

Intermediate 2
Unit 5 Reading
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A Moral Dilemma

moral = ethical = relating to the standards of good or bad behavior, fairness, honesty, etc. that each person believes in, rather than to laws

moral ≠ immoral

ethical ≠ unethical

dilemma /daɪ'lem.ə/ /dɪ'lem.ə/ = a situation in which you can't decide what to do

When I was asked to confess an incident that I had never told anyone about before, the story of the English Essay Prize came easily to my mind.

Passive: I was asked to ...

Active: Somebody asked me to ...

confess = admit a mistake

incident = event, happening

come to somebody's mind = remember

essay = article = a short piece of writing on a particular subject, especially one done by students as part of the work for a course

I should have told the principal at the time. After all, I was someone he trusted, but I didn't tell him.

principal (American) = headmaster (British) = the person in charge of a school

at the time = then, at that moment

I should have told the principal. = I was expected to tell the principal, but I didn't.

after all = anyway, anyhow

trust (verb) = to believe that someone is good and honest and will not harm you, or that something is safe and reliable

trustworthy (adjective) = reliable, dependable

He had gone out of the study for some reason and in his absence, I moved aimlessly to see what was on his desk. In the middle of the desk was a small piece of paper on which was written the words "English Essay Prize Examination: History is a String of Biographies".

study = a room, especially in a house, used for quiet work such as reading or writing

➤ **for some reason** = for an unknown reason

➤ **for some reasons** = for several reasons

absence ≠ presence

aimlessly = without a purpose

string = combination; chain

biography = a real story of a person's life

A moral person would have looked away as soon as he saw the heading. I did not. The subject of the English Essay Prize was a secret not revealed to the candidates until the start of the exam. I could not resist reading it. It was wrong, but it was the sort of temptation almost everyone would have yielded to.

as soon as = when, once

heading = title, topic, subject

reveal = make sth known = disclose

I could not resist reading it. = I couldn't help reading it.

temptation = the wish to do or have something that you know you should not do or have

yield = surrender, give up

By the time the principal returned, I was looking out of the window. We must have talked about this and that, the arrangements for the Graduation Day perhaps. He was a nice man. He might have left the piece of paper in that prominent position to test me, knowing how keen I was to win the essay prize. But that wasn't his style.

arrangements = plans

graduation = finishing one's studies at a school or at a university

prominent = noticeable, easily seen

keen = very interested, eager, or wanting (to do) something very much

➤ *They were very keen to start work as soon as possible.*

➤ *She's keen **on** (playing) tennis.*

I should have told him then. It would have been easy to say, "Principal, I am afraid I saw the title for the English Essay Prize on your desk. I didn't mean to, but I will withdraw my name at once, of course."

then = at that time

I'm afraid = I'm sorry

mean = want, intend

withdraw = remove

at once = immediately, right away

The opportunity passed and did not return. We sat the three-hour paper the following morning. With the advantage of knowing the title in advance, I won. I like to think I would have won anyway, but that is not the point. I didn't set out to cheat, but it was cheating nevertheless.

paper = article, essay

in advance = beforehand

advantage = a condition giving a greater chance of success

That is not the point. = That is not true.

set out = to start an activity with a particular aim

nevertheless = however (at the beginning of the sentence), anyway (at the end of the sentence)

That was when I was eighteen, thirty-eight years ago. The fact that the details are so clear suggests that the feeling of guilt has kept the memory fresh. I have never tried to analyze my reason for keeping silent.

$18 + 38 = 56 \Rightarrow$ The writer is 56 years old now. The incident happened 38 years ago when he was 18 years old.

details = minor points

guilt = a feeling of worry or unhappiness that you have because you have done something wrong, such as causing harm to another person

analyze /'æn·ə·laɪz/ = to study something in a systematic and careful way

The obvious explanation is that I could not admit I had seen the essay title without admitting that I had been prowling round his desk. But there must have been more to it than that. I must have wanted the prize very badly. I did need it for my school career, so what secret motivation have I hidden from myself for so long? I think I know. I needed that prize to avoid further defeat by my rival who had already won the English Poetry and History Prizes. I hated him and I could not bear losing again.

obvious = clear

prowl /praʊl/ = walk quietly so that others don't notice you

I did need it = I really needed it \Rightarrow **Emphatic**

motivation = what makes you do something

further = more

defeat = the fact of losing against someone in a fight or competition, or when someone or something is made to fail

rival = opponent = a person who competes against you

bear = tolerate, put up with

Graduation Day came. I received the prize I had chosen, a large collection of poems entitled "Poetry of the English-Speaking World". It is still on my bookshelf with the Graduation Day program inside. I wonder if I should send it back to the school with this page as an explanation. It could then be put in a glass case for future students to think about.

entitled = with the title, having the title

wonder = want to know, ask oneself

if = whether = إِذَا كَأَنَّ \Rightarrow used to introduce a clause, often in indirect speech, that shows two or more possibilities

Full Text:

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He had gone out of the study for some reason and in his absence, I moved aimlessly to see what was on his desk. In the middle of the desk was a small piece of paper on which was written the words "English Essay Prize Examination: History is a String of Biographies".

A moral person would have looked away as soon as he saw the heading. I did not. The subject of the English Essay Prize was a secret not revealed to the candidates until the start of the exam. I could not resist reading it. It was wrong, but it was the sort of temptation almost everyone would have yielded to.

By the time the principal returned, I was looking out of the window. We must have talked about this and that, the arrangements for the Graduation Day perhaps. He was a nice man. He might have left the piece of paper in that prominent position to test me, knowing how keen I was to win the essay prize. But that wasn't his style.

I should have told him then. It would have been easy to say, "Principal, I am afraid I saw the title for the English Essay Prize on your desk. I didn't mean to, but I will withdraw my name at once, of course."

The opportunity passed and did not return. We sat the three-hour paper the following morning. With the advantage of knowing the title in advance, I won. I like to think I would have won anyway, but that is not the point. I didn't set out to cheat, but it was cheating nevertheless.

That was when I was eighteen, thirty-eight years ago. The fact that the details are so clear suggests that the feeling of guilt has kept the memory fresh. I have never tried to analyze my reason for keeping silent.

The obvious explanation is that I could not admit I had seen the essay title without admitting that I had been prowling round his desk. But there must have been more to it than that. I must have wanted the prize very badly. I did need it for my school career, so what secret motivation have I hidden from myself for so long? I think I know. I needed that prize to avoid further defeat by my rival who had already won the English Poetry and History Prizes. I hated him and I could not bear losing again.

Graduation Day came. I received the prize I had chosen, a large collection of poems entitled "Poetry of the English-Speaking World". It is still on my bookshelf with the Graduation Day program inside. I wonder if I should send it back to the school with this page as an explanation. It could then be put in a glass case for future students to think about.

Sample Summary:

The text is a confession of a person who cheated in an English Essay Prize Examination by accidentally seeing the title on the principal's desk. The person did not tell the principal or withdraw from the competition, but instead used the advantage to win the prize and beat a rival. The person has been feeling guilty for thirty-eight years and wonders if returning the prize would make things right.

Source:
[Intermediate 2 \(anglophone.ir\)](http://intermediate2.anglophone.ir)