



Reading 38

You are going to read a magazine article. For questions 1–7, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

P.D. James

Barbara Michaels meets the acclaimed crime writer, whose innocent exterior hides a complex and brilliant imagination.

Best-selling crime writer P.D. James - the initials stand for Phyllis Dorothy - exudes an air of quiet authority. It is easy to envisage her, had she not become a creator of detective stories with more twists and turns than a spiral staircase, as a headmistress of a girls' school. But it is soon apparent from what she says that the authoritative mien is, in fact, a cloak for shyness. She reluctantly admits that Adam Dalgliesh, the detective in her novels, 'is, I suppose, modelled on myself - or rather, the way I would have turned out if I had been a man'. Dalgliesh prefers to unravel the complexities of crimes solo, as does his creator. 'I need time on my own, particularly when I am writing. I can write more or less anywhere as long as I have total privacy.'

She is too modest to concur with the view that she is Britain's best-known crime writer, even though her books - 12 major detective novels - are read avidly by millions all over the world. She herself is a great fan of the works of close friend Ruth Rendell. 'I particularly enjoy her psychological works, written under the name of Barbara Vine.' Books beside her bed are most likely to be by women writers such as Iris Murdoch, Anita Brookner and Penelope Lively, although not to the total exclusion of male authors like Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, whom she considers to have been the greatest novelists of their generation.

Success came to P.D. James late in life. Now in her seventies, she was 42 when her first crime novel, *Cover Her Face*, was published. Born in Oxford, the eldest of three children, Phyllis grew up mainly in Cambridge, where her family moved when she was 11 years old. 'I met my husband there - he was a student at the university, and I have always loved the place. That is why I chose it as the setting for *An Unsuitable Job For A Woman*.'

Reluctantly, she reveals that from a promising start, life has been hard, even tragic at times. Her Irish doctor husband, Connor Bantry White, returned from the Second World War, during which he served with the Royal Army Medical Corps, a very sick man. 'I had to work long hours to support him and our two young daughters, Clare and Jane. The ideas were teeming in my head, but I could do practically nothing about it - I simply hadn't the time. My husband's parents, however, were marvellous, and took my daughters under their wing, giving them a sense of security throughout those difficult years.'

While working full-time in administration for the National Health Service, she made good use of her enviable organisational skills. At one point, five psychiatric outpatients' clinics came under her jurisdiction. Then followed 11 years at the Home Office, first in the Police Department, doing administration for forensic science research, and then in the Criminal Law section, in the juvenile crime division. It was while working in forensic science that she became 'quite accustomed' to the sight of corpses. But it was not fascination with death itself that inspired her. 'It was, rather, the shape and construction involved in the writing of a crime novel that appealed. I have always enjoyed reading detective stories, and I always knew that I wanted to be a writer.'

'I didn't want to use the traumatic events of my own life in a work of fiction. The writing of a detective story appealed as a wonderful apprenticeship for someone setting out to be a serious novelist, and it was suitably removed from my own experience. As I went on, I became increasingly aware that one could stay within the constraints and indeed within the so-called formula of the classic detective story and still write a good, serious and revealing novel about human beings. 'Writing detective stories', she says, 'is a way of bringing order out of disorder. The solution of a crime confirms the sanctity of life - even if that life is unlovable. Nobody really likes violence.'

1 What does the writer suggest about P.D. James's outward manner?

- A It is an attempt to discourage curiosity.
- B It points to a lack of self-confidence.
- C It conceals the true nature of her personality.
- D It comes as a surprise to her readers.

2 When questioned about Adam Dalgliesh, P.D. James

- A concedes that the detective resembles her.
- B admits that his behaviour is unusual.
- C accepts that he does not enjoy company.
- D recognises a weakness in the detective's character.

3 What is revealed about P.D. James's tastes in reading?

- A She prefers books with lots of action.
- B She is less keen on male than female writers.
- C She believes that men write better books than women.
- D She thinks that women writers are not given enough credit.

4 According to P.D. James, her early writing career suffered from lack of

- A support.
- B commitment.
- C confidence.
- D opportunity.

5 What characterised P.D. James's work in the National Health Service?

- A It was well-suited to her talents.
- B It was not a satisfying experience.
- C It was useful for her future writing.
- D It was not sufficiently demanding.

6 P.D. James was drawn to writing crime novels because

- A they were her favourite sort of reading.
- B they would be useful to her in her career.
- C she liked the technical challenge they offered.
- D she had experienced the effects of crime at first hand.

7 What realisation did P.D. James come to while working on her detective stories?

- A It was not necessary to pay attention to established patterns.
- B The conventions did not adversely affect the quality of her writing.
- C It was inevitable that she would become emotionally involved.
- D The subject matter was more limiting than she had expected.

Источник задания: Cambridge CAE Practice Tests 2 (old format)

Reading 38 — Keys

1. C
2. A
3. B
4. D
5. A
6. C
7. B

Explanation

P.D. James

1 Barbara Michaels meets the acclaimed crime writer, whose innocent exterior hides a complex and brilliant imagination.

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