



## J. R. R. Tolkien – Father of Fantasy Fiction (B2 - Upper Intermediate)

### A – Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. Do you like fantasy fiction?
2. If so, do you have a favourite fantasy book or film?
3. Have you read anything by J. R. R. Tolkien?
4. If so, what did you think of it?

### B – Listen and answer

Listen (without reading) and fill in the blanks in the Fact File.

FACT FILE- J. R. R. TOLKIEN

Born in South Africa on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, <sup>1</sup>\_\_\_\_\_.

Became proficient in <sup>2</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ while still a teenager.

Went to <sup>3</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ to fight in 1915.

Married Edith Bratt in <sup>4</sup>\_\_\_\_\_.

Gained a degree in <sup>5</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ in 1911.

Published his first best seller, The Hobbit, in <sup>6</sup>\_\_\_\_\_.

His best-known work The Lord of the Rings has sold over <sup>7</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ copies.

It has been translated into <sup>8</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ languages.

### C – Read and answer

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. Why was Tolkien brought up by a priest who was a friend of his family?
2. When did he start inventing his own languages?
3. Where did he teach for over thirty years?
4. Why did he start writing fantasy tales?
5. How did he come to write The Lord of the Rings?
6. How long did it take him?
7. How did Tolkien see the The Lord of the Rings?
8. What is the story about?

### D – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense, or change from singular to plural.)

1. While wandering round the old part of the town, we \_\_\_\_\_ a wonderful art gallery.
2. When her parents died, Maisie was made the \_\_\_\_\_ of her Aunt Jess, her mother's sister.
3. A recent \_\_\_\_\_ showed that under 40% of UK citizens trust the government.
4. Though the adults didn't find the cartoon very funny, the children were greatly \_\_\_\_\_ by it.
5. Nelson Mandela died in 2013, but his legend \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Cinderella is a fairy \_\_\_\_\_ that has been told to children all over the world for centuries.

### **E – Ready for the B2 FIRST Certificate in English? (Reading and Use of English, Part 3)**

Use the word in brackets to form a word that fits in the space given.

1. As a teenager, Tolkien \_\_\_\_\_ (MASTER) Latin and Greek and invented his own languages.
2. During the First World War, he married his \_\_\_\_\_ (CHILD) sweetheart, Edith Bratt.
3. In 1925, Tolkien won the \_\_\_\_\_ (PRESTIGE) chair of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford University.
4. His life changed \_\_\_\_\_ (EVER) in 1925.
5. While grading exams, he \_\_\_\_\_ (SUDDEN) began writing a story on a blank page.
6. His words became one of the most famous \_\_\_\_\_ (OPEN) lines in English Literature.
7. Tolkien created a short, \_\_\_\_\_ (FURRY-FOOT) creature called 'a hobbit'.
8. In 1954 and 1955, he published his \_\_\_\_\_ (MASTER), The Lord of the Rings.

### **F – Write about it**

Write about a fantasy story you've read recently. Mention:

- who wrote it;
- when it was written;
- when/where it's set;
- what it's about;
- what you thought of it.

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## **The Highland Games (B1 - Lower Intermediate)**

### **A – Before you start**

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. Have you ever been to Scotland?
2. If so, did you visit the Highlands - the mountainous area in northern Scotland?
3. What do you know about Scottish customs? (e.g. traditional clothes, or Highland sports.)
4. Can you name any Scottish clans?

### **B – Listen and answer**

Read these statements. Then listen (without reading) and write T (true) or F (false).

1. The Highland Games take place from June to September.
2. The best-known of all the Highland Games sporting events is the hammer throw.
3. In medieval times, the games were a way to train fighting men.
4. Stones and logs were used for the events because they were objects that were easily found.
5. The first games of the season are held at Edinburgh Castle.
6. Members of the Royal Family usually attend the Braemar Gathering in Aberdeenshire.
7. The Braemar Gathering takes place at the end of September.
8. To buy tickets, you have to be a member of the Royal Scottish Highland Games Association.

### **C – Read and answer**

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. What do contestants have to do to compete in the caber tossing event?
2. What did clan chiefs use the games for in medieval times?
3. Why are the Atholl Highlanders unique?
4. Which clan is the Duke of Atholl the chief of?
5. What is the March On?
6. How long have the Royal Family been attending the Braemar Gathering?
7. What does the Braemar Highland Society aim to do?
8. What attractions are there at the Braemar Gathering besides the games?

