

# Unit 1

## Discovering yourself

Unit overview		
Unit key features		Organizing suggestions
<p><b>Passage 1</b> Catching crabs</p> <p><b>Passage 2</b> We are all dying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passage 1 is a story with a memoir style of writing about a university student discussing his career ideas with his father and how his father encourages him to follow his passion.</li> <li>• Passage 2 is an extract from <i>Everything That Happens to Me Is Good</i>, a book of thoughts, experiences and insights from the life of Geoff Thompson. It gives readers good advice about how to live one's life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Passage 1, explain to students (Ss) the conversational and narrative styles of writing and colloquial expressions through the exercises and the further information given to teachers.</li> <li>• For Passage 2, make sure that Ss are aware this is another passage written in a conversational style, full of idiomatic and colloquial expressions, and light-hearted words and expressions which are used to give advice. The teacher (T) may need to use more time to explain the cultural meaning, humour and background of these expressions.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Using narrative devices</li> <li>(b) Predicting</li> <li>(c) Understanding writer's style</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Passage 1 for skill (a), and use Passage 2 for skills (b) and (c).</li> <li>• For Passage 1, notice that the writing styles change from description to narration and dialogue.</li> <li>• Teach Ss to learn different ways of giving opinions by comparing and contrasting the ways used by each passage.</li> </ul>
<b>Speaking skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing Ss' descriptive and narrating skills</li> <li>• Using different styles of conversations, eg dialogues; talking in a light-hearted, but effective way to express viewpoints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage Ss to discover themselves by discussing the philosophical questions about life.</li> <li>• Ask them to include the expressions highlighted in the Language in use section in oral tasks.</li> </ul>
<b>Writing skills and tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided writing: Planning an essay</li> <li>• Unit task: Carrying out a survey on Ss' fears and ambitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach Ss to revise narrative writing skills.</li> <li>• Learn to write an essay.</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using imagination to appreciate colloquial expressions</li> <li>• Learning to be creative in making up imaginary expressions</li> <li>• Learning to think philosophically about life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage Ss to make up appropriate expressions.</li> <li>• Ask them to give reasons and explanations for their invented expressions.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading across cultures</b> Rites of passage	This is a descriptive passage showing different rites of passage in different cultures.	Make Ss get to know rites of passage in different cultures and encourage Ss to think about any rite of passage in their own culture.

# Teaching suggestions and answer keys

## Starting point

### 1 Match the questions with the answers.

#### Teaching tips

- After Ss have matched the questions and answers, and compared their answers in pairs, they could use the results in mini-interviews as follows:

- Student A uses the first six questions to interview Student B
- B answers according to the matched answers
- A then gives a comment and at the same time tries to make a conversational link to the next question and then asks the next question
- after six questions, A and B swap roles so that B now asks questions, gives comments and makes links

For example:

*A: First of all, can we turn to your childhood ... What is your earliest memory?*

*B: My mother stopped to talk to a friend in the street, and I got bored.*

*A: That doesn't sound very happy ... When was your happiest moment?*

*B: When I was two years old, and saw the snow for the first time.*

*A: Yes, that must have been very impressive ... Let's come to the present time now, which famous person do you most admire?*

...

- Alternatively, T chooses two students, A and B, to be the interviewers who take turns asking questions, and they talk to 12 Ss, each of whom will answer one question. A and B ask the questions with suitable introductory links and those giving the appropriate answers try to elaborate them with additional comments. The rest of the class listen and meanwhile have to choose the best elaboration or comment from the 12 respondents.

For example:

*A: Let's turn to your childhood memories ... What is your earliest memory?*

*Konnie: My mother stopped to talk to a friend in the street, and I got bored ... but things are different now, I'm very sociable and I chat a lot ...*

...

- What is your earliest memory?  
(j) My mother stopped to talk to a friend in the street, and I got bored. Konnie, India
- When was your happiest moment?  
(b) When I was two years old, and saw the snow for the first time. Peter, Germany
- Which famous person do you most admire?  
(c) Nelson Mandela. Gavin, Australia
- What makes you depressed?  
(e) Grey clouds, rain. Harry, UK



- 5 What characteristic do you most dislike about other people?  
(d) Bad manners, bad driving. Mary, Ireland
- 6 What characteristic do you most dislike about yourself?  
(k) I try not to, but I get very jealous. Mark, Nigeria
- 7 Which do you respect most: your character or your appearance?  
(g) I don't think I'm very pretty, but I hope I'm a kind and friendly person. Megan, New Zealand
- 8 What's your favourite word?  
(h) Butterfly, but don't ask me why! Millie, South Africa
- 9 Who would you invite to your dream dinner party?  
(a) David Beckham, Mick Jagger, Tony Blair, Bill Gates and my grandfather, who died last year. Alice, Hong Kong, China
- 10 What do you consider your greatest achievement so far?  
(i) Having a beautiful, perfect, gorgeous baby boy. Georgina, UK
- 11 What's the nicest thing anyone has ever said to you?  
(l) I missed you. William, Spain
- 12 How would you sum up yourself in six words?  
(f) Bad reputation. Such a good girl. Mercedes, Venezuela

## Active reading (1)

### Catching crabs

#### Culture points

The **Charles River** flows past well-known universities (Brandeis, Harvard, Boston, Massachusetts Institute of Technology) into Boston Harbour and it has featured in a number of films, songs and novels. The river used to be known for high levels of pollution but it is cleaner now, and it is much used for rowing and sailing.

**Congress**, the US Congress, is the legislative branch of the US Federal Government. Its main function is to make laws. The **Senate** is the “upper house”; it has 100 elected members, two representatives from each state, who serve for six years. The “lower house” is the **House of Representatives**, which has 435 elected congressmen. The number representing each state depends on the size of the population. Each state has at least one and California has 53.

#### Language points

##### 1 ... and we all started to get our heads down ... (Para 1)

To *get one's head down* means to concentrate and focus on studying. In other British informal contexts, it can mean to sleep. Note also, to *keep one's head down* means to continue to do something quietly, especially when there is trouble happening around you.



2 **Most important of course were the final exams in April and May in the following year. (Para 1)**

This is a conversational elliptical sentence. A standard way of saying this is: *The most important things, of course, were the final exams in April and May in the following year.*

3 **No one wanted the humiliation of finishing last in class, so the peer group pressure to work hard was strong. (Para 1)**

*Peer group pressure* is the pressure to conform that people, especially children and young people, often feel from the immediate group of those around them who are of the same age or status.

4 **Libraries ... were standing room only until the early hours of the morning, and guys wore the bags under their eyes and their pale, sleepy faces with pride, like medals proving their diligence. (Para 1)**

The expression *standing room only* means there are no more seats available because the place is crowded. This expression is often used in public performances, for sports events and on public transport to mean that you have to stand because the place is packed with people.

*Bags under their eyes* refer to loose dark areas of skin that you get when you have not had enough sleep. The expression *guys wore the bags under their eyes with pride* means that the students were proud that their tired appearance showed how hard they had been studying, and the bags under their eyes were like medals.

5 **It wasn't always the high flyers with the top grades who knew what they were going to do. (Para 2)**

A *high flyer* refers to someone who has achieved a lot and has the ability and determination to continue to be successful in their studies or job. In university, a high flyer is a top student.

6 **Quite often it was the quieter, less impressive students who had the next stages of their life mapped out. (Para 2)**

To *have something mapped out* means to have something that will happen planned in detail.

7 **One had landed a job in his brother's advertising firm in Madison Avenue, another had got a script under provisional acceptance in Hollywood. (Para 2)**

To *land a job* means to get a job that you wanted.

*Provisional acceptance* refers to an acceptance which is arranged (in principle), but is not yet definite. It is temporary and could be changed.

8 **The most ambitious student among us was going to work as a party activist at a local level. (Para 2)**

A *party activist* is someone who takes part in activities that are intended to achieve political change, someone who is a member of a political organization.

9 **We all saw him ending up in the Senate or in Congress one day. (Para 2)**

To *end up somewhere* means to be in a particular place or state after doing something or because of it. Here, a party activist might end up in Congress, as a result of making career progress.

10 **But most people were either looking to continue their studies ... and then settle down with a family, a mortgage and some hope of promotion. (Para 2)**

To *look to* continue their studies here means to *hope* or *expect* to continue their studies – whether they can do so would probably depend on their exam results and grades. You can also *look to someone for help, advice or support*.



A *mortgage* is a legal agreement in which you borrow money from a bank or financial organization in order to buy a house. You pay back your mortgage by making monthly payments, plus interest. Thus, getting a mortgage for many young people means getting a flat or house of their own.

11 **I braced myself for some resistance to the idea. (Para 10)**

A *brace* is a piece of wood or metal which supports an object so that it does not fall down. So to *brace oneself* means to hold oneself together in readiness for something difficult or unpleasant.

12 **You don't need to go into a career which pays well just at the moment. (Para 16)**

To *go into a career* means to start working in a particular job, business or career.

13 **Several times the crab tried to defy his fellow captives, without luck. (Para 25)**

The crab tried to *defy* the others as it resisted others or refused to obey them when it tried to escape.

The expression *without luck* means without success, being unable to do what you want.

## Reading and understanding

### 3 Choose the best summary of what happened in the crab cage.

- 3 The cage was full of crabs. One of them was trying to escape, but each time it reached the top the other crabs pulled it back. In the end it gave up trying and started to prevent other crabs from escaping.

### 4 Choose the best answer to the questions.

- 1 What happened to the students in the fall of the final year?
  - (a) They became more relaxed.
  - (b) They became more serious.
  - (c) They spent more time outside.
  - (d) They stopped going to lessons.
- 2 Why did some people have bags under their eyes in the morning?
  - (a) They'd been to an all-night party.
  - (b) They'd started worrying about their future.
  - (c) They'd spent all night in the library.
  - (d) They wanted to impress their teachers.
- 3 Which students had already planned their future?
  - (a) The ones who had the best grades.
  - (b) The ones who came from wealthy families.
  - (c) The quieter ones who didn't have the best grades.
  - (d) The ones who wanted to get married and start a family.
- 4 Why did the writer go home?
  - (a) He wanted to speak to his father.
  - (b) He could study better at home than at college.
  - (c) He had to attend a job interview.
  - (d) It was a national holiday.



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- 5 Why did his father take him out to catch crabs?
- (a) They needed to get something to eat for dinner.
  - (b) He wanted to show him how to catch crabs.
  - (c) He wanted to tell him something about life.
  - (d) They both wanted to enjoy the coastline and the sea.
- 6 What advice did his father give him?
- (a) Get to know yourself better.
  - (b) Watch what others do carefully.
  - (c) Always listen to your father.
  - (d) You can't always do what you want.

