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# Choices in Life

## Pre-Class Tasks

### 1 Mini-Research

Interview your friends about their opinions on the following questions.

1. If you have a well-paid job, will you give it up and try a new business that is full of uncertainty but you really like? Why or why not?
2. When facing a difficult situation in life, what will you choose to do?

### 2 Co-Learning

Watch a video clip and discuss the following questions in a group.

1. What makes a choice hard according to the video?
2. What are our understandings about hard choices?
3. Do you agree with the speaker's opinion on choices? Why or why not?

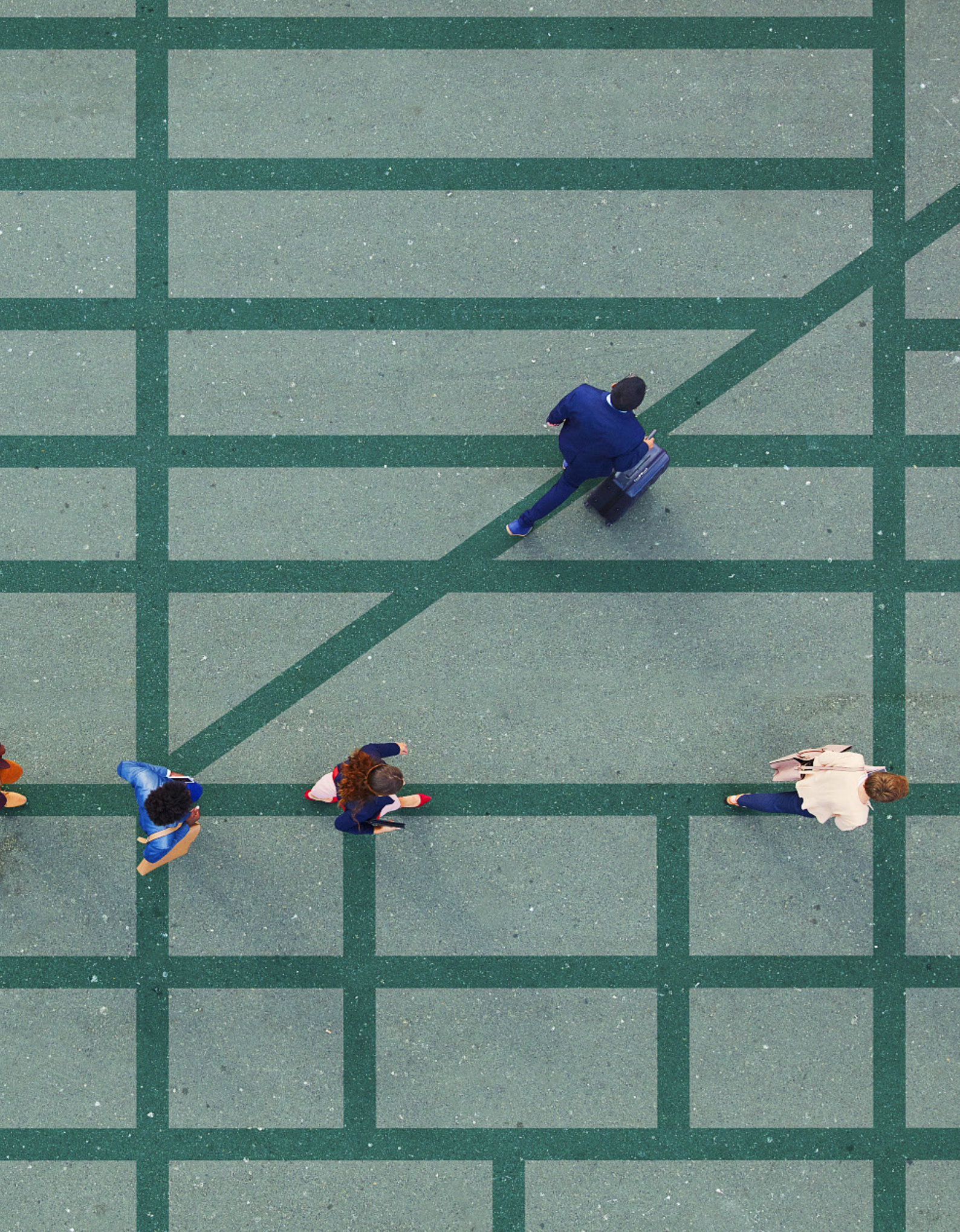
### 3 Presentation

Instead of living a life of ease, many people in history made important life choices to make contributions to the society, the country, or the world. Make a presentation introducing one of them and discuss what kind of life we should pursue.



