

I READING

1 For questions 1-8, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

The future of entertainment

More than ever, media is separating into mass market blockbusters on the one hand and 'niche' products – attracting small groups of people with similar interests – on the other. Everything else is struggling to compete.

Joe Swanberg makes films about the romantic lives of young people in the city. He shoots quickly with a digital camera and asks actors to wear their own clothes. His low-budget films are hardly ever shown in cinemas. By keeping his costs down and distributing digitally, Mr Swanberg is making a living.

Technology was expected to help young people like him. A few years ago it was predicted that the internet would vastly increase the supply of small independent films and other niche media products and increase their audiences. That has certainly happened. However, so has the opposite. Blockbusters are also tightening their grip on audiences, whether it's in the area of film, music, television or books. The growth of both niche products and huge sell-out successes has been at the expense of the things in the middle which are just quite popular – the near-misses.

There are several reasons why big hits still do so well. As in the past, people still want to have something to talk about with their friends. Which is why talent shows such as 'American Idol' do pretty much as well as they did ten years ago and why the latest blockbuster still breaks new records at the box office. Research shows that people still choose blockbusters more often than less well-known books and films. This is probably because people tend to try only things they have heard of – which for many people are limited to media-hyped blockbusters.

However, some things are new. All the technology that has made niche content so much more accessible has also proved handy for pushing blockbusters. Missed the last popular film? Don't worry, because there will be other chances to see it, in a wide variety of formats. Blockbusters are doing well not in spite of the fact that people have more choice in entertainment, but because of *it*. Imagine walking into a music shop which has more than 10

million songs, as iTunes does, all of them arranged alphabetically. Making up your mind would be impossible. So, rather than having to decide, it's much easier to just grab what everybody is talking about.

Is this increasingly more common separation into blockbusters and niches good or bad? It certainly makes life harder for media companies. In a world where entertainment choices are growing, it is more important than ever to make a big impact with your product. If it isn't a hit, it will have to fight for attention together with thousands – perhaps millions – of other offerings. The possibility of failing can make people anxious and more conservative. Television programmes must be successful quickly or they will be cancelled. It is becoming even harder to talk the decision-makers in the movie industry into approving films if *they* are not confident there is a demand for them.

Yet this can be a big advantage for consumers. In the past, these powerful business people could get away with supplying content that was not that good to people who did not have much of a choice. These days, with so many options, there is rarely anything good on television. So the media industry must raise its game. Intelligent people naturally wish that more money were available to produce the kind of music, films and television programmes they like. The problem is that everybody has different ideas about exactly what they want to watch. Some may love watching a programme about the history of dance; others may want to spend an hour being told how to look after pet snakes. But not many want to do either of these things, which explains why such programmes are niche products. There are only a few things that can be guaranteed to delight large numbers of people. They are known as blockbusters.

- 1 In paragraph 1 we learn that Joe Swanberg's films are
 - A usually low-budget costume dramas.
 - B rarely seen in cinemas.
 - C often bought on DVD.
 - D are made for young people in the city.

- 2 What impact has technology had on the movie business according to paragraph 2?
 - A Small independent film-makers are struggling to find an audience.
 - B Audiences are still enjoying blockbuster films.
 - C Fewer young people are attracted to the industry.
 - D There is more choice available in the middle market area.

- 3 According to paragraph 3, blockbuster success is because people

- A prefer to see famous actors in films.
B like watching and talking about reality shows.
C only watch films recommended to them by friends.
D are reluctant to see films they've never heard of.
- 4 Paragraph 4 indicates that people may
A be confused by the choice presented to them.
B choose niche films because of their availability.
C not understand all the different formats available.
D prefer to listen to music than watch films these days.
- 5 What does 'it' refer to in paragraph 3?
A the variety of format
B the last popular film
C the choice in entertainment
D the technology
- 6 As a result of these changes, media companies
A are finding it more difficult to make an impression.
B tend to produce more unusual films than before.
C can get financial backing quite easily.
D know there is a growing demand for their products.
- 7 What does 'they' refer to in paragraph 5?
A consumers
B media companies
C television programmes
D movie industry decision-makers
- 8 What does paragraph 6 say about the situation nowadays?
A Consumers are benefiting from it.
B There is hardly anything good on television.
C Making programmes is easier than before.
D Better films and TV programmes are being made.

2 You are going to read an extract from a magazine article about Macquarie Island. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs A – G the one which fits each gap (1 – 6). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

Macquarie Island

Journalist Matthew Denholm joins a group of scientists, attempting to save Macquarie Island, which lies halfway between Australia and Antarctica.

I am stumbling, blinded by tiny missiles of ice and snow driven horizontally into my face by a howling gale. One minute I'm blown backwards. The next I'm leaping skyward in undignified panic as a foot narrowly misses an outraged elephant seal. Squinting painfully through torchlight, I've little hope of seeing the beasts.

1 _____

Later, inside a cosy hut, sporting a patch over the sorer of my eyes, I have to admit that it probably is. This is, after all, the sub-Antarctic. Or to be precise, Macquarie Island: a sliver of land conjured abruptly from the vast wilderness of the Southern Ocean. The darkest, coldest months are generally the quietest time of year for human activity here, but this year is different. I'm with a team of scientists who are undertaking a seemingly impossible task: to rid the entire island of every rabbit, rat and mouse.

2 _____

Next morning, I abruptly change my mind, however, when I awake to a view that justifies the three-day voyage to this remote outpost of Australia. After overnight snowfalls the island is painted white, from highland plateaus, with frozen lakes, to rocky black sand and pebble shore. All glistens in rare sub-Antarctic sunshine. Besides, the previous afternoon's discomforts were entirely our own fault.

