DAY 11: PROGRESS CHECK_READING 3-4

READING 3: You are going to read an article about memory. For questions 31 – 36, circle the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Can having a bad memory actually be good for you?

By psychologist Sylvie Johnson

It's not uncommon to hear people wishing that they had a better memory. 'If only I weren't so forgetful,' they complain. 'If only I could reliably recall my computer password, and that my neighbour's name is Sarah, not Sandra.' As a psychologist who studies the science of remembering, it's especially embarrassing to me that my memory is frequently dreadful. When asked whether I had a good weekend, I often struggle to immediately recollect enough details to provide an answer. But it's precisely because I study remembering that I'm acutely aware of how our memory's flaws, frustrating and inconvenient though they can be, are amongst its most important characteristics. Human memory isn't like a recording device for accurately capturing and preserving the moment, or a computer hard disk for storing the past in bulk. Instead, human memory serves up only the gist of an event, often with a healthy side of ego-flattery, lashings of indulgent wrong-righting, and a painkiller for the next morning.

Consider the sorts of things we are particularly good at failing to remember accurately. In one study, university students were asked to recall their high school grades. The students were truthfully informed that the researcher had full access to their official records, so it was clear there was nothing to gain from intentionally distorting the truth. The students misremembered about a fifth of their grades, but not all grades were misremembered equally. The higher the grade, the more likely the students were to remember it: top grades were expertly recalled, whereas poor ones were recalled very poorly. Overall, the students were far more likely to recall their grades as being better than they had been, than to recall them as worse than they had been. Findings such as these illustrate how misremembering can be self- serving, and support our well-being. In other cases, misremembering can help to protect our belief in fairness and justice.

In a Canadian study, participants read about a man named Roger, who had won several million dollars on the lottery. Some participants learned that Roger was a hard-working man who was kind to others: a man who fully deserved his lucky win. Other participants learned that Roger was undeserving: a lazy man who complained a lot and never smiled. When asked to recall exactly how much money Roger had won, those who believed he was undeserving recalled his prize as, on average, $280,000 lower than the figure recalled by those who believed he was deserving.

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These are just two of many examples in which our memory behaves like the good friend who protects us from hearing bad news or cruel gossip about ourselves. When we reliably learn that a serial cheat has been hired by a prestigious law firm, we later misremember that this news came from an unreliable source. When someone gives us critical feedback on our character traits, we selectively forget many of the lessflattering bits. And by and large, our unhappy memories lose their sting long before our happy memories lose their fervor. The cumulative effect of these small self-deceptions over time is that, just like an over-protective best friend, memory gives us a distorted but altogether rosier perception of the world and of ourselves. ***[line 42]*** And who wouldn't choose to wear these rose-tinted glasses?

In a recent study, psychologists asked members of the public whether they would – hypothetically – take a drug that could guarantee to numb the pain of a traumatic memory. Fascinatingly, most respondents (no fewer than 82%) said they would not. There is no doubt that we place a huge value on the (apparent) authenticity of our personal memories, both good and bad, and so it's clear that the idea of actively interfering with these memories seems wholly unappealing to many of us.

But we should also be sceptical about the desirability of a world in which every past event can be committed perfectly to memory: authentic, objective, unapologetic, and unadulterated. Although flawed memories are often a nuisance and sometimes disastrous, they can also do wonders for maintaining our self-esteem and satisfaction. In these respects at least, perhaps we shouldn't be too critical of our manipulative friend, memory, for pulling the wool over our eyes.

31 What is the writer doing in the first paragraph?

A attempting to calm her readers' concerns about memory
B clarifying the reasons for her professional interest in memory
C identifying with a memory difficulty her readers' regularly face
D explaining why she finds certain events especially challenging for memory

32 What does the study mentioned in the second paragraph exemplify?

A our skill in deceiving others about poor performance
B our need to maintain a good opinion of ourselves
C our ability to forget about insignificant incidents
D our desire to be viewed positively by others

33 The Canadian study is mentioned to highlight people's

A innate sense of fairness.
B wish to see others succeed.

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C poorness of numerical memory.

D inclination to support charitable events.

34 What does to wear rose-tinted glasses (line 42) mean?

A to deceive oneself

B to act disillusioned

C to be expectant

D to feel optimistic

35 What point is made in the fifth paragraph?

A We need to keep hold of certain memories in order to make sense of our world.

