Reading

You are going to read a magazine article about problems between neighbours. For questions 1–7, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which best fits according to the text.

1. Why doesn't the writer like her next-door neighbours' dogs?
   A. They wake her up.
   B. They bark at her.
   C. They are aggressive.
   D. They have sharp teeth.

2. According to the report, most people argue with their neighbours about
   A. dogs. B. noise. C. parking. D. DIY.

3. What does the article say about Mediation UK?
   A. It gives a lot of money to charity.
   B. It has over fifty groups around the world.
   C. It was established by the United Nations.
   D. It has its head office in Bristol.

4. Some people decide not to buy a house because they don't like
   A. the people who live in the next house.
   B. other property in the area.
   C. the untidy garden of the house.
   D. the colour of the paint used on the house.

5. What do we find out about Mr Gladden?
   A. He invited people to come and look at his house.
   B. He started an argument with the council.
   C. He doesn't care what his neighbours think.
   D. He defended himself from attacks by neighbours.

6. The writer decided not to buy the house because
   A. it didn't have a good view.
   B. it was next door to a zoo.
   C. she didn't trust the owners.
   D. she disliked noisy dogs.

7. The writer's main aim in the article is to
   A. inform people what to do if they have problems with their neighbours.
   B. describe her own problems with her neighbours.
   C. illustrate the types and causes of problems between neighbours.
   D. explain the activities of the organisation Mediation UK.

Neighbours from hell

I used to think my little corner of urban England was somewhere I could get away from the stress and strain of modern life — until they moved in next door. There are two of them. They are white, woolly and probably have sharp teeth as well as a loud bark. But every time their constant barking interrupts my sleep, I remind myself that, in many respects, I am lucky. The neighbours don't hold all-night parties, nor do they shout or throw crockery at each other, and, though their dogs may bark, they don't bite.

According to a recent report on 'nightmare neighbours', dogs are the fifth most common source of bad relations between neighbours. Noise of any description heads the list of complaints, followed by DIY enthusiasts and parking disputes.

So what alternatives are there? One is to take legal action. But this can be time-consuming and expensive and does nothing to improve already difficult relationships. The other alternatives are to sell up and go, or to try to reach a solution with the help of someone neutral. Mediation UK was set up to help resolve community disagreements. The Bristol-based charity acts as an umbrella organisation for sixty regional groups, which are staffed by trained volunteers. In most cases, officers find that lack of communication is the main cause of conflict and that peace can be negotiated.

David Nation of Plymouth Mediation points to poor public housing and unemployment as additional factors. He also reports more cases of complaints from people who live in flats. Large houses built in the
nineteenth century and designed as single-occupation family homes have, he says, been converted into flats with little or no attention to sound insulation.

Buyers can also be put off by the external appearance of neighbouring houses. Anything from wild gardens to unusual external colour schemes can put off buyers — even though the offending property is next door. But it could be worse. John Gladden upset his neighbours by putting a huge fibreglass fish on the roof of his house. The council argued that he should have got planning permission, residents thought the fish did nothing to improve the appearance of the neighbourhood, and war broke out. Gladden defended his right of self-expression and proceeded to install an inflatable Santa Claus and a replica tank. Sightseers poured in, and homes nearby are now hard to sell.

As most problems offend the ears rather than the eyes, it’s surprising that so few buyers take the trouble to check out their future neighbours. Estate agents recommend making frequent visits to the area. It is pointless, after all, to expect people who are trying to sell their house to give an objective view of their neighbours. I recently went to view a house which looked promising — until I saw the neighbouring zoo. I decided I could live with the birds, the rabbits and the cats, but when I spotted the dogs I had my doubts. ‘Do the alsatians next door bother you at all?’ I asked.

‘No, no,’ they replied, ‘not at all.’

‘Oh yes they do,’ insisted their six-year-old son. ‘They bark all night and keep us awake.’ Another lucky escape.

DIY: Do-it-yourself, making and repairing things in your own home

Estate agents: people who buy and sell houses for other people

Vocabulary

Adjectives and nouns

There are a number of adjective-noun collocations in the text. Which adjectives are used with the nouns in these sentences?

bad loud sharp wild

a The neighbours’ dogs have ______ teeth and a ______ bark.
b Dogs are the fifth most common source of ______ relations between neighbours.
c ______ gardens can put off house buyers.

Complete these sentences with one of the adjectives in 1 above. Sometimes there are two possibilities.
a We could hear ______ voices coming from the cellar.
b There have been several ______ increases in the price of bread this year.
c More and more species of ______ animals are becoming extinct.
d I must make an appointment to see the dentist — I think I may have a ______ tooth.
e Be careful — those are ______ scissors. You might cut yourself.
f When I was a teenager I went to lots of ______ parties.
g We’ve had such ______ weather recently. Let’s hope it gets better.
h There was a ______ explosion as the fire reached the petrol tank.