VIDEO CLIP







AUDIO CLIP

# We Are What We Choose

Jeff Bezos

- 1 As a kid, I spent my summers with my grandparents on their ranch in Texas. I helped fix windmills, vaccinate cattle, and do other chores. We also watched soap operas every afternoon, especially *Days of Our Lives*. My grandparents belonged to a Caravan Club, a group of Airstream trailer owners who travel together around the U.S. and Canada. And every few summers, we'd join the caravan. We'd hitch up the Airstream to my grandfather's car, and off we'd go, in a line with 300 other Airstream adventurers. I loved and worshipped my grandparents and I really looked forward to these trips. On one particular trip, I was about 10 years old. I was rolling around in the big bench seat in the back of the car. My grandfather was driving. And my grandmother had the passenger seat. She smoked throughout these trips, and I hated the smell.
- 2 At that age, I'd take any excuse to make estimates and do minor arithmetic. I'd calculate our gas mileage—figure out useless statistics on things like grocery spending. I'd been hearing an ad campaign about smoking. I can't remember the details, but basically the ad said, every puff of a cigarette takes some number of minutes off your life. I think it might have been two minutes per puff. At any rate, I decided to do the math for my grandmother. I estimated the number of cigarettes per day, estimated the number of puffs per cigarette

and so on. When I was satisfied that I'd come up with a reasonable number, I poked my head into the front of the car, tapped my grandmother on the shoulder, and proudly proclaimed, "At two minutes per puff, you've taken nine years off your life!"

- 3 I have a vivid memory of what happened next, and it was not what I had expected. I expected to be applauded for my cleverness and arithmetic skills. That's not what happened. Instead, my grandmother burst into tears. I sat in the backseat and didn't know what to do. While my grandmother sat crying, my grandfather, who had been driving in silence, pulled over onto the shoulder of the highway. He got out of the car and came around and opened my door and waited for me to follow. Was I in trouble? My grandfather was a highly intelligent, quiet man. He had never said a harsh word to me, and maybe this was to be the first time? We stopped beside the trailer. My grandfather looked at me, and after a bit of silence, he gently and calmly said, "Jeff, one day you'll understand that it's harder to be kind than clever."
- 4 What I want to talk about is the difference between gifts and choices. Cleverness is a gift; kindness is a choice. Gifts are easy—they're given after all. Choices can be hard. You can seduce yourself with your gifts if you're not careful, and if you do, it'll probably be to the detriment of your choices.
- 5 We humans—plodding as we are—will astonish ourselves. We'll invent ways to generate clean energy and a lot of it. Atom by atom, we'll assemble tiny machines that will enter cell walls and make repairs. As a civilization, we will have so many gifts. How will you use your gifts? And will you take pride in your gifts or pride in your choices?
- 6 I got the idea to start Amazon 16 years ago. I came across the fact that Web usage was growing at 2,300 percent per year. I'd never seen or heard of anything that grew that fast, and the idea of building an online bookstore with millions of titles—something that simply couldn't exist in the physical world—was very exciting to me. I had just turned 30 years old, and I'd been married for a year. I told my wife MacKenzie that I wanted to quit my job and go do this crazy thing that probably wouldn't work since most start-ups don't, and I wasn't sure what would happen after that. MacKenzie told me I should go for it. As a young boy, I'd been a garage inventor. I'd invented an automatic gate closer out of cement-filled tires, a solar cooker that didn't work very well out of an umbrella and tinfoil, baking-pan alarms to entrap my siblings. I'd always wanted to be an inventor, and she wanted me to follow my passion.
- 7 I was working at a financial firm in New York City with a bunch of very smart people, and I had a brilliant boss that I much admired. I went to my boss and told

him I was going to start a company selling books on the Internet. He took me on a long walk in Central Park, listened carefully to me, and finally said, “That sounds like a really good idea, but it would be an even better idea for someone who didn’t already have a good job.” That logic made some sense to me, and he convinced me to think about it for 48 hours before making a final decision. Seen in that light, it really was a difficult choice, but ultimately, I decided I had to give it a shot. I didn’t think I’d regret trying and failing. And I suspected I would always be haunted by a decision to not try at all. After much consideration, I took the less safe path to follow my passion, and I’m proud of that choice.

- 8 How will you use your gifts? What choices will you make? Will inertia be your guide, or will you follow your passions? Will you follow dogma, or will you be original? Will you choose a life of ease, or a life of service and adventure? Will you wilt under criticism, or will you follow your convictions? Will you bluff it out when you’re wrong, or will you apologize? Will you guard your heart against rejection, or will you act when you fall in love? Will you play it safe, or will you be a little bit swashbuckling? When it’s tough, will you give up, or will you be relentless? Will you be a cynic, or will you be a builder? Will you be clever at the expense of others, or will you be kind?
- 9 I will hazard a prediction. When you are 80 years old, and in a quiet moment of reflection narrating for only yourself the most personal version of your life story, the telling that will be most compact and meaningful will be the series of choices you have made. In the end, we are our choices. Build yourself a great story.

