

CARD 17-1

Student A

David Blaine began his career with street magic, performing card tricks and illusions such as levitating or bringing dead flies back to life. Encouraged by his mother every step of way, he used small camera crew to record his act live in front of audience of everyday people. This act provided basis for his television specials of street magic which defined his cool style and won him friendships with celebrities like Leonardo DiCaprio and Madonna. Magician later turned his attention to feats of endurance; these included being buried alive for week, spending 61 hours in block of ice and standing on tiny platform at the top of 27 m high pole for 35 hours. Most famously, Blaine spent 44 days without food in transparent box above River Thames in London. However, stunt became the subject of much media attention due to mischievous minority. Eggs, sausages, water, beer cans, paint-filled balloons and golf balls were all thrown at box and he was even subjected to having hamburger flown round him by radio-controlled model helicopter. One man was arrested for climbing scaffolding supporting Blaine's box and attempting to cut power and water supply.

CARD 17-2

Student B

Escapologist Harry Houdini was born Ehrich Weiss on 24th March, 1874 in Budapest, Hungary. He initially focused on traditional card tricks and was known as 'King of Cards' but also did illusions. One of most successful of these was performed in London theatre in 1901 with Houdini making full-grown elephant vanish from stage. He soon began experimenting with escape acts and his big break came in 1899, when he met showman Martin Beck. Impressed by Houdini's handcuffs act, Beck advised him to concentrate on escape acts and within months, he was performing at biggest theatres in country. As Houdini's fame spread, he travelled to Europe and continued to develop his act, freeing himself from handcuffs, chains, ropes and straitjackets, often while hanging from rope or suspended in water, sometimes in plain sight of audience. In 1913, escapologist introduced perhaps his most famous act, 'Chinese Water Torture Cell', in which he was suspended upside-down in locked glass and steel tank. Lowered into water, Houdini would hold his breath for over 3 minutes before escaping from his handcuffs. Legend has it that he died from punch to stomach.