### Dealing with unfamiliar words

#### 5 Match the words in the box with their definitions.

- 1 achieving good results (productive)
- 2 the fact of being present at an event, or of going regularly to school, church etc (attendance)
- 3 the refusal to accept something new, such as a plan, idea, or change (resistance)
- 4 determined to be successful, rich, famous etc (ambitious)
- 5 agreement to a plan, offer, or suggestion (acceptance)
- 6 the written words of a play, film, television programme, speech etc (script)
- 7 very good, large, or showing great skill (impressive)

#### 6 Complete the paragraph with the correct form of the words in Activity 5.

To be a successful film scriptwriter takes more than training although (1) attendance on a screenwriting course will definitely help you learn the skills. You also need to be very (2) ambitious – the film business is very competitive. You have to be prepared to work hard and be very (3) productive because it takes more than just one good idea to make it big. No matter how (4) impressive your idea is, there will always be (5) resistance from producers because it's too expensive. So make sure you have plenty of others to show them. What are you waiting for? Get on with writing that brilliant (6) script and plan your (7) acceptance speech for when you win your first Oscar!

#### 7 Replace the underlined words with the correct form of the words in the box.

- 1 We've seen a place we like and we're applying for a loan to buy a house. (mortgage)
- 2 We stood on the top floor of the boat and watched the coast disappear into the horizon. (deck)
- 3 I love to walk along the beach and watch the waves breaking, and the white water hitting the shore. (surf)
- 4 In seaside areas in the north-east of the country, life is hard and fishermen have to go against the forces of nature every time they go to work. (coastal; defy)
- 5 Agreement was finally reached after a long and heated discussion. (lengthy)

#### 8 Answer the questions about the words and expressions.

- 1 If you watch an *impromptu* performance of something, has it (a) been prepared, or (b) not been prepared?
- 2 When you *map out* your future, do you (a) plan it carefully, or (b) draw a sketch of it on paper?



- 3 If you *brace yourself* for something unpleasant, do you (a) try not to think about it, or (b) **prepare yourself for it mentally and physically**?
- 4 Do you *moor* a boat by (a) turning the steering wheel, or (b) **tying it to a post with a rope**?
- 5 Is a *rusty* piece of metal something that (a) is bright and shiny, or (b) **might have been left out in the rain and is covered with brown substance**?
- 6 If a bowl is *brimming with* soup, is it (a) **very full**, or (b) half empty?
- 7 If someone is being held *captive*, are they (a) free to do as they please, or (b) **being kept as a prisoner**?
- 8 If you have *figured out* something, have you (a) added numbers together, or (b) **understood it**?

## Reading and interpreting

**9 Work in pairs. Look at the sentences from the passage and answer the questions.**

- 1 *In the fall of our final year, our mood changed.*  
Why does the passage begin with a time expression?  
The use of the time expression, together with the past tense, is a signal that this is a narrative with a sequence of events. The word *our* indicates that this is a story of personal experience.
- 2 *But there was something else.*  
What is the purpose of this short sentence?  
This indicates that studying for the final exams was not the only concern of the students. So it is a transition from studying for final exams to the next topic – getting a job after graduation.
- 3 *I went home at Thanksgiving ...*  
Why does the writer change from *we* to *I*?  
Because this changes the focus onto the writer as an individual. The *we* paragraphs are general background to the main narrative about the individual, which is coming.
- 4 *“So?” he said.*  
What is the effect of the change to direct speech?  
This change to direct speech opens a moment-by-moment dialogue. This slows down the narrative of events but gives a good impression of how the writer found it difficult to say what he wanted to do and how the father made few comments.
- 5 *Crabs fascinated me.*  
How does the focus change with this sentence?  
The topic shifts to crabs. The sentence also arouses the readers’ interest – we expect some fascinating new information about crabs here. Later, we realize how the topic of crabs is connected with the son finding a job, and the crabs’ behaviour leads the father to give memorable advice.
- 6 *My father started the motor and we set off back home.*  
Is this an effective conclusion? Why / Why not?  
Yes, we don’t know what happens next, but the implication is fairly clear that the father would support the son’s idea of travel and of being a writer. It makes a better conclusion not to say it explicitly, as it leaves a lot of room for personal interpretation.



**10 Work in pairs and answer the questions.**

- 1 What sort of relationship do the father and son have?

The son seems afraid of being criticized for his ideas about a career and expects resistance from his father. However, the father actually supports what his son wants, but he makes him think about it by watching the crabs. So at the beginning we feel their relationship may not be good, but later it becomes clear that they have a good relationship and, in fact, their relationship has improved by catching crabs together.

- 2 Do you think the son respects his father?

The son does respect his father, and the crab-catching episode adds to this respect because the father finds a good way of showing support to his son and making him think more about his plans.

- 3 Do you think the father understands his son?

Yes, because he says, “I kind of wish I’d done that when I was your age.” Also, his way of teaching his son – through observing crabs – shows that he understands his son well.

- 4 What is the father trying to tell his son by showing him the crabs?

He is teaching his son not to follow conventional expectations and peer pressure. He tells his son not to be pulled back by others, and to find out more about himself – what he enjoys, where his interests and skills are, how he wants to work, because if he doesn’t figure these things out, he will never be happy.

- 5 How successful do you think the “crab story” is?

It is successful in showing the father-son relationship through catching crabs and it makes readers think about not being pulled back by others.

- 6 Is the father pleased that his son wants to be a writer?

He doesn’t say so, but it seems he wanted to travel or write when he was young himself. His use of the words, “Interesting idea” and “Interesting choice”, could be ambiguous, or may show support. The way he says “We’ve never had a writer in the family” does seem to be positive. So he’s pleased but he doesn’t want to say it directly.

## Developing critical thinking

**11 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.**

### Teaching tips

- Encourage Ss to extend their answers beyond sheer statements. Here, four ways are given to encourage more elaborated answers:
  - 1 each student thinks of more than one angle to the question and explores different views with their partner
  - 2 Ss ask each other reasons for their opinions
  - 3 Ss try to summarize their discussion by putting each other’s contribution together
  - 4 Ss try to present two opposite views, and then balance them in a clear conclusion
- After discussion, T chooses four pairs, each for one question, to present a summary which also includes a conclusion to the class. Ask the class to listen carefully and check whether more than one angle is considered and whether there is a conclusion.

The examples below show summary statements drawn by following these steps.



1 How important is it to be ambitious in life?

It is a complicated question. On the one hand, it seems good to be ambitious because most people want to be successful and having an ambition probably makes you work harder for your goals and that's good. On the other hand, we feel some reservations. Some people are ambitious to be extremely rich, famous or powerful. We really wonder whether these are the most important things, because some ambitious people seem to work only for themselves, so they work against other people rather than for or with others. On balance, we suppose it is important to be ambitious, but it depends on exactly what kind of ambition you are thinking of.

2 Is being ambitious a positive part of personality?

Well, this is one of those qualities which are OK as long as you don't go to extremes. We think it probably depends on how ambition is related to the rest of your personality. What we mean is this: If a person only focuses on ambition it can get out of proportion – too much ambition can lead to all sorts of negative aspects of a personality. But being ambitious can be very positive if it is related to other positive qualities like wanting to make an effort and do your best with honesty and sincerity, and also to help your family, other people and your country. So our conclusion is: Yes, ambition is a positive part of personality as long as it is related to other positive qualities.

3 How much time should students spend planning their future?

Well, if you don't spend any time planning a future, it may never happen. If you spend too much time planning it, it won't happen either, because you won't actually be doing anything about it, only thinking. We think the father in *Catching crabs* is right: You need to spend some time thinking about what you enjoy and what interests you, where your skills are, and then plan to try some jobs in those areas in order to discover what you are good at and what makes you happy. We think, as students, this is as much a matter of thinking and planning as of trying out different things, for example, doing part-time jobs and holiday work to get experience. So we conclude by saying that planning and doing go together, really.

4 Is it part of a university's role to help students choose a career?

Universities are supposed to teach students advanced knowledge and skills within different disciplines, to help them develop their thinking, creativity and awareness of citizenship, cultures and peoples in the world. Of course, helping students choose a career is not the same as getting them work. It is more a matter of helping them identify what they are good at and how their majors may prepare them for different professions. We think universities can help us choose a career by providing information about different professions and jobs, and by inviting professionals and employers in different fields to universities to talk to students. So, to conclude, yes, we think this is part of a university's role, a small but important part.

## Talking point

1 Work in pairs. Discuss which are most effective in helping you know yourself better.

- therapy

Therapy is used because a person needs treatment for an illness or a medical condition. There are different kinds of therapy: physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and psychotherapy etc. Psychotherapy may help you know yourself better than the first two.



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- meditation  
There are different ways of meditating, but all involve relaxation, breathing, and keeping your mind quiet. People do say that this helps you know yourself.
- personality tests  
Well, these ought to tell you a lot about yourself but many personality tests only divide people into a limited number of types. So, this is interesting but may not be very exact and effective.
- horoscopes  
Some people believe horoscopes tell you something about your character, according to your star sign. But we are not sure whether it is reliable. Besides, they must be very general, don't you think, with so many people who have the same birthday?
- painting, writing, playing music  
Yes, we think these activities could help you know yourself better because they ought to make you aware of your skills and what you want to say in relation to an audience, and therefore who you are.
- dream analysis  
No, we don't think it will help you know yourself very much because we have all sorts of dreams and many people don't remember their dreams. When therapists analyze patients' dreams, it is because the patients have problems.
- healthy relationships  
Yes, healthy relationships with a good friend or spouse can surely tell you a lot about yourself. Because the other person will tell you about your character, and you will do the same too. So you will both know yourselves better.
- education  
Yes, good education could help you find out about yourself, and this should be part of education. This may be the most effective one to choose because it would include arts, healthy relationships, physical exercise and spirituality.
- physical exercise  
This can tell you what you can do and show you something about your character, but perhaps only in certain ways.
- spirituality  
This could tell you something about who you are. Spirituality is related to your spirit rather than to the material world. Some people think of spirituality in terms of the heart and mind, soul or religion, others think in terms of human qualities that aren't material ones. Virtually all education systems pay attention to moral and spiritual education and generally this includes a strong element of helping students to know what they think and believe and how they make important decisions in life – in other words, to know themselves.

### 2 Work in pairs. Look at the extract from the poem *If* by Rudyard Kipling and discuss the questions.

- 1 Who is the poet talking to?  
From the last two words, the poet seems to be talking to his son. But certainly the poem is addressed to everyone.

2 What advice is he giving?

He is telling us to mix with other people (*crowds* and *Kings*) and still have a humane approach (being virtuous and able to meet all sorts of common people); not to be hurt by others and to respect people (they all count with us); and to use time effectively.

3 Is it good advice?

Yes, it is, because this kind of advice can apply to anyone, whoever we are.

## Active reading (2)

1 Check (✓) the statements which are true for you.

- 1 I take each day as it comes.  
I wish I could do this but you have to plan your studies, don't you?
- 2 I try to put off until tomorrow what I have to do today.  
I sometimes do have this tendency, but you just have to get on with studying.
- 3 I don't have any regrets.  
Yes, I do have a few. Surely everyone does, don't they?
- 4 I have a plan for the rest of my life.  
No, I have some ideas for the future and some goals, but not such a fixed plan.
- 5 I'm scared of what's going to happen in the future.  
I'm not scared. We will all do what we can to make the world better.
- 6 I prefer to wait for the right time to do something.  
Well, this is true for some things; but with other things you can't just sit and wait, you have to make them happen.
- 7 I try to fit as much as possible into my life.  
Yes, this is generally true of me. I'm busy doing something or other.
- 8 I don't expect to be remembered when I die.  
I disagree; I expect – or hope – that my family and friends will remember me.
- 9 I believe everything that happens to me is good.  
Not really, some things that happen to me really seem to be bad. Perhaps later some of them seem not so bad, but at the time they are just bad.