## Notes to the Text

### 1. soap opera

A soap opera is a television or radio serial dealing especially with domestic situations; it is broadcast regularly, e.g. two or three times a week, or sometimes every day. The term *soap opera* originated from such dramas in the past being typically sponsored by soap manufacturers.

### 2. Amazon

In this text, it refers to Amazon.com, Inc., an American electronic commerce and technology company based in Seattle, Washington State that was founded by Jeff Bezos on July 5, 1994. Starting as an online bookstore, it has now become one of the most influential online shopping retailers and Internet companies in the world.

## New Words and Expressions

**ranch** /rɑːntʃ/ *n.* a large farm used for raising animals 牧场

**vaccinate** /ˈvæksəneɪt/ *v.* to protect a person or animal from a disease by giving them a vaccine 给……接种疫苗

**chore** /tʃɔː/ *n.* a task that you do regularly 日常琐事, 杂务

**hitch** /hɪtʃ/ *v.* (~up) to fasten sth such as a trailer to the back of a car 把(拖车等)挂在车后

**worship** /ˈwɜːʃɪp/ *v.* to love and admire sb very much 热爱, 崇拜

**estimate** /ˈestəmeɪt/ *n.* a calculation of the value, size, amount, etc. of sth made using the information that you have, which may not be complete 估计, 估算

**arithmetic** /əˈrɪθmətɪk/ *n.* the science of numbers involving adding, multiplying, etc. 算术

**gas mileage** the number of miles a vehicle can travel using each gallon of gasoline 耗油量

**puff** /pʌf/ *n.* the action of taking the smoke from a cigarette 吸, 抽

**poke** /pəʊk/ *v.* to move or push sth through a space or opening 伸出, 探出

**tap** /tæp/ *v.* to hit sb/sth quickly and lightly 轻敲, 轻拍

**proclaim** /prəˈkleɪm/ *v.* to state sth publicly and officially 宣布, 宣告

**applaud** /əˈplɔːd/ *v.* to express praise for sb/sth 称赞, 赞许

**harsh** /hɑːʃ/ *adj.* cruel, severe, and unkind 残酷的, 严厉的

**seduce** /sɪˈdjuːs/ *v.* to persuade sb to do sth by making it seem very attractive 引诱, 唆使

**detriment** /ˈdetrəmənt/ *n.* (to the ~ of sb/sth) harm or damage that is done to sb/sth 损害, 伤害

**plodding** /ˈplɒdɪŋ/ *adj.* slow or thorough and not exciting 缓慢而乏味的

**assemble** /əˈsembəl/ *v.* to put all the parts of sth together 组合, 装配

**start-up** /ˈstɑːt ʌp/ *n.* a new small company or business 新创办的小公司

**tinfoil** /ˈtɪnfɔɪl/ *n.* thin shiny metal that bends like paper

and is used for covering food 锡箔, 锡纸

**entrap** /ɪnˈtræp/ *v.* to trap someone, especially by tricking or deceiving them 使(某人)陷入圈套, 诱骗

**sibling** /ˈsɪblɪŋ/ *n.* (formal) a brother or sister 兄弟, 姐妹

**haunt** /hɔːnt/ *v.* to keep remembering sth so that you cannot forget it 萦绕于心头

**inertia** /ɪˈniːʃə/ *n.* a lack of energy or desire to move or change 惰性

**dogma** /ˈdɒɡmə/ *n.* a set of firm beliefs held by a group or organization, which others are expected to accept without argument 教义, 教条

**wilt** /wɪlt/ *v.* to become weak or tired or less confident 萎靡不振, 消沉

**criticism** /ˈkrɪtɪsɪzəm/ *n.* the act of expressing disapproval of sb/sth 批评, 责备

**conviction** /kənˈvɪkʃən/ *n.* a strong opinion or belief 信念

**bluff it out** to get out of a difficult situation by continuing to tell lies 靠说谎蒙混过关

**play (it) safe** to be careful and not take risks 谨慎行事

**swashbuckling** /ˈswɒʃˌbʌkəlɪŋ/ *adj.* enjoying adventures and fighting 爱冒险的

**relentless** /rɪˈlentləs/ *adj.* determined and never stopping your attempts to achieve sth 有恒心的, 有毅力的

**cynic** /ˈsɪnɪk/ *n.* a person who believes that people care only about themselves and are not sincere or honest 愤世嫉俗者

**hazard** /ˈhæzəd/ *v.* to say sth that is only a suggestion or guess 冒昧提出, 猜测

**prediction** /prɪˈdɪkʃən/ *n.* a statement about what you think will happen in the future 预测, 预言

**reflection** /rɪˈfleksʃən/ *n.* careful thought about sth 深思, 沉思

**narrate** /nəˈreɪt/ *v.* to tell a story in speech or writing 叙述, 描述

**compact** /kəmˈpækt/ *adj.* concise; brief 简洁的, 精练的



## Lexical and Grammar Notes

### 1. **And every few summers, we'd join the caravan. We'd hitch up the Airstream to my grandfather's car, and off we'd go...**

In these sentences, the word *would* is used to describe typical habitual behavior in the past. More examples:

*When he was a child he would often go to that library.*

*He would always be the first to come up with a solution.*

In English, both *would* and *used to* can be used to talk about past habits. However, there are some differences:

1) *Would* can only be used for actions in the past while *used to* can be used to talk about states and situations as well as actions.

