

PART 3

You are going to read a magazine article. For questions 13-19, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Step back in time

Historical biographer Antonia Fraser reveals the pleasures of studying a bygone era.

Gibbon was inspired to write *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* sitting on the steps of the Capitol at Rome one evening, listening to the sound of monks chanting. My own inspiration to become a historical biographer came in rather less elevated circumstances, as a teenager one rainy Oxford afternoon: I began to read Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, and was in particular fascinated by his essay on Cardinal Manning. This was going to be the life for me! Once back at school I plunged into further research in the library. A very different picture emerged. Gradually as I pursued the topic, I became aware of Strachey's daring sallies into "artistic truth" (as opposed to historical truth). Nevertheless I never forgot my original sense of being transported into a world more vivid than my own.

line 21 An ability to convey this sensation is, I believe, at the heart of the matter. If you, the biographer, don't thrill to your subject, you can hardly in all fairness expect the reader to do so. In a sense (not of course the commercial sense) the choice of subject is irrelevant so long as it meets that requirement. You could say that I was extremely lucky to choose Mary Queen of Scots for my first foray since there proved to be a world-wide public for the troubles of the ill-fated Queen. But you could argue equally that I made my own luck, since I had always been obsessed by Mary's story from childhood. Nor was success fore-ordained. It was, after all, the leading publisher Mark Bonham-Carter of (then) Collins who said to me when I confessed my project, "They say that all books on Mary Queen of Scots sell and no books on South America do", before adding with a laugh, "Perhaps yours will be the exception."

Nevertheless I did have luck. In the 60s, so-called narrative biography was said to be out of fashion. Mary Queen of Scots was an early beneficiary from the fact that the public continued to have an appetite for it, so long as the research was felt to be solid.

The actual research for a biography – now that's a whole other matter. The paramount need for it – historical truth not Stracheyesque truth must be established – means that biographers discover for themselves the reality

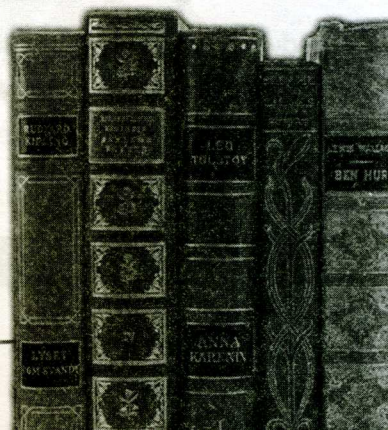
of Dr Johnson's wise dictum: "A man will turn over half a library to make a book."

And what about those fabled things boasted of on blurbs: hitherto unpublished documents? Obviously it is every researcher's dream to discover such papers, and their discovery once again may make a project commercial which would not otherwise be so. At the same time I would issue a caveat about hitherto unpublished documents. HUDs are not in themselves more valuable than the printed sources – it's a historical coincidence that one set has become known early on, the other not. One needs to evaluate them even more closely. Here I speak from personal experience. A series of chances led me to discovering some hitherto unpublished letters of Oliver Cromwell just as I was finishing my manuscript. I blazoned my finds across the text: only to realise at the proof stage, that they might be unpublished but they were not very important in the grand scheme of things ... an expensive mistake.

Where the perils and pleasures of writing historical biography are concerned, there are two perils which seem to me to raise points of principle. The first is the peril of anachronistic judgements. For example, in the 16th century line 6 more or less everybody took astrology seriously and more or less everybody enjoyed a jolly afternoon out to see the bears baited. It's no good dismissing the former as meaningless and cringing from the latter as disgusting.

I would further cite the peril of hindsight. We may know that Henry VIII will marry six times, but he didn't, and he would have been amazed if it had been predicted at the time of his first marriage to Catherine of Aragon.

And the pleasures? Manifold! Principal among them however is the opportunity to lead a life less ordinary. As a biographer, I can rule over kingdoms, lead the cavalry into battle, patronise the great artists of the past and all without leaving my chair.



Exam Tip 

Read the text extremely carefully in order to distinguish between apparently similar viewpoints, outcomes or reasons.

