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Man's "entire life" for sale on eBay

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THE ARTICLE

People have sold many strange things on the Internet auction site eBay, but never a whole life – until now. Ian Usher, a 44-year-old British man is selling his “entire life”. This includes his three-bedroom house in Perth, Australia and all its contents, his job, hobbies, and even his friends. Mr Usher said: "Everything that I have - the furniture in the house - all has memories attached to it. It's time to [say out with] the old, and in with the new." He explained he wanted to make a “clean break” and make a “fresh start” after splitting up with his wife. The bidding opened on June 22nd and within five hours, he had attracted 70 bids. The highest offer was just over \$625,000, which is more than the half-a-million dollars he wanted. There is no telling how much the final offer will be when bidding closes on June 29th.

Friends of Mr Jones thought the auction was a great idea. They are all willing to be introduced to the highest bidder as a potential new friend. Joy Jones, who co-owns a store in Perth where Ian used to work, said: "When Ian came up with this idea, because we had seen him go through a break-up of marriage and pain and bits and pieces, I thought it was really exciting. We thought, why not give it a go?" Ian can't wait for the sale of his life. He said: "I intend to walk out of my front door with my wallet in one pocket and my passport in the other, nothing else at all." He has no idea what the future has in store for him. "My current thoughts are to...head to the airport and ask...where the next flight with an available seat goes to, and to get on that and see where life takes me from there," he said.

WARM-UPS

1. AUCTIONS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about auctions. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

strange things / auction sites / a whole life / hobbies / clean breaks / fresh starts / great ideas / new friends / marriage break-up / bits and pieces / available seats

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. BUY MY LIFE: You are going to sell your life. Put a price next to the things in the table and write a description to make people want to buy the things in your life. With your partner(s), discuss your prices. Change partners and try to get people to buy your life.

	Price	Why you should buy this/these
My hobbies		
My possessions		
My friends		
My job		
My car		
Other _____		

4. OTHER LIVES: Rank these lives in order of the one you would like to have: 10 = 'I would die to have this life'; 1 = 'No thank you very much, I'm perfectly happy as I am'. Show your rankings to your partner and talk about them.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| _____ The President of the USA | _____ A supermodel |
| _____ The world's greatest soccer player | _____ An astronaut |
| _____ A Nobel Prize winner | _____ A very good English Teacher |
| _____ Parent of the Year | _____ A voluntary worker saving lives |

5. HEADLINE PREDICTION: With your partner(s), use the words in the "Chat" activity above to predict what the news article will be about. Once you have your story, change partners and share them. Who was closest to the real story?

6. LIFE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'life'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. A man is selling everything he has, including his friends, on eBay. | T / F |
| b. He wants to start a new life after his marriage ended. | T / F |
| c. The man is disappointed with the latest offer from an eBay bidder. | T / F |
| d. The bidding will be open until the end of the year. | T / F |
| e. The man's friends thought he was mad and tried to talk him out of it. | T / F |
| f. The man's ex-employer told him to give up and go. | T / F |
| g. The man has no idea where his life will take him next. | T / F |
| h. The man will go to the airport and let fate decide where he'll fly to. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. strange | a. offers |
| 2. whole | b. curious |
| 3. attached | c. plan |
| 4. fresh start | d. prepared |
| 5. bids | e. connected |
| 6. great | f. unfilled |
| 7. willing | g. entire |
| 8. potential | h. fantastic |
| 9. intend | i. new beginning |
| 10. available | j. possible |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. People have sold | a. not give it a go? |
| 2. out with the old, | b. he had attracted 70 bids |
| 3. make a "fresh start" | c. up with this idea |
| 4. within five hours, | d. thought the auction was a great idea |
| 5. There is no | e. and in with the new |
| 6. Friends of Mr Jones | f. life takes me from there |
| 7. Ian came | g. telling how much the final offer will be |
| 8. We thought, why | h. many strange things on the Internet |
| 9. He has no idea what | i. after splitting up with his wife |
| 10. see where | j. the future has in store for him |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

