ADVANCED 2 (C1-C2)
MID-TERM TEST

READING

Good or a bad choice?

Two readers write about a big choice they made, rightly ... or wrongly.

Paul

Would you say that it's possible for a choice made by an eleven-year-old to have an effect on the rest of their life? We generally think that most significant choices are those we make regarding higher education, choice of career, where to live and so on; choices made when we are of an age to weigh up the pros and cons and decide what we think, rightly or wrongly, is good for us. We may live to regret choices we make, but ultimately those choices were our responsibilities and we either live with the consequences of a wrong choice, or we take action to change. I'm not one for regrets. The past is past and however much we might want to, we cannot go back and change it. We can learn from it, and I think, well, I hope that I have done that.

It was just after my eleventh birthday when I made a choice that undoubtedly affected my life for a long time. My class at primary school had taken a national examination; those who passed went to what we called a 'Grammar School' and those who failed went to a 'Secondary Modern'. I'm a grandfather now – so you can see how far I'm going back. I passed. However, all my best friends failed, and I was not elated by my results. Quite the opposite, I was devastated that I would be split up from my group. And being the rebellious, spoiled child that I now realise I was, I informed my parents that I did not want to take up the opportunity to go to the Grammar School, but I would stick with my friends and attend the Secondary Modern. We argued, but I was determined. They tried to make me see that the Grammar School would be better educationally for me, but once I'd made up my mind I refused to back down – a trait that I've since come to realise is self-destructive in so many ways. I once thought my parents were weak to allow me to have my own way on something so crucial at such a young age, but I now appreciate that they were showing tolerance and not putting their foot down, which could well have engendered resentment for a long time.

I went to the Secondary Modern with my friends and that first year was tough, but enjoyable. I don't think I learnt very much; the classes were large and undisciplined, but socially I became more mature. And then, and here's the **irony** of it, after a year my father changed job and we had to move home, ending up in a different town entirely. I lost my friends and I lost out on the chance of a better education. I wasn't studious by nature and kids like me need the encouragement of teachers who are not continually trying to control an unruly bunch of children who would rather be somewhere else. I got distracted, I failed my exams and I never made it to university. Sometimes I think back on what might have been. Luckily, the education system has changed and my grandchildren will never have to go through my experience, and I have learnt to listen and not to be so stubborn. I think I'm a better person now.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Anita

Some people go through their whole lives doing a job that is satisfactory, that they are content with. They pat themselves on the back for being employed at all when so many others aren't, and for not being reluctant to go to work in the mornings. Ask them about their jobs and you get 'It's OK. Pays the bills.' That was me for ten long years, and I do mean 'long'.

I was an art teacher and to a certain extent I looked forward to my working week, but I also looked forward more to the weekends, when I could do my own painting. The students I taught were enthusiastic, if not all the next Hockney or Kahlo. But to be perfectly honest, my heart was never really in it. Something inside was eating away at me and whispering that I shouldn't be there, I should be doing what I knew I had the talent for, I should be exploiting my own gift, not trying to develop the talent of others. Then I would catch myself and reprimand myself for being selfish, and anyway I had to pay the bills. Giving up a secure job and trying to become an artist in my own right was a whim I simply couldn't afford to indulge. Or could I?

It's easy to give in to your logical voice when you're considering a life-changing choice or decision, however it is also said that we shouldn't always be so risk averse. I battled with the decision for a long time; should I, shouldn't I put all my creative eggs in one basket and give up teaching. My family noticed how tired I was looking, and I found myself on the edge of depression; it was the not being able to decide that was having an impact. It felt as though I was in a vacuum – I couldn't focus properly on either my work or on my painting. Eventually the decision was taken out of my hands. I woke up one morning and discovered I simply couldn't go to work; it was the start of a breakdown. During my illness I painted and painted – it is a wonderful therapy – and I was happy with what I was doing. I began to feel alive again. And I never returned to teaching. I am now a well- established artist and yes, I can pay the bills. I think your body and mind let you know what the right choices are in cases like mine.

1) Read the article. Choose the correct option, A, B or C.

1 Paul now believes that

A eleven-year-olds shouldn't have to make important choices.

B people should stand by the choices they make at older ages.

C we are never too young to make decisions that affect our future.

2 According to Paul, if we make a bad choice we should

A live with it.

B profit from it.

C use the knowledge to advise others.

3 Regarding the decision he made at eleven, Paul

A blames his parents for allowing him to make it.

B realises a personality trait was the reason.

C regrets listening to his friends' advice.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

4 Paul uses the word 'irony' in line 39 because

A he was separated from his friends anyway.

B he did badly at the new school.

C he needed firm teachers.

5 From Anita's description of her job,

A she was clearly unhappy doing it.

B she wasn't cut out to teach.

C she changed her opinion of the work.

6 Anita's health suffered because

A she was indecisive.

B she tried to do too much.

C she felt misunderstood.

7 What advice would have been good for Anita while she was teaching?

A Consider the benefits of secured employment.

B Bear in mind how you can best help others.

C Listen to your inner voice.

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