

10B The power of words

1 READING

- a Read the article once. Why didn't Marlon Brando accept his Oscar?
- b Read the article again and choose the correct answer.
 - 1 For the writer, the most interesting part of the Oscars ceremony is when...
 - a we find out who has won each category.
 - b the celebrities pose for photographs.
 - c the winners speak.
 - d we see excerpts from the nominated movies.
 - 2 When Sacheen Littlefeather went up on stage, she...
 - a refused to accept the Oscar statuette.
 - b greeted the two presenters.
 - c announced the winning actor.
 - d turned off the microphone.
 - 3 Marlon Brando was protesting because he thought that the movie industry should...
 - a employ more Native Americans in their movies.
 - b apologize to Native Americans.
 - c return the Pine Ridge reservation to Native Americans.
 - d stop contributing to a negative stereotype of Native Americans.
 - 4 While Ms. Littlefeather was speaking, the people in the audience...
 - a sat in silence.
 - b were divided in their opinion.
 - c showed their support.
 - d wanted her to stop.
 - 5 After Marlon Brando's boycott, the organizers of the ceremony...
 - a declared their support for Native Americans.
 - b reduced the length of acceptance speeches.
 - c changed the rules for who could pick up Oscars.
 - d gave an award to Sacheen Littlefeather.
- c Look at the highlighted words and phrases in the text. What do you think they mean? Use your dictionary to look up their meaning and pronunciation.

CONFUSION AND CONTROVERSY AT THE OSCARS

Every year, movie-goers all over the world eagerly await the annual Academy Awards ceremony, better known as the Oscars. The red carpet is rolled out, the actors are photographed in their elegant gowns and tuxedos, and the winners are announced. And then comes the moment of truth: the acceptance speeches. Some of these are more memorable than others, but none will be remembered more than one that was made at the 45th Academy Awards ceremony of 1973. This is what happened.

The moment had arrived for the announcement of the winner of the Oscar for Best Actor. The award was to be presented by Roger Moore, who was the current James Bond, and Norwegian actress Liv Ullman. The two opened the envelope and announced the name of the winner: Marlon Brando for his role as Vito Corleone in the movie *The Godfather*. To everyone's surprise, it was not Mr. Brando who came on stage, but a young woman in Native American dress. The woman was a Native American activist named Sacheen Littlefeather. She proceeded to brush aside Roger Moore when he tried to give her the statuette and made her way toward the microphone. Here she gave a 60-second speech introducing herself, explaining why she was there instead of the famous actor, and apologizing for interrupting the ceremony. The audience – and the presenters – were shocked!

The reason for Mr. Brando's absence was that he was boycotting the ceremony. In previous years, he had become increasingly upset by the treatment of American Indians on television and in movies, where they were always portrayed as savage and evil. He was also very concerned about an ongoing incident on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Tired of their corrupt leader, who was backed by the US government, a group of armed Native Americans had taken over the town of Wounded Knee. At the time of the Oscar ceremony, the Native Americans were still holding the town against US officials, including the FBI.

Mr. Brando had written down the reasons for his boycott in a 15-page speech that he had given Ms. Littlefeather to read at the ceremony. The organizers, however, had prohibited her from making this speech, so she had gone ahead and improvised with her own much shorter version, which caused quite a stir. Halfway through, some of the audience started booing and others began to cheer. Yet she continued bravely to the end and then allowed the two presenters to escort her backstage, where she shared Mr. Brando's original speech with the press. The next day it was printed in its entirety in the *New York Times*.

Ms. Littlefeather received several death threats after her intervention at the Oscar ceremony, but she continued fighting for the cause and still works with the Native American community today. The Wounded Knee incident finished after 73 days and succeeded in making Americans more aware of the injustice suffered by American Indians in their country. And as far as the Oscar ceremony is concerned, it was the last time that an actor was allowed to nominate someone else to accept an award on his or her behalf.

