

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Credit Level Reading—Text is adapted from “Bouncing off Walls” by Kenneth Stephen, taken from *The Herald Magazine*, 25 April 2009. Reproduced by kind permission of the Herald & Times Group.

Credit Level Reading—Photograph is taken from www.halifaxparkour.com. Unable to trace.

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NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2011

FRIDAY, 6 MAY
2.30 PM – 3.20 PM

ENGLISH
STANDARD GRADE
Credit Level
Reading
Text

Read carefully the passage overleaf. It will help if you read it twice. When you have done so, answer the questions. Use the spaces provided in the Question/Answer booklet.



BOUNCING OFF WALLS

An underground phenomenon involving running through cities and leaping over obstacles, parkour is the epitome of cool for its growing army of fans. Critics say it's stupidly dangerous. Kenneth Stephen hits the streets to hear both sides of the story.



1 It is a Wednesday night in Glasgow. The high walls, rails and steps of Rottenrow Gardens look like some form of municipal amphitheatre under the reddening sky. Several athletic youths in T-shirts and jogging bottoms are moving quickly. They bound over rocks, sure-footed, before leaping like cats into the air, their trainers crunching into the gravel on landing. To move off again, they roll on to their shoulders on the hard ground, springing up and pushing off in one fluid, unbroken movement. You can still see dust in the air as they pass on through the shadows, up and over a wall or vaulting a railing.

2 Witnessing this for the first time, you might think you've come across an unorthodox piece of urban theatre, and in a sense you have. This is parkour, an underground activity that started in the suburbs of Paris in the 1980s and is now sweeping Europe, fuelled by the Internet, especially DIY productions on video sharing websites.

3 Participants are known as traceurs (or traceuses for females) and the parks and city structures of Scotland are rapidly becoming their stage. "I really like the ability to move the way you want, rather than being bound by the way the street designer wanted you to move," says Glynn Forsythe, 24, one of the traceurs assessing the obstacles dotting the campus of Strathclyde University. The biology PhD student points to a walkway snaking into the distance. "It might be faster to go across that railing than take the path. I like that," he says. "It makes things interesting."

4 Like its more expressive cousin free running, parkour is a street art that embraces continuous movement over obstacles. There are no rules and no projected outcomes; parkour simply advocates that individuals "find their own way". The aim is to improve strength, both mental and physical, while developing your technique to overcome ever-greater barriers. The obstructions

can be bollards, benches, scaffolding, advertising boards, bins, cars, bus stops or high walls. In extreme cases, they can be whole buildings.

5 In 2002, a BBC trailer titled *Rush Hour* depicted the French founder of parkour, David Belle, now 35, leaping between the rooftops of urban buildings 200 feet above street level. It is dynamic images such as these that have lured youngsters out of their bedrooms into public spaces.

6 Documentaries such as Channel 4's *Jump London* (2003) and its sequel *Jump Britain* (2005) followed. Assisted by the reach and immediacy of the Internet, parkour spread. It was featured in films such as *District 13* and *Casino Royale*, and now sports clothing firms have jumped on the bandwagon, using parkour's hip factor to sell clothes and trainers.

7 Back in Glasgow, it's only the grey tower blocks on the skyline and the cranes of the Clyde shipyards that remind you this isn't a Paris backstreet or downtown New York. Parkour, say its practitioners, transgresses physical, mental, cultural and geographical boundaries. It is unique, operates off the radar and involves risk and a sense of danger. Just as city kids of the late 1970s and early 1980s found creativity in skate parks and hip-hop, it isn't difficult to see why, for some, parkour is now synonymous with freedom and cool.

8 Therein lies the problem, though. The glamourisation of parkour has been a catalyst for its growth but has also communicated mixed messages. The explosion in popularity has caused a schism to develop within the parkour community over the movement's philosophy. Is it, for example, about dangerous jumps across tenements, and the sort of flips and tricks which have seen brand-name executives reaching for their cheque books? Or is it, as many argue, about fine-tuning the mind and body to overcome obstacles and fear?

9 Whenever accidents happen, parkour is inevitably labelled as a dangerous fringe activity with little place in modern towns

and cities. According to the Glasgow traceurs, the media backlash against the activity has been disproportionate. They feel the headlines ignore the spirit of positivity which Belle and others, such as *Jump Britain's* Sebastien Foucan, brought to the activity.

