

## The World's Funniest Joke (B1)

### A – Before you start

*Answer the questions with a partner.*

1. Do you enjoy listening to jokes?
2. Have you got a good sense of humour?
3. What kinds of jokes do you prefer? (nonsensical? satirical? ironic? wordplay? obscene? etc.)

### B – Listen and answer

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

1. Monty Python's Flying Circus was ... comedy show.  
a) an American                      b) a British                      c) an Australian
2. Their pilot show in 1969 contained a sketch about a joke that was used  
a) to amuse children.              b) to kill the enemy.              c) to cure depression.
3. Psychologist Richard Wiseman began a search for The World's Funniest Joke in  
a) 2001.                                  b) 2011.                                  c) 2010.
4. The number of jokes examined during the study was  
a) 14,000.                              b) 30,000.                              c) 40,000.
5. The winning joke was about two  
a) farmers.                              b) uncles.                              c) hunters.
6. A 2019 study made in Hong Kong found that humour is taken  
a) more seriously in the West.      b) more seriously in the East.      c) just as seriously in the East as in the West.
7. The Monty Python TV show was only popular in English-speaking countries.  
a) True.                                  b) False.                                  c) The article doesn't say.
8. Richard Wiseman later discovered that a version of the winning joke already existed in 1951.  
a) True.                                  b) False.                                  c) The article doesn't say.

### C – Read and answer

*Read the article and answer the questions.*

1. What happens to the inventor of the funniest joke in the Monty Python sketch?
2. What effect is laughter thought to have on our health? Why?
3. How did the LaughLab study decide on the winning joke?
4. Who did Gurpal Gosall use the winning joke with? Why?
5. What happens to the man who collapses in Gosall's joke?
6. What was different in the way UK and US audiences reacted to the Monty Python sketch?
7. Who had written the original version of the funniest joke?
8. Why was Wiseman surprised?

### 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. If you're in a field during a storm, stay away from trees and \_\_\_\_\_ down on the ground.
2. James was offended because Chloe made a funny \_\_\_\_\_ about his new jacket.
3. Before entering Death Valley, we \_\_\_\_\_ we had plenty of drinking water with us.
4. Why do so many people keep smoking when they know the \_\_\_\_\_ effects it can have?
5. People who go to yoga classes often say it gives them a sense of \_\_\_\_\_.

6. After finishing the marathon Alice could hardly speak because she was \_\_\_\_\_ for breath.

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

*Write one word only in each space.*

When brilliant comedian Spike Milligan <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ in 2002, at the age of 83, one of the many people to pay tribute to him <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ the Prince of Wales, now King Charles III. Charles had been a fan of Spike Milligan's <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ his childhood, when he listened regularly to the comedian's performances in *The Goon Show*, an irreverent radio comedy show, broadcast by the BBC between 1951 and 1960. Milligan was the creator and main writer of the show, in <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ he also played the part of several characters.

Milligan asked for the words "I <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ you I was ill" to appear on his gravestone. King Charles once said of him: "He has made me laugh for <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ years than I can remember."

### **F – Talk about it**

*In pairs or groups.*

1. Why are some people better at telling jokes than others, in your opinion?
2. Are you good at telling jokes? Why (not)?
3. Have you got a favourite comedian? If so, who is he/she?
4. Do you agree that people in different countries often have a different sense of humour?
5. Can you think of a funny joke you heard recently? If so, try telling it to your classmates.

## **Answers**

### **B – Listen and answer**

1. b 2. b 3. a 4. c 5. c 6. a 7. b 8. a

### **C – Read and answer**

1. He dies laughing. 2. It is thought to have a beneficial effect because it can be a coping strategy at times of crisis. 3. More than 350,000 people from seventy countries rated the jokes on a scale of 1 to 5. 4. He used it with his patients to help them gain perspective on their problems. 5. His friend shoots him. 6. They laughed at different parts of the same sketch. 7. An Irish comedian called Spike Milligan. 8. Because Milligan was a controversial figure at the time.

### **D – Learn it! Use it!**

1. lie 2. remark 3. made sure 4. deadly 5. well-being 6. gasping

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

1. died 2. was 3. since 4. which 5. told/warned 6. more