

GT Reading Mock Test 45:

Part 3: Question 28-40

You should spend about **20 minutes** to complete this task.

Read the text below and answers questions **28-40** on your answer sheet.

GT Reading Sample - "A BOOK REVIEW – DOG WILL HAVE HIS DAY"

Read the text below and answer Questions **28–40**.

A BOOK REVIEW – DOG WILL HAVE HIS DAY BY FRED VARGAS (*TRANSLATED BY SIAN REYNOLDS*)

This is another crime thriller from the prize-winning novelist Fred Vargas. Despite the misleading first name and Spanish surname, the author is actually a French woman – Frédérique Audoin-Rouzeau. She adopted her nom de plume from the Ava Gardner character, the Spanish dancer Maria Vargas, in the 1954 film *The Barefoot Contessa*. Although a writer of crime fiction, Frederique Audoin-Rouzeau is primarily a medieval historian and archaeologist.

Her detective books are immensely popular: over 10 million copies have been sold worldwide and they have been translated into 45 languages. She is a little mystified by her success – after all, it is just a hobby – and finds it quite amusing. As an

archaeologist specialising in epidemiology, she produced the definitive study on the transmission of the bubonic plague – a book that she says “after seven years of intensive work trying to find the real vector of the plague” sold only a thousand copies. It is even more paradoxical to learn that she wrote each of her novels in three weeks flat, during her annual summer holidays. Even when she took a break from archaeology to work full-time on her fiction, the first draft was still finished within the same time frame. She uses the ensuing months to polish and tidy the prose.

Perhaps by virtue of Vargas’ archaeological background, *Dog Will Have His Day* starts with a bone. It turns out to be the top joint of a woman’s big toe, found by chance in Paris by Louis Kehlweiler, a former special investigator for the Ministry of Justice. He presents his findings to the local police, who declines to do anything about it. However, Louis, convinced that a murder has taken place, decides to focus on finding the body to which the toe belongs.

Most of Vargas’ characters are eccentrics in some way and Louis is no exception. He carries a toad named Bufo around in his pocket and consults it on matters of importance, although Louis says: “You have to keep it simple with Bufo, just basic ideas ... He can’t cope with anything else. Sometimes I try a bit harder, a bit of philosophy even, to improve his mind ... He was much more stupid when I first got him.” Louis recruits the assistance of Marc Vandoosler, one of the ‘evangelists’ of a previous novel *The Three Evangelists*. The evangelists, actually unemployed historians, share a rundown house and Marc is the medieval researcher among them. Later, another of the evangelists, Mathias, the hunter-gatherer (a prehistoric specialist), joins the undertaking.

As the bone fragment had obviously passed through a dog’s digestive system, Louis’ first mission is to track down the dog in question. Ringo, a pit bull, is eventually identified as the culprit and his owner is tracked to a tiny Breton fishing village. There, Marc and Louis establish that the corpse of an old woman missing her big toe had been discovered on the beach a few days earlier. The investigation takes in some interesting

characters, including a collector of antique typewriters. Although initially suspecting just one murder, Louis, with the help of Marc and Mathias, manages to solve three homicides and unmask a would-be mayoral candidate who is in fact wanted for crimes against humanity dating from the Second World War.

As an aficionado of crime fiction, I find Vargas' prose far from conventional. It is original, enthralling and witty, occasionally whimsical and surreal, but always with a delightful simplicity. The main characters have their little catchphrases such as "I could do with a beer" (Louis) which makes them endearingly human. She has a cast of quirky provincial characters expertly portrayed; far removed from the darkly humorous, brutally violent, hard-edged Scandinavian realism which is so widely admired these days. Vargas definitely swims against the tide of realism – there is a lack of elaborate description – no detailed depictions of the meals eaten, clothes worn, music listened to or cars driven. This is enormously refreshing: frankly, how essential is it to know the make of a vehicle or the brand of beer? Unless, of course, it is inextricably linked to the unravelling of the plot.

Comparatively speaking, the plot of this book appears at first to be a little on the light side although her bizarre characters and inventiveness keep the reader well entertained. However, the story suddenly becomes convoluted towards the end and the denouement rapidly ensues, leaving the reader feeling short-changed. It is not as ingenious or inspired as *The Three Evangelists* – one of her finest novels and a hard act to follow – but the well-judged inclusion of Marc leaves the reader wanting to see more of the other two evangelists. Despite some shortcomings, it is still a brilliant read and I remain a steadfast fan.

Questions 28-36

Complete the summary below.

Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER** from the text for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes **28–36** on your answer sheet.

Fred Vargas is the **28** of Frédérique Audoin-Rouzeau. She has two main professions, and writing crime novels is her **29** She thinks it is funny that her fiction is so popular, in contrast to her academic writing, which does not sell so well. It took many years of research before she published her book about the **30** whereas she can write the first draft of a detective story in just **31**, although it takes quite a bit longer to correct and change the **32**

Dog Will Have His Day is a story about a piece of human bone, and Louis Kehlweiler's attempts to solve a murder mystery. Kehlweiler is a typical example of Vargas' heroes, many of whom are **33**; in his case, he has a pet toad who he chats to regularly. He enlists the help of Marc and Mathias, both **34** who had featured as evangelists in an earlier Vargas novel. They end up in a small **35** where they learn that a woman's body had recently been found on the beach. In the course of their investigation, they uncover more murders and **36** a war criminal.

Questions 37-40

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in SECTION 3?

In boxes **37–40** on your answer sheet, write

YES if the statement agrees with the views of the writer

NO if the statement contradicts the views of the writer

NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this

- 37. Vargas' style of writing is typical of crime fiction.
- 38. The style has much in common with Scandinavian crime novels.
- 39. Detailed descriptions are only useful to the reader when they develop the storyline.
- 40. 'The Three Evangelists' is Vargas' best selling novel.

ANSWER

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| <p>28. nom de plume
29. hobby
30. (bubonic) plague
31. three weeks/3 weeks
32. prose
33. eccentrics
34. (unemployed) historians
35. (Breton) fishing village
36. unmask
37. NO
38. NO
39. YES
40. NOT GIVEN</p> |
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