## D – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense, or change from plural to singular.)

1. The day after his operation, Jack was in an \_\_\_\_\_ position in bed, working on his computer.
2. Before opening a shop, Mia had a market \_\_\_\_\_ where she sold hand-made jewellery.
3. Few club members \_\_\_\_\_ the meeting because most of them hadn't been told about it.
4. Ken Smith lives alone in a remote part of the Highlands in a cabin he made out of \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Don't sit on the edge of the chair like that. If it \_\_\_\_\_, you'll end up on the floor.
6. Is Matt really going to join the army? I can't \_\_\_\_\_ him wearing a uniform.

## E – Ready for the B1 PRELIMINARY English Exam? (Paper 1, Reading: Part 6)

Write one word only in each space.

Scotland is broadly split into two parts: the Highlands and the Lowlands. The line between the two runs more or <sup>1</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ diagonally across Scotland from a little east <sup>2</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ Inverness, in the north, to the Isle of Arran, in the southwest. This division is not <sup>3</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ geographic but also cultural and linguistic.

The Highlands, with its wild mountainous scenery and isolated communities, was the setting for epic films <sup>4</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ as Braveheart and The Highlander. The area is one of the most sparsely populated in Europe, with only around 25 inhabitants <sup>5</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ square mile. Until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Scottish Gaelic, a Celtic language, was widely <sup>6</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ there. Now the main language is Scottish English.

## F – Write about it

Write about a traditional sporting event that takes place in your country in summer. Mention:

- what it consists of;
  - when/where it takes place;
  - what its origins are;
  - how popular it is.
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## The Ringling Circus (B2 - Upper Intermediate)

### A – Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. Have you ever been to a circus?
2. If so, which acts did you like best?
3. Are there any famous circuses in your country?
4. If so, what are their names?
5. Do their performances involve any animals?

### B – Listen and answer

Listen to the introductory article (without reading) and write T (true) or F (false).

1. The Ringling Bros. and Barnham & Bailey Circus has been performing for over 150 years.
2. It's now returning after a pause of ten years.
3. The Ringling Bros. Circus was bought by the Barnham & Bailey Circus in 1906.
4. The two circuses weren't united till 1919.
5. The circus stopped using elephants because they were expensive to train.
6. The new circus will start with a tour of over fifty cities across the world.

### C – Read and answer

Read the introductory article and the information box and answer the questions.

1. What is the Ringling Bros. and Barnham & Bailey Circus famous for?
2. When did the Ringling brothers start performing? Where?
3. What examples does the article give of controversial so-called "freak shows"?
4. Why were they eliminated?
5. Why did the owners of the circus close it down in 2017?
6. What will the new version of the circus be like?

### D – Listen to the interview (Optional)

N.B. This interview is graded as C1, so don't be discouraged if you find it difficult. Try to understand the main points.

*Read these statements. Then listen to the interview with Jennifer Lemmer Posey, without reading, and write T (true) or F (false).*

1. The John and Mable Ringling Museum was founded in California in 1927.
2. It is not just a museum of the history and evolution of the American circus.
3. Jennifer Lemmer Posey is a curator at the museum.
4. Lemmer Posey says the first circus disciplines involved acrobats and clowns without animals.
5. She says menageries and sideshows gave people a chance to see unusual animals and individuals.
6. In 1944, nearly a hundred people were killed in a circus fire in Hartford, Connecticut.
7. The victims of the fire were mostly women and children.
8. Lemmer Posey says audiences appreciate the effort and courage that's involved in circus acts.

### E – Listen, read and check your answers

*Listen to the interview while reading the text. (If you did Exercise D, check your answers while reading.)*

### F – Learn it! Use it!

*Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense or change from plural to singular.)*

1. The first full-length animated movie was *Snow White and the Seven \_\_\_\_\_*, made in 1937.
2. This toy isn't \_\_\_\_\_ for children under the age of five.
3. Medieval kings and queens often kept \_\_\_\_\_ with exotic animals to impress their guests.
4. We live in a small village where there's nothing to do for \_\_\_\_\_ in the evening.
5. Don't stand on a chair to change the light bulb. Fetch the \_\_\_\_\_ from the garage.
6. Granddad's not the same any more. His illness has \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ on him.

