

Exam practice – Listening 1

Paper 4 Part 4

You will hear an interview with Anita Perry and her son Darren, who is training to be a clown in the circus. For questions 1–7, choose the best answer (A, B or C).

- Anita suggests that Darren's fascination with clowns
A started when he learned not to be frightened of them.
B was understandable given his family history.
C came as something of a surprise to her.
- Darren's family first considered circus work after
A his father lost his job.
B his brothers had completed university.
C his mother had failed to find work locally.
- When Darren said the family could join a circus, at first his father
A doubted if they had the right skills.
B said they couldn't afford a caravan.
C didn't think it was a serious suggestion.
- How did Darren feel when his father wrote off to various circuses?
A unsure how easy it would be to find work
B worried about whether they'd like the work
C confident that they would all be offered work
- What problem did Anita have during the family's first period with a circus?
A It was hard not having a holiday.
B It was difficult living in a small space.
C It was tough being away for a whole year.
- What does Darren say about life in the circus?
A He loves performing in front of the public.
B He wishes he could go to normal school lessons.
C He's learning useful skills by watching the experts.
- How does Anita feel now about their decision to join the circus?
A She sometimes wonders if it was a mistake.
B She's pleased that they took the risk.
C She's got used to the discomforts.

Audio Script

P = Presenter, A = Anita, D = Darren

P: Today I'm talking to Anita Perry, and her son Darren, who's 14. Now lots of children dream of running away to join the circus, but this is the story of a whole family that did just that. Anita, first of all tell me, do either you or your husband come from a circus family?

A: Not at all. I was a housewife and Terry, my husband, had a good job as an electrical engineer. What happened was, when Darren was three, we took him to see a travelling circus and, for some reason, he just couldn't keep his eyes off the clowns – he was fascinated by them.

It's strange because, as a child, I always found them rather frightening. Anyway, after that, Darren became a real circus fan.

P: Right. And so how did this lead to the family actually joining a circus?

A: Well, when Darren was nine, my husband was suddenly made redundant. Although we live in an area of high unemployment, it still came as quite a shock to us. We didn't know what to do, because Darren's two older brothers were just going through university, which was expensive, and there wasn't much work going in the area, so we were pretty desperate.

P: So Darren, what happened next?

D: Well, I said that my dad should try and get work in the circus. We had a car and a caravan, and they always need electricians, so he had the right skills already. At first he thought I was joking, but when I explained that circuses often employ whole families, he began to take me more seriously. I'd read about circuses, and I'd seen some TV documentaries too.

P: So you knew what you were talking about?

D: Not really, but I convinced Dad that he should write away to all the circuses asking if they'd got any work for the three of us. I didn't hold out much hope actually, because I had no idea how easy or difficult it was to get in as a family. But within a week, we'd got an offer from one of the large travelling circuses. Dad was taken on as a spotlight operator, Mum would be selling tickets, and I was accepted as a trainee clown.

P: As easy as that Anita?

A: Well, it wasn't an easy decision to make, and then there was a great deal to organise. I mean, Darren says we had a caravan, but it was only one of those little ones that people take on holiday with them. So it was tough at first, deciding what we needed to take and how it could all be fitted in. We only go away for the summer months,

but that first year it seemed to go on forever. At times I wanted to give it all up, I can tell you. It was a great relief to get home and sort things out.

P: And Darren?

D: Well, I'm not old enough yet to perform in front of an audience, but I've learnt a great deal about clowning just watching the real professionals night after night. People ask about my education, but I only miss the summer term. I follow the same books with a private teacher and I have my laptop computer. It's actually better because on your own it doesn't take long. At school, the teacher wastes a lot of time trying to get everyone to listen and do what they're told, which annoys me. I have to fit in my clowning lessons as well, so I want to get the schoolwork done as quickly as possible.

P: And the future, Anita?

A: Well it was a risk to take, but it's working out, so I guess it was worth it, and we're enjoying it too. We've made lots of friends and, of course, we now have a proper van and a big caravan, so it's quite comfortable. I mean we could've sat at home and got depressed about Terry losing his job, and I'm glad we didn't do that. In a way, I suppose, we had nothing to lose.

Answers

1 C; 2 A; 3 C; 4 A; 5 B; 6 C; 7 B