

Reasons to be cheerful?

WORKSHEET A

Sam

Whenever I watch the TV news I see things that make me anxious about the future. The current economic crisis is making me question various assumptions I had until recently – for example that I would probably never be unemployed, that economic growth would carry on indefinitely, and that when I got to my parents' age I would have a higher standard of living than they do now. And then there are the huge environmental problems around the corner. What will happen to food production as the planet continues getting hotter? What will happen to our way of life when we run out of vital natural resources such as oil?

Michael

Sometimes I look around me in Britain and I can't believe the number of people with long faces. It's partly the media's fault, though: on the front pages of most newspapers there's nothing but doom and gloom – crime, political scandals, global warming, etcetera. Every day the papers give the public something to complain about, and eventually it becomes a habit – I'm sure there are people who'd hate it if they didn't have anything to grumble about.

The truth is we live in a privileged part of the world at a privileged time in history. We have a standard of living beyond the wildest dreams of our great-grandparents. We live in a democracy and have freedom of speech. We have better healthcare and better food, which is why we live longer. Everyone has the opportunity to get an education, and to travel.

Sure, we've got a short-term economic crisis, but the long-term trend is for things to get better – so please can we cheer up a bit?

Margaret

I'm very grateful for a lot of things in my life but I see worrying changes in society and wonder how they will affect my grandchildren.

When I was growing up in the 1950s, life was harder in lots of ways – we were poorer, for a start – but there was more of a sense of community. We trusted and helped each other, whereas these days it seems a lot of people don't even know who their neighbours are.

Too many people these days seem obsessed with earning as much money as possible, then finding new ways to spend it. They have less time for each other. It's not wealth that makes you happy, though, is it? I'm not sure they have a better quality of life than we used to. In some ways it seems things are going in the wrong direction.

Reasons to be cheerful?

WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

Decide for which of the three people (Sam, Michael, Margaret) the following statements are true.

1. They believe things will probably get better in the future.
2. They mention environmental problems.
3. They mention future generations.
4. They are not certain whether our current standard of living is better than in the past.
5. They mention the media.

Exercise 2

Decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F), or if the text doesn't say (D).

1. Margaret thinks it is a good thing to know who your neighbours are.
2. Michael thinks the media can affect people's attitudes.
3. Sam thinks he has less chance of becoming unemployed than he used to.
4. Sam does not have a good standard of living.
5. Margaret believes there is less of a sense of community these days.
6. Michael thinks life in Britain is better than in some other parts of the world.
7. Michael thinks British people's great-grandparents would not have been surprised by the rise in the standard of living that has taken place since they were alive.
8. Sam believes global warming is taking place.

Exercise 3

Answer the questions below.

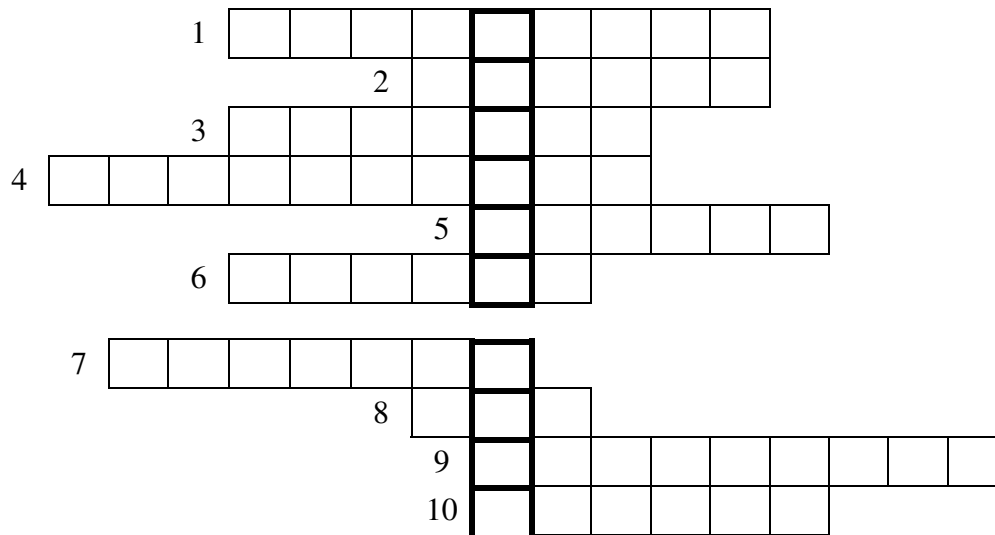
1. What is Michael referring to when he says 'it becomes a habit'?
2. Sam mentions three ways in which he is less optimistic now than he used to be – what are they?
3. Why does Michael think people live longer these days?
4. Michael mentions something that he doesn't think will last a long time – what is it?
5. Which 'worrying changes' does Margaret refer to?

Reasons to be cheerful?

WORKSHEET C

Exercise 4

Complete the crossword below. If all the words are correct the two words that complete the expression 'look on the _____', which means to focus on positive rather than negative aspects of a situation, will read from top to bottom.



1. Michael thinks there are lots of people who should stop _____.
2. Sam used to assume economic _____ would never stop, but now he is not sure.
3. Margaret doubts whether young people's _____ of life has improved.
4. Michael believes people are _____ to be living in Britain today.
5. Michael believes the standard of living of people in Britain today is far _____ than that of their great-grandparents.
6. Margaret thinks many people believe _____ is more important than it really is.
7. Watching the TV news makes Sam _____.
8. Sam believes _____ is essential to our current way of life.
9. Michael refers to the fact that Britain is a _____.
10. Margaret believes that in lots of ways life today is _____ than it was in the 1950s.