*I used to have an old Rolls-Royce.*

2) *Used to* indicates the action, state, or situation described is no longer true.

*The Townhouse used to be a Greek restaurant. It's Italian now.*

### 2. **I think it might have been two minutes per puff.**

The *may/might have + past participle* structure is used to make speculations about something in the past. Here the sentence means "It is possible that it was two minutes per puff." or "Perhaps it was two minutes per puff." The structure *might have + past participle* can also be used when the event or situation referred to was possible but did not happen. For example:

*He came home alone. You shouldn't have let him do that; he might have gotten lost.*

*It is a good thing you didn't lend him the money. You might never have gotten it back.*

### 3. **A. ...my grandfather, who had been driving in silence...**

#### **B. He had never said a harsh word to me...**

Please note the difference between the past perfect progressive (*had been doing*) and the past perfect simple (*had done*). The former is used for actions or events that started before a particular time in the past and were still in progress up to that time in the past; the latter is used to talk about something that was

completed before a certain point in the past. Compare the following sentences:

*I had been looking for it for days before I found it.* (The focus is on the process of the action.)

*We had finished the job by 2 o'clock.* (The focus is on the completion of the action.)

#### 4. Choices can be hard. You can seduce yourself with your gifts...

In the two sentences, the modal verb *can* is used to express that something sometimes happens or something is possible. “Choices can be hard” means “Choices are sometimes difficult to make.” “You can seduce yourself with your gifts” means “It is possible that you seduce yourself with your gifts.” More examples:

*The Strait of Dover can be very rough.*

*Scotland can be very cold.*

In English modal verbs, *could*, *may*, and *might* can also be used to indicate possibility, but there are some differences:

- 1) *Could*, *may*, and *might* are often used to talk about the possibility that something will happen or is happening.

*They've agreed, but they could change their minds.*

*We may go climbing in the Alps next summer.*

*She might still be waiting there.*

- 2) *Can* usually expresses general possibilities, and is not normally used to talk about specific possibilities in the present or future. For example, instead of saying *It can rain tonight*, you should say *It could/may/might rain tonight*.

## Comprehension

**1** Find out information about the following and share your findings in a group.

- 1 *Days of Our Lives*
- 2 Caravan Club
- 3 Airstream

**2** Analyze the text structure and complete the following table.

Story 1 (paras. 1-5)	Jeff Bezos _____ the feelings of his grandmother out of ignorance as a kid, and through the thoughtful remarks of his grandfather, he came to learn about the difference between _____ and _____.
Story 2 (paras. 6-7)	Jeff Bezos decided to give up his current job and start a company selling _____ on the Internet by following his _____.
Further Insights (paras. 8-9)	Life to a large extent is composed of various _____, and in the end, _____.

**3** Answer the following questions.

- 1 How does the author begin the text? Why does he do so?
- 2 Why did the author do the math for his grandmother? Was it simply due to his interest in making estimates and doing minor arithmetic?
- 3 What was his grandmother's reaction? Was it what he had expected?
- 4 How does the author interpret his grandfather's words that "it's harder to be kind than clever" (para. 3)?
- 5 What would be the consequence of using gifts carelessly?
- 6 Why was the idea of building an online bookstore with millions of titles so exciting to the author?
- 7 What factors had the author taken into consideration before starting a company selling books on the Internet? Why did he make up his mind to do it ultimately?
- 8 The question "How will you use your gifts?" is asked twice in the text, in paragraphs 5 and 8. What functions does this repetition serve?
- 9 In paragraph 8, the author raises many questions beginning with "Will you." What effects does the author intend to achieve?
- 10 What have you learned from the two stories in the text?

