**GP Term 4 2014 – Comprehension – Lesson 2 – Values & Norms – Happiness**

*Michael Foley considers the pursuit of happiness in today’s world.*

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| **1** | Who, in the Western world, has not been deranged by a toxic cocktail of dissatisfaction, restlessness, desire and resentment? Who has not yearned to be younger, richer, more talented, more respected, more celebrated and, above all, more sexually attractive? Who has not felt entitled to more, and felt aggrieved when more was not forthcoming? Who, in other words, has not constantly sought happiness? | 5 |
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| **2** | Yet many can hardly bear to utter a word so contaminated by the excesses of ‘happy-clappiness’ and self-help. It immediately brings to mind beatific grins, tambourines, orange robes and T-shirts saying, ‘Today is the first day of the rest of your life’. The word would draw an equally derisive snort from a philosopher and a cab driver - though both would no doubt secretly want the experience. We are too knowing, too sophisticated, too ironical, too wised up, too post-everything for a cliché like happiness. | 10 |
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| **3** | It is difficult to define happiness. The kingdom of Bhutan set up a Gross National Happiness Commission whose first task was to define what it was created to promote. So far, it has indicated four pillars, nine domains and seventy-two indicators. Yet the country is still no better than others at resisting lamentable trends. As a spokesperson glumly conceded, ‘In the last century, a young person asked to identify a hero would invariably have chosen the king – but now it is the rap artist 50 Cent’. | 15 |
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| **4** | Then there is the view that the pursuit of happiness is itself the main cause of unhappiness, that the pursuit is intrinsically self-defeating. The philosopher Kant postulated that the more we devote ourselves to the aim of enjoying life and happiness, the further we get away from true contentment. The absurdity of happiness is that it is embarrassing to discuss or even mention, impossible to define or measure, may not be achievable at all, and may even turn into its opposite if directly pursued, yet it frequently turns up unexpectedly in the course of pursuing something else. There is no tease more infuriating. | 20  25 |
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| **5** | Agonising over happiness leads only to bewilderment and frustration, or to banalities – watch less television and smile more at strangers. It is tempting to forget the whole thing and simply fall back on the couch with a remote control in one hand and a beer in the other. But rejecting these problems, which might feel liberating, is actually enslavement. As the writer Nietzsche warned, ‘He who cannot obey himself will be commanded’. Worse, the one who gains command is likely to be the average contemporary, and his solution a weak mixture of contemporary recommendations and anathemas. But who should be faulted for producing such paucity of intellect? | 30 |
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| **6** | The political thinker Karl Marx argued that much of what we assume to be independent thought is actually imposed by society. Our current age thrives on promoting the illusion that fulfilment is not only possible but easy, even inevitable. Regular economic crises expose this illusion, of course, but only to a few, for a short period, and in a limited way. Most will question the mechanics of the system but not its underlying assumption that, if there is unlimited personal freedom and infinite choice, then anyone can be anything and have anything. This is the message propagated covertly by advertising and overtly by the self-help industry. | 35  40 |
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| **7** | Thus, the ideal of our age is the ‘bubbly personality’, its symbol the smiley face and its mantra ‘Have a nice day’. As everyone presents a ‘bubbly personality’, it appears as if there must indeed be automatic, universal fulfilment. But there is another fundamental axiom of today’s popular culture: Be yourself. Should we then be surprised that this ‘bubbly’ and ‘smiley’ generation is increasingly dosing itself with antidepressants? | 45 |

