. For every rider, every horse has wings.

And birds fly in all kinds of ways: the brisk purpose of a sparrow, the airy detachment of the seagull, the dramatic power of the hawk. Some birds specialise in flying very fast; others in flying very slow. Great hunters such as the barn owl work on the edge of the stall all the time. Kestrels are very good at flying without moving at all. Some birds are not so great at flying. Pheasants just about get off the ground into a safe place in a tree for a night. They are poor flyers, but they are unquestionably better than us humans.

And flight attracts our eyes, lifts our heart with joy and envy. Flight, to us earthbound creatures, is a form of magic—one of the great powers attributed to decent wizards and witches throughout history is the ability to fly, from the persecuted sorcerers of the Dark Ages to the players of the game of quidditch.

Take a basic urban moment—a traffic jam, a train becalmed. A sigh, a look away from the road or the newspaper, out of the window. A skein of geese in the sky; probably, almost certainly, "just" Canada geese. Too far away to hear them honking to each other, urgent instructions to keep the formation tight and to help the leader out with the hard work. A daily sight, a common sight, an ordinary sight. But just for one second—perhaps even two—you are let off the day's hassles. At least that is the case if you take the trouble to look up. It will probably be the most inspiring thing you will see all day. The day is the better for those birds.

And so we look to birds for a deep-seated kind of joy. It goes back to the dawn of humankind: ever since humans first walked upright, they were able to turn their eyes to the heavens and observe the birds. The birds have something we can never have. But merely by existing—by flying before us—they add to the daily joys of existence. Birds are about hope.

Adapted from *How to be a Bad Birdwatcher* by Simon Barnes

Come Fly With Me

QUESTIONS

1. Explain what is odd or ironic about the expression "note scientific precision" (lines 1–2). **2**

2. "It was nothing special, nothing exceptional, and it was very good indeed." (line 7).
(*a*) What is surprising about this statement?
(*b*) Show how the writer continues this idea in the next sentence (lines 8–9). **1**

3. Identify **two** techniques used in lines 10 and 11 which help to convey the idea ofspeed described in the next two paragraphs (lines 12–17). **2**

4. (*a*) What is the author suggesting about the bird when he says "It turned itself into an anchor" (line 14)? **1**
(*b*) Why is the comparison of the bird to a "thunderbolt" (line 15) an effective image or metaphor? **2**

5. Explain with clear reference to the whole sentence why the writer uses a colon In line 19. **2**

6. "The sight of a hobby-hawk makes no headlines in the birdwatching world" (lines 20 –21). Explain **in your own words** what is meant by "makes no headlines". **1**

7. Write down the word from later in the paragraph which continues the idea introduced by "trainspotting" (line 25). **1**

8. In what way does the author's use of "quite literally" (line 27) help to make his meaning clear? **1**

9. (*a*) What does "trivial" (line 34) tell us about the writer's attitude to golf? **1**
(*b*) Explain how an expression later in this sentence makes it clear that the author is aware that others do not share his opinion. **2**
(*c*) Why are the comparisons the writer uses in the rest of this paragraph appropriate? **2**

10. The writer mentions a variety of sports between lines 29 and 43. What Challenge does he think these activities have in common? **1**

11. The writer refers to equestrianism ("horsey events", line 41), as related to the pursuit of flight. What is the difference between this and all the other sports he mentions? Answer **in your own words.** **1**

12. Why is it appropriate to introduce the paragraph consisting of lines 44 to 49 With the expression "And birds fly in all kinds of ways"? **2**

13. The writer refers to "wizards and witches throughout history" (lines 51–52). Explain by referring to either **word choice** or **structure** how the rest of the

sentence continues this idea. **2**

14. What do the writer's examples of "a basic urban moment" (line 54) have in common? **1**

15. What is the effect of the inverted commas round "just" in line 56? **1**

16. Explain fully why the last paragraph (lines 62–66) provides an appropriate or effective conclusion to the passage. **2**

[*END OF QUESTION PAPER*]

Hey, parents, leave those kids alone.

