

1 LOOKING AT LANGUAGE

collocations

Complete the collocations in the sentences.

- 1 The problems we **face** today are quite different from those that troubled our ancestors.
- 2 We have an **a** lot of studying to do for our history exam.
- 3 The leader of the opposition seems to be **d** serious about resigning if his party doesn't win the next election.
- 4 We could talk for hours about the **r** and wrongs of the political system in ancient Rome.
- 5 Politicians need to concentrate on the big **p** and not get distracted by small details.
- 6 Manchester Town Hall is a **cl** example of Gothic revival architecture.
- 7 Freedom of speech and the right to vote are two important **c** rights.
- 8 In medieval times, life was good for the landowners, but **o** people had a difficult time.

2 READING

a Read the article. Mark the sentences **T** (true) or **F** (false).

- 1 The author of *Horrible Histories* used to work on the stage.
- 2 Deary's *Horrible Histories* books are purely fictional.
- 3 Deary began writing the stories in the same year as his country celebrated an important occasion.
- 4 Teachers bought *Blitzed Brits* to teach their classes about World War II.
- 5 The host of the TV shows is a famous figure from history.
- 6 In many of the comedy sketches, a parallel is drawn between past and present events.
- 7 The author did not expect his concept to be so popular.
- 8 Plans to build a *Horrible Histories* theme park have been announced.

b Underline five words or phrases you don't know. Use your dictionary to look up their meaning and pronunciation.

Why *Horrible Histories* is a hit

Getting an audience interested in history can be a daunting task at the best of times, but it's especially difficult when your medium is the written word. Enter Terry Deary, former actor and full-time author of the best-selling series *Horrible Histories*. Since the publication of *Terrible Tudors* and *Awesome Egyptians* in 1993, readers have been hooked on the series, which now consists of over 60 titles. More than 20 million copies have been sold in around 30 different languages. So, just what is the secret behind Deary's success?

The answer lies in the way the subject is presented. For each of his tales, Deary selects an important era from the past and picks out the most unpleasant events: gory killings, juicy scandal, and grim tales of revenge. These lesser-known aspects of history are recounted in comic-book fashion, eliciting disbelief in the reader, although the details are completely accurate. And this is what appeals to children about his books: the fact that by reading them, they learn something unbelievable but true.

As well as Deary's writing style, it was also coincidence that contributed to his rise to fame. Two years after the series began, the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II came along. Deary had conveniently just written *Blitzed Brits*, a description of events in wartime Britain. Teachers were looking for something on the subject to grab their students' attention in class and *Blitzed Brits* fitted the bill perfectly. The book shot up the sales charts and made Deary into a bestselling author almost overnight.

Yet *Horrible Histories* is not confined to books. Deary's gruesome tales have also been adapted for television, providing the material for five whole series. The shows are presented by a talking rat called Rattus Rattus, whose job is to introduce comedy sketches portraying a particular historical event and to verify the facts they contain. The sketches often parody current media stories, and each episode contains a song that imitates a particular pop style, which can be anything from boy bands to hard rock. The outrageous costumes and ridiculous humor of the show appeal to both children and grown-ups alike, and the TV series has won numerous awards at both children's and adult ceremonies.

Not even Terry Deary anticipated the huge success of *Horrible Histories*, which has joined the ranks of other children's favorites such as *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games*. Along with reading the books and following the TV series, fans can also purchase magazines, listen along to audio books, play video games, and watch stage productions. There have even been rumors of a theme park. With a range of products that wide, who would dare claim that history is boring?

