Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh in 1850. The son of a prosperous civil engineer, he chose to study law rather than follow the family profession. Stevenson's relations with his parents were far from cordial, due to his intense dislike of the Presbyterian respectability of the professional classes.

When he was still a young man, he contracted a respiratory disease which was to plague him for the rest of his life. It was at this time, in his early twenties, that he decided to become a professional writer. The Scottish climate, however, did nothing to help his delicate condition, and after long periods abroad, he finally settled in Samoa.

Stevenson's Calvinistic background led him to inquire more deeply into the question of predestination and the power of evil, as, for example, in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde,* the classic tale of dual personalities.

Stevenson is just as well-known for his adventure stories, the most famous being *Treasure Island* (1883). He was, above all, a gifted story-teller who helped to fashion the novel of action as we know it today.

At the time of his death in 1894, Stevenson was working on his unfinished masterpiece, *Weir of Hermiston*.

1. Answer the following questions using your own words. (2 points: 1 point each)

a) What aspect of Stevenson's early life in Scotland influenced his ideas?

b) What was Stevenson's contribution to literature?

2. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)? (1 point: 0.5 each)

a) Stevenson was almost thirty when he made the choice to become a writer.

b) He could not finish *Weir of Hermiston* because he got a serious illness when he was writing it.

3. Find a word or a phrase in the text which, in context, is similar in meaning to: (1 point: 0.5 each)

a) to cause continuous suffering

b) story

3. Choose a, b or c, in each question below. Only one choice is correct. (2 points: 0.5 each)

1. Stevenson stayed out of Scotland for long periods ...

a) and eventually made his home in Samoa.
b) but finally died in Edinburgh.
c) because he wanted to change his working conditions.

2. Stevenson studied law at university ...

a) although he wanted to become a civil engineer.
b) because he disapproved of his father's profession.

c) although he started writing seriously a few years later.

3. His relations with his parents were ...
   a) affectionate, but not as far as religious ideas were concerned.
   b) very good.
   c) troubled.

4. He had a special talent ...

   a) for telling stories.
   b) for writing psychological novels.
   c) for exploring predestination.

5. Composition (100-150 words approximately). Choose one of the following topics. (4 points)

l. Write about your reading habits. (When, what and why do you read?)

2. Children should follow their parents' profession. Do you agree?