In many ways, nothing changes. We love our children. We want our children to grow up to be competent, decent human beings fit for adult purpose. These are the main things, and in these we have, I think we are all agreed, not done too badly. Our children, and I'll generalise here, are not serial axe murderers or kitten drowners. Our children do make an effort — at least on special occasions anyway — to repay the enormous investment of time, energy, money and emotion we have poured into them. Children are programmed to please, to be loved, and to love us back.

So we are not here to examine our children. What we should do is try to find out where we have gone so terribly wrong. Before we come to the wretchedly indulgent state of modern parenting, though, I suppose I'd better set out my stall. Inevitably, when one becomes a parent, one can't help revisiting one's own childhood to make comparisons.

When I was little, we were given no choices — about what we ate, what we wore, what we did, where we went to school, when we went to bed etc. I could only choose what to read.

There was not so much stuff (many of my son's 15-year-old friends have iPods, iPads, MacBooks, unlimited access to their parents' credit cards, Pay Pal, eBay and iTunes accounts — and not just iPhones, but BlackBerrys too), so we made our own fun.

Our parents provided us with the essentials, then got on with their own lives. Which makes me realise that my parents were brilliant, not for what they did, but more for what they didn't do.

So we were fed, we were clothed, we were loved, and we had all the books we could read. But there was not the expectation of having every wish granted, as there is now, and that is the best thing that my parents could ever have given us.

I remember only once going to a restaurant in the UK. It was a motorway café on the A303. My father told us, wincing as he looked at the laminated text, with its stomach-churning pictograms, that we could have the spag bol. From the children's menu.

We had a TV, but as we lived in Belgium there was nothing to watch apart from two American sitcoms, which came on only once a week.

My parents were so hard up that when we went to England for holidays on the family farm on Exmoor — mainly spent "wooding" for winter fuel on rainswept hillsides — my father would invariably book cheap overnight ferry crossings from the Continent. He would never shell out for a cabin, despite the 1am or 3am departure slots. Instead, he would tell us to go to sleep in the back of the car, parked in the lower deck, where we would eventually pass out from suffocation or diesel fumes.

We never had friends round for "playdates". Keeping children busy and happy was not a parental priority. If we were bored, that was our own fault. In fact, there was nothing to do for weeks on end except rake leaves (my father once made us spend a whole half-term raking leaves) and read on our beds. Occasionally my mother would shout up the stairs: "Stop reading!" Imagine that now, when children are on their laptops in their rooms, looking at . . . I don't even want to imagine.

As for school, well, reports were read, not dwelt upon, as they were not parents' business, but ours. As for parental involvement, all I can tell you is that my father's proudest boast as a parent is that he never, once, attended a parent-teacher meeting at any one of our schools.

It never did me any harm, but still, I can't repeat this sensible, caring regime of character-building, toughening, benign neglect for my own children . . . and nor, it appears, can anyone else. Now examples of "wet parenting" abound.

We also live in a world where a manic mum calls herself a Tiger Mother and writes a bestselling book by the same name about how to produce straight-A, violin-playing, tennis-champ, superkids, and where pushy, anxious helicopter parents hover over every school. A friend reports that when her son was due to visit the Brecon Beacons on a school camping trip this summer, three mothers pulled out their sons because the weather forecast was "rainy".

University dons are also complaining of a traumatic level of parental over-involvement just at the exact moment that mummies and daddies are supposed to be letting go.

It was the complete opposite in my day. When I was on my gap year, I called my father from Israel in September and told him I'd decided not to take up my place at university. I announced that I wanted to stay in Galilee with a handsome local shepherd. For ever.

My father didn't miss a beat. "Great scheme!" he cried, astutely divining that if he approved the plan, I would never carry it out.

