

Speaking part 4

Use the following questions, in order, as appropriate:

- Do you think it's important to have good communication skills to do a job well? (Why? / Why not?)
- Some people say that because of modern technology we are losing our communication skills. What's your opinion? (Why? / Why not?)
- Do you think people can be taught good communication skills or is it something we are born with? (Why? / Why not?)
- How important do you think it is for families to find time to communicate with each other? (Why? / Why not?)
- Do you think that all children should be taught at least one foreign language at school? (Why? / Why not?)
- Do you think that it's likely that one day there will be an international 'world language' that everyone speaks? (Why? / Why not?)

Select any of the following prompts, as appropriate:

- What do you think?
- Do you agree?
- How about you?

Choosing Binoculars

For independent travellers, a good pair of binoculars often represents an essential piece of kit. Unless you're planning to do a (0) **great** deal of bird-watching or other specialist activities, however, there's no need to invest (9) a full-size pair. Compact binoculars are fine when (10) comes to general all-purpose viewing in good light. What's (11), they are certainly easier to carry round.

Everyone has (12) own idea of what makes a comfortable pair of binoculars. When you're considering (13) of the many brands and models on the market you should choose, don't base your decision on price alone. A better idea (14) to pop down to your local photographic store and (15) those that fall within your price range a test run.

(16) you might like the look of a particular pair, you may not find the handling and viewing position comfortable. Finally, make sure the binoculars come with a decent case and a comfortable neck strap. These details can make all the difference when you're out in the field.

TASK ONE

For questions 21–25, choose from the list A–H what each speaker is saying.

A I made up my mind about something.

Speaker 1

| | |
|--|----|
| | 21 |
|--|----|

B I had a piece of luck.

C My popularity started to decline.

Speaker 2

| | |
|--|----|
| | 22 |
|--|----|

D I received some bad publicity.

Speaker 3

| | |
|--|----|
| | 23 |
|--|----|

E I achieved an ambition.

F My attitude to fame changed.

Speaker 4

| | |
|--|----|
| | 24 |
|--|----|

G I made a mistake.

H I turned down an opportunity.

Speaker 5

| | |
|--|----|
| | 25 |
|--|----|

TASK TWO

For questions 26–30, choose from the list A–H the feeling each speaker expresses.

A regret

Speaker 1

| | |
|--|----|
| | 26 |
|--|----|

B relief

C annoyance

Speaker 2

| | |
|--|----|
| | 27 |
|--|----|

D optimism

E anxiety

Speaker 3

| | |
|--|----|
| | 28 |
|--|----|

F embarrassment

Speaker 4

| | |
|--|----|
| | 29 |
|--|----|

G indifference

H disappointment

Speaker 5

| | |
|--|----|
| | 30 |
|--|----|

Science in Fiction

Science fiction thrillers have a rich history. Erica Wagner picks her favourites

By the time of his death in 2008, Michael Crichton had become the giant of the science thriller genre. He was perhaps best known for his novel *Jurassic Park* – published in 1990 – and the film spin-offs of his books. (I say ‘best-known’ but let’s not forget that he was also the man behind the famous story of the little alien ET, who befriends a small boy.)

For my money, however, his finest and most frightening novel was one of the earliest: *The Andromeda Strain* published in 1969. The novel builds on the premise that if we are ever to encounter aliens from another galaxy, they are much less likely to be little green men than microscopic life forms.

On a slightly jollier note, sticking to alien life, there’s Carl Sagan’s *Contact*, published in 1985, the tale of a radio astronomer who encounters a signal that could have been sent only by an intelligent life form. On one visit to the Jodrell Bank Observatory in Cheshire I was heartened to discover that this book (and the 1997 film starring Jodie Foster) was a favourite of the astronomers there.

But back to putting a shiver down your spine. How about Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*? First published, anonymously, in 1818, it shows that even in what the writer and academic Richard Holmes so memorably termed ‘The Age of Wonder’, the dark side of scientific research was never far from imaginative minds.

Now take another minute and find the answers to these questions about those names and numbers. The questions do not follow the order of the text.

- 1 Who is the author of this article?
- 2 Which is the oldest book she mentions?
- 3 Which is the most modern?
- 4 What can be found in Cheshire?
- 5 Which creations bearing Michael Crichton’s name are mentioned in the article?
- 6 Which of these does the reviewer say she likes most?
- 7 Which of Jodie Foster’s films is mentioned in this article?
- 8 Whose name was on the title page of the first edition of *Frankenstein*?
- 9 When was the book that the Jodrell Bank astronomers like published?
- 10 Who coined the phrase ‘The Age of Wonder’?
- 11 Which age does ‘The Age of Wonder’ refer to?
- 12 When did Michael Crichton die?

