Teacher's Key

Raygun and the Internet Pile-On: Why Mockery Spreads (Level B2)

Vocabulary Matching

1 unconventional = **N**
2 viral = **A**
3 mockery = **H**
4 parodied = **L**
5 pile-on = **G**
6 petition = **M**
7 manipulated = **I**
8 scrutiny = **E**
9 engagement = **D**
10 incentives = **O**
11 verified = **J**
12 disproportionate = **K**
13 plausible = **B**
14 surreal = **C**
15 process = **F**

Fill in the Blank

1 unconventional
2 viral
3 mockery
4 parodied
5 pile-on
6 petition
7 manipulated
8 scrutiny
9 engagement
10 incentives
11 verified
12 disproportionate
13 plausible
14 process

True or False

1 **True.** Paragraph 1 describes her as a 36-year-old university lecturer.
2 **False.** She lost all three without a single vote from the judges.
3 **True.** Paragraph 2 states this.
4 **False.** It gathered more than 45,000 signatures.
5 **True.** Matt Carroll called it “vexatious, misleading and bullying.”
6 **False.** It found that negative words raised the click rate.
7 **False.** The writer says neither study examined sports memes.
8 **True.** It monitored 1,917 accounts.
9 **False.** It covered athletics, not breaking.
10 **True.** Paragraph 6 quotes this fear from the documentary.

Language Focus: Reported speech (tense backshift)

Example answer: Gunn said (that) she **was** not going to compete any more.

Comprehension Questions: Model Answers

1 She is an Australian breaker and former university lecturer with a PhD on breaking culture. She qualified by winning the Oceania qualifying event.

2 The comedian Rachel Dratch parodied her on The Tonight Show and Adele talked about her at a concert, while Prime Minister Anthony Albanese praised her for trying.

3 It claimed that she had manipulated her Olympic selection. The committee's chief executive called it vexatious, misleading and bullying, and it was taken down.

4 She said the scrutiny would be too intense, because people would film her and post the videos online.

5 Each extra negative word in an average-length headline raised the click rate by about 2.3 percent. It could measure cause because readers saw different headlines for the same story at random.

6 Abuse is concentrated: two athletes received 82 percent of the verified abuse at the Paris Olympics.

7 She believes women athletes face extra scrutiny. The evidence makes this plausible but does not settle it: female athletes were heavily targeted at Tokyo and almost a third of the Paris abuse was sexual or sexist, but the gap between women and men had narrowed by Paris.

8 She says it felt surreal and left her with a feeling of dread, but therapy and time helped her process it, and Paris is now just a part of her story.

9 Open answer. Each person sees only their own post, which may seem harmless, but the target receives thousands of posts at once. Accept reasoned agreement or disagreement.

10 Not Given. The reading reports the effect of each negative word but says nothing about how many headlines contained one.

11 No. The writer says neither study examined sports memes, so applying them to Gunn's case is an inference, not a direct finding.

12 To give evidence that online abuse tends to fall on a small number of people, which helps explain the scale of the attention on Gunn. The writer notes its limits (athletics only, no private messages) so readers do not overstate it.

Notes on the Evidence

- Sources (all checked by search in September 2026): CNN interview by David Mack, August 25, 2026 (syndicated on KEYT and KRDO); The Irish Times, August 26, 2026; Mediaweek and Variety Australia on the documentary trailer, August 2026; BroadwayWorld and Reelgood for the September 1, 2026 Netflix release date; Reuters (via Dubai Eye and Star-Advertiser), Canberra Times, and The Nightly on the petition and the AOC statement, August 2024; AP, Al Jazeera, and Variety on Gunn's retirement from competition, November 2024; Yahoo Sport Australia on Albanese's praise; Robertson et al. (2023), Nature Human Behaviour 7: 812 to 822; Rathje, Van Bavel and van der Linden (2021), PNAS 118(26); World Athletics press release, December 18, 2024.
- Scores: Gunn lost all three round-robin battles 18 to 0, 54 to 0 combined (CNN, Al Jazeera). The earlier version said she scored zero across all five judging categories; breaking judges vote on battles, so the reading now says she received no judges' votes.
- Petition: signature counts vary by date and outlet (more than 45,000; 45,197 in the Canberra Times; about 50,000 in one Yahoo report). The petition named Gunn and chef de mission Anna Meares. Claims about her husband and coach, Samuel Free, circulated separately as rumors and conspiracy theories (CNN). The earlier version said the petition itself accused Gunn and her husband; that was corrected.
- Research figures: the 2.3 percent is a relative increase per negative word for a headline of average length (about 15 words); the Upworthy data date from 2013 to 2015. Rathje et al. studied posts by US news outlets and members of Congress, not sports content. The reading marks the link to Gunn as an inference.
- World Athletics: Paris 2024 figures are 1,917 accounts monitored on X, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok; 355,873 posts; 809 verified abusive; two athletes received 82 percent; about 30 percent sexual or sexist (13 percent sexual, 17 percent sexist). Tokyo 2020 (held 2021): 63 percent aimed at two female athletes. The statement that the gap between women and men narrowed by Paris comes from a secondary summary (Coach Athletics Australia) that says male athletes received slightly more abuse at Paris; the full report PDF was not read. Private messages were not monitored.
- Breaking is not on the program for Los Angeles 2028 or, as of November 2024 reporting, Brisbane 2032. This is not stated in the reading.
- Revision (September 2026): rebuilt from the earlier version, which retold the documentary and interviews. The new reading uses the story as a hook for a durable question: why online mockery spreads and whom it hits. Added evidence from two engagement studies and the World Athletics study; kept Gunn's own account. Corrected the scoring description and the petition's target (see above). Removed an unverified claim that Gunn replied online about the points system, and the claim that the Untold series profiles unlikely sporting figures. Replaced the vocabulary pair mockery and ridicule, which were near-synonyms. Changed the Language Focus from present perfect versus past simple to reported speech. The Yes/No/Not Given item was changed because the old answer (Not Given) was debatable.
- Hindi and Arabic translations are unchecked by a native speaker, as with every EnglishBridges unit.