

## Reading Progress Test 4

YEAR 6

Marathon Runner



## Marathon Runner



Paula Radcliffe was born in 1973 in Cheshire. She moved to Bedfordshire, joined the Bedford & County Athletics Club and took up running seriously, despite having to endure bouts of asthma and anaemia (the inability of the blood to carry enough oxygen). Muscles need oxygen and, once, she blacked out while training. As a 12-year-old, she entered her first race at national level and came 299th out of about 600 competitors in the girls' race of the English Schools Cross Country Championships. The following year, she finished fourth.

She won the London Marathon three times in 2002, 2003 and 2005 and the New York Marathon three times in 2004, 2007 and 2008. Her marathon race in 2003 set a new world record for women with a time of 2hr 15min 25sec. At the time of writing, Paula Radcliffe's record has not been broken.

## Diary of Maria, a First-time Marathon Runner

### An unforgettable day in April

At 5am, I thumped my alarm, ate my bowl of porridge and, before I left the house, kissed my running shoes – a little ritual to bring me good luck. I joined the other 40,000 hopefuls ready to start after the fastest runners at 10am.

I was nervous and excited. I've been building myself up for this for the past year. All I hoped for was to complete the race in one piece. I wanted to do my bit for a charity that supports education for girls in Tanzania and not to let down all those at work who sponsored me.

Once I started to run, I relaxed. If I could do it close to four and a half hours, that would be fantastic. Incredible to think Paula Radcliffe, my hero, did it in half that time! At the half-way point, my knees began to complain. It was gruelling. Punishing. Why did I get out of bed? Then I remembered what my best mate said: 'Maria, pain passes - pride goes on forever.'

When I reached 21 miles, I was ecstatic! Just over 5 miles to go! I no longer felt the pain in my knees, my feet, anywhere. I was running faster. Then I told myself 30 more minutes, 20 more minutes, 10... and there it was: the finishing line. I even managed to smile at the camera as I crossed the line! I have never felt such pain and such jubilation. Would I do it all again? Difficult to say.