B We prefer to maintain what we consider to be a truthful account of our lives.

C We want to remember negative experiences because we learn from them.

D We believe that removing negative memories will affect our personalities.

36 The writer sums up the article in the final paragraph by

A advising us that memory can play unhelpful tricks on our subconscious.

B cautioning us against relying on our memories for an accurate version of events.

C warning us against considering the retention of all memories to be an ideal.

D alerting us to the repercussions of having a poor memory.

READING 4: You are going to read an article about university education. Seven paragraphs have been removed from the article. Choose from the paragraphs A – H the one which fits each gap (37 – 43). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

What do you really want from a university education?

There is little doubt that going to college offers a substantial economic payoff. On average, graduates earn quite a bit more than those without a degree, and their level of unemployment is only about half as high. Studies in the USA suggest that a university degree nearly doubles lifetime earnings.

(37) .....

Likewise, it cannot be the only parameter by which we evaluate the worth of a college education. Consider the case of Amy, a young woman who, after graduating with flying colours from a top business school, went to work for a large Wall Street investment bank, helping to structure multi-billion dollar financial transactions. By the lights of many economically-orientated analyses, Amy was a resounding educational success, getting off to a flying start.

(38) .....

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She excelled in these and was receiving top-notch evaluations. Her annual salary and bonuses were growing. She was in line for promotion, and her mentors told her that she would rise quickly in the company. Yet she noticed that something important was missing – something that has nothing to do with economics or the economic criteria of success.

(39) .....

In many respects, they were the picture of success, but inside they felt hollow, and longed to commit to work that really meant something. When Amy challenged her colleagues about this, they would say, 'Of course I hate my job. Everyone around here does. But this is what you have to do to get ahead. What do you expect me to do – quit and go to medical school? Sure, I wish my work had more meaning, but the money is simply too good, and I can't afford to do that.'

(40) .....

But despite the sacrifices, there were notable gains. Work now actually means something to her, where she feels that she is truly making a difference in the lives of other people – the patients she cares for every day. Economically, the last decade of her life has been a ruinous loss, but in human terms, it has paid off handsomely.

(41) .....

And let's be clear: many students in the USA graduate with crushing debt. The average 2012 university graduate was nearly $30,000 in debt, and many medical students have debts totalling over $300,000. No student can afford to ignore the costs of education, and no parents send their child off to university imagining they will emerge unemployed, or worse yet, unemployable.

(42) .....

Our jobs represent an important part of our lives, but we do not live strictly to work. We spend time in eager pursuit of many activities in life in spite of the fact that no one pays us to do them – getting and staying married, raising children, enjoying the company of friends, reading books, travelling, gardening, cooking, playing sports and so on.

(43) .....

To put the matter as straightforwardly as possible, worth cannot be based solely on economic terms. While we can calculate the value of a college education in dollars, doing so omits more than it captures. We are not just wage earners and wealth creators. We are also citizens and human beings, whose educations can 'pay off' in far more important and enduringly meaningful ways.

A Yet that's just what Amy did. She went back to education and started medical school. All in all, this career change cost her dearly. More than ten years of her life and literally thousands of dollars in additional educational costs and lost income.

B However, there are problems with assessing the worth of a university education strictly in terms of employment and earnings. We need to remember that having a job is not the only thing which makes life worth living.

C Statistics concerning job and graduate and professional school placement rates really do matter. And so do statistics concerning starting salaries, continuing employment and lifetime earnings.

D But it doesn't just prepare us for life. It helps us discover what it means to feel truly alive, and to develop habits that make life worth living.

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E Landing a job straight after university paid her handsomely. Every day, her work presented her with business problems that required her to hone her critical thinking skills, solve complex problems, and speak and write effectively.

F This story illustrates important lessons about the true worth of a university education. Foremost among these is the realization that the purpose of university is not merely to prepare for a job or career. It is not even to develop the requisite skills to compete successfully in an increasingly unforgiving and rapidly changing global market.

G At its best, education does not just provide career training and job placement. It also helps us to find our path in life, by challenging us to examine ourselves, the world around us, and our vision of the kinds of lives and world we hope to build.

H Her business education had prepared her to succeed, but not to do work that was meaningful and fulfilling. Amy noticed that her workmates were miserable. They had expensive tastes in clothes and cars, but loathed their jobs. They were making lots of money but they found no real fulfilment in the work they were doing.

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