**You are going to read an article about the importance of reading in our lives. For questions 1-8 choose the correct answer A, B or C.**

My husband hasjust returned from a trip to Iceland. He enthused about the natural and man-made wonders of the place: the geysers; the ancient glaciers; the fact that a large beer costs ?10 a glass. However, it was when he told me that 99 per cent of the Icelandic population are literate that I got excited. If Icelandic schools can produce such spectacular results, why can't ours in Britain? According to the Basic Skills Agency, one in six people in Britain has literacy problems. I think we must ask why so many children are leaving school (after eleven years of compulsory education) unable to read and write their own language satisfactorily. I was once told by a highly literate woman that: 'Reading and writing isn't everything. We should learn to value people for themselves, they have other skills.' We were in a literacy centre at the time, full of adults struggling to learn their own language. A couple of people were in their seventies and had spent a lifetime covering up the fact that they couldn't read or write. Some of their excuses were creative. One man wrapped a bandage around his right hand whenever he had an official form to fill in. Other, more common, excuses are: 'I've forgotten my glasses' or 'My handwriting is bad'.  
I was a late reader myself, so I can empathize with the terror of looking down at a page full of incomprehensible black squiggles. I used to dread being asked to read by the teacher in my infant school (who was so unkind that my brain turned to porridge whenever I saw her). I learned to read during an absence from school. I was away for three weeks with mumps. My mother bought Richmal Crompton's Just William books, and I was so captivated by the ink drawings that I wanted to know what the captions said underneath. My mother read them to me, and somehow, by the time I went back to school, I could read the books myself.  
For those of you who don't know the William books, I'd better explain their attraction. They start in the 1930s when William Brown is an eleven-year-old boy. He lives in a village in the country with his family. His mother, Mrs Brown, is a long-suffering woman prone to headaches. Mrs Brown can't quite bring herself to think badly of William, though God knows there is daily evidence that he is the son from hell. Mr Brown is a permanently angry man. Unlike his wife, he is convinced that William is the spawn of the devil.  
William leads a gang called 'The Outlaws', but he is not a wicked boy. The books are wonderful and have a rich, sophisticated vocabulary. The reader sees the adult world through William's eyes and, like him, finds it a baffling, hypocritical place.  
William Brown hated school and was constantly in trouble. And, judging by the letters he wrote (ransom notes, usually), he struggled with his spelling and punctuation. My literary hero never grew up, but I hope that a good teacher out there in Fictionland persevered with him and that he left school able to read and write. Because I fear that William's 'other skills' - disorderliness, hand-to-hand fighting - would not have adequately equipped him for adult life. Unless, of course, he wanted to join the foreign legion, whose only entry qualification is that applicants must have hands and legs.  
Good teachers should be honoured by society. We should pay them more and stop being jealous of their long holidays. Boring, inadequate teachers should be sifted out before they leave teacher-training college. On no account should their fatal influence be allowed to pollute the lives of small children. One of my daughters wept every night for weeks because she was afraid of the 'shouting' teacher.  
Millions of jobs have disappeared now, and will never return. However, unemployed people remain, and it's only fair that if they are to stay at home in, they should be allowed to pick up a book and be able to read it.

**1. What the author of the article likes most about Iceland is**   
A. the geysers and a lot of ice  
B. the prices of different products.  
C. the level of education

**2. According to the story the education in Britain is**   
A. better than in Iceland  
B. worse than in Iceland   
C. is absolutely different from Icelandic education.

**3. In literacy centres in Britain you can meet**   
A. very creative children.  
B. people who have been illiterate all their life.  
C. people with physical problems.

**4. The author of the story learnt to read**   
A. while she was ill.  
B. at the lessons in school.  
Cwhile she was examining pictures.

**5. The author liked the William books because**   
A. the boy hated school as the author did.  
B. the readers could see the adult world through the boy's eyes.  
C. the author feared for the boy.

**6. The most important thing in life according to the author is**  
A. ability to read and write.  
B. to have different skills that would be necessary for the life  
C. to join the foreign legion.

**7. According to the text teachers should**   
A. get special education at teachers-training college  
B. influence the life of small children.  
C. be respected.

**8. According to the text literacy gives you an opportunity to**   
A. find a job.  
B. spend the time better while looking for a job.  
C. escape unemployment.