

≡Listening Comprehension≡



This listening comprehension test consists of FOUR short pieces taken from *The Book of Heroic Failures*. Learners may not take notes as you read the paragraphs and questions set on them. After re-reading the extracts to the learners, read the questions and allow them to answer them.

Remember that spelling and language errors should not be penalised. One mark is allocated to each question; the total is 10.

Afterwards discuss the use of humour in the passages.

SUGGESTED ANSWERS

- 1.1 The firemen were on strike.
- 1.2 Up a tree
- 1.3 It was run over and killed.
- 2.1 She mistook the accelerator for the clutch.
- 2.2 Five times
- 2.3 They did not have the examiner's report.
- 3.1 He didn't want to attract attention.
- 3.2 She didn't have a paper bag.
- 4.1 Buses didn't stop to pick up passengers.
- 4.2 The timetable is more important than the passengers – but the passengers are the reason for the service.



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Happy Teaching!

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1. The Least Successful Animal Rescue

The firemen's strike of 1978 made possible one of the great animal rescue attempts of all time. Valiantly, the British Army had taken over emergency fire fighting and on 14 January they were called out by an elderly lady in South London to retrieve her cat which had become trapped up a tree. They arrived with impressive haste and soon discharged their duty. So grateful was the lady that she invited them all in for tea. Driving off later, with fond farewells completed, they ran over the cat and killed it.

- 1.1 Why did the British Army become involved in the rescue of a cat?
- 1.2 Where was the cat?
- 1.3 What happened to the cat in the end?



2. The Fastest Failure of a Driving Test

In the early 1970s Mrs Helen Ireland of Auburn, California, failed her driving test in the first second. She got into the car, said 'Good morning' to the tester and started the engine. However, she mistook the accelerator for the clutch and shot straight through the wall of the Driving Test Centre. In 1969 an accelerator/clutch confusion enabled Mrs Beatrice Park to drive into the River Wey at Guildford during her fifth test. She and her examiner climbed onto the roof and waited to be rescued. The examiner was later sent home in a state of shock, still clutching his clipboard. When Mrs Park asked if she had passed her test she was told: 'We cannot say until we have seen the examiner's report.'



- 2.1 What caused Mrs Ireland to crash through the wall of the Driving Test Centre?
- 2.2 How many times did Mrs Park try for her driver's licence?
- 2.3 Why were the authorities unable to tell Mrs Park whether or not she had passed her test?

3. The Least Successful Bank Robber

Not wishing to attract attention to himself, a bank robber in 1969 at Portland, Oregon, wrote all his instructions on a piece of paper rather than shout. 'This is a hold-up and I've got a gun,' he wrote and then held the paper up for the cashier to read. The bemused official waited while he wrote out, 'Put all the money in a paper bag.' This message was pushed through the grille. The cashier read it and then wrote on the bottom, 'I don't have a paper bag,' and passed it back. The robber fled!

- 3.1 Why did the bank robber write his instructions on a piece of paper?
- 3.2 Why didn't the cashier give the would-be robber the money?

4. The Worst Bus Service

Can any bus service rival the fine Hanley to Bagnall route in Staffordshire? In 1976 it was reported that the buses no longer stopped for passengers. Thus came to light when one of them, Mr Bill Hancock, complained that buses on the outward journey regularly sailed past queues of up to thirty people. Councillor Arthur Cholerton then made transport history by stating that if these buses stopped to pick up passengers they would disrupt the timetable.

- 4.1 What was Mr Hancock's complaint about the bus service?
- 4.2 What was odd about Councillor Cholerton's reply to the complaint?