People have sold many _____ things on the Internet auction site eBay, but never a whole life - _____ now. Ian Usher, a 44-year-old British man is selling his "entire life". This includes his three-bedroom house in Perth, Australia and all its _____, his job, hobbies, and _____ his friends. Mr Usher said: "Everything that I have - the furniture in the house - all has memories _____ to it. It's time to [say out with] the old, and in with the new." He explained he wanted to make a "clean break" and make a "fresh start" after _____ up with his wife. The bidding opened on June 22nd and _____ five hours, he had attracted 70 bids. The highest offer was just over \$625,000, which is more than the half-a-million dollars he wanted. There is no _____ how much the final offer will be when bidding closes on June 29th.

splitting

even

telling

until

attached

strange

within

contents

Friends of Mr Jones thought the _____ was a great idea. They are all willing to be introduced to the highest _____ as a potential new friend. Joy Jones, who co-owns a store in Perth where Ian used to work, said: "When Ian came _____ with this idea, because we had seen him go through a break-up of marriage and pain and _____ and pieces, I thought it was really exciting. We thought, why not give it a _____?" Ian can't wait for the sale of his life. He said: "I intend to walk out of my front door with my wallet in one pocket and my passport in the other, nothing _____ at all." He has no idea what the future has in store for him. "My current thoughts are to..._____ to the airport and ask...where the next flight with an available seat goes to, and to get on that and see where life _____ me from there," he said.

else

bidder

go

bits

auction

takes

up

head

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

People have sold many _____ Internet auction site eBay, but never a whole life – until now. Ian Usher, a 44-year-old British man is selling _____. This includes his three-bedroom house in Perth, Australia and all its contents, his job, hobbies, _____ friends. Mr Usher said: "Everything that I have - the furniture in the house - all has memories attached to it. It's time to [say out with] _____ the new." He explained he wanted to make a "clean break" _____ after splitting up with his wife. The bidding opened on June 22nd and _____ had attracted 70 bids. The highest offer was just over \$625,000, which is more than the half-a-million dollars he wanted. There is _____ the final offer will be when bidding closes on June 29th.

Friends of Mr Jones thought the auction _____. They are all willing to be introduced to the highest bidder _____ friend. Joy Jones, who co-owns a store in Perth where Ian used to work, said: "When Ian _____ idea, because we had seen him go through a break-up of marriage and pain _____, I thought it was really exciting. We thought, _____?" Ian can't wait for the sale of his life. He said: "I intend to walk out of my front door with my wallet in one pocket and my passport in the other, _____." He has no idea what the future has in store for him. "My current thoughts are to...head to the airport and ask...where the next flight with an available seat goes to, and to get on that and see _____ from there," he said.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'whole' and 'life'.

whole	life
--------------	-------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• strange• includes• attached• fresh• attracted• telling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• willing• store• bits• front• store• seat
---	---

STUDENT LIFE SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about life in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

LIFE DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'auction'?
- c) What do you think of Mr Usher's idea?
- d) Have you ever wanted to make a clean break and a fresh start?
- e) Would you like to sell your life and start again?
- f) What three adjectives do you think best describe Mt Usher's actions?
- g) Why do you think bidders would want to pay so much for someone else's life?
- h) How much would you sell your friends for?
- i) Have you ever said something like "out with the old, in with the new"?
- j) Why is there "no telling" how much the final offer will be?

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LIFE DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What would your friends think of you if you told them you wanted to sell them?
- c) Would you be willing to be introduced to a new friend who 'bought' you at an Internet auction?
- d) What was the last exciting idea you came up with?
- e) Have you seen a friend go through a difficult time?
- f) When was the last time you thought "Why not give it a go"?
- g) What do you think it would be like to walk out on everything with just a wallet and your passport in your pocket?
- h) What do you think the future has in store for you?
- i) Have you ever done something just to see where life takes you?
- j) Would you like go to an airport and say "anywhere please"?

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LANGUAGE

People have sold (1) ____ strange things on the Internet auction site eBay, but never a whole life – until now. Ian Usher, a 44-year-old British man is selling his “entire life”. This (2) ____ his three-bedroom house in Perth, Australia and all its (3) ____, his job, hobbies, and even his friends. Mr Usher said: “Everything that I have - the furniture in the house - all has memories attached to it. It's time to [say out with] the old, and (4) ____ with the new.” He explained he wanted to make a “clean break” and make a “fresh start” after splitting up with his wife. The bidding opened on June 22nd and (5) ____ five hours, he had attracted 70 bids. The highest offer was just over \$625,000, which is more than the half-a-million dollars he wanted. There is no (6) ____ how much the final offer will be when bidding closes on June 29th.

