**Written Comprehension and Expression 5**

**Who Killed Benny Paret?**

Sometime about 1935 or 1936 I had an interview with Mike Jacobs, the prize-fight promoter. I was a fledgling reporter at that time; my beat was education but during the vacation season I found myself on varied assignments, all the way from ship news to sports reporting. In this way I found myself sitting opposite **the most powerful figure in the boxing world.**

There was nothing spectacular in Mr. Jacobs’ manner or appearance; but when he spoke about prize fights, he was no longer a bland little man but a colossus who sounded the way Napoleon must have sounded when he reviewed a battle. You knew you were listening to Number One. His saying something made it true.

We discussed what to him was the only important element in successful promoting — how to please the crowd. So far as he was concerned, there was no mystery to it. You put killers in the ring and the people filled your arena. You hire boxing artists — men who are adroit at feinting, parrying, weaving, jabbing, and dancing, but who don’t pack dynamite in their fists — and you wind up counting your empty seats. So you searched for the killers and sluggers and maulers — fellows who could hit with the force of a baseball bat.

I asked Mr. Jacobs if he was speaking literally when he said people came out to see the killer.

“They don’t come out to see a tea party,” he said evenly. “They come out to see the knockout. They come out to see a man hurt. If they think anything else, they’re kidding themselves.”

Recently, a young man by the name of Benny Paret was killed in the ring. The killing was seen by millions; it was on television. In the twelfth round, he was hit hard in the head several times, went down, was counted out, and never came out of the coma.

The Paret fight produced a flurry of investigations. Governor Rockefeller was shocked by what happened and appointed a committee to assess the responsibility. The New York State Boxing Commission decided to find out what was wrong. The District Attorney’s office expressed its concern. One question that was solemnly studied in all three probes concerned the action of the referee. Did he act in time to stop the fight? Another question had to do with the role of the examining doctors who certified the physical fitness of the fighters before the bout. Still another question involved Mr. Paret’s manager; did he rush his boy into the fight without adequate time to recuperate from the previous one?

In short, the investigators looked into every possible cause except the real one. Benny Paret was killed because the human fist delivers enough impact, when directed against the head, to produce a massive hemorrhage in the brain. The human brain is the most delicate and complex mechanism in all creation. It has a lacework of millions of highly fragile nerve connections. Nature attempts to protect this exquisitely intricate machinery by encasing it in a hard shell. Fortunately, the shell is thick enough to withstand a great deal of pounding. Nature, however, can protect a man against everything except man himself. Not every blow to the head will kill a man — but there is always the risk of concussion and damage to the brain. A prize fighter may be able to survive even repeated brain concussions and go on fighting, but the damage to his brain may be permanent.

In any event, it is futile to investigate the referee’s role and seek to determine whether he should have intervened to stop the fight earlier. That is not where the primary responsibility lies. The primary responsibility lies with the people who pay to see a man hurt. The referee who stops a fight too soon from the crowd’s viewpoint can expect to be booed. The crowd wants the knockout; it wants to see a man stretched out on the canvas. This is the supreme moment in boxing. It is nonsense to talk about prize fighting as a test of boxing skills. No crowd was ever brought to its feet screaming and cheering at the sight of two men beautifully dodging and weaving out of each other’s jabs. The time the crowd comes alive is when a man is hit hard over the heart or the head, when his mouthpiece flies out, when the blood squirts out of his nose or eyes, when he wobbles under the attack and his pursuer continues to smash at him with pole-axe impact.

Don’t blame it on the referee. Don’t even blame it on the fight managers. Put the blame where it belongs — on the prevailing mores that regard prize fighting as a perfectly proper enterprise and vehicle of entertainment. No one doubts that many people enjoy prize fighting and will miss it if it should be thrown out. And that is precisely the point.

**Task One: Comprehension, answer the following questions according to the text.**

1. Why, according to Mike Jacobs, do people come to see a prize fight? Does Cousins agree with him?

2. What was the immediate cause of Paret’s death? What remote causes did the investigators consider? What, according to Cousins, was the main cause — that is, where does the “primary responsibility” (9) lie?

3. Why does Cousins believe “it is futile to investigate the referee’s role” (9)?

4. Cousins ends his essay with “And that is precisely the point.” What is the “point” he refers to?

5- At whom is this essay aimed — boxing enthusiasts, sportswriters, or a general audience? On what do you base your conclusion?

6- Does Cousins expect his audience to agree with his thesis? How does he try to win sympathy for his position?

7- What are the immediate and the remote causes of the death?

8- Read the text and copy all the lexis related to prize fighting.

**Task Two: Lexis, Structure and Style:**

1. What do the Underlined parts refer to?
2. Explain bold-typed parts using your own words.
3. What is the main pattern of development of the passage? (the writer's purpose)
4. What are the other patterns the writer used? Justify your answer
5. Write a short paragraph accounting for sentence variety in the passage.

**"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure." Gen. Colin Powell**