

Part 6

You are going to read a magazine article about white-water rafting. Seven paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs **A–H** the one which fits each gap (37–43). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use. Mark your answers **on the separate answer sheet**.

## A Wet and Wonderful Ride

*Cameron Wilson is swept away by the thrill of Tasmania's formidable Franklin River*

Tasmania's Franklin River is a renowned rafting destination, both for the beauty and remoteness of the country through which it flows and for the challenge it presents the rafter. I'd been told by one of the guides on my trip that 'portage' is an indispensable word in the river rafter's lexicon. It derives from the French where it means 'physically carrying boats between two navigable stretches of a river'.

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Thanks to the light but steady rain, however, the river level turned out to be high enough for us to glide over small rocks, and portage comfortably around the bigger ones, on the way to our first campsite. Conditions there turned out to be typical of those for the entire trip; the ravine drops steeply to the river and there is not much level ground, so rock overhangs make handy shelters.

37

Such is the challenge of expedition rafting and the truth is, I was loving every minute of it. I glanced over at Brendan, at twenty-one the younger of our two river guides, and his grin confirmed that he too was having a ball, despite appearing in imminent danger of being swept off his feet and into the torrent. 'Mate,' he yelled over the roar of the rapids, 'like I keep telling them... this is not a holiday!'

41

The summit is more than half a vertical mile above the Franklin. It's the perfect spot from which to take in the unspoilt beauty of the country we'd been travelling through, its mountains, forests, high-country lakes and tarns.

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A measure of respect, therefore, seemed in order, as I psyched myself up for rafting through the heart of the wilderness that had been so hard fought for. I was one of a group of ten – eight clients plus two guides – mustered over an early breakfast in Collingwood Bridge, two and a half hours north-west of the Tasmanian capital, Hobart.

42

Ironically enough, it was not until we struck one of the less celebrated stretches of white water that our only real rafting drama occurred. Shaun and his crew had wrapped their raft around a boulder and there it stayed for twenty minutes, held in place by the fast-flowing white water.

39

A light drizzle was beginning to close in as we donned helmets and life-jackets, and pushed off into the gentle currents of a calm tributary. It was plain sailing so far, but I knew these tranquil waters would carry us on down to the raging Franklin. The afternoon was spent becoming acquainted with our raft buddies, or with pressing Shaun and Brendan for stories about Franklin expeditions from days gone by.

43

As the river widened, such white-knuckle experiences became fewer and further between, and as we eased into a leisurely paddling rhythm, twice I caught sight of platypus crossing the river. The silences grew longer and more comfortable, and as we slipped along under a blue sky the quiet was broken now and then by Shaun enquiring: 'How's the serenity?' On each occasion it was well above par.

- A** Having hung gamely on for a minute or two, Simon, a tax auditor from Brisbane, was finally dragged away for a bumpy solo ride to the bottom of the cascades. He came up bruised but smiling. I think it summed up how we were all feeling about the trip at that point.
- B** I had reason to reflect upon this information as I scrambled about on a slippery rock, trying to carry a heavy rubber raft between two boulders. The gap was too narrow and I was under constant assault from thousands of litres of white water. However expressed, this was a skill you couldn't do without if you were going to raft down the Franklin.
- C** It just went to prove how right our guide had been. A Franklin expedition is not a joy ride. It is, however, an opportunity to experience life on a river that, thanks to those who campaigned to save it, survives as one of the world's great wilderness journeys.
- D** Some of the stretches we'd be doing could be rafted straight through apparently, with the boulders under two metres of water. At other times the river gets so low we'd have to do a high portage – unload the gear, deflate and carry the lot through the forest. But you never knew because the river presents a new challenge each and every time.
- E** The moment arrived to pack our gear and supplies into barrels and 'dry bags' and lash these to aluminium frames, which were then secured in the two rafts. Our trip leader, Shaun, briefed us on how to handle a difficult portage or riding a rugged set of rapids, and talked us through ways of getting back into a raft from which you've just tumbled.
- F** The next few days saw both raft crews functioning superbly as we traversed the next section of river, responding as one to commands, as we bounced off logs and boulders through rapids. These were evocatively referred to by names such as 'The Cauldron', 'Nasty Notch' and 'Thunderush'.
- G** There was no doubting the truth of this assertion. I'd chosen this trip for a number of reasons, not least the fact that the Franklin is famous for the events of 1983. That's when thousands of people took to the streets or chained themselves to bulldozers to save it from being dammed and flooded, in what remains one of the largest environmental campaigns in Australia's history.
- H** Roused by Brendan, we'd be coaxed from our cocoons each day with the aroma of fresh coffee. On the day of our third such awakening, the sky had cleared beautifully, which meant fleece jackets and waterproofs could give way to dark glasses and sunscreen. The conditions were ideal for the long day's hike to Frenchman's Cap.