

Reading

► Paper 1, Part 3

1 What other types of risk may people take in addition to sport? Which of the following high-risk activities do you think you might like to try one day? Which would you never want to try? Why?

- riding on a 'state-of-the-art' roller-coaster
- exploring an undeveloped area of the world
- gambling on the stock exchange
- resigning from a safe job to set up your own business

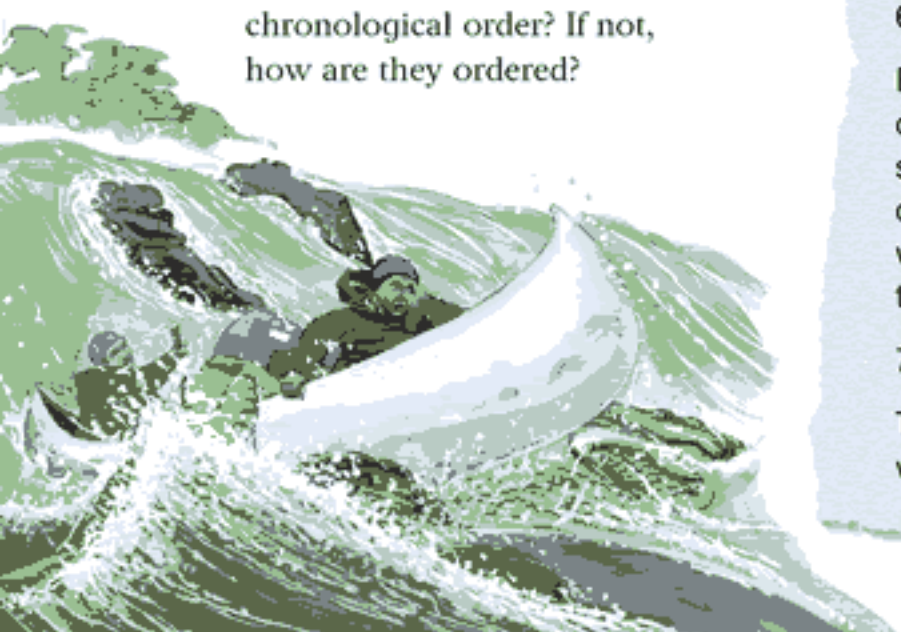
2 You are going to read an extract from a book written by a young couple who recently travelled by canoe up a remote river in South America. The extract is narrated by the woman.

Why might the following qualities be needed for such an expedition? Can you suggest any more?

- ability to keep your head in a crisis
- a sense of humour
- physical strength
- a high level of fitness

3 Read the text quickly and answer the following questions. Do not look at the jumbled paragraphs on page 113 yet.

- 1 What is the main event described in the text?
- 2 Are the events described in chronological order? If not, how are they ordered?



While I was drowning I thought of Martin, and wondered if he were drowning as well. But in the urgency of my predicament there was no time to worry about it – I was being whisked along beneath murky water by a relentless current and my senses were spinning out of control. Everything was going wrong; the day hadn't begun very well, and it certainly wasn't improving.

1

Martin lit the wrong end of a cigarette and spluttered over the smouldering filter tip; I could tell he was nervous. Our anxieties concerned not just the unseasonably high and turbulent river, but also our twelve-foot fibreglass canoe that was overloaded to the point of instability. With only two inches of freeboard we were forever bailing water out of it.

2

By mid-morning we were paddling away upstream like a pair of demented river turtles. My fingers were numb with the cold, and with the effort of fighting the current. As the river narrowed, the current increased. Then the paddle slipped from my hands. Immediately the water carried it away until it was caught against a rock a little way downstream, and at the same time the canoe spun into the bank beneath a mass of overhanging foliage.

3

In that fraction of a second, water flooded in and the bow sank beneath me. Martin, unconcerned in the back, had no idea what was happening until he was unceremoniously tipped out, a look of utter astonishment on his face as he was whipped away downstream.

4

And now I was drowning. I tried to surface but was caught under a mass of roots. I struggled to free myself, but just got further entangled. Then the current snatched me back, swished me around as if in a washing machine, then regurgitated me and flung me against a submerged tree trunk.

5

Once more I was swept off and flung around like flotsam until I hit the slippery trunk of another submerged tree with a rib-crunching smack. I had no time to feel any pain. The water dragged my body under the tree and at first I struggled to hang on to it but as the current pulled me downstream I began to lose my grip.

6

Everything was blurred. I had lost my contact lenses but I could still just distinguish the bank, about thirty feet away. The waves broke over my shoulders. My nose was running and I wiped it with my hand; it was covered with blood. All I could hear was the ceaseless roaring of the water. I yelled for Martin but he was gone. Nothing moved except the water.

7

Then, to my inexpressible relief, I heard a shout over the noise of the waters. It was Martin.

4 Now choose from the paragraphs **A–H** the one which fits each gap. There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use. Underline the sections of the text which helped you to decide on the order.

A It wasn't meant to be like this. One of us wasn't supposed to die. It was just another trip, like the others. It was supposed to be fun, an adventure. That's what we did it for, wasn't it? It was dangerous of course, and we'd often talked about getting killed. Usually we joked about it, confident it wouldn't happen to us.

B I hung onto a branch, water up to my chest. I caught a fleeting glimpse of brightly-coloured equipment floating away, then the branch broke and I was sucked under water.

C 'Let's put our lifejackets on,' said Martin, and I was eager to comply. Lifejackets were things we normally used as pillows: sometimes we inflated them to sit on; this day, well into our fourth South American river trip, would be the first occasion we'd used them for their intended purpose.

D The single overwhelming need was to get my head out of the water and breathe again. Surfacing briefly I managed it, seeing at the same time that I was a long way from the bank. Back in the depths, brilliant blue lights flashed in my head before I surfaced again, this time to discover that my lifejacket was now so tightly wrapped around my neck and face that I could see nothing.

E The next thing I saw was the canoe floating upside-down next to me. I clutched at it, trying to right it. It turned, but with a mass of slimy green muck on it, and sank under the weight.

F Then, driven by fear, I made a last effort and hauled myself up onto the tree to a position of relative safety, with my head and shoulders above water and my legs wrapped tightly round the trunk, and looked around.

G Unfortunately we'd parked in a residential area and the alligator whose exit we'd blocked chose that moment to emerge, suddenly and violently like a cannon-ball shooting out straight under the boat, tipping it sideways.

H Early that morning, in the second week of our journey, we'd emerged from our jungle camp to survey the river. Downstream stretched the miles of rapids and fast water we'd struggled up the previous day. Upstream there was no visible end to more of the same.

5 The writer uses carefully chosen words to describe her feelings and sensations during the canoe accident.

1 Find six verbs in the paragraphs beginning *And now I was drowning* and *Once more I was swept off* which have the current or the water as their subject. What do all these verbs have in common?

2 Choose the word that gives the most dramatic effect in the sentences below. Justify your choice.

- 1 The boat *spun/went* into the bank.
- 2 The water was *dark/murky*.
- 3 I was *pulled/sucked* under the water.
- 4 I *tried/struggled* to hang on.
- 5 I *hauled/pulled* myself up.
- 6 All I could hear was the *noise/roaring* of the water.
- 7 Then, to my *great/inexpressible* relief, I heard a shout.

6 Although this extract describes a dangerous and frightening situation, the writer occasionally uses irony and humour to make her point.

1 Find a phrase in the opening paragraph where understatement is used ironically.

2 Find two examples in the rest of the text (main section and paragraphs A–H) where the writer adds humour by using images or expressions which would be more appropriate in an urban setting.