In which review are the following mentioned?

a central character who is said to be friendly

20

a character who is not honest with his relatives

21

a director with a part in his own film

22

a film which makes insufficient impact on the eye

23

a lot of money being spent without many obvious gains

24

a production that would have been improved by being shorter

25

a son deals with problems with his parents in an unusual way

26

a story aimed at the youth market

27

a partially successful new version of a popular old movie

28

a true story of a search for a family member

29

a youngster who uses sport to overcome his difficulties

30

an aspect of the film has an educational element

31

the film might be understood to have a different meaning from what was intended

32

the acting rescues an otherwise problematic film

33

the film has its origins in a previously popular television drama

34

At a cinema near you this week

There is a variety of films on general release this week. There should be something to appeal to most tastes and age groups.

- A Bush Trials** This documentary follows the popular lead singer of the band *Furry Monsters* as he travels through Australia in search of a long-lost relative, a fellow musician. In the process he acquaints himself with a small community living in the outback. He stays with them for longer than he intended, forgetting about his relative but getting to know them and becoming involved in their life. He's a likeable guide, chatting enthusiastically to local residents and joining them in concerts and table tennis tournaments in their village hall. The film is informative about Australian history without being too heavy. Does he meet his relative? Well, I recommend you go and watch *Bush Trials* and then you'll find out.
- B Car Heroes** This film is intended as a proper action movie for today's youngsters rather than a nostalgia fest for those of us who remember the 1980s television series. The film proudly shows off its distance from the original in an irreverent prologue in which the heroes' trademark black van is disposed of in no uncertain terms. Even the fondest fan would be hard put to argue that the TV show was a cultural landmark worthy of a preservation order and yet I'm not convinced that this film has any right to be so pleased with itself. Its action scenes are, of course, a lot more expensive than the TV show's brief shoot-outs but only one of these shows much imagination and so were hardly worth the expense. Well, that's how I felt at least.
- C Acing It** For this high-budget remake of the 1994 film about a bullied boy who gets his own back by learning judo, the director has kept to the tried and tested plot while souping up the action to modern standards. The contest that provides the climax to the film is now an event of Olympic scale and flamboyance and the fights it features are certainly more dynamic than before even though the participants are younger, 12-year-olds rather than the original film's car-driving, party-loving teenagers. The film generally provides decent entertainment. Its main weakness is that it drags in places and ends up rather more drawn-out than it needed to be. Nevertheless this is definitely a film you should consider for a family outing.
- D Will** Made in Scotland by the extraordinarily successful young Canadian director, Jack Fox, this film was not deliberately made as a parody of cinema pretentiousness although it could certainly be interpreted as such. A teenage boy escapes from his bad-tempered parents in their dark old castle in the Highlands by climbing into the surrounding trees and refusing to come down – a lifestyle choice he manages to maintain for several months. Apart from a few striking moments showing the boy clambering through the forest, it lacks the sort of visual intensity that might have allowed the film to succeed despite its other shortcomings. Far from seeming noble or poignant, the boy's tree life remains just an anti-social teenage sulk. He should be grounded.
- E Red Lake** The director of this film also plays its central character: a prison guard and family man, who means well but can't help keeping secrets from his wife and kids. The big one is that the young ex-convict that he has taken under his wing is his son from a long-ago relationship, but, curiously perhaps, he's just as unwilling to reveal he's attending both acting and golf classes. Meanwhile other family members have secrets of their own. The film aims for a balance between life lessons, drama and farce. This doesn't work particularly well. All the same, it is easy to watch, mainly thanks to the surprisingly powerful performances of the two main characters.

OVERLY AMBITIOUS?

It is **commonly believed** that being overly ambitious is a negative and even destructive trait. The main reason that ambition is not always highly regarded is that many people associate it with greed and with the type of people who push others out of the way to get where they want to be. According to a well-respected psychologist, if we take a randomly selected group of people, only one in ten would be regarded as highly ambitious. I am personally strongly opposed to the idea that ambition is a dirty word, and I'm deeply concerned that young people, especially women, are being held back by such stereotypical views of ambition. So, what is a more positive way to embrace your aspirations? First of all, it is vitally important to focus on your education at the early stages of your career. The most ambitious people tend to be highly educated. It is also useful to be well thought of by your peers, so get out there and join professional and social networks – both on and offline. Don't just join and be a passive observer. Get actively involved.

A

fully
utterly
badly
highly
closely
widely
conveniently
bitterly

B

disappointed
ridiculous
located
aware
available
trained
associated
mistaken

- 1 I find it _____ that teachers are no longer allowed to encourage any form of competition between students.
- 2 Tomas was _____ with his exam results and plans to re-sit them in the summer.
- 3 Teachers are _____ professionals, so they should definitely be paid more.
- 4 If you think I'm going to give up without a fight, you're _____.
- 5 The college bookshop is _____ next to the main entrance.
- 6 Most students are _____ that a degree does not guarantee them a job for life.
- 7 All the textbooks you will need are _____ across the country.
- 8 The university is _____ with the teaching hospital.