## Word Application

**1** Complete the sentences with the proper form of the words in parentheses.

- 1 Anyone who wants to avoid this kind of flu should consider getting a \_\_\_\_\_ . (vaccinate)
- 2 We have very strict quality control measures, so anything that is defective is \_\_\_\_\_ . (rejection)
- 3 His good conduct deserves \_\_\_\_\_ and respect. (applaud)
- 4 The girl in the movie is blessed with both good looks and \_\_\_\_\_ . (intelligent)
- 5 It was a hard decision to give up a \_\_\_\_\_ offer of higher pay and choose to do something I really like. (seduce)
- 6 All theories \_\_\_\_\_ from practice and in turn serve practice. (original)
- 7 Adaptability is a critical skill in today's workforce and a key to maintaining sanity in our \_\_\_\_\_ , fast-changing world. (prediction)
- 8 Please stop yelling. Why can't you two deal with the problem in a \_\_\_\_\_ way? (civilization)
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ say this proposal is short-sighted and dangerous and thus should be vetoed. (criticism)
- 10 After hearing the news, they sat in a quiet, \_\_\_\_\_ silence. (reflection)

**2** Paraphrase the following sentences, paying special attention to the underlined parts.

- 1 I'd calculate our gas mileage—figure out useless statistics on things like grocery spending.
- 2 Cleverness is a gift; kindness is a choice.
- 3 You can seduce yourself with your gifts if you're not careful, and if you do, it'll probably be to the detriment of your choices.
- 4 I came across the fact that Web usage was growing at 2,300 percent per year.
- 5 I told my wife MacKenzie that I wanted to quit my job and go do this crazy thing that probably wouldn't work since most start-ups don't.
- 6 That logic made some sense to me, and he convinced me to think about it for 48 hours before making a final decision.
- 7 Seen in that light, it really was a difficult choice, but ultimately, I decided I had to give it a shot.
- 8 I suspected I would always be haunted by a decision to not try at all.
- 9 Will you guard your heart against rejection, or will you act when you fall in love?
- 10 Will you play it safe, or will you be a little bit swashbuckling?

**3** Complete the sentences with the proper form of the words or expressions given below.

relentless	financial	chore	calculate	come up with
a bunch of	suspect	proclaim	campaign	burst into tears

- 1 A prudent person always \_\_\_\_\_ the advantages and disadvantages before making a decision.
- 2 Simple \_\_\_\_\_ like doing dishes and taking out the trash can teach kids invaluable life lessons.
- 3 Today it's almost impossible to conduct an effective advertising \_\_\_\_\_ without the inclusion of digital elements.
- 4 The government \_\_\_\_\_ a new economic proposal that accommodates the special needs and interests of the elderly.
- 5 The board of directors \_\_\_\_\_ that Jennifer was designated to take over the position of chief financial officer.
- 6 This university supports needy students with an array of \_\_\_\_\_ aid schemes.
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_ nothing, he walked right into the trap and was caught on the spot.
- 8 His success is due to continuous efforts and a \_\_\_\_\_ pursuit of perfection.
- 9 Stung by the harshness of his words, she \_\_\_\_\_ and rushed out.
- 10 To simulate a real interview scenario, the candidate prepared \_\_\_\_\_ possible questions and asked two friends to be the interviewers.

**4** Complete the sentences with appropriate prepositions or adverbs.

- 1 It may not pay well, but \_\_\_\_\_ any rate it's a meaningful job.
- 2 The museum is open daily \_\_\_\_\_ the year.
- 3 He showed the talent for mathematics \_\_\_\_\_ an early age.
- 4 We were thinking about going to Japan, but \_\_\_\_\_ the end we went to Thailand.
- 5 As designers, we take pride \_\_\_\_\_ creating an environment that is uniquely tailored to our client's taste.
- 6 The Russian relay team will again be going \_\_\_\_\_ the gold medal at the Olympic Games.
- 7 She came close to me and lean \_\_\_\_\_ to whisper something in my ear.
- 8 The father is so proud \_\_\_\_\_ his daughter's achievements as doctor.
- 9 The police pulled \_\_\_\_\_ a speeding car and ordered the driver to show his driving license.
- 10 Although the judge had caught him telling a lie, he tried to bluff it \_\_\_\_\_.

## Grammar Application

- 1** Decide which of the words given in the box below would best complete the passage if inserted in the corresponding blanks. The words can be used **ONCE ONLY**.

A. similarities	B. pleasure	C. practice	D. but	E. overjoyed
F. process	G. pressure	H. differences	I. like	J. attractive
K. more	L. share	M. represents	N. unlike	O. overwhelmed

In reality, many choices are between things that are not that much different. The value of choice depends on our ability to perceive **1** \_\_\_\_\_ between the options. Americans train their whole lives to spot the difference. They **2** \_\_\_\_\_ this from such an early age that they've come to believe that everyone must be born with this ability. In fact, though all humans **3** \_\_\_\_\_ a basic need and desire for choice, we don't all see choice in the same place or to the same extent. When someone can't see how one choice is **4** \_\_\_\_\_ another, or when there are too many choices to compare and contrast, the **5** \_\_\_\_\_ of choosing can be confusing and frustrating. Instead of making better choices, we become **6** \_\_\_\_\_ by choice, sometimes even afraid of it. Choice no longer offers opportunities, but imposes constraints. It's not a marker of liberation, **7** \_\_\_\_\_ of suffocation by meaningless minutiae. In other words, choice can develop into the very opposite of everything it **8** \_\_\_\_\_ in America when it is thrust upon those who are insufficiently prepared for it. But it is not only other people in other places that are feeling the **9** \_\_\_\_\_ of ever-increasing choices. Americans themselves are discovering that unlimited choices seem more **10** \_\_\_\_\_ in theory than in practice.