2 Work in pairs. Look at the title of the passage and choose the best way to complete the sentences.

- 1 The passage will be (c).
- (a) a newspaper article about life expectancy  
(b) a sad story about death  
(c) advice about how to make the most of your life  
(d) a warning that modern lifestyles are bad for health



- 2 The passage is likely to be (d).
  - (a) serious
  - (b) funny
  - (c) depressing
  - (d) a mixture of all three
  
- 3 The passage is likely to say (b).
  - (a) young people don't think enough about death
  - (b) life is short
  - (c) people are dying unnecessarily
  - (d) people don't enjoy life enough

## We are all dying

### Background information

The passage is taken from *Everything That Happens to Me Is Good*, a book of thoughts, experiences and insights from the life of Geoff Thompson. The writer worked in many different jobs, including nine years as a “bouncer” in a nightclub in London (a bouncer has the tough job of making sure that no one causes trouble, eg if they are rude, drunk or violent). He then trained full-time in karate, judo and other martial arts and became well-known as a martial arts instructor. He lived out his dream to become a writer, authoring over 30 books on self-defence and self-improvement and has recently been making films and writing for the screen. Asked what he had learnt from his years in martial arts, he said, “The main thing I’ve learned is that wherever there is discomfort there is growth, but what people do is to look for growth in areas of comfort – and there’s no growth in comfort. So look for areas of growth that are uncomfortable but allow you to grow, and learn to become comfortable in those areas.”

### Language points

- 1 **I have some good news and some bad news for you (as the joke goes). The bad news – and I’m very sorry to be the bearer – is that we are all dying. It’s true. I’ve checked it out. (Para 1)**

*Good news* and *bad news* are often paired together in jokes and in comments on new information or recent events where there is a mixture of positive and negative aspects, eg *The good news is ... But the bad news is ...*

To *check something out* means to examine something or someone in order to be certain that everything is correct, true, satisfactory or acceptable. *Check this out!* is an attention-getting exclamation which means here’s something interesting to have a look at.

- 2 **... we are all going to be either coffin dwellers or trampled ash in the rose garden of some local cemetery. (Para 1)**

*Coffin* is a long box in which a dead person is buried. The expression *coffin dweller* is a humorous way to refer to dead people.

The expression *trampled ash in the rose garden of some local cemetery* refers jokingly to the ashes of a dead person placed in a cemetery garden where people walk on the buried ashes.



3 **After all, we never quite know when the hooded, scythe-carrying, bringer-of-the-last-breath might come-a-calling. (Para 1)**

The expression *the hooded, scythe-carrying, bringer-of-the-last breath* refers to *the reaper*, a person who reaps or cuts corn for the harvest and is a symbol of death from medieval times of the West. A reaper is personified as a tall figure dressed in a black cloak with a hood covering his face and carrying a scythe, a cutting tool with a long curved metal blade used for cutting, or reaping long grass or corn. The reaper brings death or *brings your last breath*. The expression *when the reaper arrives* means when death comes to you.

4 **... and nothing underlines the uncertainty and absolute frailty of humanity like the untimely exit of a friend. (Para 1)**

The word *exit* here means leaving this world or death. The word *untimely* means happening at a time that is not suitable because it causes problems. *An untimely death* is too soon or when a person is young.

5 **Knowing that we are all budding crypt-kickers takes away all the uncertainty of life. (Para 3)**

That *we are all budding crypt-kickers* is a humorous way of saying that we are all potentially soon to be buried, ie dead.

6 **The prologue and epilogue are already typed in. All that's left is the middle bit ... choose the meat of the story. (Para 3)**

A *prologue* is a piece of writing at the start of a book, or the beginning of a play, film or TV programme that introduces a story. An *epilogue* is at the end of a novel, play or piece of writing, which carries an extra comment or extra information about what happens after the main story. Here, the writer's point is that the prologue (birth) and epilogue (end, death) of your life are already written, but we all choose to write *the middle bit – the meat of the story*.

7 **So, all those plans that you have on the back burner, you know, the great things you're going to do with your life "when the time is right"? (Para 4)**

A *back burner* is literally one of the back parts of a cooker which is used for heating or cooking food. Metaphorically, if you put something *on the back burner*, it means you have decided not to do it until later. It is at the back of the cooker, just simmering or cooking slowly, so you don't give it priority because it doesn't need your full attention. The expression *this back-burner stuff* (Para 10) thus refers to things which have low priority and get little attention.

8 **There's only a promissory note that we are often not in a position to cash. (Para 5)**

A *promissory note* is a document giving details of your promise to pay someone a particular amount of money by a particular date. The writer means that tomorrow, or the future, is like a promissory note for which you never get the cash, because the future never comes unless you act now and use time wisely, as if tomorrow is today.

9 **... but regret and a rear-view mirror full of "could haves", "should haves" and "would haves". (Para 5)**

A *rear-view mirror* is a mirror fixed to the front window of a car that lets the driver see what is happening behind. Here, the mirror refers to the past, which is behind us. We don't want such a mirror full of regrets about things we *could / should / would have done*, but did not do.



- 10 **I love watching people ingeniously stack the cucumber around the side of the bowl – like they're filling a skip – and then cramming it so high that they have to hire a forklift truck to get it back to the table ... They just know that they only have one shot at it. (Para 6)**

A *skip* is a large metal container used in the building industry for waste; it is carried away by a truck when it is full.

A *forklift truck* is a vehicle that uses two long metal bars at the front for lifting and moving heavy objects. The writer is using the images of a skip and a truck to emphasize how people use the opportunity to serve themselves, because they *only have one shot* – they only have one chance or attempt, they can't return for more salad in this type of buffet, so they make the most of this opportunity.

- 11 **So what I'm thinking is (and this is not molecular science) ... (Para 10)**

It means this is not specialized knowledge. It's not rocket science; it's simple and straightforward.

- 12 **The right time is the cheque that's permanently in the post, it never arrives. (Para 10)**

That *the cheque is in the post* means money has been sent, it's on its way. This is often said as an excuse for late payment, so if *the cheque's permanently in the post*, it means the money never comes.

- 13 **It's the girl who keeps us standing at the corner of the Co-op looking like a spanner ... She's stood us up. (Para 10)**

The expression *looking like a spanner on the street corner* means he looks awkward and out of place, waiting for a girl who is late and never arrives.

To *stand someone up* means not to come to meet them when you have arranged to meet them, especially someone with whom you are having or starting a romantic relationship. The word *us* is an informal and personal way to include others who will recognize that this is a typical experience.

- 14 **Act now or your time will elapse and you'll end up as a sepia-coloured relative that no one can put a name to in a dusty photo album. (Para 13)**

The expression *you'll end up as a sepia-coloured relative* means that in the end you will be only an old half-forgotten photograph in a photo album. *I can't put a name to someone* is said when you half-recognize a person but you can't quite remember his name.

- 15 **Better to leave a biography as thick as a whale omelette than an epitaph. (Para 14)**

An *omelette* is flat round food made by mixing eggs together and cooking them. The expression *as thick as a whale* means extremely thick. The writer means it is better to leave a very large biography than an epitaph, or, in other words, live a full life which is worth writing about.

## Reading and understanding

- 3 Choose the best summary of the passage.

3 Life is short. So there's no point in planning for a future which may never come. Now is the time to do what we want to do. There's no time to lose.

## Dealing with unfamiliar words

- 4 Match the words in the box with their definitions.

- 1 involving three things of the same kind (**triple**)
- 2 an area of ground where dead people are buried (**cemetery**)



- 3 the part of a place or thing that is at the back (**rear**)
- 4 a book that someone writes about someone else's life (**biography**)
- 5 to put people or things into a space that is too small (**cram**)
- 6 at the very beginning of a career and likely to be successful at it (**budding**)
- 7 continuing only for a limited time or distance (**finite**)
- 8 to pass (**elapse**)

#### 5 Complete the sentences with the correct form of the words in Activity 4.

- 1 About two hours **elapsed** before we reached the **cemetery** where the war dead were buried.
- 2 I sat in the **rear** seat behind the driver. My three sisters were all **crammed** in the front.
- 3 The entrance to the car park was blocked, so the road was full of cars which had been **triple**-parked one against another, making it almost impossible to get past.
- 4 We have a number of **budding** authors in our class this year, one of whom has written a fascinating **biography** of his grandmother.
- 5 The time we have on this earth may be **finite**, but there are no limits to the human imagination.

#### 6 Answer the questions about the words.

- 1 If you *substantiate* a claim, do you (a) **prove it is true**, or (b) persuade someone that it is true?
- 2 If someone *tramples* over something, do they (a) pour water over it, or (b) **walk all over it**?
- 3 If someone's arrival is *untimely*, is it (a) **at the wrong moment**, or (b) late?
- 4 If events are described *chronologically*, do they occur (a) **in the order in which they happened**, or (b) in no particular order?
- 5 Is *ingeniously* likely to mean (a) artistically, or (b) **cleverly**?
- 6 Is *knackered* an informal British word meaning (a) very relaxed, or (b) **extremely tired**?
- 7 Is *patently* likely to mean (a) **obviously**, or (b) usually?
- 8 When something is *allotted* to you, is it (a) **given to you**, or (b) taken from you?

#### 7 Answer the questions about the phrases.

- 1 If you *check something out*, do you (a) **find out**, or (b) not think about it?
- 2 If you see something *from the sidelines*, do you (a) take part in the action, or (b) **stay away from it**?
- 3 If something is *down to you*, is it your (a) bad luck, or (b) **responsibility**?
- 4 If you have something *on the back burner*, (a) **will you look at it later**, or (b) are you interested in it now?
- 5 If you are *in a position to do something*, are you (a) **able**, or (b) unable to do it?
- 6 If time is *ticking away*, does it seem (a) as if it will last forever, or (b) **to be passing quickly**?
- 7 If you can *have one shot at something*, (a) are you allowed to shoot it, or (b) **do you have only one chance to do it**?
- 8 If you *make the best of something*, do you (a) enjoy it while you can, or (b) **work hard to make it a success**?
- 9 If a girl *stands you up*, does she (a) **fail to turn up for a date**, or (b) refuse to sit down when you ask her to?



## Reading and interpreting

8 Find the sentences in the passage and decide what part of the message "life is short; act now" they give.

*We may not even last that long.* ("life is short")

*It could be sooner than we'd like.* ("life is short")

*... go out and do them now before it's too late.* ("act now")

*It needs to be brought forward and done now ...* ("act now")

Now look at the rest of the passage and underline more expressions and sentences which convey the message.

- The novel ... the trip ... your mind's-eye dream-job ... the West End play ... – you have to do them now.
- Tomorrow is just another version of now, an empty field that will remain so unless we start planting some seeds.
- Fill your bowl. We come this way but once so let's make the best of the short stay.
- Fit as much into the short time there as you can.
- And now is the time, not tomorrow. There is no time like the present.
- ... if we are dying and our allotted time is finite, why the hell aren't we doing all the things we want to do NOW?
- So I say stop waiting and meet providence halfway. Start filling your life with the riches on offer ...
- Act now or your time will elapse and you'll end up as a sepia-coloured relative ...

