

THEME 4 TRADITIONS READING SKILL (COUNT ME IN)

A. Read the texts and answer the questions.

They Make It Happen: Travel Back In Time

The Amish in the USA are a German and Swiss descendant community. They are famous for their lifestyle as they resist against most of the changes in time. They do their best to preserve their traditions in social life. They do not benefit from most of the advantages of modern technology because they see it as a threat to their traditions and way of life. Their children go to school until a certain age. They use horses and buggies or bikes for transportation within the community. Their economy is based on farming. They have their own style of wedding ceremonies and funerals. Gas lanterns light their houses. As you can guess, their style of dress is plain. They live on fertile lands in their traditional houses. Thousands of people want to witness this “resistance against time” on site and visit Amish communities. There are hotels for these visitors nearby. Most visitors feel impressed. Here are two visitor comments:

Jamal from Morocco: “It was incredible. They reminded me of my childhood days in the village, in some ways. We used to wake up to the sound of roosters at dawn and go to the farm. We used to make our own bread and eat traditional dishes. We used to gather together in one of the houses of the village in the evening and have chats. This was a way to socialize. There was no technology, at all. We didn’t even have electricity. We used to have gas lanterns and fire to light the house. It’s difficult to believe but the Amish still have these. Evenings without TV or computers may sound to be dull and boring, but those were more enjoyable times. I don’t know why. The Amish don’t see school as an important place, but in my childhood we all went to school because our parents wanted us to be well-educated and have a better life than theirs. Of course they were state schools with very strict teachers and firm discipline. I really miss those days and this visit to an Amish community gave me a sense of those days.”

Kate from the UK: “It was a travel back in time. I noticed many similarities with our past lifestyle in the countryside. Children and teenagers used to play with each other and animals on wide open spaces. We didn’t use to go away from home to parks or movies. School was another chance to share with friends. Adults used to spend most of their time helping each other with the work on and around the farm. There were limited activities in social life but people were happier. Fashion industry was not advanced then. People used to dress in similar ways. I mean, plain and modest dresses were very common. Few people had cars in the countryside, so most people used to travel by horse and buggies. Technology was not only limited in transportation but almost in everything. Fortunately, we had electricity and black&white TV sets. Some houses had telephones and we could use them in emergencies. We went to state schools. There were a few universities and going to a university was more difficult, so we didn’t use to focus much on university education. With this visit, I remembered what it was like to be part of that kind of lifestyle. The smell of the soil, horses, cows, fresh milk... It was incredible.”

1. What is special about the Amish lifestyle?
2. What were the ways to socialize in Morocco and the UK?
3. What did Jamal’s parents think about education?
4. How did people use to light their houses in Morocco when Jamal was a child?
5. How was the UK different from Morocco in technology when they were children?

B. Read the text and fill in the chart about changes in lifestyles and customs as in the example.

Changes have always been part of human life, but revolutionary changes from the last quarter of the 20th century up to date have put the 21st century generations to the center of comfort, speed and worldwide communication. While younger generations enjoy a technology based and comfortable form of life, the elderly are not happy about this new lifestyle because they cannot keep up with it and many customs and traditions disappear. Perhaps the most objective comments could come from middle children of both centuries as they are old enough to remember the 70s, 80s, 90s, at the same time young enough to benefit from the 21st century advantages.

Last month, in one of his interviews, Dr. Alex Hunter, a contemporary history professor of Romania, gives examples of life in both centuries through his own life. “The computer arrived. Before that, we used to look up words in dictionaries, and facts in encyclopedias. We used to use phone books to find telephone numbers. In time, these traditional methods of searching disappeared and they are a thing of the past now. People refer to search engines or mobile devices for these now. The arrival of digital cameras killed the tradition of keeping pictures in photo albums as they have memories for storage. We used to keep pictures in photo albums and showing them to friends or guests was a custom during visits or family gatherings. Few people keep photo albums now as almost everyone shares pictures online nowadays. The Internet and social media have caused a bigger gap. Numerous things have changed. Here is a simple example: We used to send postcards to the beloved ones or visit them to celebrate occasions, but now people feel too lazy to do these things. They share messages or good wishes on social media platforms. People used to have face to face communication and chats, but now they run the communication via social media platforms. It is not only the Internet based changes, of course. Even toys have changed in today’s global world. There are global toy shop chains now and children play the same or similar toys all around the world. In the past, making toys for yourself such as toy cars, baby dolls was a tradition...”

Changes come with advantages and disadvantages, but they will be part of human life forever. Today’s technological wonders such as drones, space ships, computers will be a primitive thing of the past some day. What is your future thing of the past?

Developments and innovations	Past habits before innovations	Newer form of actions and habits in the 21st Century
E.g. Arrival of computers	People used to use traditional methods of searching. They used to look up words in dictionaries and facts in encyclopedias.	People refer to search engines or mobile devices.
Arrival of digital cameras		
The Internet and social media platforms		
Toy shop chains		