**2** Choose the right answer from the options given in parentheses. In some cases, more than one answer is possible.

- 1 I \_\_\_\_\_ live in Paris when I was a kid. (would; used to)
- 2 When we were children we \_\_\_\_\_ go skating every winter. (would; used to)
- 3 She \_\_\_\_\_ sing in a choir, but she gave it up. (would; used to)
- 4 On Sundays he \_\_\_\_\_ get up early and go fishing. (would; used to)
- 5 Perhaps we should have taken the other road. It \_\_\_\_\_ have been quicker. (can; could; may; might)
- 6 Measles \_\_\_\_\_ be quite dangerous. (can; could; may; might)
- 7 Bill isn't here; he \_\_\_\_\_ still be waiting for a bus. (can; could; may; might)
- 8 According to the weather forecast, it \_\_\_\_\_ snow tonight. (can; could; may; might)

**3** Complete the sentences with the past perfect simple or past perfect progressive of the words in parentheses.

- 1 Before she won the gold medal, Evelyn \_\_\_\_\_ very hard. (practice)
- 2 We \_\_\_\_\_ for him for more than an hour by the time he came. (wait)
- 3 I \_\_\_\_\_ to attend the meeting, but I found at the last minute that I couldn't make it. (hope)
- 4 Laura was tired because she \_\_\_\_\_ for the whole afternoon. (read)
- 5 The pianist said that he \_\_\_\_\_ many congratulations from his fans after the concert and it was time to share his joy with them. (receive)
- 6 When she arrived, she \_\_\_\_\_ for 36 hours. (travel)
- 7 He wasn't exactly a stranger—I \_\_\_\_\_ him once before. (meet)
- 8 Robert felt pretty upset because of what Mary \_\_\_\_\_, but he tried not to think about it too much. (say)
- 9 Peter \_\_\_\_\_ hard in a company for many years before he went to college. (work)
- 10 When she got to the checkout, she realized she \_\_\_\_\_ her purse at home. (leave)

**4** Translate the following sentences into English, using the proper form of the words or expressions in parentheses.

- 1 我们热切期望将更多优质产品和服务推向市场。(look forward to)
- 2 奶奶和小贩讨价还价，直到他同意降 50 元。(take...off...)
- 3 园丁估计他得用四个小时才能除完花园的杂草。(estimate)

- 4 他说话很冲，性格倔强，可能会引起争执和不满。(harsh)
- 5 蛋糕上的花是用糖做的，不是用塑料。(out of)
- 6 面对选择，你得有追随自己的内心和直觉的勇气。(follow)
- 7 如果孩子们不喜欢你做的决定，他们就会想办法劝你改变主意。(convince)
- 8 直到今天，我还时常回想起那天的情景。(haunt)
- 9 医生把药敷在伤口上，以防感染。(guard against)
- 10 我们不能以牺牲环境为代价来换取经济增长。(at the expense of)

## Oral Practice

Work in a group and discuss the following topic.