10 "*Jump Britain* got us started," says Chris Grant of Glasgow Parkour Coaching, as he takes a short break from leading the traceurs through conditioning work. He is currently Scotland's only professional parkour coach. "We were all young and in the same boat. But the documentary was the best thing and the worst thing to happen to parkour. It popularised it but it was also responsible for a lot of misconceptions."

11 Grant, 25, takes a quick gulp of mineral water, his eyes still focusing on the figures stretching on the pavement. Behind them, draped on a mock arch, is a banner reading Glasgow, Commonwealth Games 2014.

12 Getting the public and civic authorities to look behind the sensationalism to find parkour's beating heart is something with which Glasgow's serious traceurs have tasked themselves. For them, the increased profile of parkour counts for little if it doesn't lead to a proportionate level of acceptance. They feel the best way to understand the activity is to watch it being practised, and encourage doubters to come along and witness proceedings for themselves.

13 "Just because people don't understand it, that doesn't mean it's wrong," stresses Grant, before leading the traceurs over a water feature beside red-brick walls. Watching the traceurs learn to cushion a footfall properly or break a jump, it is difficult to question the merits of the activity. Strength, concentration, practice

and technique are all in evidence. In a society that persistently bemoans childhood obesity and risk-averse behaviour, these are perhaps qualities to be coveted, not derided.

14 Grant, a graduate in music and computing from the University of Glasgow, got into parkour with a friend in 2005. Working in Glasgow bars, they found the activity was the perfect way to exercise after closing time. "There was always a quiet spot where you wouldn't get moved on," he recalls. "It fitted in well with our lifestyle at the time because we would always be up until about three in the morning anyway." After his initial dalliance, Grant trained with the French originators of parkour before bringing his knowledge back to Glasgow. He trains every day, whether in the activity's more physical aspects or in its technique. More than 100 people attend his adults and female-only classes every week. In 2007, he collaborated with the National Theatre of Scotland for its production *Bolt*, which included elements of parkour. He has also coached children at three local schools. All three have requested further sessions.

15 In the 18 months since he founded Glasgow Parkour Coaching, assisted by fellow coaches Mick McKeen, Gavin Watson and David Lang, Grant says he has seen only one injury. "It happened over there," he says, pointing to a row of innocuous wooden posts. In front of him, traceurs and traceuses from tonight's class are poised like trapeze artists on railings completing a study in balance. "The main problem for us is bureaucracy and the persistent idea that this is a dangerous activity," says Grant. "People think parkour is just about jumping off walls and they have trouble seeing the outcomes

and rewards. We have liability insurance—we do risk assessments and we get people to sign disclaimers. We are serious about what we do. I don't sleep sometimes because, as a coach, I am responsible for other people."

16 One of the revealing things about watching Grant's mixed-adult class in action is the demographic make-up of the group. Besides the likes of University of Glasgow students in their twenties, Grant has coached physics teachers and seen people as old as 50 practising parkour regularly. Since *Casino Royale* hit cinema screens, parkour's training methods have been incorporated into the battle drills of the British Royal Marines.

17 "People shouldn't just see this as hopping off walls, because it is much more," says Angie Rupp, a 31-year-old vet from Munich who is studying neuroscience in Glasgow. She began practising parkour after reading about it in a magazine article last May. "Parkour requires conditioning and the use of the mind," she says. "It makes any risk a calculated risk, like driving a fast car. We live in such a cotton wool society, but with parkour you are constantly assessing how far you can go and pushing your limits just a wee bit further each time. It helps me to assess problems, and I take the determination needed for parkour into my everyday life." Joining Rupp on a network of scaffolding adjoining two university buildings is Kate Cohen, a 21-year-old finance student. The pair complete a sideways traverse with the same ease as their three male counterparts. Neither of them appears even remotely out of breath, despite the strength required to pull their body weight across the hanging bars. "You must be fit and strong and make sure you use the right technique," says Cohen. "It can look very dangerous, big or impressive—but when you start learning, it's not like that at all."

18 As the traceurs and traceuses pull on their zipped tops and make for their homes across the city, the banner for Glasgow 2014 is almost blanked out by the creeping darkness. Their hobby will maybe never be accepted as a Commonwealth sport, but if they can continue to chip away at the misconceptions, at the very least they might have more places to train without being moved on. That would be progress.

