

Experience: I found a fortune in a charity shop

Read the article from The Guardian on the following page and answer both tasks.

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. Andy Hewson worked in a charity shop in London.
2. He was in the charity shop when a hippy couple brought in a lot of books.
3. He bought *The Hobbit* because he had lost the copy that he'd been reading.
4. He wanted to read the book again as he had just seen the film.
5. He read the book at work in his lunch break.
6. A woman on the train told him it might be worth a lot of money.
7. The book contained a mistake that was only in valuable first editions of the book.
8. Luckily, his girlfriend was a books specialist at Christie's in London.
9. The book was sold at auction for more money than anyone had expected.
10. Andy Hewson never went back to the Paws charity shop again.

a. Find the following expressions in the article.

1. a term used to describe a place or situation that looks messy but which nevertheless works well (two words, para 1)
2. moving first in one direction and then in the opposite direction many times (three words, para 3)
3. try to discover the facts about something (two words, para 3)
4. used for saying that you were or were not fortunate in some way (five words, para 5)
5. stay calm (three words, para 9)

b. Use the expressions to complete these sentences.

1. I wrote a letter of complaint, and the airline has promised to _____ the matter.
2. I thought the tickets had sold out, but _____, there were two left.
3. My mother's kitchen is _____. I can never find anything, but she knows exactly where everything is.
4. I thought I was going to cry, but I managed to _____.
5. We ran _____ with buckets of water, trying to put out the fire.

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Andy Hewson

10 July, 2020

- 1 I work for a charity in central London, and in 2012, there was an animal-welfare charity shop near my office called Paws. I used to go in there in my lunch break, mostly to chat to Michelle, the friendly lady who ran the shop. There was always loads of stuff in there. I guess to Michelle it was organized chaos.
- 2 I was there one day when a hippy couple started unloading hundreds of books from a camper van. I noticed a copy of *The Hobbit*. I'd bought a new copy a few weeks before because I wanted to read it again before the film came out, but I'd lost it. I thought: "Oh, that's lucky. I can carry on reading it now." Underneath it was a cartoon magazine from the 70s, Michelle said I could have the two for a pound.
- 3 It was a nice book. The dust jacket had an illustration of trees and mountains in blue, green and black with Tolkien's name underneath. I started reading it on the train back and forth to work. I'm not a fast reader, so I was still getting through it a month or so later when, as I was leaving work, a colleague came up to me. She had seen the book in my hand. She said it looked old and that I should look into whether it was worth anything.
- 4 I went on the internet to look at first editions of *The Hobbit*. I learned that there were 1,500 copies printed in the first run in 1937. You can check if you have one of these by looking for the reference to Charles Lutwidge Dodgson – better known by his pen name, Lewis Carroll – printed in notes about the novel on the dust jacket. On the first edition, the name was misspelled as "Dodgeson" and had to be hand-corrected by the publishers. I checked the back and found the crossed-out e.
- 5 I was thinking, "This can't be." As luck would have it, my girlfriend, Jenna, was working as an event coordinator at the famous London auction house Christie's at the time, so she put me in contact with a specialist in the books department. I remember him saying, "I think you might have a very valuable book."
- 6 I wrapped it in a pair of pants, put it inside a sandwich bag and took it in to show him. He asked me what I thought it was worth. I'd done my research and said that I was hoping for about £7,000. He agreed that was a good estimate.
- 7 I had to wait four months for an auction. It took place a few weeks before *The Hobbit* film came out, so there was a lot of interest. The auction was held in one of the rooms at Christie's, and about 40 buyers were there. Most of the lots before mine were going for about £2,000. I was thinking, even if I make £500, it would still be amazing. I only paid 50p for it.
- 8 So when it came to my book and the auctioneer said, "We'll start the bidding at £3,000," I was already thrilled. The bids started going up in jumps of £500: "£4,000, £4,500, £5,000." My heart was racing. "£6,000, £6,500, £7,000 ..."
- 9 I started to feel a bit sick but was trying to hold it together. The bidding had reached £10,000 before I knew it. It was very quiet in the room. My girlfriend had come to watch with a couple of her colleagues. As it got to £13,000, they were mouthing, "Oh my God!" to me. It finally sold for £16,000.
- 10 I was 28 at the time; I didn't have any serious life pressures, but I'd been in debt in the past. All I knew was that I couldn't waste that money. I don't have any rich relatives who might leave me money.
- 11 My girlfriend persuaded me to put on a photography exhibition – something I'd always wanted to do. Then I spent the rest on a deposit for a flat. I would never have been able to get the money together to buy my own place without it. We're still living here now.
- 12 I carried on going back to Paws until it closed a couple of years ago. I made a small anonymous donation but never told them what happened. I know it sounds strange, but I didn't want to change the relationship. I just went in the next lunchtime as if nothing had happened.

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