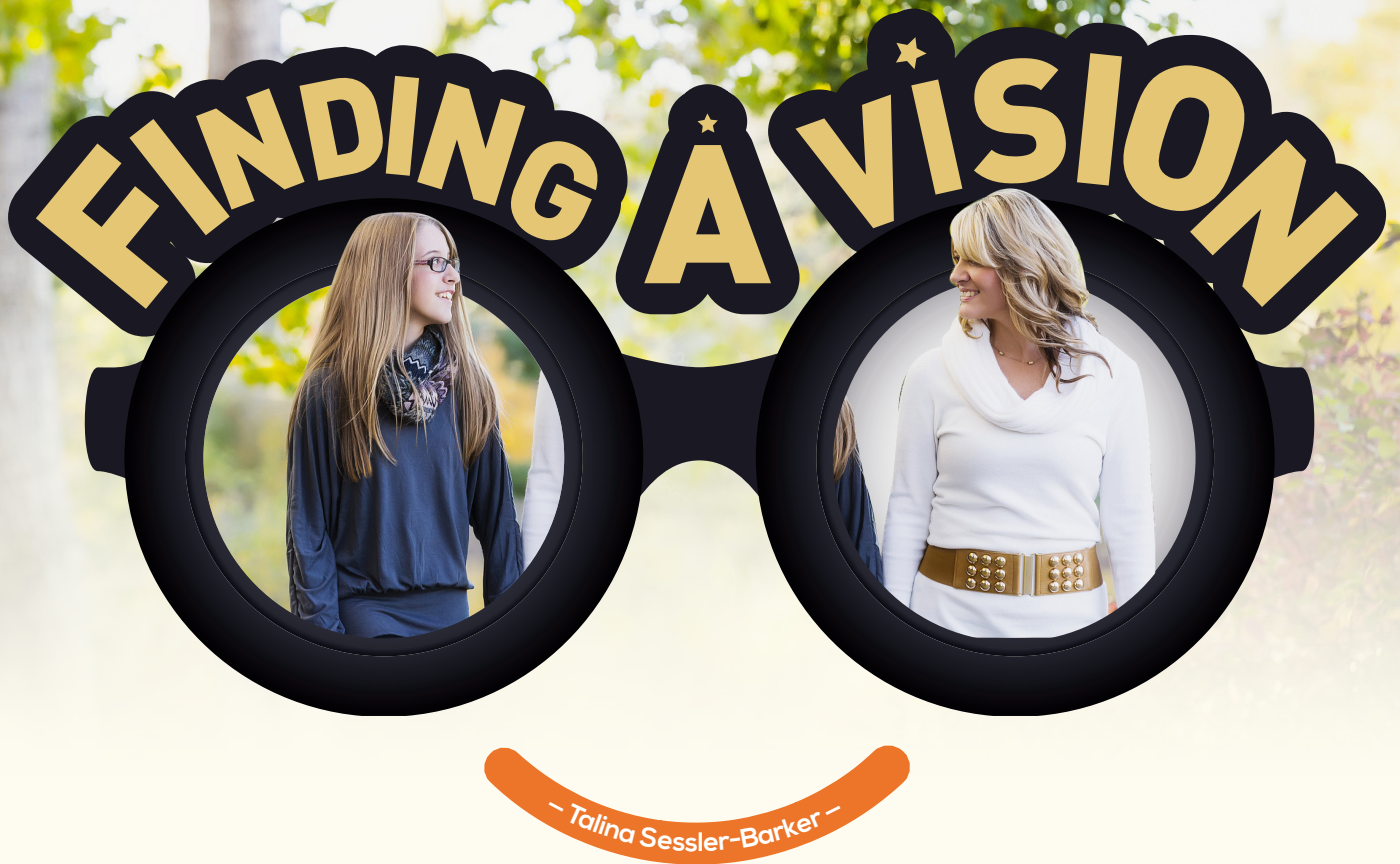
After the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 in China, many doctors, nurses, and medical researchers from across the country chose to leave their families and go to support hospitals in Wuhan. Why did they choose to do so? What did their choice mean to the people concerned?

## Writing


As a college student, you must have made some important decisions in your life, such as whether to choose liberal arts or science as your main field of study, which college or university to attend, what hobby to commit to, etc. Write an essay describing the most important decision you have made in no less than 200 words. The following questions may serve as a guide to your writing.

- 1 What is the most important decision you have made?
- 2 How did you reach that decision?
- 3 What do you think about that decision when looking back on it?





- 1 Six years ago, I went blind. Due to a severe herpes simplex virus in my eyes, I lost one of my most precious possessions: my eyesight. Tiny cold sores covered the surface of my eyes, scarring my cornea. I wasn't allowed to stand in direct sunlight or even in a brightly lit room. The light would penetrate my eyelids and cause too much pain. At the age of seventeen, I was unprepared to find myself in a dark world. Who would I be without my ability to see?
- 2 All I wanted throughout the entire summer was to be able to see people. What new cute bathing suit style was everyone wearing? Who had cut their hair or dyed it purple? I would have a conversation with someone and realize that I had no idea what facial expressions he was making. I no longer had the ability to make eye contact, a privilege I had taken for granted before. I longed to talk with my eyes. I just wasn't whole without my vision.
- 3 My parents became my sole support system. Hoping for a miracle, they took me to an eye specialist every day. No one was sure if I would ever completely recover, and if so, how long the healing process would take. Meanwhile, Mom and Dad adjusted



their own lives in order to keep my spirits up. They would take me to baseball games and out to dinner—anything to get me out of the house. However, going places was difficult. I had to wear eye patches and dark sunglasses to ease the pain of bright light. As a seventeen-year-old, this wasn't exactly the fashion statement I was trying to make.

