Intermediate 2
Unit 5 Grammar Part B
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Probability in the Past

may/might have

Simple Form: Subject + may/might + have + Past Participle + …
Example:
Situation: I went to my uncle's house last night. He didn't answer the door.

- *He may have gone out.* (Maybe he had gone out, but I'm not sure)
- *He might have been out.* (Maybe he was out, but I'm not sure)

Progressive Form: Subject + may/might + have + been + Verb+ing + …
Example:
Situation: I went to my uncle's house last night. He didn't answer the door.

- *He may have been taking a shower.* (Maybe he was taking a shower, but I'm not sure)
- *He might have been working in the backyard.* (Maybe he was working in the backyard, but I'm not sure)

may/might have vs. must have

Point:
We use "must have" when we are 100% sure about something that happened in the past, but when we are not quite sure, we ought to use "may have" or "might have".
Example:
Situation: Tom is a lazy student, but he got an A on the final exam.

- *He must have cheated on the exam.* => **I am sure that he cheated on the exam.**
- *He may have cheated on the exam.* => **I'm not sure. Maybe he cheated on the exam.**
- *He might have cheated on the exam.* => **I'm not sure. Maybe he cheated on the exam.**

Sample Questions:

William had an accident yesterday afternoon. I know him very well and I'm sure about what happened. He ……. have been driving carelessly.
a. may b. should c. must d. might

Right Answer:
C

Mary had an accident last week. I don't know her very well and I'm not sure about what happened. She ……. have been driving carelessly.
a. ought to b. should c. must d. might

Right Answer:
D

Source:
Intermediate 2 (anglophone.ir)