

Entraînement à l'épreuve de compréhension écrite

Durée de l'épreuve : 30 minutes

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Read the following article and say whether the following statements are right (R) or wrong (W) by ticking the correct box. You do NOT have to justify your choices.

Comedy Queen of the Aborigines

Guardian Weekly, Thursday September 25th 2008.

Mark Bin Bakar, child of Muslim father and Aboriginal mother, is both a campaigner for Australian Aboriginal rights, and also Mary G, star of 'her' own radio show. Broadcast to more than 100 stations across Australia, Bin Bakar's matriarchal alter-ego is adored by far more than an Aboriginal audience. He shares the story of his rise to cross-dressing fame (1).

“Mary G happened by accident. I was doing voluntary radio in 1992 and was alone in the studio. I put on this woman's voice (2) to create some new energy. It became instantly popular – so much so that the station offered me my own show.

I think the secret of Mary G's success is her simple humour and motherly presence. She personifies the matriarchal personality; she is the grandmother who tells you off if you're not pulling your weight. She talks about the issues that affect Aboriginal people, like addiction to drugs and alcohol (3), which has broken apart so many families. Every week she chips away, and hopefully her message is getting into the psyche of Aboriginal people. I think they see Mary G as a leader and not as a made up character; to them she is real.

I felt no embarrassment when I started to impersonate a woman. I enjoyed doing it right from the start and everyone just seemed to welcome the character with open arms. She is what a lot of people need. She brings Aboriginal humour to Aboriginal people and talks about serious issues with wit and comedy. (4) She holds up a mirror to society and helps people to laugh at themselves. This is what we need. She is good medicine.

I was born to a Muslim father and a Catholic-Aborigine mother in the ethnically diverse town of Broome, Western Australia (5). It was a multicultural society before the term became commonly used. It was one of only two places, along with the Torres Straits, that were excluded from the White Australia policy. This is because it was a large pearling port and the government needed Asians to work on the pearling boats. So there were many Asians there and a lot of Aborigines. Everyone just got on together. We grew up calling everyone uncle and auntie.

I have one brother and two sisters, all younger than me. When we were growing up we had no idea of the pain and abuse our forebears had endured – particularly my mother, who was one of the Stolen Generations, the children who were taken from their families to be “assimilated” into white culture (6).

When I was a child I never knew what had happened to my people or my mother. My parents were not good at expressing love or teaching us about our history; it was too painful. It was only when I started getting educated that I was told the full story. I have never asked my mother why she didn't tell us, but I want her to open up about her experiences and what she feels.

A huge moment for myself – and millions of others – came in February when Prime Minister Kevin Rudd officially apologised for the treatment of the Aboriginal people by previous governments – and specifically to the Stolen Generations. (7) At the start of the Stolen Generations era the Australian government saw the Aboriginal people as part of the flora and fauna of the country, something they owned. If an Aboriginal woman had a child by a white man, the child was taken away from its mother and all ties were severed. We lost our language and culture because of this.

John Howard, the previous prime minister, was in power for 11 years and caused a lot of damage. He thought Aborigines should integrate themselves into the rest of society and if they didn't want to then they weren't worth looking after. He put our people into a deep abyss of pain (8). He refused to apologise for the crimes of the past. He said that it wasn't his generation who did these things so it wasn't his responsibility. Our people began to switch off and shut down. The addictions and problems that have hurt us for years got worse.

I have a fairly important role now back at home (9): Mary G is popular and a lot of people are influenced by her. It has given me phenomenal power. I had to make the choice between becoming radical and using that power against the authorities or trying to help my people get the same opportunities as everyone else. It seemed natural to me to use Mary G to make a difference for my people.

I still live in Broome with my wife Tanya. Mary G's radio and television schedule is getting busier and she tours Australia with her band, the G-Spots. But I stay involved with several organisations. I founded Abmusic, an indigenous music school, and the Stompem Grounds music festival, to create new opportunities for Aboriginal musicians. I am also involved in the Stolen Generation Oral History Project, which aims to change the way Australian history is taught in schools.

I hope that through Mary G I can continue to build bridges between Aboriginal people and other Australians (10) in what could be a crucial period in our country's history. I hope I can help to spread the messages of change that this whole country desperately needs."

1. The article is an interview of the transexual Mark Bin Bakar.	R <input type="checkbox"/> W <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Mark Bin Bakar decided to become a woman when he dressed for the first time as one in 1992.	R <input type="checkbox"/> W <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Mary G is a socially committed character, involved in social problems such as drug addiction and alcohol.	R <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Mary G talks about serious subjects with a sense of humour.	R <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Mark Bin Bakar comes from a multicultural society in west Australia.	R <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/>
6. When she was a child, his mother was withdrawn from her parents to be assimilated into white society.	R <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/>
7. In February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd offered an official apology to the Stolen Generations who were cut off from their culture by the government.	R <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/>
8. John Howard behaved in a very different way from Kevin Rudd.	R <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/>
9. Mary G thinks she has to play a very important part in society now.	R <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/>
10. She thinks she will be able to create the necessary connections between Aborigines and the rest of society.	R <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/>