

Grade 8 English First Additional Language Worksheet

Reading comprehension - "Happiness"

Read the following article on being happy and then answer the questions:

You have only yourself to blame if you are not happier. Give up feeling sad and sorry for yourself. You can be happier NOW if you follow this advice.

We are a generation of couch potatoes. Give up those endless hours, lying on the couch and doing very little. Television is generally not good for you, unless you agree with Groucho Marx's comment that he found television very educational because, every time someone turned the set on, he went to the next room and read a book!

We are often affected by the moods of those closest to us. If we surround ourselves with negative people, those who only describe the latest crime statistics or who have no sense of achievement, we, too, will be sad and depressed. Do not spend time with negative people who moan about weight gain, ageing, crooked politicians, or the elections; surround yourself with happy people. Their mood will be catching and you will brighten up immediately.

Once you are off the couch and spending time with cheerful people, make sure that you lead an active life. Take up squash and beat the blues away; run or walk regularly; swimming is excellent for muscles, joints, and the heart; pump iron in the gym each morning; activity will allow you to approach your work with greater energy.

Once at work, do not waste your time. You often feel unhappy when you think that you have not achieved what you set out to do, or when you are criticised for failing to meet deadlines. Instead, manage your time wisely.

We know from all the self-help guides and the how-to articles in newspapers and magazines that we must make sure we have goals, know exactly what they are, and work towards achieving them. Make sure that you set goals and review them from time to time. Check each month whether you are still on track.

Instead of complaining and criticising, be grateful for what you have. We are all inclined to focus on the negatives and we forget that there is so much to praise and enjoy. Make sure that you say "thank you" – to your loved ones, to God, to your neighbours and friends.

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Questions

1. Where do you think this article was published? Give a reason for your answer. (2)
2. For whom is the article written? Give a reason for your answer. (2)
3. The writer says that we are all “coach potatoes”. Do you agree with this? Give a reason for your answer. Has Groucho Marx (a famous comedian) got a point? (3)
4. The writer argues that we should not surround ourselves with negative people.
 - 4.1 According to the writer, what sort of negative things do these people talk about? (3)
 - 4.2 Why do you think people like to focus on negative things? (2)
 - 4.3 How do you think you can avoid negative people? (2)
5. Do you agree that we need to live an active life? Give a reason for your answer. (2)
6. Explain the importance of time management. (2)
7. Why do you think this writer talks about the need for goals? (2)
8. Is an article about being happy needed at this time? Give a reason for your answer. (2)

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Suggested Solutions

1. The article was probably published in the Life section of a newspaper, or in a magazine. It is quite colloquial and enthusiastic; it gives typical hints and tips in an informal, racy way. (2)
2. The article is written for everyone. Advice about being happy applies to everyone, regardless of race, gender, age, etc. (2)
3. Any reasonable suggestion. The learner may say yes/no, and must give a reason. (2)
- 4.1 weight gain, ageing, crooked politicians, crime or the elections. Any 4. (4)
- 4.2 Any reasonable suggestion, e.g., people actually enjoy being negative and complaining all the time. (2)
- 4.3 Any reasonable suggestion, e.g., do not choose to spend time with such people; find other friends. (2)
5. Any reasoned view, e.g., exercise is essential for mind and body. (2)
6. Without control of time, you will not achieve your goals ✓ and then you will feel like a failure. ✓ (2)
7. Any reasonable answer. Goals give us direction and purpose and help us get a sense of achievement. (2)
8. Any reasonable suggestion, e.g., there is so much negativity about Eskom and politicians and crime that an article like this might help. (2)

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