- 13 What did the writer learn while researching a historical figure as a teenager?
- A There was a surprising amount of information available.
 - B It was not possible to take everything she read as fact.
 - C It was difficult to interpret the true meaning of what she read.
 - D It was necessary to consult a wide range of sources.
- 14 What does 'that requirement' in line 21 refer to?
- A the reader's response to a writer's subject
 - B the correct choice of subject
 - C the commercial appeal of the book
 - D the writer's ability to communicate their enthusiasm
- 15 What did Mark Bonham-Carter believe about the writer's choice of subject?
- A Her long-standing interest in it may ensure her book's success.
 - B It did not guarantee her book's success.
 - C There are already too many books written on it.
 - D It was a wise choice for her first biography.
- 16 The main point that the writer is making in the fourth paragraph is that
- A a biography is more likely to be successful if it contains new information.
 - B researchers must be careful to check all facts thoroughly.
 - C research material can include inaccurate information.
 - D extensive reading is crucially important.
- 17 What warning does the writer give to biographers about unpublished documents?
- A They are difficult to obtain as their discovery is down to chance.
 - B Their overall significance to the book must be carefully considered.
 - C Their use could result in diminished commercial success for a book.
 - D It should not be assumed that they are authentic.
- 18 An example of an 'anachronistic judgement' (line 64) that the writer gives is
- A not being able to imagine oneself living in the sixteenth century.
 - B being uninformed about sixteenth century customs and practices.
 - C viewing the sixteenth century from a twenty-first century perspective.
 - D focusing only on the negative side of life in the sixteenth century.
- 19 In the article as a whole, the writer implies that her main motivation for becoming an historical biographer was the chance to
- A carry out extensive research.
 - B become immersed in history.
 - C discover unpublished documents.
 - D establish historical truth.

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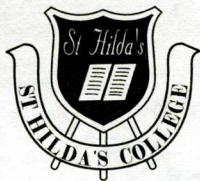
Exam Tip

First identify what part of speech is given as a prompt word and then think about what sort of change(s) you need to make.

For questions 28-37, read the text below. Use the word given in capitals at the end of some of the lines to form a word that fits in the gap in the same line. There is an example at the beginning (0).

Example:

| | | |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| 0 | EXPANSION | _____0_____ |
|---|-----------|-------------|



ST HILDA'S COLLEGE Teaching Vacancies

Due to the (0) *expansion* of our sixth form department, we are currently recruiting teachers with a(n) (28) in 'A' level Physical Education, Psychology, Law or Italian, or a (29) of these.

St Hilda's College is a(n) (30) day school for girls with a mission to provide high-quality (31) education to pupils aged eleven to eighteen.

Applicants should have a(n) (32) track record in teaching at 'A' level, although we would also welcome applications from (33) qualified teachers. Experience in the development and delivery of (34) curriculum programmes would be a distinct advantage.

It is highly (35) that applicants should be self-starters as well as team players and (36) to participate in extra-curricular activities. For further information and an application form, please contact Mrs Jessica Beaumont on: 0208-427-7721. The (37) date for applications is May 15th.

EXPAND
SPECIAL
COMBINE

DEPEND
SECOND

PROVE

NEW
INNOVATE

DESIRE
WILL

CLOSE

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Exam Tip 

Don't choose an answer based on an isolated word. Read the sentence and make sure you understand the overall meaning.

You will hear part of a radio interview in which a travel writer, Owen Griffiths, is talking about his career. For questions **15-20**, choose the answer (**A, B, C** or **D**) which fits best according to what you hear.

- 15** Why does Owen feel well suited to a career as a travel writer?
- A** He believes he has the desire and determination to succeed.
 - B** He finds it easy to adjust to living in different places.
 - C** He feels he has both the right character and skills.
 - D** He doesn't feel ready to settle down in one place.
- 16** Why did Owen work for a newspaper after leaving university?
- A** to gain writing experience
 - B** to follow in his mother's footsteps
 - C** to finance his novel writing
 - D** to please his parents
- 17** Why was Owen's first travel piece published?
- A** The paper had been planning a piece on that region.
 - B** He was the only writer able to meet the deadline.
 - C** It solved a problem for his boss.
 - D** His boss wanted to reward him.
- 18** According to Owen, what quality must a travel piece possess?
- A** It needs a balance between information and opinion.
 - B** It has to appeal to all readers of the newspaper.
 - C** It should be constructed like a short story.
 - D** It must convey the writer's enthusiasm for the place.
- 19** What criticism does Owen make of his own writing?
- A** He sometimes struggles to produce original pieces.
 - B** He often ends up leaving out the best parts of his journeys.
 - C** He believes his ideas could be better organised.
 - D** He sometimes writes to please himself more than his readers.
- 20** According to Owen, what is the ultimate aim of travel writing?
- A** to present an accurate picture of places around the world
 - B** to encourage the readers to visit certain places
 - C** to challenge wrong ideas people have about places
 - D** to engage the reader on an emotional level