In my lifetime, parenthood has undergone a terrifying transition. Becoming a mother or father is no longer something you just are. It is something you do, like becoming a vet—complete with training courses, parenting vouchers, government targets and guidelines, and a host of academics and caring professionals (as well as their websites, and telephone helplines) on hand 24/7 to guide you through what to expect when your twentysomethings return home.

Parenting has become subsidised and professionalised, even though anyone can (and, frankly, does) have a baby, after which they become parents.

I love being a parent, most of the time anyway, but we should immediately de-professionalise it, on the grounds that: one, it's unpaid; and two, thanks to the economy, lack of housing and jobs etc, you never get to retire.

Rachel Johnson, in The Times

MARKS

1. Look at line 9, where the writer gives the view that, nowadays, parents "have gone . . . terribly wrong".

   Explain **in your own words** what the writer goes on to say has gone wrong. 2

2. Explain any way in which the sentences in lines 12 – 14 help to provide a link between ideas at this point in the passage. 2

3. Look at lines 24 – 40, where the writer develops the idea of her family being "hard up".

   Show fully how examples of the writer's use of such features of language as **word choice** or **sentence structure** helps to convey her ideas effectively. 4

4. Look at lines 45 – 47.

   Explain what is meant by the expression "benign neglect", and explain what is surprising about this expression. 3

5. Look at lines 48 – 55.

   With reference to **three** examples of the writer's **word choice** from these lines, show fully how she makes clear her disapproval of what she calls "wet parenting". 6

6. In the expression "straight-A, violin-playing, tennis-champ, superkids" the writer tries to achieve a humorous, mocking tone.

   Explain with reference to her use of language how successful you think she has been in achieving this tone. 2

7. Look at lines 59 – 60.

   Show fully how the writer conveys her father's **apparent** attitude, and his **actual attitude**, to her plan. 4

8. Look at lines 61 – 66, and then explain **as far as possible in your own words** what similarities the writer sees between "Becoming a mother or father" and "becoming a vet". 2

9. In this article, the writer points out several differences between parenting and childhood when she was little and parenting and childhood now (she refers to "a terrifying transition", line 61).

   As far as possible in your own words, summarise what some main differences are. 5

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

On the spot

If you throw a rat into the middle of a room full of humans, it will instinctively freeze. By becoming completely still, it is more likely to avoid detection. Then, it will dart into a corner of the room, hoping to flee danger. If cornered, however, it will fight. Ferociously.

Psychologists call it the fight-flight-freeze response, and it emerged very early in evolution. We know this because it is common to all vertebrates. The response starts in a part of the brain which reacts when an animal is confronted by a threat, and is controlled by the automatic nervous system. This is the same system that manages digestion and respiration, and is independent of conscious will.

At the World Cup finals, we were given a neat insight into this deeply ingrained response. The players who took penalties, and the former players who shared their experiences as pundits, talked about "the walk". This is the fearful, solitary journey from the halfway line to the penalty area in preparation for a single moment of truth: the spot-kick.

In the modern world, we rarely face danger head-on. It is not like the good old days when the fight-flight-freeze response was regularly called upon to deal with predators (of both an animal and human kind). Instead, the danger we face today is artificially created: taking an exam, giving a speech, taking a penalty.

The psychological response, however, is the same. As footballers walk towards the spot, they are experiencing precisely the things you experience when put under pressure at work. The threat is not to life or limb, but to ego and livelihood. We fear the consequences of messing up.

There is an acceleration of heart and lung function. There is paling and flushing. There is an inhibition of stomach action, such that digestion almost completely ceases. There is a constriction of blood vessels. There is a freeing up of metabolic energy sources (fat and glycogen). There is a dilation of the pupils and a relaxation of the bladder. Perception narrows. Often, there is shaking.

All of these things are incredibly useful, in the right context. They prime the muscles; they massively increase body strength in preparation for fighting or running. The increased muscle flow and blood pressure means that you become hyper-vigilant. The response is beautifully balanced for a simple reason: it helped our ancestors (and the ancestors of modern-day rats) to survive.