### G – Ready for the FIRST Certificate in English? (Reading and Use of English, Part 4)

*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. Use between 2 and 5 words including the word given.*

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|----------|--|
| Example: | People call this circus The Greatest Show on Earth.                                |
| KNOWN    | This circus <u>is known as</u> The Greatest Show on Earth.                         |
| 1.       | The circus is still captivating audiences after almost 150 years.                  |
| BEEN     | The circus _____ almost 150 years.   |
| 2.       | In time, the Ringling Brothers created one of the biggest circuses in the US.      |
| WENT     | The Ringling Brothers _____ one of the biggest circuses in the US.                 |
| 3.       | People have made comparisons between the new version and Cirque du Soleil.         |
| COMPARED | The new version _____ to Cirque du Soleil.   |
| 4.       | Barnham & Bailey had created the so-called Greatest Show on Earth.                 |
| UP       | Barnham & Bailey _____ with the so-called Greatest Show on Earth.                  |
| 5.       | As society's values changed, the sideshows declined in popularity with the public. |
| BECAME   | As society's values changed, the sideshows _____ with the public.                  |

6. Fire destroyed the big top in just a few minutes.  
MATTER The big top burnt down in \_\_\_\_\_ minutes.

### H – Write about it

Write about a traditional show or race in your country that involves animals. Mention:

- where/when/how often it takes place;
- which animals are involved;
- what its origins are;
- how popular it is.

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## Bank Holidays (B1 - Lower Intermediate)

### A – Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. What are the most important public holidays in your country?
2. Which ones are religious holidays and which are secular holidays?
3. Are there any local public holidays? If so, when are they? What do they celebrate?
4. Do you think there are too many holidays? Why (not)?

### B – Listen and answer

Read these statements. Then listen (without reading) and choose the correct answer.

1. Bank holidays take place in  
a) the United Kingdom.    b) the Republic of Ireland. c) both of these.
2. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there were ... bank holidays.  
a) fewer                      b) more                      c) the same number of
3. The number of local public holidays increased  
a) after 1871.                      b) in 1830.                      c) as a result of the Industrial Revolution.
4. Under the 1871 Bank Holiday Act, ... had one more bank holiday than the rest of the UK.  
a) Scotland                      b) Ireland                      c) England
5. From the beginning, the Bank Holiday Act affected government institutions as well as banks.  
a) True.                      b) False.                      c) The article doesn't say.

### C – Read and answer

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. How many holidays did the Bank of England have before 1830?
2. What did they celebrate?
3. Which days were still bank holidays in 1834?
4. Why did all the factories in a town usually close on a local holiday?
5. Why did local holidays begin to disappear?
6. What happens to financial transactions when there is a bank holiday?
7. Why do the dates of most bank holidays vary from year to year?
8. Why was there an extra bank holiday in May 2023?

### D – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense.)

1. Lots of people were singing and dancing in the square, so we \_\_\_\_\_ with them.
2. Easter Sunday is on 31<sup>st</sup> March next year, so \_\_\_\_\_ is on 29<sup>th</sup> March.
3. James took a day \_\_\_\_\_ so that he could watch his son play in the school football team.
4. In some countries it's \_\_\_\_\_ for a man to have more than one wife.
5. The discussion was badly organised because everyone was speaking \_\_\_\_\_.
6. We \_\_\_\_\_ our expenses drastically by selling our car and travelling to work by bike.

## E – Ready for the B1 PRELIMINARY English Exam? (Paper 1, Reading: Part 5)

Choose the correct word in brackets for each space.

In many countries, the day after Christmas is a religious holiday called Saint Stephen's Day, but in the UK, it is a bank holiday called Boxing Day.

The name of the day has <sup>1</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (everything/something/nothing/anything) to do with the sport of boxing. <sup>2</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (Instead/Also/Therefore/Although) it probably comes from the wooden collection boxes placed in medieval churches. People who wanted to donate money put <sup>3</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (them/it/there/away) into the boxes as they entered or left the building. The boxes were opened on Saint Stephen's Day and the contents were distributed to <sup>4</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (rich/ri-ches/poor/the poor).

Another tradition was the giving of "Christmas boxes" to servants. After <sup>5</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (work/have worked/to work/working) on Christmas Day, servants were allowed a day's holiday on 26<sup>th</sup> December to visit their families. Each <sup>6</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ (were/had/was/have) given a box containing a gift, money and often left-over food.

## F – Write about it

Write about a recent public holiday in your country. Mention:

- the date of the public holiday;
- what it celebrates;
- what people usually do on this day;
- where you were at the time;
- how you and your family/friends spent the day.

