

Listening

ANSWERS

- 1 A
- 2 C
- 3 D
- 4 B
- 5 C
- 6 A
- 7 struggles
- 8 gossip
- 9 sophistication
- 10 special occasions
- 11 anecdotes/ funny stories
- 12 oral accounts
- 13 careers
- 14 scientific procedures

Audioscripts:

Task 1

You will hear a radio discussion about writing a novel. For questions 1-6 choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which fits best according to what you hear. You now have 70 seconds to look at part 1.

(pause 70 seconds)

Woman: In my role as a publishing consultant, I've recently written a report on trends in the best-seller lists over the last five years. I've carried out an in-depth analysis of best-selling titles in various categories and have tried to identify some patterns. It's my conclusion that there are some common features in the books that have been most successful.

First of all, the genre of the celebrity autobiography. These consistently top the charts, selling in vast numbers, but what makes them so popular? They show the reader a world of glamour, and they claim to give an accurate picture of the 'real person' behind the celebrity. But my research shows that the most successful books all describe the celebrity's struggles. These may be connected with achieving fame, or they may come after fame, or both. And contrary to what you might expect, the top-sellers in this genre do not always include gossip, even though this is generally assumed to be part of their appeal.

Cookery books sell in large numbers and when I analysed the top-sellers in this genre, it was clear that they offer an air of sophistication that has huge appeal. People aren't buying books of simple, everyday

recipes. Often the ingredients required are expensive and hard to find, and the recipes can be complex and challenging. People seem to buy these books because they show a world they aspire to, rather than something they will actually do, apart from for special occasions, when they may well turn to recipes in these books. When it comes to books about sport, the best-sellers have all been Biographies or autobiographies of well-known figures, and what these books have in common is a wealth of anecdotes. It's clear that readers like the feeling of being on the inside, of getting a glimpse into the world of top professional sport through these funny stories. They are less interested in dry factual accounts of how a career started or statistics about sporting achievements.

One genre that has seen a huge rise in recent years is history books. The best-sellers in this category are aimed at the ordinary reader, not serious students of the subject, and one feature they all share is their use of oral accounts. Quoting from people who were speaking at the time, these books aim to provide a human aspect to history, rather than just focusing on facts and figures, and this gives them more relevance to the ordinary person.

Ever since they first appeared on the scene, self-help books have always featured high on best-seller lists. Analysis of the top self-help books of the last five years shows a move away from those dealing with personal relationships or happiness to those advising on how to get ahead in careers. This suggests a shift in the priorities of the people who buy this kind of book.

When it comes to fiction, crime fiction has long been extremely popular, of course. My analysis of bestsellers in this genre indicates that the scientific procedures used in criminal investigations are a dominant feature these days, rather than the character of the detective, which used to be the cornerstone of books in this genre. This might well reflect the current popularity of TV crime dramas, with their focus on forensic science.

Now, moving on to other kinds of fiction, ...

Now you will hear Part 1 again.

Now turn to part 2

**You will hear a part of a talk about best-selling books. For questions 7-14, complete the sentences. You now have 45 seconds to look at part 2.
(pause 45 seconds)**

Interviewer: OK, in our weekly spot about how to write a novel, I'm talking to novelist Louise Doughty. Louise, this week we're talking about getting comments and feedback on your work from other people. 'If there is

anything in your own work you think particularly fine.' said Ernest Hemingway, 'strike it out.' Is that good advice?

fJoveiist: Well, few would-be novelists aspire to be as plain and brutal as Hemingway, I suspect, but his dictum is still worth tucking into a corner of your brain - not

to be followed slavishly, but as an antidote to that great curse of the inexperienced novelist: over-writing.

tnt ervie\!11er: How do you know if you are over-writing?

Novelist: Well, an excess of adverbs and adjectives is a clue. Repetition under the guise of emphasis is another, and extended metaphors should be rationed tightly.

interview,er: Now, there comes a point in the writing of every novel when you just don't know any more. You've been immersed in it for weeks, possibly years. You've lost sight of the original impetus behind the book and are plagued with self-doubt - yet at the same time you know there is something there and are not ready to give up on it.

NoveHst: Yes, and this is the point at which you should be getting feedback.

Intervie\rver: From whom?

NoveHst: As a rule, I'd advise against getting it from your nearest and dearest. You will be wounded by their criticism and suspicious of their praise. Instead, join a writing community of some sort. You need comments from another writer. Those who have been logging onto my website will know that such a community has formed there. Creative writing courses and book groups are also good places to find like-minded souls. Through such contacts you can find someone who understands what you are trying to do - which is not the same as someone who is uncritical of the way you do it. There is a time and a place for emotional support, but that is not what we are talking about here.

interviewer: What kind of comments are useful in your view?

Noveiist: Well, you need someone who is prepared to say, 'I really like the opening paragraph but I thought it went a bit wrong after that because ...' and, crucially, is prepared to be specific. 'I just didn't like him' is not a helpful comment on a character. 'I lost sympathy with him in the scene where he tells his brother the truth because I thought he was too brutal. Maybe you should re-write it making his motivation clearer and his language softer.' That is useful advice: you can choose whether to take it or discard it. Similarly, at the level of prose style, some well-meaning person might say 'It's a bit boring', but a helpful critic would say 'You have three paragraphs of description here before you tell us who is talking; maybe you should consider starting the conversation first and weaving all the description in,

instead of having it all in one chunk.'

Interviewer: How do you personally get feedback on your work?

Novelist: The most fruitful relationships I have with other writers are with the novelists with whom I swap work – usually the person whose novel is under discussion pays for dinner. If you can find other novelists who are working at a similar level to yourself, with similar interests, and who are frank and unafraid of frankness from you, then keep them close at hand.

Interviewer: Now what about reactions to feedback? We've talked about getting it, but what about when you've got it?

Novelist: Well, even with a trusted ally, there comes a point when you have to stick to your guns and say, 'This person whom I really respect doesn't like this bit but I do and it's staying in.' And of course, feedback can be annoying. For a start, a lot of the criticism you receive will be stuff which you knew already in your heart of hearts – you were just hoping nobody else would notice. And sometimes, you will bristle at a certain comment on your work, not because it is untrue but because the consequences of righting that particular defect are too daunting to contemplate at that particular time – accurate criticism is the most painful of all. On other occasions, you will have a gut feeling that the person reading your work just doesn't 'get' it, or wants you to write a different novel entirely. Frequently, the only way to work out if criticism is useful is to nod sagely, then file it in a drawer. When the wounds have healed over and your ego is not under immediate threat, then you will be able to assess its true worth.

Interviewer: Right. Now let's move on to talk about ...
Now you will hear Part 2 again. This is the end of the listening test.

Reading

KEYS

- 1 False
- 2 True
- 3 False
- 4 Not Given
- 5 True
- 6 True
- 7 (the) Mediterranean
- 8 Greece
- 9 his (colourful) lifestyle
- 10 political views
- 11 output
- 12 failing health
- 13 climate
- 14 individualism and imagination
- 15 b
- 16 a
- 17 a
- 18 c
- 19 c
- 20 a

Culture awareness

KEYS

- 1 G
- 2 K
- 3 A
- 4 M
- 5 B
- 6 J
- 7 L
- 8 D
- 9 H
- 10 I
- 11 N
- 12 C
- 13 F
- 14 QUESTION
- 15 OUTRAGEOUS
- 16 THEM
- 17 THOUSAND

18	PERCHANCE
19	COIL
20	SO
21	WRONG
22	LOVE
23	HIMSELF
24	TRAVELLER
25	HUE
26	NAME