



Prova d'accés a la Universitat (2008)

Anglès

Model 3

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions in English. USE YOUR OWN WORDS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE.

Time allowed: 1 hour and 30 minutes. Total score: 10 points.

Happiness is being young or old, but middle age is misery

According to a worldwide study of happiness, people are most likely to become depressed in middle age. The team of economists leading the work found that we are happiest towards the beginning and end of our lives, leaving us most miserable in middle years between 40 and 50.

The results, published in the journal *Social Science & Medicine*, showed that people's levels of happiness followed a pattern that was remarkably consistent in the vast majority of countries the researchers looked at, from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe. For both men and women in the UK, the probability of depression reached its highest point at around the age of 44. In the US, men were most likely to be unhappiest at 50, while for women the age was 40.

Andrew Oswald, from the University of Warwick, and David Blanchflower, from Dartmouth College in the US, led a study of more than 2 million people from 80 countries to find if happiness was related to age. They found that the signs of mid-life depression were consistent across many groups of people, irrespective of socio-economic status, whether they had children in the house, were divorced, or were facing changes in jobs or income.

"What causes this pattern and its similar shape in different parts of the developed and even often developing world, is unknown," said Oswald. However, one possibility is that individuals learn to adapt to their strengths and weaknesses. Another possibility is that cheerful people live systematically longer. A third possibility is that older people might compare their lives with their equals'. Seeing their friends die could mean people value their remaining years more highly.

Oswald added that only in their 50s do most people emerge from their low period. "But encouragingly, by the time you are 70, if you are still physically fit then on average you are as happy and mentally healthy as a 20-year-old," he said. One wonders whether realising that such feelings are completely normal in mid-life might help people survive this phase better.

Adapted from 'The Guardian', January 29th 2008.

Vocabulary: low period = a period of uncertainty.



1. Say whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE. Explain WHY using your own words OR finding evidence in the text. NO marks are given for only TRUE or FALSE. (1 point)

- a) People are usually less happy in middle age.
- b) People's level of happiness follows a similar pattern in most countries.
- c) Mid-life depression is more frequent among people who have children in the house or are divorced.
- d) People who are 70 can be as happy as people who are just 20.

2. In your own words and based on the ideas from the text, answer the following questions. (2 points)

- a) What makes the researchers believe that happiness is related to age and not to other factors?
- b) How can the results of this study help middle-aged people?

3. Find in the text words or phrases which mean the same as the following (1 point):

- 1) A group of people who work together for a particular purpose.
- 2) Notably, extraordinarily.
- 3) Happy and joyful.
- 4) To ask oneself.

4) Follow the instructions for each question and answer them (2 points):

4.1) Write a question for the underlined words of the sentence below.

'I've been practising sport for two hours'.

4.2) Finish this sentence so that it means the same as the sentence before it:

'People of all ages can play this game'.

This game _____

4.3) Finish this sentence so that it means the same as the sentence before it:

'You should relax and take things easy', she told me.

She advised me _____

4.4) Finish this sentence so that it means the same as the sentence before it:

'I would like to be younger'.

I wish _____

5. Choose ONLY ONE of the following options. (4 points)

Write a composition of 120-150 words on:

- a) Do you think happiness is related to age? What do you think makes people happy? Explain.
- b) Explain the advantages and disadvantages of being the age you are now.