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## Answers: J. R. R. Tolkien (B2 - Upper-Intermediate)

### B – Listen and answer

1. 1892   2. Latin – Greek   3. France   4. 1916   5. Old English   6. 1937   7. 250 million  
8. thirty

### C – Read and answer

1. Because he had lost both his parents.   2. While still a teenager.   3. At Oxford University.  
4. He started writing them to amuse himself and his four children.   5. His book The Hobbit was a surprise success with both adults and children, so his publisher asked for a sequel.   6. It took him 12 years.   7. He saw it as a mythology for England.   8. It's about a group of hobbits who set out to destroy the One Ring to prevent Dark Lord Sauron from using it to conquer Middle-earth.

### D – Learn it! Use it!

1. came across   2. ward   3. poll   4. amused   5. lives on   6. tale

### E – Ready for the B2 FIRST Certificate in English?

1. mastered   2. childhood   3. prestigious   4. forever   5. suddenly   6. opening  
7. furry-footed   8. masterpiece

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## Answers: The Highland Games (B1 - Lower Intermediate)

### B – Listen and answer

1. F – They take place from May to September.   2. F – It's tossing the caber.   3. T   4. T  
5. F – They are held at Blair Castle.   6. T   7. F – It takes place on the first Saturday of September.   8. F – Anyone is welcome to go and watch.

### C – Read and answer

1. They have to throw a heavy log of Scottish pine. The log has to stand upright and tip over to the other side.   2. They used them to assess the participants and to select bodyguards, fighters and messengers.   3. They are Europe's last remaining private army.   4. He's the chief of the Clan Murray.   5. It's an impressive parade of pipes and drums.   6. Since Queen Victoria's

first visit in 1848. 7. It aims to preserve the kilt and the language and customs of the Highlands. 8. There are craft stalls, bagpipe music, local delicacies, whisky and dancing.

**D – Learn it! Use it!**

1. upright 2. stall 3. attended 4. logs 5. tips over 6. picture

**E – Ready for the B1 PRELIMINARY English Exam?**

1. less 2. of 3. just/only 4. such 5. per/a 6. spoken

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**Answers: The Ringling Circus (B2 - Upper Intermediate)**

**B – Listen and answer**

1. F – It has been performing for almost 150 years. 2. F – It's returning after a pause of six years. 3. F – It was The Ringling Bros. Circus that bought the Barnham & Bailey Circus in 1906. 4. T 5. F – The use of elephants was prohibited because of concerns over animal welfare. 6. F – It will start with a tour of over fifty cities across America.

**C – Read and answer**

1. It's famous for incredible acrobatics and death-defying stunts. 2. They started performing in 1882 in Mazomanie, Wisconsin. 3. The examples given are giants, dwarfs, "armless wonders", "bearded ladies" and "four-legged girls". 4. Because the performers' disabilities were exploited for profit. 5. Because they had financial difficulties. 6. It will revolve around dare-devil performers and contortionists, like Cirque du Soleil.

**E – Listen, read and check your answers**

1. F – It was founded in Florida in 1927. 2. T 3. T 4. F – She says they involved riders with horses and animals. 5. T 6. F – Far more than a hundred people died. 7. T 8. T

**F – Learn it! Use it!**

1. Dwarfs 2. suitable 3. menageries 4. amusement 5. ladder 6. taken a toll

**G – Ready for the FIRST Certificate in English?**

1. has been captivating audiences for 2. went on to create 3. has been compared 4. come up 5. became less popular 6. just/only a matter of

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**Answers: Bank Holidays (B1 - Lower Intermediate)**

**B – Listen and answer**

1. c 2. b 3. c 4. a 5. b

**C – Read and answer**

1. It had about forty. 2. They celebrated saints' days, Christian festivities or royal occasions. 3. The only bank holidays in 1834 were Good Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1<sup>st</sup> November and Christmas Day. 4. To save on running costs. 5. Because of the standardisation of paid holidays and school holidays, and the decline in the manufacturing industry. 6. They are postponed until the day after the bank holiday. 7. Because they fall on a Monday. 8. It was to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III.

**D – Learn it! Use it!**

1. joined in 2. Good Friday 3. off 4. lawful 5. at once 6. slashed

**E – Ready for the B1 PRELIMINARY English Exam?**

1. nothing 2. Instead 3. it 4. the poor 5. working 6. was

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