



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

10 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.

15 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
20 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.
25 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
30 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. 35 40

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. 45

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. 50 55

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. 60 65

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

- 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.

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) | a describe the important facts or characteristics about something or someone |
| 2 sum up (line 6) | b do what you said you would do |
| 3 get hold of (line 27) | c say or write something which is not true |
| 4 have a go (lines 36–37) | d start doing a particular job or activity |
| 5 take risks (line 54) | e be completely unable to guess, understand, or deal with something |
| 6 make up (lines 55–56) | f try to do something |
| 7 keep a promise (line 56) | g do something even though something bad might happen because of it |
| 8 not have a clue (line 60) | h obtain something |

2 Complete these sentences by writing a phrasal verb or expression from Exercise 1 in the correct form in the gaps.

- 1 I'd never do something like sky-diving because I don't enjoy
- 2 How would you her personality in just a few words?
- 3 Hans let me on his new bike, and now I want to get one myself!
- 4 Sometimes when I arrive home late, I an excuse to tell my parents why I am late.
- 5 Diego how to answer the questions in yesterday's exam because he simply hadn't studied.
- 6 People won't trust you unless you can and do what you say you're going to do.
- 7 I need to get more exercise, so I'm thinking of jogging.
- 8 We could play football this afternoon if I can a ball.