COLEGIO SAN JOSÉ
JESUITAS – AREQUIPA

NAME: _____

4F Reading

How time changes us

I can understand a text about how personality changes over time.

Revision: Student's Book page 48

1 Read the text. Find words in the text which match the definitions below.

a believe without proof
b weaken
c affect, influence
d likely to show or possess
e receive advantage, profit, improve
f be permanent and not change

Reading Strategy

Remember that multiple-choice questions about a text:

- always follow the order of the text.
- sometimes specify what part of the text they refer to by mentioning a paragraph.
- may relate to the overall meaning of the text rather than to a specific part. (If so, this will be the final question.)

2 Read the Reading Strategy. Then look at questions 1–5. Which questions refer to a specific paragraph? Which question refers to the text as a whole?

Your true self

(1) Most of us consider our personality to be an integral and unchanging part of who we are, and for decades psychologists have more or less assumed that our main personality traits are fixed by the age of 30. But now mounting evidence is undermining that notion; personality is far more mutable than we thought. That may be a little unsettling, but it's also good news for the almost 90% of us who wish our personalities were at least a little different.

(2) There's no doubt that personality is partly genetic, but experiences in childhood also shape our personalities. Research shows that young children become more extroverted and work harder when surrounded by other kids with these traits. Parental behaviour has an impact, too. Jerome Kagan at Harvard University has found that if parents encourage timid infants to be sociable and bold, they grow up to be less shy and fearful.

(3) Genes and environment interact in complex ways to shape our personality, and this process doesn't stop when we reach adulthood. It's becoming clear that major life events can have long-lasting impacts on personality at any age. For example, going through a divorce makes women more extroverted and more open to experience, while men become less conscientious, according to one US study.

(4) Becoming unemployed can have a dramatic effect on well-being. 'It's probably the life event that has the biggest impact,' says Christopher Boyce at the University of Stirling, UK. And he has found that the impact on personality is twice as big, tending to make people less conscientious and less agreeable. Moving to a new town or country might influence your personality too – people living in New York tend to be highly neurotic, for example, while Londoners score low on agreeableness.

(5) The extent to which environmental factors shape our characters over a lifetime is remarkable. In work published last year, psychologist Wendy Johnson and her colleagues at the University of Edinburgh compared results from personality tests taken by people when they were aged 14 and again at 77. 'We couldn't find any evidence for stability in individual personality characteristics,' she says.

(6) There is also growing evidence that we can actively shape our own personality – and would benefit from doing so. Psychologists continue to debate the extent to which personality is plastic in adulthood, but there is now no doubt that it can and does change. And that's good news for all of us. Knowing that you are not 'set' by 30 is empowering. You can think: 'I'm not stuck with who I am. I can change,' says Boyce.

3 Read the text. Choose the correct option (a–d).

1 The idea that our personality does not change much after the age of 30 is one which
a psychologists have always doubted.
b most people find uncomfortable.
c has been undermined by advances in genetics.
d is not supported by the results of research.

2 According to the study mentioned in paragraph 3, the experience of getting divorced tends to
a affect men and women differently.
b have a bigger effect than genetics.
c make people generally more outgoing.
d affect people differently depending on their age.

3 The effect on your personality of losing your job is
a less dramatic than moving house.
b as profound as its effect on your well-being.
c the same as the effect of moving to New York.
d far bigger than its effect on your well-being.

4 The research in paragraph 5 suggests that your personality
a becomes more unstable as you get older.
b is different at different points in your life.
c is more affected by environment when you are young.
d only becomes fixed when you reach your seventies.

5 Overall, the main point of the text is that
a you cannot escape the personality that you are genetically destined to have.
b scientists still know very little about how our personalities are formed.
c your personality can change during adulthood and you may be able to affect the process.
d people are becoming generally more neurotic than they used to be.

LIVEWORKSHEETS