9 Work in pairs and decide what the underlined images refer to.

1 *After all, we never quite know when the hooded, scythe-carrying, bringer-of-the-last-breath might come-a-calling.*

The image is of the reaper of death. We never know when death will come to us. The reaper wears a black hood so you can't see his face, and he carries a scythe which represents cutting people down like corn; he brings our last breath.

2 *We already know how the story ends. The prologue and epilogue are already typed in. All that's left is the middle bit and that's down to us. We get to choose the meat of the story.*

This refers to the main body of the story, and the main part of our life, like the meat in a sandwich. The meat is between two pieces of bread; the main content of the story is between the prologue and epilogue.

3 *So, all those plans that you have on the back burner, you know, the great things you're going to do with your life "when the time is right"?*

This means plans which you have postponed or kept waiting as a low priority, as if they are simmering gently but not really cooking on the back part of the cooker.

4 *... there isn't a tomorrow. There's only a promissory note that we are often not in a position to cash.*

This means tomorrow is like a note which has promised a payment of money but by which we can't actually get the cash. It never really comes unless we act now.

5 *Your time ... will be gone and you'll have nothing to show for it but regret and a rear-view mirror full of "could haves", "should haves" and "would haves".*

The image is of someone driving a car and looking in the rear-view mirror. They are looking at their past with lots of regrets about what they could have, should have, or would have done but did not in fact do.



6 *Fill your bowl.*

This means take as much as you can in your life within the limits of what is possible. The image is of filling a salad bowl with as much salad as possible because you only have one chance to serve yourself.

7 *The right time is the cheque that's permanently in the post, it never arrives. It's the girl who keeps us standing at the corner of the Co-op looking like a spanner.*

This image is of a man waiting for a girl who has said she will come but who isn't actually coming – he's waiting, hoping romantically for the right time, but it will never come.

**Now discuss which are the best images, and why.**

- To me, the most powerful negative image is the reaper. This is a scary image, like one in a horror film: a terrifying figure cloaked and hooded in black, whose face you can't really see but he's grim, serious, unfriendly, unpleasant, ugly and depressing. He comes and cuts you down like a stalk of corn, and you're dead.
- From my perspective, the positive image which is the easiest to remember is to "fill your bowl". This is a homely picture because life is a buffet and you have one chance to get some salad. However large or small your bowl is, you can still make the effort to fill your own bowl while you have the chance.

## Developing critical thinking

**10 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.**

### Teaching tips

Ss may want to give short and simple answers, but T should try to encourage them to consider different aspects of the questions, or different points of view, so that they get a broader view and present a richer understanding of the questions.

1 Do you agree with the advice in the passage?

- To some extent, I agree, because we can't predict what will happen to our life in the future, so we should do as much as we can now, to use our time and opportunities. Where I disagree is that the writer seems to be saying that we should live now and disregard the future. If he's saying that, then I disagree because I think we should balance "living now" with "thinking for the future".
- But the writer doesn't really say "disregard the future", does he? He's just emphasizing the present. When he says "there isn't a tomorrow", he's talking about the kind of tomorrow which people dream about but never act upon, so of course it never comes. I agree with that point of view and with what the writer says, "act now" and "make tomorrow happen".

2 Do you think following this advice would make people more selfish?

- Well, it might do so, if everyone only does whatever they want. But I don't think the writer means that we should be selfish – "filling up our bowl" doesn't mean we wouldn't help other people to fill theirs, does it? It means using opportunities wisely and we can do that together, surely.
- I agree with that. He's not talking about being selfish and of course you can "act now" without being selfish.



- 3 How can you get a balance between enjoying life now and preparing for the future?
  - We can probably get a balance by doing things now and especially choosing those things which we think will have a good effect on the future, so we would be using “now” as much as possible but with an eye for “tomorrow” too. Remember, the writer is talking to people who plan for a future but who don’t do much now to make that future happen.
  - I think that’s right. The writer’s point about writing a biography and not just an epitaph means using time wisely now which can become a thick biography in the future.
- 4 Would thinking more about death change your attitude to life?
  - Well, part of me says that we shouldn’t think about death because I am young and death seems a faraway and depressing topic. Another part of me says that of course death is inevitable for all of us, so why not think about it, why not know that it can happen to any of us at any time? Knowing that and thinking about it would help us to put things into a different perspective so that we live properly today.
  - Mm, I agree, we should be aware of death but without thinking about it all the time. The point is to know that life is fragile and limited, and therefore to use the time we have and use it purposefully, isn’t it?
- 5 Can you think of three things you’d like to do for yourself if you followed the writer’s advice?
  - I would go to have a banquet in a first-class restaurant, probably in Paris because my second thing would be to travel. And my third thing is to visit my grandmother for at least a week and really talk to her while I can.
  - First, I would tell all my friends how much I appreciate their friendship, and then I would write a best-selling novel and a blockbuster film script, and thirdly I would make an effort to improve my English now and not wait till the exam comes!
- 6 Can you think of three things you’d like to do for society if you followed the writer’s advice?
  - First, I would establish a scholarship fund for clever students from the countryside to come to university and ask lots of wealthy people to contribute. Then I would develop a fantastic, low-cost public transport system so that people wouldn’t need to think about cars and traffic. Thirdly, I would persuade people to plant trees and plants everywhere to help with the problem of climate change and have a greener world.
  - As for me, well, I’d help to establish worldwide equality for women because some countries have not advanced much in this respect. Then I would ban smoking in any public place at all, streets, restaurants, offices etc. Some people would certainly complain about this but it really would be better for everyone’s health and people who keep smoking would get used to the idea. Finally, I would encourage everyone else to think of three things that they can do for people around them, small, practical things in most cases. And I would ask everyone to do these three things on Friday. On Monday, each person should ask everyone else if it made a difference to their life that day. I am sure that it would raise awareness of small positive changes!

## Talking point

### 1 Work in pairs. Look at the comments and say what they have in common.

- 1 I could have taken the year off before going to university, but unfortunately I didn’t.
- 2 I would have spent more time studying German if I’d realized how useful it was going to be.



3 I should have taken the opportunity to learn music when I was a child.

They all look at the past with a choice that was not taken in order to express regret. They all express the idea of not doing something then but wishing it had been done now.

Now make similar reflections about yourself using *could have*, *would have* and *should have*.

- I could have learned to play the guitar when my friend was learning, but I didn't. Now I really wish I had taken the opportunity.
- I would have been a much better table tennis player, if I'd only listened to my coach.
- I should have learned thousands of words in English, but unfortunately I just can't remember every word I hear or read.

2 Tell the rest of the class about your biggest regret in life.

I should have taken more trouble to talk to my grandmother when she was alive. Now it's too late and I regret it very much. If I have grandchildren – or even my own child – I will try to talk to them when they are young before I get too old myself.

## Language in use

### word formation: compound words

1 Find more examples of each use of hyphens in the passage *We are all dying*.

- I've double- and triple-checked it. (compound verb)
- budding crypt-kickers (compound noun)
- a rear-view mirror (compound adjective)
- the once-a-year holiday to Florida or Spain (compound adjective)
- back-burner stuff (compound adjective)
- standing at the corner of the Co-op (compound noun)
- a sepia-coloured relative that no one can put a name to (compound adjective)

2 Rewrite the phrases using compound adjectives.

- 1 a party which is held late at night (a late-night party)
- 2 a library which is well stocked (a well-stocked library)
- 3 a professor who is world famous (a world-famous professor)
- 4 some advice which is well timed (some well-timed advice)
- 5 a population which is growing rapidly (a rapidly-growing population)
- 6 an economy which is based on free market (a free-market economy)
- 7 a boat trip which lasts for half an hour (a half-hour boat trip)

### *It's what / how ... that ...*

3 Rewrite the sentences using *It's what / how ... that ...*

- 1 What other people think of us is determined by how we behave.  
It's how we behave that determines what other people think of us.



- 2 What sort of job we are going to end up doing is usually determined by our character.  
It's what our character is that usually determines what sort of job we are going to end up doing.
- 3 What we do as a career isn't always determined by the marks we get at university.  
It isn't always what marks we get at university that determine what we do as a career.
- 4 How we react to life's problems is often determined by our childhood experiences.  
It is often what we experienced in our childhood that determines how we react to life's problems.
- 5 When we die is determined by our genetic clock, and the changes we make to it.  
It's what our genetic clock is and what changes we make to it that determine when we die.

### *It is / was not just that ... but ...*

#### 4 Rewrite the sentences using *It is / was not just that ... but ...*

- 1 Not only were the shops all closed for Thanksgiving, there was also no one in the streets.  
It wasn't just that the shops were all closed for Thanksgiving, but there was no one in the streets.
- 2 Not only did she spend all her time at college going to parties, she also took the time to gain a first-class degree.  
It wasn't just that she spent all her time at college going to parties, but she took the time to gain a first-class degree.
- 3 Not only were they not listening to what he said, it also seemed as if they weren't at all interested.  
It wasn't just that they weren't listening to what he said, but it seemed as if they weren't at all interested.
- 4 Not only was I upset, I also felt as if I was going to burst out crying.  
It wasn't just that I was upset, but I felt as if I was going to burst out crying.
- 5 Not only was the Grim Reaper intended to frighten people, it was also a figure of fun.  
It wasn't just that the Grim Reaper was intended to frighten people, but it was also a figure of fun.

### collocations

#### 5 Read the explanations of the words. Answer the questions.

- 1 **settle** When you *settle* somewhere you go there to stay.
  - (a) Where is dust likely to *settle* in a room?  
On the surfaces that aren't used very often or aren't cleaned.
  - (b) If you *settle an argument*, is the conclusion satisfactory?  
Yes, it is, because the disagreement is solved and each party is satisfied with the outcome.
  - (c) If you *settle the bill*, what is there left to pay?  
Nothing, because you have paid everything that is owed.
  - (d) What do you do when you *settle back* to watch a film?  
We relax in a comfortable chair and enjoy it.
- 2 **smooth** This word can mean flat or soft, comfortable, easy or confident.
  - (a) If the sea is *smooth*, are you likely to feel seasick?  
No, because the sea is calm. We will feel seasick if it is rough.



- (b) If a changeover from one government to the next is *smooth*, are there lots of problems?  
No, because the changeover has gone well, without difficulties.
- (c) Is it a good idea to trust a *smooth talker*?  
Not necessarily, because some people who talk confidently like that do so to trick you, like a confidence trickster or conman.
- 3 **offer** This word can refer to something you would like someone to take, something someone gives, or something that is for sale.
- (a) If you *decline an offer*, do you say “yes” or “no”?  
We say “no”, because we are refusing it.
- (b) If you *offer an apology* to someone for something you have done, what do you say?  
We should say, “I apologize” or “I’m sorry”.
- (c) Where are you likely to see *special offer*?  
In a shop, because the shop is offering a special price or reduction for something.
- (d) If someone *has a lot to offer*, what kind of person are they?  
They are intelligent, talented, gifted or creative and they will bring these kinds of qualities to their work.
- 4 **bear** If you *bear* something you carry or bring it. If you cannot *bear* something, you dislike it or cannot accept it.
- (a) If you *bear something in mind*, do you forget it?  
No, we will remember it and consider it for a particular occasion in future.
- (b) If you *bear a resemblance to* someone, in what way are you like them?  
We look similar in certain physical features.
- (c) Is there anything you *can't bear to* think about?  
I can't bear to think too much about some of the problems in the world, famine, war, poverty etc. In the modern world, why don't we just solve them?
- 5 **resistance** This word can refer to the refusal to accept something new, the ability not to be harmed by something, or opposition to someone or something.
- (a) If there is *resistance to an idea*, do people accept it?  
No, not easily. They refuse to accept the idea maybe because it's just a bad idea, or they may change their mind if they understand it better.
- (b) If the soldiers *met with resistance*, what happened?  
The soldiers met opposition from those they were fighting against.
- (c) Is there a way to *build up your resistance to* cold?  
Yes, we can keep ourselves as healthy as possible with a good diet and getting enough exercise so that we are less likely to catch a cold, or if we do get one, we won't suffer so badly.

