

Student's Name _____

Date _____

Read this short article and see how much you can understand. Underline the words or expressions that you don't know. Don't use a dictionary for the moment.

My First Job

I was fifteen when I got my first paid job. My parents ran the local post office in Rosenallis, the small midland village where we lived. There were three postmen who delivered the post around the parish on bicycles. During the summer, they each had two weeks holidays, which were normally covered by somebody in the area who was on the dole. But in 1978 there was nobody who was interested so my parents suggested that I should do it. I was delighted. The previous Christmas I'd got a fantastic racing bike with 4 gears so this was the perfect chance to try it out.

The post arrived in the village post office every morning at 6.30 from Portlaoise, which is the main town in the county. It came by van and on Friday mornings it was escorted by a Garda squad car because the money to pay the weekly old age, widow's and disability pensions was in the postbag.

Along with my mother, the postmen sorted the letters and parcels into the three different post rounds. Then each of them organised his bundle of letters. The rounds were between 10 and 15 miles long, on small country roads. Many people lived down long lanes, which in the winter was difficult because they were very muddy but in the summer it was fine. I'm sure it must have rained sometimes but all my memories are of beautiful summer mornings.

I knew nearly all the people on the round and they often invited me to come in for tea and cake. Generally I stopped in the Protestant houses because at that time Protestant women were famous for their excellent baking.

Although the regular postmen wore a uniform, I didn't have one but I did borrow a postman's hat, which I wore very proudly. Most days the round took three or four hours because you didn't have post for everybody every morning. But when the ESB bills arrived the round was much longer because ever house

got one. On the other hand, when I finished later than 11.30, I got paid overtime.

Two of the routes were on mostly flat ground so the cycle was very easy but the third went up to the top of the Slieve Bloom Mountains and even if these mountains in the midlands are not the Alps, it was hard work pushing my bike up the hill. On the same route there was a huge, old, house with a very fierce Alsatian dog. Generally he was chained up but I remember one morning when he came running at me as I was going up the steps to the front door. I was terrified but luckily the owner of the house opened the door before the monster got to me and called the dog off.

I was paid every Friday in cash - £ 52 a week, which for a teenager was a lot of money in 1978, especially as I didn't have to pay any tax. I saved nearly all the money I earned and the following Easter my school organised a trip to visit Moscow and St. Petersburg (or Leningrad as it then was) and I used my savings to pay for the trip.

Comprehension Questions

Are these statements True (T) or False (F) ?

1. The writer got the job because he was unemployed.
2. The Gardai travelled with the post van on Fridays to protect the pension money.
3. The writer was very happy when his parents asked him to do the job.
4. The worst thing about the job was the bad weather.
5. The writer was paid overtime for delivering the pensions.
6. Only one of the rounds involved cycling up hills.
7. The writer sometimes stopped on the route to have something to eat.
8. The writer wore a uniform.
9. The Slieve Bloom Mountains are about the same height as the Alps.
10. In one house where the writer delivered the post there was a monster.
11. The writer bought a new bicycle with the money he earned.
12. The writer thinks he was well-paid.
13. The writer is your teacher.

Vocabulary Check

Find words or expressions in the text which mean the same as:

1. Unemployed
2. Before
3. Police car
4. Very pleased
5. Special clothes worn for work
6. Money paid by the government to people who are retired, whose husbands have died or who cannot work for health reasons
7. Very good (X 2)
8. Money you put in a bank, post office, credit union or building society to use in the future.
9. Very afraid
10. Very big
11. A person between the ages of 13 and 19

Over to you!

You are going to tell the class about either your first job or your last job.

Before you begin make some notes to help you. You can use your dictionary or ask your teacher to help you with vocabulary.

Think about these points. You have 15 minutes to prepare

- What was the job?
- When did you do this job?
- Where did you do the job?
- How long did you do the job for?
- How did you get the job?
- What exactly did you have to do in the job?
- How did you get on with your employer/boss?
- How did you get on with your colleagues/workmates?
- What did you like about the job?
- What did you not like about the job?
- Was it well-paid?
- Was it part-time or full-time?
- Would you do this job again?

Follow Up Sample Questions

1. Who helped his family by bringing farm workers their lunch?
2. Who learned to sew from a friend of his father?
3. Who delivered messages on foot?
4. Who picked tomatoes?
5. Who knows how to repair the brakes of a car?
6. Who covered for her mother when she was away on holidays?
7. Who had to work in very hot weather?
8. Who sold children's clothes?
9. Who owned his own shop?
10. Who never got lost?
11. Who had a lot of responsibility when she was very young?
12. Who worked in a hospital?
13. Who told lies to her customers?
14. Who helped on a farmers' collective?
15. Who had to do stock taking?
16. Who was the personal shopper for a rich business man?