

FCE READING NATURAL CLASSIC

You are going to read a magazine article about a book. For Questions 1-7, choose the correct answer A, B, C or D.

Natural CLASSIC

Each month we ask one of our experts to tell us what wildlife book – novel, guide or textbook – has most influenced him or her. Here, Martha Holmes, marine biologist, TV presenter and filmproducer, reveals all.

I'm a very keen reader, but selecting the book with a natural-history theme which has influenced me most was some challenge, until I thought back to my childhood. Then **it** was easy.

Where the book came from is a mystery, and I have never met anyone who has heard of it. It is Rita Richie's *The Golden Hawks of Genghis Khan*. I read it when I was about 10 years old and I remember to this day the effect it had on me.

Set in 1218, it is a story of a rich boy whose parents are dead. He is growing up in the splendid city of Samarkand and has a fascination for hawks, those magnificent hunting birds.

There is a great deal of mystery surrounding his past, but he is led to believe that a band of Mongols killed his father to steal a rare type of bird – the golden hawk. Determined to get these birds back, he runs away from Samarkand and joins a group of people travelling to the country of Mongolia. What follows is a grand adventure centred on the city of Karakorum, where the great Mongol chief Genghis Khan was then based.

The book combines adventure, mystery, honour, friendship, danger, suffering – all seen through the eyes of the young hero, Jalair. I still find this fantasy a thrilling read. Jalair's great love for the birds was enviable and inspiring. But most of all it was the sense of place that stayed with me. The book gives the reader an idea of the vast open spaces of central Asia and its huge skies, without the use of the long descriptive passages that would bore a child. There are no boundaries. The emptiness of the Gobi Desert, the Tian Shan mountains and the excitement of riding through forests and over rolling hills fascinated me.

The book gave me more than hawks, horses and a desire for wild places. It also gave me a set of values. The Mongols in *The Golden Hawks* were totally uninterested in possessions, a characteristic that is absolutely essential for people who spent their lives travelling from place to place. They were never mean. Generosity, goodwill and optimism were highly valued, hard work was enjoyed and the rest was pure fun.

They simply loved life.

Two years ago, I fulfilled a life-long ambition and went riding in Mongolia's mountains. I was not disappointed.

1 When first asked to choose a book, Martha Holmes

- A was influenced by the experts.
- B chose one she had read recently.
- C had difficulty in making a decision.
- D was pleased to have been approached.

2 What does 'it' in line 6 refer to?

- A the choice
- B Martha's childhood
- C the book
- D the theme

3 Martha says the book *The Golden Hawks of Genghis Khan*

- A was recommended by a friend.
- B was very popular when she was a child.
- C is known to very few people.
- D is one of many mystery books she has read.

4 The main interest of the hero of the book is

- A what happened to his parents.
- B the desire to see different countries.
- C the beauty of his homeland.
- D his passion for particular birds.

5 Where does most of the story take place?

- A in Samarkand
- B in Karakorum
- C on the way to Karakorum
- D in the Tian Shan mountains

6 What did Martha enjoy about the book?

- A the range of characters
- B the geographical setting
- C the descriptive writing
- D the changes of atmosphere

7 What values did Martha learn from the book?

- A the importance of a sense of humour
- B how to be a successful traveller
- C the need to protect your goods
- D how to get the most out of life



ANSWERS

- 8 C
- 9 A
- 10 C
- 11 D
- 12 B
- 13 B
- 14 D