## 6 Translate the paragraphs into Chinese.

- 1 We all sensed we were coming to the end of our stay here, that we would never get a chance like this again, and we became determined not to waste it. Most important of course were the final exams in April and May in the following year. No one wanted the humiliation of finishing last in class, so the peer group pressure to work hard was strong. Libraries which were once empty after five o'clock in the afternoon were standing room only until the early hours of the morning, and guys wore the bags under their eyes and their pale, sleepy faces with pride, like medals proving their diligence. (👁️ and guys wore the bags under their eyes and their pale, sleepy faces with pride ... 这句的动词wear 后面带两个宾语, 中



文找不到能带这两个宾语的动词，故处理成四个中文短句；翻译 like medals proving their diligence 时，采用“增词法”增加“这些”来概括前面所描写的“眼袋”，“脸色苍白”，“睡眼惺忪”等，使译文含义更加清晰流畅。）

我们都觉得在校时间不多了，以后再也不会有这样的学习机会了，所以都下定决心不再虚度光阴。当然，下一年四五月份的期末考试最为重要。我们谁都不想考全班倒数第一，那也太丢人了，因此同学们之间的竞争压力特别大。以前每天下午五点以后，图书馆就空无一人了，现在却要等到天快亮时才会有空座，小伙子们熬夜熬出了眼袋，他们脸色苍白，睡眼惺忪，却很自豪，好像这些都是表彰他们勤奋好学的奖章。

- 2 Tomorrow? It's all a lie; there isn't a tomorrow. There's only a promissory note that we are often not in a position to cash. It doesn't even exist. When you wake up in the morning it'll be today again and all the same rules will apply. Tomorrow is just another version of now, an empty field that will remain so unless we start planting some seeds. Your time, which is ticking away as we speak (at about 60 seconds a minute chronologically; a bit faster if you don't invest your time wisely), will be gone and you'll have nothing to show for it but regret and a rear-view mirror full of "could haves", "should haves" and "would haves". (👉 本段的难点在于对一些词的理解与翻译，如 an empty field that will remain so, chronologically, invest your time wisely, have nothing to show for it but 等等。“could haves”, “should haves”, “would haves” 是表达与事实相反的条件句，指自己没有做，但有可能或应该做的事情。)

明天行吗？明天只是个谎言；根本就没有什么明天，只有一张我们常常无法兑现的期票。明天甚至压根儿就不存在。你早上醒来时又是另一个今天了，同样的规则又可以全部套用。明天只是现在的另一种说法，是一块空地，除非我们开始在那里播种，否则它永远都是空地。你的时间会流逝（时间就在我们说话的当下嘀嗒嘀嗒地走着，每分钟顺时针走 60 秒，如果你不能很好地利用它，它会走得更快些），而你却没有取得任何成就来证明它的存在，唯独留下遗憾，留下一面后视镜，上面写满了“本可以做”、“本应该做”、“本来会做”的事情。

## 7 Translate the paragraphs into English.

- 1 对于是否应该在大学期间详细规划自己的未来，学生们意见不一。有的人认为对未来应该有一个明确的目标和详细的计划，为日后可能遇到的挑战做好充分的准备；有的人则认为不用过多考虑未来，因为未来难以预料。(map out; brace oneself for; uncertainty)

Students differ about whether they should have their future mapped out when they are still at university. Some think they should have a definite goal and detailed plan, so as to brace themselves for any challenges, whereas some others think they don't have to think much about the future, because future is full of uncertainties.

- 2 经过仔细检查，这位科学家得知自己患了绝症。虽然知道自己将不久于人世，他并没有抱怨命运的不公，而是准备好好利用剩下的日子，争取加速推进由他和同事们共同发起的那个研究项目，以提前结项。(tick away; make the best of; have a shot at)

After a very careful check-up, the scientist was told he had got a fatal disease. Although he knew that his life was ticking away, instead of complaining about the fate, the scientist decided to make the best of the remaining days, and speed up the research project he and his colleagues initiated, and have a shot at completing it ahead of schedule.



## Reading across cultures

### Rites of passage

#### Culture points

A **rite of passage** is a ceremony or ritual, a culturally prescribed action, to signify an event in a person's life which shows a transition from one stage to another or a major change in social state, age, place or part of the life cycle, eg marking birth, adolescence, marriage or death. A **rite** is a traditional ceremony; a **passage** here means movement past, over or through a place.

**Elbert Hubbard** (1856–1915), an American writer, was a soap salesman until the age of 36, and then a prolific writer, farmer and publisher. He also said, “Don't take life too seriously. You'll never get out of it alive.”

*As You Like It* is a romantic and comic play of Shakespeare, written in 1599 or 1600. In the play, a young gentleman, Orlando is persecuted by his brother Oliver, and forced to flee the country after he has annoyed the new Duke who has usurped the place of his older brother, the rightful Duke. Celia (daughter of the new Duke) and Rosalind (daughter of the rightful Duke) also leave to look for Rosalind's father who is hiding in a forest. Rosalind is disguised as a man, which leads to comic mistakes. Orlando loves Rosalind but does not recognize her. Oliver, cast out by the new Duke, loves Celia and is reconciled with Orlando. In the end, the usurper changes, the rightful Duke returns to his dukedom. Oliver gets his inheritance and Orlando and Rosalind marry. Jacques, a thoughtful and sad clown, says one of Shakespeare's most famous monologue, “All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players (actors); they have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages ... the infant ... the schoolboy ... the lover ... a soldier ... the justice (full of wisdom) ... the sixth age ... with spectacles on his nose ... last scene of all ... is second childishness ... sans (without) teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.”

**Bar Mitzvah** is the ceremony in which a Jewish boy, aged 13 (or in many communities, a girl aged 12 or 13), takes on the responsibilities of an adult under Jewish religious law. From that age they have moral and religious responsibilities for their own actions. A ceremony is common (but not actually necessary for the religious rights and obligations) during which the participant is treated for the first time as an adult, reading or reciting from the Jewish scriptures and making a speech in a synagogue, a Jewish meeting place for worship and instruction. Bar Mitzvah in Hebrew means “son of the commandments” (*Bat Mitzvah* for girls). The ceremony may be followed by a reception or celebratory meal and gifts may be given, eg money, often in multiples of 18, which is a number symbol for “life”.

The **prom** is an end-of-year dinner dance for senior (final-year) high school students in the US beginning in the 1920s, following the 19th-century European idea of “a promenade ball” at which young people and debutantes could display their fashions and dancing. American parents thought the prom would be a good formal social occasion to teach the school leavers about culture and etiquette. For this special night most students go with a dance partner, a “date”, who may or may not be a romantic partner. Many arrive in groups in a limousine wearing black tuxedos and formal gowns or long dresses. There is the crowning of the Prom Queen and King, who are chosen by fellow students. And many group photos are taken. Proms have spread to other countries with similar events: the “leaver's party” in the UK, “fiesta de graduación” (“party for graduation”) in Latin America, “gala” in France, “Abifeier” in Germany (the school leaving exam is the Abitur; Feier is a festival), and similar events in Finland, Malaysia, South Africa, Canada etc.



The **walkabout** is a ritual journey into “the outback” in Australia, large areas of land not used for growing crops which are far away from cities and towns, made by adolescent aborigines. On walkabout, they appreciate the spiritual interconnectness of the land, the natural world, all creatures, and their ancestors – this understanding is very important for aboriginal communities. They see the land as a living being which sustains them. People live in reciprocal relationships with nature through **songlines**. The 1971 film, *Walkabout*, tells of two children who get lost in the outback, but survive thanks to the skills of an aboriginal boy, who discovers them while he is on walkabout.

**Songlines** are an ancient spiritual concept among aboriginal communities in a 40,000-year-old culture. Songlines, or dreaming tracks, footprints of the ancestors, are invisible paths which criss-cross Australia, connecting sources of water, food and landmarks. For aborigines, the world was created and named when the ancestors sang out the names of everything, giving life in singing. The world continues because it is maintained by people who sing these ancient songs in the right way when they are on walkabout. The songlines are spiritual and cultural maps. By singing them, aborigines can keep the land alive and find their way across long distances, deserts or mountains, or locate water and food. Songs feature in the 2008 film, *Australia*; the aboriginal actor, David Gulpilil, leads his grandson into the outback to learn the ancestors’ ways. He was also the aboriginal star of the 1971 film, *Walkabout*.

## Language points

### 1 Is life just “one damned thing after another” ...? (Para 1)

The use of the word **damned** can range from a curse, to an angry swear word, to show that you are annoyed, to a simple emphasis in what you are talking about. Hubbard’s saying essentially means that life is one problem after another.

### 2 Or is it an obstacle race ...? (Para 1)

An **obstacle** is a thing which obstructs progress. An **obstacle race** is a type of race in which you have to get over, under, or through a series of objects or structures. In the metaphor, “life is an obstacle race”, the crucial stages in life are obstacles that must be surmounted or overcome.

## 1 Read the passage and answer the questions.

- 1 How did Elbert Hubbard describe life?  
He said it was “one damned thing after another”.
- 2 How many ages are there in a person’s existence according to Shakespeare?  
Seven ages.
- 3 What is a rite of passage?  
It’s a formal recognition of change, a move from one stage of life to another.
- 4 What does the Bar Mitzvah mean to Jewish children?  
It is a rite of passage which means that children become responsible for their own actions.
- 5 What do American high school students wear at a prom?  
They wear formal clothes.
- 6 What is the purpose of walkabout for young Australian aborigines?  
They spend about six months walking alone through the wilderness and follow the paths of their ancestors along the “songlines”.



- 7 What do they have to do during their walkabout?  
They penetrate the heart of aboriginal culture and also discover themselves.
- 8 What is particularly interesting about Australian aboriginal culture?  
It is the oldest continuous culture in the world.

## 2 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

### Teaching tips

If Ss find it difficult to think of detailed examples in pairs, T could first give a demonstration to help Ss think about the topic and then ask them to discuss the questions in groups. Later, representatives from different groups can give a brief summary to the class.