3 _____

The delay while we doubled back made it impossible to reach the hut before dusk. I had also blundered, deciding snow goggles were unnecessary. We had been taught a valuable lesson. While officially part of Australia, this island is a different world. Different rules apply. Every move must be planned and precautions taken because of the dangers posed by climate and terrain.

4 _____

This extreme isolation means no activity is easy on the island. Our first challenge was getting ashore as there is no safe anchorage. But when we eventually reached the beach, I could instantly see that the island's reputation as 'the Galápagos of the south' is justified. Over the next few days, seals, penguins and a host of seabirds are a constant presence. As in the Galápagos Islands, some species are abundant – there are an estimated 100,000 seals and four million penguins. Though hunted in the past, these days the main threat to the island's fauna comes not from man but from our legacy.

5 _____

Unaccustomed to the herbivores' teeth, the island flora has been overgrazed and reduced to stubble. The hills and plateaus are pock-marked with holes and soft surfaces are undermined by their burrows. On this treeless island, the overgrazing has also left the homes of native birds exposed. Petrel and albatross chicks are thus more vulnerable to predation and the harsh elements. The devastation reached such a point that in 2007 the World Heritage Convention discussed whether the island should lose its World Heritage status.

6 _____

However, the status was also conferred because of its 'outstanding natural beauty and aesthetic importance'. Given that the wild hillsides that should be lushly covered are bare, and are animated not by the movement of wind in tussock but by rabbits running amok, it is not surprising that the world was beginning to ask whether the description still applied.

A This is mainly in the form of rabbits. Introduced in 1877 as a food source, they took to the island with gusto. Recent estimates of the rabbit population, before the eradication program began, ranged from 100,000 to 150,000.

B It's a realisation that makes all the more impressive the endeavours of the first explorers to come here. Here at Brothers Point, perched on a headland off the island's east coast, we could be the last humans on Earth. In a geographical sense, we very nearly are.

C The walk – just under 10km from the research station to the cabin – wasn't meant to be in darkness. Some time after setting out, however, my photographer realised he had left a piece of camera equipment behind.

D It's one of the most ambitious programs of its type ever attempted. A worthy project indeed, but as the intense winds rage outside, I can empathise with Captain Douglass, an early visitor to the island. Arriving in 1822, Douglass called Macquarie 'the most wretched place'.

E The resultant landslips have devastating consequences. They have harmed hundreds of penguins as well as destroying nesting sites leaving local wildlife at risk. I begin to realise just how damaged this wilderness is.

F At night, they are indistinguishable from the rocks that cover the ground; only their gurgling barks tell me when to jump. As I lose feeling in my fingers, numbed by glacial temperatures, I ask myself: Is this what I sailed to the bottom of the world for?

G Macquarie achieved the listing 10 years earlier, partly in recognition of the fact that it is a geological freak. The island is ocean floor forced to the surface by the convergence of two tectonic plates – an ongoing process.

II USE OF ENGLISH

1 For questions 1 – 8, read the text below and decide which answer (A, B, C or D) best fits each gap.

New uses for salt mines

Geological deposits of salt were formed millions of years ago, when what is now land, lay under the sea. It is hard to believe that salt is now such a cheap **(1)**, because centuries ago it was the commercial **(2)** of today's oil. The men who mined salt became wealthy and, although the work was **(3)** and frequently dangerous, a job in a salt mine was highly **(4)**

Nowadays, the specific microclimates in disused mines have been (5) for the treatment of respiratory illnesses such as asthma, and the silent, dark surroundings in a mine are considered (6) in encouraging patients to relax.

In addition, some disused mines have been (7) to different commercial enterprises, although keeping up-to-date with the technology of mining is essential to (8) visitors' safety. Some of the largest underground chambers even host concerts, conferences and business meetings.

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|----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 A provision | B utility | C material | D commodity |
| 2 A match | B similarity | C parallel | D equivalent |
| 3 A critical | B demanding | C extreme | D straining |
| 4 A regarded | B admired | C approved | D honoured |
| 5 A exploited | B extracted | C exposed | D extended |
| 6 A profitable | B agreeable | C beneficial | D popular |
| 7 A put down | B turned over | C made out | D set about |
| 8 A enable | B retain | C ensure | D support |

2 For questions 1-8, complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between two and five words, including the word given.

1 I have less than a month to go before my university graduation.

WILL

By this time next month, I _____ from university.

2 She studies with him and he studies with her.

EACH

They study _____ .

3 My father's horse was the fastest.

BELONGING

_____ my father was the fastest.

4 They don't eat raw fish – they're not accustomed to it.

USED

They _____ raw fish.

5 Any time she visited her grandfather, she could do as she pleased.

LET

Her grandfather always _____ she wanted.

6 If he was at home, his coat would be here.

BE

He _____ at home – his coat’s not here.

7 ‘I want to go out,’ he said to me.

TOLD

He _____ to go out.

8 She got high marks in her finals but didn’t get a place at the university she most wanted to go to.

SPITE

She didn’t get a place at the university she most wanted to go to _____
_____ high marks in her finals.

III WRITING

Consider the following quotation. Write a paragraph of 150-200 words discussing the statement and presenting your opinion in a clear and coherent manner.

“ If advertisers spent the same amount of money on improving their products as they do on advertising then they wouldn’t have to advertise them”

Adapted from: <http://thinkexist.com>

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