But there is a rather obvious problem. The fight-flight-freeze response is great for fighting, freezing or fleeing, but it is terrible if you have to do something complex, or subtle, or nuanced. When you are taking a penalty, or playing a piano concerto, or marshalling the arguments necessary to pass a difficult interview, it is not helpful to have adrenalin pumping like crazy and perception obliterated by tunnel vision. You need to be calm and composed, but your body is taut, pumped and trembling.

Sports psychology can be thought of as helping performers to manage a response (ie fight, flight, freeze) that has outlived, to a large extent, its usefulness. The players standing in the semi-circle holding hands are virtually motionless. It is a nice metaphor for the freeze response. The walk to the penalty spot is curiously self-conscious. You can almost hear the inner dialogue: "Get out of here, run away! 'But I can't run away. I have to take this thing!' "

How to deal with these responses? One way is with reflection. The next time you give a

speech or are doing a job interview, take note of how you feel. Gauge the curious feeling of dread, the desire to run away, the way your heart is beating out of your chest. But do not let this intimidate you; instead, reflect that these are normal reactions and everyone experiences them: even Michael Jordan (a marvel from the free-throw line) and Roger Federer (who always looks unnaturally calm on Centre Court).

One of the most creative sports psychologists has found that simply discussing the fight-flight-freeze response has huge therapeutic benefit. It takes the edge off. It makes an otherwise bewildering reaction (what on earth is going on inside me?) into a comprehensible one. To put it another way, the first stage of liberation from the tyranny of pressure is echoing the behaviour of our ancient selves.

This, I think, is what top athletes mean when they repeat that otherwise paradoxical saying: "Pressure is not a problem; it is a privilege". Talk to David Beckham, Sebastian Coe or Sir Chris Hoy and they will be perfectly open about their nerves and fear. But they also talk with great pride about facing up to them. They didn't see these human responses as signs of weakness but as opportunities to grow. They created mechanisms (often highly personal ones) to help them through. They seized every opportunity to face danger, and learnt from each experience.

So, here is a piece of (free) advice: if you are given an opportunity to take the equivalent of a penalty, whether at work or anywhere else, grab it. Accept that you will feel uncomfortable, that your stomach will knot and that, at the moment of truth, you will wish to be anywhere else in the world. Think also, as you are about to perform, of the footballers at a World Cup who volunteered to step forward with the weight of a nation's expectations on their shoulders.

Because here is the most revelatory and paradoxical thing of all: if you miss, your life will not end. If you fluff your lines, you won't die. Instead, you will grow, learn and mature. And isn't that what life – whether at home, on the football pitch, or in the office – is ultimately about?

Matthew Syed, in "The Times"

N5 On the Spot
Questions

1.Explain fully why the first paragraph (lines 1—4) is an effective opening to the passage as a whole. **3**

2. Look at lines 5—10, and then explain **in your own words** what the writer means when he calls the response "deeply ingrained". **2**

3. Look at lines 14—21, and then explain **in your own words two** aspects of "danger"or "threat" we used to experience in the past, and **two** we face now. **4**

4. Look at lines 22—37, and then summarise, **using your own words** as far as possible, some of the changes in the body which occur with the response.
You should make **five** key points in your answer. **5**

5. Explain why the sentence "How to deal with these responses?" (line 44) provides an appropriate link at this point in the passage. **2**

6. Look at lines 50—54, and then explain how **two** examples of the writer's **wordchoice** demonstrate the "benefit" of the response. **4**

7. Look at lines 55—61. Explain what the attitude of top athletes is to pressure, and how **two** examples of the language used make this attitude clear. **5**

8. Look at lines 62—67, and explain fully **using your own words** why the advice to"grab" the opportunity might at first seem strange. **3**

9. Pick an expression from the final paragraph (lines 68—71), and show how it helps to contribute to an effective conclusion to the passage.
You should refer to an expression or idea from earlier in the article. **2**

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]