- 1 Which are the most interesting rites of passage in China?  
One of them takes place a full month after a baby has been born. There is a banquet when people give gifts and celebrate the birth. People used to place some objects in front of the baby and would tell the baby's fortune according to which object the baby picked up.
- 2 What are their origins?  
The origins are generally a mixture of traditional folk customs and religion. Some traditional rites of passage may be regarded as superstitions now but others are still common practice.
- 3 What traditional rites accompany births, marriages and deaths?  
For example:
  - In traditional marriages in the past in some areas of China, after a decision to get married, the groom's family was expected to give gifts of food and money to the bride's family.
  - On the wedding day, the bride performed ceremonies for her ancestors and was supposed to cry to show her appreciation of her parents' care and to show that she did not want to leave her parents' home. She wore red and was carried in a sedan chair with a procession of musicians to go to the groom's house, bringing her dowry, bedding, and clothes. The groom would welcome her and lift the red veil covering her head with a steelyard. He might give money to the bridesmaids to release the bride. The groom's family started the ceremony by showing respect to the bride's family and their ancestors. Later, there was a banquet held by the groom's family.
  - Some days after the wedding, the bride would visit her parents, dressed in red to show her new status; the groom would send gifts to his parents-in-law.
- 4 What rites of passage are there at school or university?  
For leaving school and university in China, there are normally parties to celebrate the conclusion of successful studies and to say goodbye to classmates. Graduation ceremonies, when students wear special caps and gowns, are also common.
- 5 Are they formal or informal?  
The parties are usually informal and organized by students themselves. Whereas graduation ceremonies are very formal and serious.
- 6 Are traditional rites of passage surviving or dying out?  
Some traditional customs for marriages and funerals continue and are an important part of Chinese culture. Some others are discontinued or greatly modified, eg the traditional rites in the examination halls of ancient times have disappeared.



## Guided writing

### Planning an essay

1 Match the passages in this unit with the text types and their main purposes.

- 1 *Catching crabs* is a (b) narrative; it is written (iii) to entertain.
- 2 *We are all dying* is an (c) opinion which is written (i) to persuade.
- 3 *Rites of passage* is an (a) essay which is written (ii) to inform.

2 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- 1 What was the topic of the last essay you wrote?  
I wrote an article about science which was designed to be read by teenagers to encourage them to study more science.
- 2 How long was it?  
It was only about a page long, but it was in English!
- 3 How much time did you spend planning it?  
Well, I worked with a partner and we met a couple of times for about 15 minutes each time. Then we worked separately for about two hours finding the information that we needed.
- 4 What research did you do?  
We consulted a couple of books and also used the Internet.
- 5 How satisfied were you with your work?  
I was happy with the result because it was in English and our teacher praised it.

Now tell your partner how you could have improved your work.

If we had had more time, we could have looked for more information, especially science information that would interest teenagers. Also we could have illustrated the article with photos, perhaps, and certainly with charts. We could have looked for good publications written for teenagers to get a clearer idea of what a good style for this audience might be. These would have helped make our planning for the writing more effective, I think.

3 Check (✓) the resources you use to research an essay.

- 1 my own textbooks and reference books  
We use these because they are on hand, but the disadvantage is that they don't have all the information we need.
- 2 the Internet  
We use the Internet when we can get access to it. The disadvantage is that you need a networked computer and you can't always find useful information.
- 3 the library  
We can go to the library easily and it has good resources for us to use. But sometimes it is closed and it takes time to find what we need.



4 the media

Newspapers and some magazines can be helpful, but TV programmes or films do not usually help. The disadvantage is that we have to get hold of the right newspapers and magazines.

5 friends and family

This depends on the topic. For some topics friends and family can give us ideas and information.

6 other

We sometimes buy books from a bookshop. Because of the cost, we only do this if we are very interested and can't find the books in the library.

**4 Look at the notes about the Bar Mitzvah ceremony. Write them up as one or two sentences and compare with the passage in Reading across cultures.**

Bar Mitzvah: Jewish / religious ceremony, feast / children responsible for actions / 13

Bar Mitzvah is a Jewish religious ceremony and feast which is held when children become responsible for their actions at the age of 13.

**Now write similar notes about the American prom and the Australian aborigine walkabout.**

- American prom: end of high school / dance / formal clothes / limousine / behave like adults
- Australian adolescent aborigines walkabout: six months in wilderness / follow ancestral songlines / heart of culture / discover themselves

**5 Read the passage in Reading across cultures and answer the questions.**

1 How is the topic introduced?

The writer uses a quotation and asks two questions about life to introduce the topic of rites of passage. The idea of life stages is introduced in the second paragraph by quoting famous lines from a Shakespeare's play.

2 How much of the passage is introduction?

It takes two out of five paragraphs.

3 At what point is the concept *rite of passage* defined?

It's defined in the third paragraph, after the reference to Shakespeare's idea of seven stages.

4 How many examples of rites of passage are used?

There are three examples: Bar Mitzvahs, American proms, and walkabouts of Australian aborigines.

5 How much of the essay do they take up?

Three out of five paragraphs. This might seem a lot, but without the examples the definition doesn't mean very much to most people.

6 How does the essay end?

It concludes with a final thought from the third example. This thought about "discovering yourself through a rite of passage" applies to all of the examples and makes a good conclusion.



## 6 Write a short essay describing a rite of passage in China.

### Example:

#### A rite of passage: The “thorny gates” of exams

From the Sui and Tang dynasties until the end of the Qing period, examinations in China were rites of passage to the gates of success for civil service employment, status, wealth and power, often known as “thorny gates”. With variations at different times, exams marked the transition from study to work or stage-by-stage progression from local to provincial to metropolitan and national levels.

There were rituals for candidates to prepare for these important selection exams. With their teachers, students had read, recited, and memorized the classics and learned to write particular kinds of poems and essays by strictly using a particular script, writing special texts and counting the exact number of lines and characters. Depending on the level, this could take many years.

At the examination halls there were special rituals to take the exams. Guarded by soldiers, candidates waited in line at dawn for their names to be called. They bowed to the examiners and were searched to make sure they had only brushes and ink with them. They were given a place to sit in a small hut where they read the questions and wrote their answers for perhaps three days, talking to no one. None of them was allowed to leave until the exam was over. The examiners had to go through similar hardships to mark the papers.

There were further rituals to announce the results. Candidates would gather outside the exam halls, perhaps wearing special robes, bow to the examiners, and with the sounds of bells hear the announcements and receive their results, written on large sheets of paper. Later, successful scholars would have a feast to celebrate with officials and past degree holders. They put banners outside their homes and could use special titles according to their local, provincial, metropolitan or imperial exam success and would be accepted for ever in society, with rank, status and employment.

In modern China such exams have disappeared since 1905. But we still have our “thorny gates” of university entrance exams and exams to graduate. Even English tests can be thorny for some of us. Though the content is quite different and exams are on printed paper and marked electronically, we still have our rituals to prepare for, to take, and to celebrate our exams. And the results can still be gates or rites of passage to success in our lives.

## UNIT TASK

### Carrying out a survey on students' fears and ambitions

#### 4 Analyze the results of the survey and present a summary to the class.

### Example:

#### The future is now: a brief survey of students' ideas and attitudes to the future

As final-year students at our university prepare for their future profession and employment, they are also very much concerned about the present, studying hard to get a good degree result. We asked 50 students about their plans and ambitions, and here we summarize our analysis of their responses.

As you might expect in a group of this size, they had a range of ambitions. Most wanted to be successful in particular professions or fields of employment (some spoke of this as personal success, but many thought of it as contributing to society and to the country). A few said, quite openly, that they wanted to be rich. Many said they wanted to be happy with their family. Of course, for many students these kinds of ambitions overlap – you can, after all, have more than one ambition.

Students generally seemed confident about the future. But when we asked specifically about their fears, quite a few simply mentioned a “fear of failure”. However, a similar number were afraid of not finding the right romantic partner. A few said they were afraid of the future and others couldn’t think of an answer or said they were afraid of nothing. Still, the vast majority thought that it is important to plan for the future, mostly saying “very important”.

We asked students what they expected to be doing in ten years’ time. Our analysis shows that most spoke about progressing on a career ladder, eg they mentioned promotion, management, being the boss etc. Many others spoke about their family life, having a spouse, a child, home etc.

We also asked the difficult question of whether life is too short. Surprisingly, most students just said, “yes” or, a slightly larger number “no”. Eleven students considered the question more carefully and eight said, “It depends”, giving examples and reasons for their cautious reply, while three specifically stated that this is a difficult question and gave reasons why they thought it was difficult, eg “too short for whom?” meaning there would be different answers for people in different circumstances.

Finally, we asked if students believed in “seizing the moment”. Here, most students said “sometimes” (often thinking of different situations), while fewer gave a simple “yes” (11) or “no” (8) response.

In conclusion, this survey is quite brief, but the outcomes are clear. Students’ ideas and attitudes about the future generally centred on their likely profession or work, and on their future family and a happy home life. This future seems to be planned with quite clear expectations, but we give the final comment to three students in a small group who said, “The future is now. We do think about it now and make plans, but you can’t be sure about what will happen. Things may go wrong or other opportunities may come up which you should seize. But to make your dream come true you have to act now, otherwise nothing will happen. The future is now.”

<b>A brief survey of students’ ideas and attitudes to the future</b> (N = 50 final-year students)	
1 What ambitions do you have for the future?	Success in a profession or work 42; to be happy 28; to be rich 8.
2 What are you afraid of, if anything?	Failure 18; not finding a good partner 17; the future 12; nothing or no answer 10.
3 How important is it to plan for the future?	Very important 32; important 10; not sure 5; not so important 3.
4 What do you expect to be doing ten years from now?	Progressing on a career ladder 32; have a family 21; travelling 3; no idea 4.
5 Do you think life is too short?	Yes 18; no 21; it depends 8; a difficult question: who for? 3.
6 Do you believe in “seizing the moment”?	Yes 11; no 8; sometimes 31.