*Roger Cohen considers the case for measuring levels of happiness.*

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| 1 | The Brits don’t go in much for happiness. A stiff upper lip is more the thing, and a good laugh if warranted. Trying to be happy just seems like piffle to a practical people. Undeterred, Prime Minister David Cameron has decided to create a national happiness index providing quarterly measures of how folks feel. His foray into ‘happynomics’ has prompted a deluge of criticism — ‘woolly-headed distraction’ was a mild commentary — at a time when the British face a year of cuts in everything from public-sector jobs to child benefits. The consensus seems to be that Cameron is going touchy-feely because in reality he’s wielding an axe. | 5 |
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| 2 | That may be so. But the case for trying to measure the happiness of a society, rather than its growth and productivity alone, has become compelling. When Western industrialised societies started measuring gross domestic product, the issue for many was survival. Now most people have enough — or far more than enough by the standards of human history — but the question remains: What’s going on inside their heads? Little that is good, it seems. Stress has become the byword for a spreading anxiety. This anxiety is personal, about jobs and money and health, but also general: that we can’t go on like this, running only to stand still, making things faster and faster, consuming more and more food (with consequent pressures on prices); that somehow a world of more than seven billion people is going to have to ‘downshift’ to make it, going to have to revise its criteria of what constitutes well-being. | 10  15 |
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| 3 | Just what goes into well-being is confounding. Many of the variables - like love and friendship and family relations - are hard to pin down. But British research has suggested that money itself does not confer happiness, although wealthier people tend to be happier; that employment is critical to self-esteem; that women tend to be happier than men; and that people need something beyond the material for fulfilment. | 20 |
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| 4 | Starting next month, the government will ask people to respond on a scale of zero to 10 questions such as: How happy did you feel yesterday? How satisfied are you with your life nowadays? To what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile? Scarcely extraordinary, but Andrew Oswald, a happiness economics expert at the University of Warwick, suggested that these questions were a good start, although he would have added, ‘How well have you been sleeping?’ — an important mental health indicator — and ‘How pressurised do you feel your time is?’ The important thing, he argues, is to shift ‘from the concept of financial prosperity to the idea of emotional prosperity.’ Perhaps that’s the 21st-century indicator we need: gross emotional prosperity, or G.E.P. The Office for National Statistics, which will do the survey, has been conducting an online debate. Answers suggest that the British link happiness to bird song, knowing themselves, the environment, responsible pet ownership, contributing to society, going out into the wild and reading Socrates. | 25  30  35 |
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| 5 | Clearly, ‘happynomics’ is no precise science, and how the happiness index will link to policy remains to be seen. But the idea is to put value on things that don’t have price tags. Open spaces, clear air, security, release from pressure — these are things of growing importance and scarcity. Then the question becomes: How do you promote them while at the same time creating the jobs needed in all Western societies? Growth is of course a large part of the answer, but it can’t be all the answer any longer. There are moments linked to nature, to finding time, to feeling the transcendent power of the human spirit. Emotional prosperity is not the next e-mail in a relentless life. So I’m ready to give Cameron the benefit of the doubt. It’s a tough sell in a grim economy, but it captures a need among dislocated people to connect more. | 40  45 |
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| Read the passages in the insert and then answer **all** the questions which follow below. Note that up to fifteen marks will be given for the quality and accuracy of your use of English throughout this Paper.  Note: When a question asks for an answer IN YOUR OWN WORDS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE and you select the appropriate material from the passage for your answer, you must still use your own words to express it. Little credit can be given to answers which only copy words or phrases from the passage.  **Questions on Passage 1**  **1a.** What does the author mean by the phrase ‘toxic cocktail’ (line 1)? **Use your own words as far as possible**.  ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………..………………………….[2]   1. Using material from paragraphs 2 to 5 of passage 1, summarise the reasons why the author feels that the pursuit of happiness is problematic.   Write your summary in **no more** than 120 words, not counting the opening words which are given below. **Use your own words as far as possible**.  The author feels that the pursuit of happiness is problematic because ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………………………………………  ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………………………………………  ………………………………………………………………………………………………[8]     1. According to the author, why do we not question the underlying assumption of the system (line 38)? **Use your own words as far as possible**.   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………  ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..............[3]   1. Why does the author think that we should not be surprised that this generation is ‘increasingly dosing itself with antidepressants’ (line 46)? **Use your own words as far as possible**.   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………  ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..............[3]  **Questions on Passage 2**   1. Identify and explain a metaphor that reflects the attitude of the British public towards PM David Cameron’s foray into ’happynomics’ (line 4). **Use your own words as far as possible**.   ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….....................................................................................................................................................[2]   1. Why does the author consider stress ‘a spreading anxiety’ (line 14)? **Use your own words as far as possible**.   …………………………………………………………………………………………………  ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..............[2]   1. What is the dilemma suggested by the writer in linking happiness to policy (lines 37-38)? **Use your own words as far as possible**.   …………………………………………………………………………………………………  ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..............[2]   1. Michael Foley observes that the pursuit of happiness can lead to unhappiness while Roger Cohen sees a silver lining in our attempts to measure happiness.   How much emphasis does your society place on the pursuit of happiness? Do you think this is beneficial?  Quote:  Explanation:  Focus – degree of emphasis (extent of agreement)  Whether it is beneficial or not? (applicability)  Review the impact  …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………  ……………………………………………………………………………………………  ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………  ……………………………………………………………………………………………  ……………………………………………………………………………………………  …………………………………………………………………………………………[8] | For Examiner's Use  For Examiner's Use  For Examiner's Use  For Examiner's Use  For Examiner's Use  For Examiner's Use |