- 4 My parents had to take care of me everywhere. At restaurants they ordered my food, arranged it on the table, and then explained where everything was on my plate so I could finally eat it. My fifteen-year-old brother took this opportunity to rearrange the food on my plate. My mom was amazing. Each day she would brush my hair and lay out a decent-looking outfit so I could walk out of the house with a little bit of pride. She was determined to keep my self-esteem as high as possible. I relied on my mom to make me feel pretty. At an age when I should have been gaining my independence, I found myself becoming increasingly dependent on my parents.
- 5 I wasn't able to drive or visit my friends. Movies were completely out of the question. Life seemed to just go on without me, as if I was never there. Fortunately, I had a wonderful friend who knew how to make me feel special. Donny and I had dated a couple of times before I lost my vision, but at that time we were just friends. He would come to my house to sit and talk with me. If the TV was on, he'd watch and I'd listen. One time, Donny took me to a baseball barbecue and introduced me to all of his friends. I had never been so happy in my entire life. He didn't care that I couldn't see his friends. He held my hand proudly and led me around. I may not have been able to see all the people I met that day, but their voices are clear in mind. I can still separate whose laughter belonged

to whom. When I close my eyes now and try to remember that day, I mostly see darkness. But I can still smell the sausage and brisket cooking on the grill. I can hear the happiness around me and Donny's voice saying, "This is my girlfriend, Talina."

- 6 I slowly began to make progress toward the end of the summer. Little by little, I was able to open my eyes. My vision was still blurred but this achievement called for a celebration. My parents were still concerned and Donny continued to stay by my side. Then I began to worry. Will I have to start my senior year wearing my thick glasses that everyone still refers to as Coke bottles? I didn't want to think about it. August crept up on me, though, and I started school with limited vision and thick glasses. As I walked through the halls, I struggled to look confident. I had a harder time cheering at pep rallies and football games. My lack of clear vision and concern with my physical appearance took the fun out of everything that I used to love. My level of self-confidence had diminished to an unrecognizable point.
- 7 At a time in my life when I expected my only concern to be to have fun, I was learning a powerful lesson. I could no longer rely on appearance to make me feel better about myself. I had to go deeper. With the support of my family and friends, I realized that feeling good about who I am on the inside is far more important. Believing that I can overcome the obstacles that I face is crucial. My identity wasn't my thick glasses. My identity was my inner strength. This inner strength allowed me to love life even when I was unable to see it. Losing my eyesight could not take away my ability to hear the voices of the people who love me. It could not steal away the fresh smell of morning or the lingering aroma of my mom's cooking. Most important, my loss could never take from me the feel of my boyfriend's hand around my own.
- 8 Six years later, I continue to need steroid eye drops to keep the virus from reoccurring. The scar tissue is slowly improving. Recently, I began to wear both contacts, which is a huge accomplishment. A day doesn't go by that I am not thankful for my progress and the lesson I learned. I am incredibly thankful for my special friend who visited me, introduced me as his girlfriend and is now my husband.
- 9 I am currently preparing for my first year of teaching. I think about which of my personal qualities I might be able to share with my students. I know how difficult it is to grow up and I want my students to believe that I understand them. If I can't teach them anything else, I hope I can get across the lesson that changed my teenage experience: True beauty is not about what you see on the outside but what you feel, sense and love from within.

## Working with Words and Expressions

Look up the following words and expressions in a dictionary and find out their meaning in the text.

- 1 herpes simplex (para. 1)
- 2 cornea (para. 1)
- 3 specialist (para. 3)
- 4 lay out (para. 4)
- 5 out of the question (para. 5)
- 6 senior year (para. 6)
- 7 pep rally (para. 6)
- 8 diminish (para. 6)
- 9 eye drops (para. 8)
- 10 contact (para. 8)

## Understanding the Text

**1** Answer the following questions.

- 1 In what order does the author recount her story? How does this order help to develop the story?
- 2 What does the author mean by saying that “My parents became my sole support system” (para. 3)?
- 3 How did the author cheer herself up and regain self-confidence?
- 4 In what sense or senses is the word “vision” used in the story?
- 5 From the story, what can you conclude about making a right choice in the face of difficulty?

**2** Paraphrase the following sentences, paying special attention to the underlined parts.

- 1 As a seventeen-year-old, this wasn’t exactly the fashion statement I was trying to make.
- 2 My vision was still blurred but this achievement called for a celebration.
- 3 August crept up on me, though, and I started school with limited vision and thick glasses.

- 4 My identity was my inner strength.
- 5 A day doesn’t go by that I am not thankful for my progress and the lesson I learned.

## Voicing Your Views

Work in a group and discuss the following topic.

Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens.  
—Carl Gustav Jung

In this text, the experiences of the author show that the process of self-exploration can lead to the discovery of one’s inner strength. Based on Jung’s words and the author’s experiences, talk about the relationship between “look outside” and “look inside.”

## Reading Between the Lines

Read the analysis of the development of this text and complete the following tasks.

This text is a piece of narrative writing that illustrates the process of how the author found who she was and what she should value, each paragraph including a clear theme. For example, in the first paragraph, the author shows her concern about her identity by the question “Who would I be without my ability to see?” In the last paragraph, she highlights the lesson that changed her teenage experience.

Find out the themes of the body paragraphs and recount how the author discovered her true self.