## Translation of the passages

### Active reading (1)

#### 抓螃蟹

大学最后一年的秋天，我们的心情变了。刚刚过去的夏季学期的轻松氛围、即兴球赛、查尔斯河上的泛舟以及深夜晚会都不见了踪影，我们开始埋头学习，苦读到深夜，课堂出勤率再次急剧上升。我们都觉得在校时间不多了，以后再也不会有这样的学习机会了，所以都下定决心不再虚度光阴。当然，下一年四五月份的期末考试最为重要。我们谁都不想考全班倒数第一，那也太丢人了，因此同学们之间的竞争压力特别大。以前每天下午五点以后，图书馆就空无一人了，现在却要等到天快亮时才会有空座，小伙子们熬夜熬出了眼袋，他们脸色苍白，睡眠惺忪，却很自豪，好像这些都是表彰他们勤奋好学的奖章。

还有别的事情让大家心情焦虑。每个人都在心里盘算着过几个月毕业离校之后该找份什么样的工作。并不总是那些心怀抱负、成绩拔尖的高材生才清楚自己将来要做什么，常常是那些平日里默默无闻的同学早早为自己下几个阶段的人生做好了规划。有位同学在位于麦迪逊大道他哥哥的广告公司得到了一份工作，另一位同学写的电影脚本已经与好莱坞草签了合约。我们当中野心最大的一位同学准备到地方上当一个政党活动家，我们都预料他最终会当上参议员或国会议员。但大多数同学不是准备继续深造，就是想在银行、地方政府或其他单位当个白领，希望在 20 出头的时候能挣到足够多的薪水，过上舒适的生活，然后就娶妻生子，贷款买房，期望升职，过安稳日子。

感恩节的时候我回了一趟家，兄弟姐妹们免不了不停地问我毕业后有什么打算，我不知道该说什么。实际上，我知道该说什么，但我怕他们批评我，所以只对他们说了别人都准备干什么。

父亲看着我，什么也没说。夜深时，他叫我去他的书房。我们坐了下来，他给我们俩各倒了杯饮料。

“怎么样？”他问。

“啊，什么怎么样？”

“你毕业后到底想做什么？”他问道。

父亲是一名律师，我一直都认为他想让我去法学院深造，追随他的人生足迹，所以我有点儿犹豫。

过了会儿我回答说：“我想旅行，我想当个作家。”

我想这不是他所期待的答案。旅行？去哪儿旅行？当作家？写什么呀？我做好了遭到他反对的心理准备。

接着是一段长长的沉默。

“这想法有点意思，”他最后说。

接着又是一段长长的沉默。

“我真有点希望自己在你这个年纪时能做这些事儿。”

我在等他把话说完。

“你还有很多时间，不必急于进入一个暂时报酬高的行业。你现在要搞清楚自己真正喜欢什么，如果你弄不清楚，以后就不可能成功。”

“那我该怎么办？”

他想了一会儿。然后他说道：“瞧，现在太晚了。我们明天早晨乘船出海去，就我们两个。也许我们能抓点螃蟹当晚餐，我们还可以再谈谈。”

那是一艘小小的机动船，停泊在离我们家约十分钟路程的地方，是好些年前父亲买的。次日清晨，



我们沿着港湾出发，一路上没说多少话，只是默默地欣赏着海鸥的叫声，还有港湾沿岸和远处大海的景色。

在这个时候沿海水域没什么风浪，船平稳地航行了半个小时之后父亲把船停了下来。他说：“咱们在这儿试试运气吧，”然后抓起一个系上绳子的生了锈的网状篓子抛到海里。

我们等了一会儿，父亲站起来对我说，“来帮我一把。”于是我们一起将蟹篓子拽上了甲板。

螃蟹让我着迷，它们太容易抓了。不仅仅是因为它们顺着篓盖上的小孔爬进一个再明显不过的陷阱，更因为即便盖子打开了，它们似乎也懒得从里面爬出来，只会趴在那儿冲你挥动着蟹钳。

篓子里挤满了几十只软壳螃蟹，一只压着一只，堆得老高。“它们为什么不逃走啊？”我满腹狐疑地问父亲。

“你先观察一下，看那只螃蟹，那儿！它想爬出去，但每次都被同伴拽了回去，”父亲说。

我们接着观察。那只螃蟹顺着网眼向顶盖攀援，每当它爬到顶盖时，果然就会有另一只螃蟹举起蟹钳夹住它的腿把它拽下来。这只螃蟹尝试了好几次想挣脱它的狱中同伴，但都没能成功。

“快看！”父亲说。“它开始对这种游戏感到不耐烦了。”

那只螃蟹不仅放弃了漫长的逃亡之战，而且还帮着把其他想逃跑的螃蟹拽下来。它最终选择了一种轻松的活法。

我忽然明白了父亲为什么提议早上来抓螃蟹。他看着我说：“你可别被别人拽下来哦。花点时间想想你是哪一类人，你这一生希望得到什么，回顾一下你在大学修的课程，想想有哪些课对你个人来说最有益。然后再想想什么对你最重要，什么最使你感兴趣，你有什么技能。琢磨一下你想在哪里生活，你想去哪里，想挣多少钱，想做什么样的工作。如果你现在不能回答这些问题，你就得花点时间去找出答案。你不这样做的话，永远都不会幸福的。”

他停顿了一下。

“你想去旅行？”他接着问我。

“对，”我回答说。

“那就去申请护照吧。你想当作家？”

“对。”

“有趣的选择，我们家还没出过作家呢，”他说。

我父亲发动了马达，我们返航回家。

## Active reading (2)

### 我们都在走向死亡

我给你带来一条好消息，还有一条坏消息（正如笑话所说的）。坏消息是：我们都在走向死亡——很抱歉是我带来了这条坏消息。这可是真的，我已经核实过了，事实上我已经三番五次地核实过了。我也找到了证据，可是要说出这个事实实在是困难，不过我们的确都在走向死亡。这件事我过去多少知道一点，但不愿过多地去想它。但事实是，再过70年或80年——这要取决于你现在年龄有多大，寿命有多长——我们都会躺到棺材里，或者变成某个地方公墓玫瑰园里的灰尘，被人践踏。我们甚至活不到这么老。毕竟，我们从来就不清楚那位戴着头巾、手持长柄镰刀、命人吐出最后一口气的死神什么时候会来召唤我们，有可能会比我们希望的要早。其实我最近就曾经从局外人的角度观察过死亡，没有什么比朋友的早逝更能表明人生的无常和生命的脆弱了。

真可怕。



我已经让你够沮丧的了，现在告诉你那条好消息吧：知道了我们都在走向坟墓，我们就不再有人生无常的感觉了。我们已经知道故事的结局，开场白和尾声也都确定了，剩下的就是介于两者之间的那些事儿了，这些事是我们作得了主的。我们必须挑选故事情节。

所以，那些被你搁置在一边的计划，即那些“当时机成熟时”你会用生命来完成的伟大事业怎么办呢？可我发现时机永远不会有成熟的时候。时间必须提前，必须马上行动，就在这一刻，不能拖延，必须赶紧，而且越快越好。不管是你想写的小说，还是你一直在筹划的去大峡谷的旅行，你心仪的工作，你想导演的伦敦西区话剧，你都必须现在就去。知道吗？我们都在走向死亡。这是已经定了的。

因此，把自己的梦想搁置起来，等到时机成熟之后才开始实现它，这就意味着梦想可能永远都不会实现。人生的遗憾莫过于还有事情没有做，我们有必要现在就去。不然就晚了。明天行吗？明天只是个谎言；根本就没有什么明天，只有一张我们常常无法兑现的期票。明天甚至压根儿就不存在。你早上醒来时又是另一个今天了，同样的规则又可以全部套用。明天只是现在的另一种说法，是一块空地，除非我们开始在那里播种，否则它永远都是空地。你的时间会流逝（时间就在我们说话的当下嘀嗒嘀嗒地走着，每分钟顺时针走 60 秒，如果你不能很好地利用它，它会走得更快些），而你却没有取得任何成就来证明它的存在，唯独留下遗憾，留下一面后视镜，上面写满了“本可以做”、“本应该做”、“本来会做”的事情。

你是否注意过，自助餐馆里服务员会给你一个茶杯碟大小的碗，并告诉你：“你想盛多少沙拉都可以，但只能盛一次”？生活就像那只盛沙拉的碗，我们可以和那些饥肠辘辘等着主菜的人一样在那只小碗里装上尽可能多的沙拉。我喜欢看人们巧妙地把黄瓜片插在沙拉碗的四周——就像往废料桶里堆东西那样——把沙拉堆得老高老高，最后不得不雇个叉车把沙拉拉回餐桌。他们不是贪婪，而是明白自己只有一次机会。

把你的碗盛满吧，我们在这个世上只走一遭，既然来了就好好利用这短暂的一生，就像我们牢牢抓住一年一度去佛罗里达或西班牙度假的机会那样。在短暂的人生中填入尽可能多的内容吧。确保每天回家后你都会因为干了很多事而感到精疲力尽。

如果你不想当邮递员就别当邮递员，放弃这份工作去当个画家、作家、滑雪运动员，干什么都行。千万不要干自己明明就不喜欢的事情。

现在就开始行动吧，不要等到明天。没有比现在更好的时间了。如果在这一刻你不能得到你想得到的东西，你至少可以趁灵感还在的时候马上开始你的旅程，即刻起程。我们有同样多的时间，我们和布兰森以及盖茨一样，每天都有 24 个小时。决定我们这一生成败的是我们把时间花在什么事情上，是我们如何来分配时间。

因此，我正在琢磨的是（这可不是分子科学）：如果我们正在走向死亡，而且分配给我们的时间是有限的，那么我们到底有什么理由不现在去做所有想做的事情呢？这些被暂时搁置的事情到底又是什么呢？为什么明明知道成熟的时机永远不会到来，而我们却都还在等待呢？成熟的时机是一张支票，它永远都在邮寄的路上，永远都不会到来。它就是那位让我们在合作社旁边像桥墩那样站着傻等的女孩，我们再怎么看表也无济于事，她失约了。

我们傻等着，而成熟的时机却永远不会到来。

所以我要说，别再等待了，走到路上去迎接天意。开始给你的生活增添所有你能得到的财富，这样当死神到来时，你已经完成了那么多事，你的一生是那么的充实。当生命在你眼前回放时，死神等着等着就睡着了。

现在就行动吧，不然你的时间会流逝的，而你最终将成为尘封的相册里的一位谁都叫不上名字的灰头土脸的穷亲戚。

还是给人间留下一本像大煎蛋饼那么厚的传记吧，那可比仅仅留下一块碑铭强。

“乔·史密斯……嘿嘿，他没干过什么，对吧？”



## Reading across cultures

### 通过仪式

生活是否如同对生活持宿命论看法的美国作家阿尔伯特·哈伯德在一百年前所描述的那样,是“该死的事情一桩接着一桩”?抑或是一场障碍赛跑,其间每个参赛者,即世界各地的人们,不得不在生命的各个重要阶段展现自己的价值?

莎士比亚的戏剧《皆大欢喜》中那个悲伤的小丑雅克认为,人的一生要经历“七个年龄段”,几乎每个社会都有的通过仪式也证明,我们往往是把生命分为这几个阶段来看待的,比如童年、中年和老年。

通过仪式是社会对个人从一个阶段走向另一阶段的正式的认可,其中被广泛认同的是由少年步入成年时举行的成年礼。成年礼有多种形式。例如,在犹太传统中,人生最重要的时刻之一就是“犹太男孩成人仪式”,人们为年满13岁的孩子举办宗教仪式和家宴,这标志着从此以后这个孩子要对自己的行为负责了。13岁也恰恰是许多国家规定开始承担法律责任的年龄。

美国中学生活结束前的毕业舞会是另一种截然不同的通过仪式。这次舞会非同寻常,学生们不仅穿着正式(许多学生平生第一次这么穿),他们通常还乘坐着一辆租来的豪华轿车到达舞会现场。就在那一天晚上,他们似乎要表现得和年龄是他们两倍的成年人一样,至少是看上去要比自己的实际年龄老。

世界上最有趣的通过仪式之一或许就是澳洲原住民的“徒步旅行”了,还处于青春期的少年必须在野外独自行走六个月,沿着划定国土疆域的“歌之版图”追寻祖先的足迹。通过这样的仪式,他们深入到土著文化这一世界上最古老而持久的文化的精髓之中,并在这一过程中发现自我。



## Further teacher development

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### Using metaphors

The passage *We are all dying* has a number of key metaphors. First, the image of *the reaper* to represent death has been common in a number of European cultures since the Middle Ages; this is a grim figure (ie unpleasant, unfriendly, a cause of worry) who wears a hood (a medieval form of headwear) and carries a scythe to *cut people down* like corn. The image carries ideas of the inevitability of death, if the reaper comes for you.

