

Midyear Exam
A Meaningful Life

iPhone, Beats by Dr. Dre, Louis Vuitton, Xbox, Bentley ... Many people want to buy the newest gadget, the fastest car and the most expensive watch – but what are these things really worth?

For some people, these items give them **a social status**. They're cool because they have a cool car, or they're better at the newest Xbox game. Lots of people say that purchasing new things makes them delighted. They like having new, pretty, impressive things. The problem is that people don't stay happy, and the feeling you get when you buy something new fades. There's a new iPhone. You stop liking your car. Your friend had Beats in a different color and they're so much nicer! Things get outdated and tatty, and someone else always has something better.

So, what can you buy and stay happy with? The research suggests that the best thing to spend your extra money on is doing things like travelling, learning to cook, speaking a language, skiing or surfing. What about going to the theatre, eating at a Michelin star restaurant or climbing a mountain?

In the long run, people are happier with money they spend on activities than on things. You don't remember what shoes you wore, but you remember running the marathon! When you do new things or things you enjoy, you gain life experience and memories. You can share adventures with people and tell stories. It's always fun when you meet someone who has done the same thing as you. You have an instant connection with this person and can have an amazing time comparing the things you've done and swapping stories. Even if you don't enjoy the experience, you can learn something, and often a little while later you see the positives of it. At the very least, it's a story to tell – maybe even a funny one.

Whenever I ask my French high school pupils what they do in their free time, the answer always seems to be one of the following: a) sleep, b) see my friends/boyfriend/girlfriend or c) play video games. It's rare for them to have left the city or even to have gone anywhere in particular within the city. That would, of course, cost money.

Money isn't all that easy to come by when you're young, is it? While Christmas and birthdays can leave you temporarily better off, it's always tempting to blow it all as soon as you've got it rather than putting it aside for **a rainy day**. Teenagers must then consider taking a part-time job in order to afford creating lifelong memories. Even if having a part time job is challenging, it is always rewarding for teenagers. Working brings out the best in teenagers: apart from added income, working increases confidence, creativity and sense of responsibility.

Call me boring, but I honestly do believe that *the best things in life are free*. The way I see it, no video game, jewelry or dress could **outweigh** conversations, jokes and quality time shared with family and friends. They're simply irreplaceable. We all need a change of scenery and a break from our usual routine from time to time in such a commercialized and materialistic world. Entertainment can be simple, and it doesn't always come with a price tag!

Many people my age would rather spend their money on going shopping or partying with friends, but I would always choose travelling. I've recently read online that *travelling is the only thing which you pay for, which in turn ends up making you wealthier*. I completely agree with this. The last 7 months have shown me beautiful places and interesting ways of life. I have also met so many new people whom I hope I will stay friends with for a long time.

Volunteering to help in deprived areas is another way to have fun, gain experience and make friends. While working tirelessly, young people grow into mature and responsible citizens ready to make a difference in the world.

What are you waiting for? Don't buy the latest phone. Instead, help out in your community, pack your bags and live your life.