Reading and Use of English | Part 5

1 You are going to read an extract from a book in which actor Ewan McGregor explains how he first became interested in motorbikes. Before you read, work in pairs. What do you think people most enjoy about riding motorbikes?

2 Read the extract quickly to find out how Ewan McGregor became interested in motorbikes.

Exam information

In Reading and Use of English Part 5, you:

- read a text of 550–650 words
- answer six questions about it by choosing A, B, C or D.

This part tests your ability to understand main ideas and details, the writer's opinion and purpose and your ability to work out what something means from the context.



My first bike

Film star, Ewan McGregor, recently rode round the world on a motorbike. He talks about how he first took up riding motorbikes.

My biking beginnings can be summed up in two words: teenage love. My first girlfriend was small with short, mousy blonde hair, and I was mad about her. Our romance came to an abrupt end, however, when she started going out with another guy in my hometown, Crieff. He rode a 50cc road bike first and then a 125. And whereas I had always walked my girlfriend home, suddenly she was going back with this guy.

I was nearly sixteen by then and already heartbroken. Then one day, on the way back from a shopping trip to Perth with my mum, we passed Buchan's, the local bike shop. I urged my mother to stop the car. I got out, walked up the short hill to the shop and pressed my nose to the window. There was a light-blue 50cc bike on display right at the front of the shop. I didn't know what make it was, or if it was any good. Such trivialities were irrelevant to me. All I knew was that I could get it in three or four months' time when I was sixteen and allowed to ride it. Maybe I could even get my girlfriend back.

I'd ridden my first bike when I was about six. My father got hold of a tiny red Honda 50 cc and we headed off to a field that belonged to a family friend. I clambered on and shot off. I went all over the field. I thought it was just the best thing. I loved the smell of it, the sound of it, the look of it, the rush of it, the high-pitched screaming of the engine. Best of all, there was a Land Rover parked next to two large piles of straw with about a metre and a half between them. I knew that from where the adults were standing it looked as if there was no distance between them. Just one large heap of straw. I thought I would have a go. I came racing towards the adults, and shot right through the gap in the straw. I was thrilled to hear the adults scream and elated that it had frightened them. It was my first time on a motorbike. It was exciting and I wanted more.

So when I looked through Buchan's window in Perth that day, it suddenly all made sense to me. It was what had to happen. I can't remember whether it was to win back my ex-girlfriend's heart or not, but more than anything else it meant that, instead of having to walk everywhere, I could ride my motorbike to school and the games fields at the bottom of Crieff and when I went out at weekends.

I started to fantasise about it. I spent all my waking hours thinking about getting on and starting up the bike, putting on the helmet and riding around Crieff.
I couldn't sleep. Driven to desperation by my desire for a bike, I made a series of promises to my mum: I won't leave town. I'll be very safe. I won't take any risks. I won't do anything stupid. But, in fact I was making the promises up – I never thought about keeping them.

At the time that I was begging for a bike, I'd already had an accident with a bike belonging to George Carson, the school laboratory technician. When I asked him if I could borrow it, he agreed, not knowing that I didn't have a clue how to ride it. The bike was in an alleyway up the side of the school hall. I managed to start it and zoomed down the alleyway until I crashed smack into a wall, bending the wheel and snapping the handlebars. Mr Carson came out to find me looking very red-faced. The bill for the damage came to more than £80, a fortune to a fifteen-year-old in those days and one that took me months of working as a dish washer and waiter at the Murray Park Hotel to pay back.

Adapted from *Long Way Round* by Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3 Read and underline the main idea in questions 1–6, but not in the options A–D.

1 What does 'Such trivialities' refer to in line 22?
A his mother's attitude to the bike
B the bike's size and colour
C the bike's price
D the bike's quality and its manufacturer

2 Ewan did not buy the bike straightaway because
A he did not have enough money.
B he was too young to ride it.
C he was uncertain about its quality.
D he had to ask his girlfriend first.

3 The adults were frightened the first time Ewan rode a motorbike because
A the bike was making too much noise.
B he disappeared from view.
C they thought he was going to have an accident.
D he seemed too small for the bike.

4 What was Ewan's main reason for buying the motorbike?
A It would be exciting to ride.
B It would improve a friendship.
C It was good for his image.
D It was a useful means of transport.

5 In paragraph 5, Ewan's desire for the bike meant he
A thought about nothing else.
B spent more time with his mother.
C invented reasons for buying the bike.
D started behaving more carefully.

6 One result of Ewan's accident was that he
A was injured.
B was punished.
C had to get a job.
D lost interest in bikes.

4 For questions 1–6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

5 Work in pairs.

Student A
You are a teenager. You want to buy a motorbike, but you need your parents to lend you the money. Think of reasons why you want a motorbike and then try to persuade your father/mother to lend you the money you need.

Student B
You are one of Student A's parents. You don't want him/her to buy a motorbike. Think of reasons why he/she shouldn't buy a motorbike and try to persuade him/her not to do so.



Vocabulary

Phrasal verbs and expressions

1 EP Match these phrasal verbs and expressions from the extract (1–8) with their definitions (a–h).

1 take up (line 4)
2 sum up (line 6)
3 get hold of (line 27)
4 have a go (lines 36–37)
5 take risks (line 54)
6 make up (lines 55-56)
7 keep a promise (line 56)
8 not have a clue (line 60)

a describe the important facts or characteristics about something or someone
b do what you said you would do
c say or write something which is not true
d start doing a particular job or activity
e be completely unable to guess, understand, or deal with something
f try to do something
g do something even though something bad might happen because of it
h obtain something

LIVEWORKSHEETS