Other metaphors in this passage relate to cooking and food. *Fill your bowl* is used to follow the idea that “life is like a salad bowl” and that you should fill it as much as you can (*cram it full*) so that you make the most of the opportunities in life while you can; life is short and there may not be other chances. This goes with the agricultural image of *planting seeds* in the *empty field* of life, to use time now and to act now as well as possible, otherwise there is no future.

Another major cooking metaphor is putting something (like plans or dreams) *on the back burner*. A gas cooker has burners for cooking things in pans: The front burners are used to heat up things quickly or to cook things which need to be stirred frequently, while the back burners are used to heat things which take a long time to cook (they are simmering or cooking slowly) or which do not need to be stirred so often. Things *on the front burner* are therefore priorities or the main focus of attention, while those on the back burner do not need your concentration now, they can be postponed or dealt with later. The metaphors therefore relate to prioritization and postponement.

Further food metaphors use *recipes* and *ingredients* for success or failure, ie to draw attention to things that cause a particular situation or result (either positive or negative). The recipe metaphor draws attention to a set of instructions or procedures which lead to the result (like cooking a dish), while the ingredients metaphor refers to necessary elements which are needed for the recipe, or things which cause a particular result. Thus a *recipe for success* in music may be “to have talent, to have a good teacher, to work hard and practise daily”, while a *recipe for disaster* in marriage might be “only to think of yourself and your career and not pay much attention to your partner”. *Ingredients for success* for writing a best-selling novel might be “to have a good plot, to write in a style which is easy to read, to have short chapters and always make the reader want to turn to the next page”. The *ingredients* in the metaphor are often modified, typically people speak of *basic*, *necessary*, *key*, or *essential* ingredients.

Ways of cooking are often used as metaphors. *To cook up* as a metaphor goes beyond simply preparing food by heating it; the metaphor emphasizes dishonest behaviour or how people change something to make it appear different from how it really is. Thus if someone *cooks up a scheme* the implication is that the scheme is dishonest or strange. *To stew* as a metaphor also goes beyond simply cooking meat or fruit slowly in liquid; rather, *letting someone stew* means leaving them to worry about something for a while instead of helping them or telling them something that would make them feel better, especially when the speaker feels that what the person is worrying about is their fault, “He could have solved the problem long ago, but just wouldn’t listen, so I’ll let him stew in his own juice for a while – then I’ll tell him what to do.” If something is *a stew*, it is disorganized or has been put together without care, “This new management policy is just a stew:



They've just put together different ideas without any real strategy." If someone is *in a stew*, though, they are worried or upset about something, "The manager is in a real stew about this morning's news – I guess a crisis is on the way, just wait until the next meeting!" *To boil* is used metaphorically to talk about strong negative emotions: "She is boiling with rage and frustration"; "I'm sorry I lost my patience – I just boiled over with anger", "You know how teenagers are – their emotions just boil over sometimes." *To boil down* a liquid means that you leave it to boil for a long time so that a large part evaporates and there is not much liquid left and the result will be thicker or stronger; metaphorically, *to boil down to something* means that you get rid of non-essential parts so that only the most important part is left, "All this talk of yours, all these reasons for not doing anything ... it just boils down to the fact that you are lazy." *To grill* as a metaphor goes beyond using strong direct heat to cook something directly from above or below, it means asking detailed and persistent questions in an unpleasant or frightening way, like an interrogation, "One of my childhood memories is when my father found that I had some money: He grilled me about it for hours and after a morning of constant grilling I had to tell him that my grandmother had given it to me to buy him a surprise birthday present ... Then he felt ashamed of how he had questioned me." If something like a plan or idea is *half-baked*, it means that it is incomplete or has not been thought about properly; it may be unrealistic or childish.

Metaphors of flavour and taste are used to talk about the qualities that something has. If some information is *dry*, it is uninteresting; if it is *juicy*, it is interesting and exciting and perhaps sensational. Language which is *acid* is cruel, negative and often deliberately unpleasant, "Be careful, she has an acid tongue – you don't want to argue with her in public." If language is *salty* it is honest and interesting but it might include swearing or offensive language. If someone – especially an older person – is described as *peppery*, they are grumpy or irritated easily, perhaps in a bad mood. If a person or something is *unsavoury*, they are unpleasant or it is morally unacceptable. A *sweet* person is pleasant, good-tempered and kind; someone who is *bitter* is unhappy or has negative feelings about something, and probably feels like this for a long time, "He is still bitter about how he was treated, even after all these years." *Bitter* is a modifier which connotes strong negative feelings: "a bitter quarrel", "a bitter controversy", "a bitter fight", "a bitter struggle", "a bitter experience". If a relationship or a situation *goes* or *turns sour*, it is less happy, enjoyable or pleasant than it once was because something has gone wrong, "Their marriage once seemed ideal, but after his infidelity it turned sour and later they divorced."

**Reference:**

Deignan, A. (1995) *Collins Cobuild English Guides 7: Metaphor*, London: Harper Collins.



# Photocopiable worksheet: Using metaphors for cooking, food and taste

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Developing your vocabulary in English is not just a matter of learning new words but also a question of learning to use words you already know in different ways to express ideas and think creatively. Metaphors often use relatively easy vocabulary in new and interesting ways. For example, words for cooking, food and taste are used to talk about ideas, plans, experiences or qualities.

Work in pairs and read the explanations. Discuss the following questions and then summarize your discussion with another pair.

**Putting something on the back / front burner:** this metaphor uses parts of a gas cooker which heat up food (the burners) to talk about things which have low priority or high priority.

1 To be a successful student, which of the following should be put on the back burner? Which should be put on the front burner? Why?

listening to music; reading textbooks; reading for pleasure; doing sports; playing computer games; revising for exams; romantic relationships; going out with friends; developing self-discipline; developing your creativity etc

**Something may be a recipe for a second thing:** a list of ingredients and a set of instructions that tell you how to cook a particular thing which shows that if you do or have the first thing, you will probably do or have the second thing as a result. The *ingredients* (the different foods that you use when you are cooking a particular dish) are things that cause a particular situation or result. An idea, plan or theory may be *half-baked* (incomplete or not thought-out properly), or perhaps *sweet*, *sour*, *bitter*, or *unsavoury* (unpleasant); maybe you can *spice it up* to make it more exciting by adding something or changing it in some way or *toned down* (made more acceptable).

2 Which of the following are part of a recipe for success in sport? Why?

talent; self-discipline; the will to win; teamwork; daily practice etc

3 Which of the following are ingredients for success in a new business? Why?

knowing the market; having sales expertise; having financial support; invention, innovation and imagination; having a good business plan; luck etc

You can also *cook up* (invent) a plan, idea or story, especially if it is dishonest, strange, or implausible (not believable) and it may *boil down to* something or be reduced to the most important or basic aspect.

4 Some friends haven't done the out-of-class assignment set by the teacher. Which of their excuses seem to be cooked up (implausible)? Do they seem to boil down to something (laziness, forgetfulness, carelessness etc)?

- *Both of my grandparents died last week and I was too upset to work.*
- *I had to meet my best friend at the airport because she was returning from her holiday and I haven't seen her for a long time.*



- *I heard that all classes were cancelled because of a national emergency, but today it seems that there isn't one!*
- *My computer had a virus and I managed to print out just one copy, but then a sudden gust of wind blew my work into the lake and it was eaten by a large fish. Fortunately a huge bird caught the fish but I shouted at the bird and it dropped the fish on the road so I have a dead fish but the work is completely unreadable, I'm afraid.*
- *I lost my memory over the weekend and I didn't know who I was and what I was supposed to be doing ... luckily it came back this morning ...*

Evaluate each of the excuses above. Is it half-baked? Does it need to be spiced up? Is it sweet or sour? Bitter or unsavoury?



# Photocopiable worksheet: Using metaphors for cooking, food and taste (Answer sheet)

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- 1 listening to music; reading textbooks; reading for pleasure; doing sports; playing computer games; revising for exams; romantic relationships; going out with friends; developing self-discipline; developing your creativity etc

Most students would say that reading textbooks, revising for exams and developing self-discipline for study should be on the front burner. If students understand that creativity is part of successful learning and thinking, then developing creativity would also be on the front burner. The other items might be put on the back burner, but many people would argue that study needs to be balanced with leisure activities so these other activities could also be on the front burner as long as they are done in moderation! Some students have found that playing computer games, going out with friends or having romantic relationships interfere with their study because it distracts them or takes up most of their time; others say that these things help them, as long as they also keep studying.

- 2 talent; self-discipline; the will to win; teamwork; daily practice etc

All of them together can make a recipe for success: Talent for a sport is important but never enough on its own; self-discipline is an important ingredient because you need to train and practise regularly; the will to win is important in competitive sports, but without training and practice it is insufficient; teamwork is clearly important for team sports, but perhaps less necessary for those sports which are mainly individual events; daily practice or training is obviously important for athletes and sports people, but without coaching or guidance practice will not “make perfect”.

- 3 knowing the market; having sales expertise; having financial support; invention, innovation and imagination; having a good business plan; luck etc

Obviously, this depends partly on what kind of business you are thinking of, but in general all of these can be key ingredients in business success and they probably all work together to make a recipe for success. Knowing the market is important for setting competitive prices and knowing what competitors offer. Having sales expertise is vital for marketing and selling, but not everybody in a business needs this skill, perhaps only the sales force needs it. Having financial support is important to start a new business because without some investment it is usually impossible to break into the market. Invention, innovation and imagination seem essential ingredients to develop and market new products or services because it is often necessary to have a really good idea for a successful business. Having a good business plan is important because it shows that you know what you are doing and that you have thought through the future development of the business in a realistic way. Luck can make a big difference, but if a new business relies on luck instead of good ideas and hard work it will probably fail.

- 4
- Both of my grandparents died last week and I was too upset to work.  
This is a bitter excuse if it is true; it sounds plausible (but not if you hear it from the same student several times!).
  - I had to meet my friend at the airport because she was returning from her holiday and I haven't seen her for a long time.



This sounds like a half-baked, cooked-up excuse; even if it is true it does not seem a valid reason for not doing the work. It boils down to the fact that the student doesn't give much priority to study; it is a bit unsavoury if seeing a friend at the airport is more important than study.

- I heard that all classes were cancelled because of a national emergency, but today it seems that there isn't one!

This is a cooked-up story: If it were true we would all know about it, especially the teachers!

- My computer had a virus and I managed to print out just one copy, but then a sudden gust of wind blew my work into the lake and it was eaten by a large fish. Fortunately a huge bird caught the fish but I shouted at the bird and it dropped the fish on the road so I have a dead fish but the work is completely unreadable, I'm afraid.

A sweet excuse but a cooked-up story, if ever there was one! I don't think the teacher will accept the dead fish instead of the work ...

- I lost my memory over the weekend and I didn't know who I was and what I was supposed to be doing ... luckily it came back this morning ...

This is a sweet excuse but it sounds so unlikely that it seems half-baked and not very imaginative. If this person doesn't know they are a student, they shouldn't be studying at college ... Now, the person's memory has come back and he / she realizes who they are: a lazy student ...