Adapted from an article from
The Herald Magazine

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ENGLISH
STANDARD GRADE
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Reading
Questions

Fill in these boxes and read what is printed below.

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Forename(s)

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**NB Before leaving the examination room you must give this booklet to the Invigilator.
If you do not, you may lose all the marks for this paper.**



QUESTIONS

Write your answers in the spaces provided.

Look at Paragraphs 1 and 2.

1. “It is a Wednesday night in Glasgow.” (Paragraph 1)
Why do you think the writer begins the article with this information?

2 ■ 0

2. Comment on the writer’s use of **word choice** to show the agility of the “athletic youths”.

2 1 0

3. “. . . unorthodox piece of urban theatre . . .” (Paragraph 2)
In your own words, explain what this means.

2 1 0

Look at Paragraphs 3 and 4.

4. **Using your own words as far as possible**, give **three** reasons why parkour appeals to Glynn Forsythe.

2 1 0

5. “. . . a walkway snaking into the distance.” (Paragraph 3)
Identify the technique used in this expression and explain why it is appropriate.

2 1 0

6. "... to overcome ever-greater barriers." (Paragraph 4)
 How does the writer develop this idea in the rest of the paragraph?

2 1 0

Look at Paragraphs 5 to 8.

7. **In your own words**, explain the impact of the trailer *Rush Hour*.

2 1 0

8. (a) What evidence is there in Paragraphs 6 and 7 of the growing popularity of parkour?

2 1 0

(b) **In your own words**, explain fully why people enjoy taking part in parkour.

2 1 0

9. "Therein lies the problem, though." (Paragraph 8)
 Explain how this sentence acts as a link between Paragraphs 7 and 8.

2 1 0

10. "... a catalyst for its growth ... " (Paragraph 8)
In your own words, explain what "catalyst" means in this expression.

2 ■ 0

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PAGE TOTAL

11. Using your own words as far as possible, explain the **two** different views of parkour outlined in Paragraph 8.

2 1 0

Look at Paragraphs 10 to 13.

12. Chris Grant describes *Jump Britain* as “the best thing and the worst thing” to happen to parkour. (Paragraph 10)

In your own words explain:

(a) why it was “the best thing”?

2 ■ 0

(b) why it was “the worst thing”?

2 ■ 0

13. What do “Glasgow’s serious traceurs” (Paragraph 12) aim to achieve? Explain **one** way in which they hope to achieve their aim.

2 1 0

14. Which description best sums up the writer’s reaction, as he watches the traceurs train? Tick (✓) **one** box.

Concerned, in case they injure themselves.	
Jealous, because they are so talented.	
Admiring, because they show skill and care.	
Dismissive, because it is a worthless activity.	

2 ■ 0

15. From Paragraph 13, describe **two** ways in which parkour could help society.

2 1 0

Look at Paragraphs 14 and 15.

16. What evidence is there of the success of both Chris Grant’s adult **and** school classes?

2 1 0

17. Comment on the writer’s use of the word “innocuous” to describe the wooden posts in Paragraph 15.

2 1 0

18. “. . . poised like trapeze artists . . .” (Paragraph 15)

Identify the technique used in this expression and explain why it is appropriate.

2 1 0

19. “The main problem for us is bureaucracy.” (Paragraph 15)

Show how the context helps you understand the meaning of “bureaucracy”.

Meaning _____

Context _____

2 1 0

[Turn over

Look at Paragraph 16 to the end of the passage.

20. How does the writer illustrate “the demographic make-up of the group”? (Paragraph 16)

2 1 0

21. Why do you think the writer includes the interview with Angie Rupp?

2 ■ 0

22. **In your own words**, explain **one** way that parkour can have a wider impact on life, according to Angie Rupp.

2 ■ 0

Think about the passage as a whole.

23. Tick (✓) the box beside the statement which you think best sums up what parkour is all about.

Pushing yourself mentally and physically.	
Allowing anyone to achieve great things.	
Being an individual is important in modern society.	

By referring closely to the passage, give **two** pieces of evidence to support the choice you have made.

2 1 0

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

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p2

p3

p4

p5

p6

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