Phrasal verbs with set

Replace the verbs in italic in these sentences with the correct form of set and one of these words.

back out off (something) on up

a A cat which got into the house through an open window made the burglar alarm ring.
b I’m going to write to the principal expressing my ideas for improvements to the school.
c Recently more and more people have been starting their own Internet companies.
d The police made their dogs attack the bank robbers as they tried to escape.
e The terrible rain storms we’ve had recently have delayed the house building programme by several months.
f We’d better leave early tomorrow. We’ve got a long way to travel.
Why do our ears ‘pop’ on planes?

The eardrum is a thin membrane that helps to transmit sound. Air pressure is exerted on both sides of the eardrum: with the surrounding atmospheric pressure pushing it inwards while air being delivered via a tube between the back of your nose and the eardrum pushes it outwards. This tube is called the Eustachian tube, and when you swallow it opens and a small bubble of air is able to move causing a ‘pop’.

Rapid altitude changes in planes make the ‘pop’ much more noticeable due to bigger differences in pressure. Air pressure decreases as a plane ascends; hence air must exit the Eustachian tubes to equalise these pressures, again causing a ‘pop’. Conversely, as a plane descends, the air pressure starts to increase; therefore the Eustachian tubes must open to allow through more air in order to equalise the pressure again, causing another ‘pop’.

What are freckles?

Freckles are clusters of the pigment melanin. It is produced by melanocytes deep in the skin, with greater concentrations giving rise to darker skin tones, and hence, ethnicity. Melanin protects the skin against harmful ultraviolet sunlight, but is also found in other locations around the body. Freckles are mostly genetically inherited, but not always. They become more prominent during sunlight exposure, as the melanocytes are triggered to increase production of melanin, leading to a darker complexion. People with freckles generally have pale skin tones, and if they stay in the Sun for too long they can damage their skin cells, leading to skin cancers like melanoma.

Why does hot honey and lemon help your throat when it’s sore?

Honey and lemon can be drank warm as a comfort remedy, and is a popular drink with many who are feeling unwell. The idea is that honey coats the throat and therefore any inflamed areas will be ‘protected’ by a layer of honey, while at the same time soothing painful areas. This means it will be less painful when these areas come into contact with other surfaces when you eat or swallow. Lemon also helps to settle the stomach too, as it contains acid, which can be particularly helpful when experiencing an upset stomach from the effects of a cold or other digestion-related illness.

“Rapid altitude changes make the ‘pop’ much more noticeable”
Motherhood

È considerato il momento più appagante della vita di una donna, ma tante altre emozioni si celano dietro la maternità. Delle recenti produzioni artistiche ce ne parlano senza tabù.

**GLOSSARY**

1. countless: infinite
2. pregnant: incinta
3. to give birth: partorire
4. is not all peaches and cream: non è tutto rose e fiori
5. misgivings: dubbi
6. downsides: svantaggi
7. screenplay: sceneggiatura
8. newborn: neonato
9. on the edge of a nervous breakdown: sull'orlo di un esaurimento nervoso
10. to lead: portare, indurre
11. letdown: delusione, disappunto
12. deprivation: mancanza
13. to try one's best: fare del proprio meglio
14. to struggle: lottare, fare fatica
15. overwhelming: schiacciante
16. to regret: pentirsi

On Instagram there are countless pictures of wonderful smiling pregnant women or stylish mothers who have just given birth and have retained their perfectly-shaped bodies. But although it is generally considered to be the best stage of a woman's life, a moment of fulfillment and absolute joy, motherhood is not all peaches and cream.

Artists are beginning to show their misgivings and the downsides of parenting from the woman's point of view. Last year, American writer and director Diablo Cody, who won an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for Juno, portrayed a mother-of-two with a third newborn in Tully, starring Oscar-winning actress Charlize Theron.

Like the main character Marlo, who is on the edge of a nervous breakdown, during and after pregnancy many women feel ugly, uncomfortable with their bodies and useless, unable to achieve the rosy experiences they have been led to expect. Australian comedy series The Letdown also shows motherhood in a realistic way. Audrey is a new mum who had a difficult pregnancy and is dealing with sleep deprivation, loneliness and feeling misunderstood. While she tries her best to go through the early phase of motherhood, she has to face other people's judgements.

Many things are changing with parenting, but women are usually the ones who struggle more to combine work and family life. In the autobiographical Motherhood by Canadian writer Sheila Heti, the author explores the difficult choice not to have children. While motherhood is often seen as natural, some women have no desire to be mothers. Even today, social pressure can be overwhelming and cause anxiety to those who may even be regarded as 'bad' women. Another taboo is that of regretting having children, as sociologist Oma Donath expressed in her Regretting Motherhood. After extensive research interviewing women from different backgrounds, Donath found that many women thought that they had lost themselves as a result of having children, even though they love them.