Friends of Mr Jones thought the auction was a (7) ____ idea. They are all willing to be introduced to the highest bidder (8) ____ a potential new friend. Joy Jones, who co-owns a store in Perth where Ian used to work, said: “When Ian came (9) ____ with this idea, because we had seen him go through a break-up of marriage and pain and bits and pieces, I thought it was really exciting. We thought, why not give it a (10) ____?” Ian can't wait for the sale of his life. He said: “I intend to walk out of my front door with my wallet in one pocket and my passport in the (11) ____, nothing else at all.” He has no idea what the future has in store for him. “My current thoughts are to...(12) ____ to the airport and ask...where the next flight with an available seat goes to, and to get on that and see where life takes me from there,” he said.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) many | (b) much | (c) mostly | (d) most |
| 2. | (a) including | (b) included | (c) includes | (d) inclusive |
| 3. | (a) glossary | (b) contains | (c) index | (d) contents |
| 4. | (a) on | (b) in | (c) out | (d) say |
| 5. | (a) without | (b) wither | (c) with | (d) within |
| 6. | (a) joking | (b) speaking | (c) telling | (d) reading |
| 7. | (a) grate | (b) great | (c) grateful | (d) greatest |
| 8. | (a) as | (b) us | (c) is | (d) as is |
| 9. | (a) up | (b) on | (c) into | (d) down |
| 10. | (a) been | (b) going | (c) go | (d) went |
| 11. | (a) others | (b) another | (c) pocket | (d) other |
| 12. | (a) face | (b) head | (c) skull | (d) brain |

HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about the sale of Mr Usher's entire life. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. MY LIFE: Make a sales poster about your life. Describe all the different parts of it. What are the good things about each part? Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. NEW LIFE: Write a magazine article about buying a new life. Write about someone who has bought the life of a famous person. Include imaginary interviews with the famous person and the person who bought his/her life.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to Mr Usher. Ask him three questions about the sale of his entire life. Give him three pieces of advice on what he should do in his new life. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

6. DIARY / JOURNAL: You have just bought a new life. Write your diary entry about your first day in that new life. Include your thoughts on how you felt when you woke up in your new life, the new people you met and the new things you did. Is it better than your old life? Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. T c. F d. F e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. strange | a. curious |
| 2. whole | b. entire |
| 3. attached | c. connected |
| 4. fresh start | d. new beginning |
| 5. bids | e. offers |
| 6. great | f. fantastic |
| 7. willing | g. prepared |
| 8. potential | h. possible |
| 9. intend | i. plan |
| 10. available | j. unfilled |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. People have sold | a. many strange things on the Internet |
| 2. out with the old, | b. and in with the new |
| 3. make a "fresh start" | c. after splitting up with his wife |
| 4. within five hours, | d. he had attracted 70 bids |
| 5. There is no | e. telling how much the final offer will be |
| 6. Friends of Mr Jones | f. thought the auction was a great idea |
| 7. Ian came | g. up with this idea |
| 8. We thought, why | h. not give it a go? |
| 9. He has no idea what | i. the future has in store for him |
| 10. see where | j. life takes me from there |

GAP FILL:

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Friends of Mr Jones thought the **auction** was a great idea. They are all willing to be introduced to the highest **bidder** as a potential new friend. Joy Jones, who co-owns a store in Perth where Ian used to work, said: "When Ian came **up** with this idea, because we had seen him go through a break-up of marriage and pain and **bits** and pieces, I thought it was really exciting. We thought, why not give it a **go**?" Ian can't wait for the sale of his life. He said: "I intend to walk out of my front door with my wallet in one pocket and my passport in the other, nothing **else** at all." He has no idea what the future has in store for him. "My current thoughts are to...**head** to the airport and ask...where the next flight with an available seat goes to, and to get on that and see where life **takes** me from there," he said.

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a 2 - c 3 - d 4 - b 5 - d 6 - c 7 - b 8 - a 9 - a 10 - c 11 - d 12 - b