

READING

Read the text quickly and complete the sentences.

- Richard Branson left school at the age of _____
- The record cover is from the album _____
- Virgin Atlantic flew to cities in America including _____ and _____
- Two Virgin businesses not shown in the pictures include Virgin _____ and Virgin _____
- Richard Branson appeared in the film _____

Read the text again and put paragraphs (A-F) in the correct spaces in the text (1-6).

A This was where Branson took the risk which could have sunk his business. He invested the money needed to record the album and released it on his own Virgin Records label. If it had failed, he would have lost everything. In fact, the record sold millions and Richard Branson, the success, was born.

B More companies followed the airline, some successful, others not, but all helped by Branson's obvious enthusiasm. Even when there is a failure, he doesn't let it bother him but moves on to the next venture.

C But has he always been so successful and how did he start to amass such a fortune? As is so often the case, luck played a large part at the beginning.

D One reason for his continued success may be the enjoyment he gets from it all. One of his ten secrets for success is to 'have fun working' and it does seem that, whether records, planes or space travel, Richard Branson's businesses mirror his hobbies which show a person who loves an adventure and has a desire to win against the odds.

E However, at first, things were difficult and, two years later, the business was in trouble. It was at this point that Branson needed something special to happen. That special thing came in the form of a record that had been rejected by all the major record labels.

3. Are the statements true (T), false (F) or is there no information (NI)?

- Richard Branson showed business skills at an early age.
- He opened a record shop in 1970.
- His record business was immediately successful.
- He liked the music on *Tubular Bells*.
- The bad publicity that the Sex Pistols got was good for business.
- Virgin Atlantic now flies all over the world.
- Virgin trains are more expensive than any other rail companies in Britain.
- There are similarities between Richard Branson's businesses and his hobbies.

4. Find the phrases in the text which have the meanings given.

- to make a large amount of money
to a mass a fortune
- to be naturally good at business
to have a talent for business
- a company which sells things by post
a mail order business
- to do something that you don't know whether will succeed or not
to try a venture
- to make a business bigger by doing different things
to expand a business into other fields
- He doesn't worry about it.
He doesn't let it bother him.
- to make other people's opinions of you worse
to degrade your reputation
- to be similar or the same as something
to mimic something

F After ten years of concentrating on music, Richard Branson started looking at other ways of expanding his business into other fields. The first of these took off, literally, in 1984.

A SUPERHERO FOR THE BUSINESS WORLD

BY JAMES SEALY

According to *The Sunday Times*, he is Britain's ninth richest person with a fortune of over £3 billion. A man, who it seems, has a magic touch where business is concerned.

1 consider releasing it. Eventually, Oliefield played the demo to a studio engineer, Tom Newman, who told Richard Branson about it. The record was released in 1972.

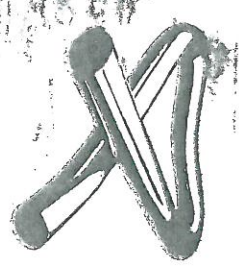
2 Virgin Records went on to be one of the major record labels during the punk rock era. After the Sex Pistols had been rejected by EMI and A&M, Virgin signed them, because of, rather than despite, the bad publicity they were generating. After all, every newspaper headline increased sales. Richard Branson finally sold Virgin Records to EMI in 1992 for about \$1 billion.

3 In 1986 he broke the speed record for crossing the Atlantic by boat and in 1987 he became the first person to cross the Atlantic Ocean by balloon. He repeated the feat four years later, becoming the first person to cross the Pacific Ocean by balloon. Four attempts to be the first to fly around the world by balloon ended in failure before he was beaten by a team of Swiss flyers. Branson then put all his efforts into repeating their feat but more quickly. It's no wonder that he makes an appearance in *Superman Returns*, he truly is a superhero for the business world.



It was obvious, even as a schoolboy, that Sir Richard had a flair for business. He set up a school magazine at the age of fifteen, his first business venture. He was also a keen sports player and captain of the school football and cricket teams. Richard Branson left school at the age of sixteen and, in 1970, he started out in the record business with a mail order company selling records by post. A year later, he opened his first shop on London's Oxford Street.

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A composer, named Mike Oldfield, had recorded a demo album of an instrumental record called *Tubular Bells*. The only record company that showed any interest had asked him to add vocals before they would



High prices and poor punctuality have damaged Richard Branson's reputation slightly although performance is improving. Not that it is stopping Sir Richard from looking to the future. His latest venture, set up in 2004, is Virgin Galactic which offers flights into space for £200,000 a ticket.

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One such failure was Virgin Cola, first sold in 1994. Despite initial high sales, its popularity soon fell dramatically although it is still served on Virgin planes and Virgin trains. The train business has also been a difficult one for Virgin since it started running in 1997.

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Twelve years after *Tubular Bells* had given the world a new listening experience, Virgin Atlantic Airways promised a different kind of flying experience with in-flight music and entertainment including video games that passengers could play against each other. The first route was from London to Newark and, two years later a route was added to Miami. Although Virgin Atlantic only flew to the Americas, Virgin have since added different routes throughout the world.

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