

The Worst Job in The World

A Talking Points lesson for
English reading & speaking



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
The Worst Job In The World.....	4
Reading Comprehension Questions.....	8
Essential Vocabulary.....	9
Discussion Questions.....	11
I Could Never Do That Job!.....	14
Extreme Jobs.....	15
Role Play.....	16
Writing.....	18
Credits.....	20

Introduction

What job would you like to have?

What job would you hate to have?

Why do people choose the jobs they have?

Do some people have no choice at all about their jobs?

The Worst Job In The World

What exactly is the worst job in the world?

And if these jobs are so bad, why do people do them?

Many people complain about their jobs. It is only natural to think your job is the most difficult and that other people's jobs are easier and more interesting.

Let's look at three jobs that are considered to be 'the worst job in the world'.

Sewer Swimmer

This job's title is exactly as it sounds. It requires someone to actually swim in the sewer.

Why do we need people to do this?

Because in some cities, the sewer is so full that the only way to clear it is by human hands.

Many cities around the world are extremely crowded. And as such, there is so much waste that the sewer system cannot deal

with it all.

So, occasionally, there are blockages that can only be cleared with the help of human hands.

It takes a very bold worker to actually dive into a hole, filled full of human effluent, and then search for the blocked channel and clear it.

But that is what many workers do around the world. They help maintain the city's sewer system and keep it working.

Pet Food Taster

Then there is the job of pet food taster.

Many of us own pets, but have you ever wondered how the food we give to our pets is tested and created?

We take it for granted that the tinned food we give to our pet cat or dog is safe to eat — and tastes good.

So how can companies do this?

They employ people to eat pet food.

These people work in laboratory conditions and try the food out every day. These same workers have to know exactly what the food should taste like.

And how it should please the taste buds of our pet cat or dog.
You have to be a real animal lover to do this kind of work.

Gravedigger

Finally, there is the job of gravedigger.

Have you been to a cemetery before?

Did you ever wonder who dug the hole in the ground?

The person who digs this hole is called a gravedigger.

Does this sound like fun?

In the past, this job had all kinds of social stigma as people were far more religious and more believing of superstitious tales about death and ghosts.

The worst thing about this job is that it often has to be carried out at nighttime. This is to avoid anyone seeing the gravedigger digging a hole in the cemetery.

So imagine that.

If you were a gravedigger, not only are you digging a grave for someone who recently died, but you are doing it in pitch black with no other people around.

Scary much?

Next time you think you have too much work to do. Or you complain about the coffee machine being out of order at work.

Spare a thought for the poor sewer swimmer.

Or the pet food taster. Or the gravedigger.

But if you fancy a career change, you only have to ask!

Reading Comprehension Questions

What three jobs are given as examples in the article?

What does a sewer swimmer do?

Why do cities need sewer swimmers?

Are the cities full of people?

How does the article describe a sewer swimmer?

What does a pet food taster do?

What food do most people give to their pet cats or dogs?

Where do the pet food tasters work?

What do they have to do every day?

What benefit is the pet food tasters work to the pets?

What does a gravedigger do?

Why does the gravedigger dig a hole in the ground?

How did people feel about this job in the past?

What time does the gravedigger work?

Essential Vocabulary

complain	only natural	considered to be
sewer	requires	extremely
waste	occasionally	blockages
bold	dive	human effluent
blocked	channel	maintain
pet food	wondered	created
take for granted	tinned food	employ
laboratory conditions	taste buds	gravedigger
cemetery	dug	social stigma
religious	superstitious	pitch black
out of order	spare a thought	fancy a change

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Complain – *to express dissatisfaction or annoyance about something.*

Only natural – *something that is regarded as normal or reasonable.*

Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or phrase correctly.

I had to complain to my next-door neighbour as his trees were blocking the sunlight in my garden.

It is only natural that the teachers were angry at their low pay rise.

Do this with all the vocabulary and, over time, this will help improve all your English skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Discussion Questions

What do you think of the three jobs described in the article?

Could you do any of these jobs?

What is considered 'the worst job' in your country?

Why do people do these jobs?

Are these jobs highly paid? Why/why not?

Should they be highly paid? Why/why not?

Is a job like a sewer swimmer dangerous?

What are the dangers of doing this job?

What are the health risks?

Are there any dangers to the jobs of a pet food taster or a gravedigger?

Are there any health risks to these jobs?

Try to think of three jobs that you could not do.

Why could you not do these jobs?

What is so bad about doing these jobs?

Now think of three jobs that you would love to do.

Why would you love to do these jobs?

What makes these jobs so great?

What kind of jobs in your country are paid well?

Why are they paid well?

Do you think this is fair?

What kind of jobs are poorly paid?

Why are they poorly paid?

Is this fair?

How do you determine if a job is good or bad?

What makes a job interesting?

What makes a job boring?

If you were offered a job that paid very well but was also very boring, would you accept it? Why/why not?

What if the job was well-paid but very dangerous?

What kind of jobs do young people want to do these days?

Why do they want to do these kind of jobs?

What kind of jobs will be popular in the future?

What advice do your parents and teachers give you about finding the perfect job?

I Could Never Do That Job!

This is a class discussion activity.

Look at the list of jobs below.

- **slaughterhouse worker**
- **odour tester**
- **traffic warden**
- **feet fixer**
- **telemarketer**
- **portaloo cleaner**

What do you think these jobs are?

Would you like to try any of these jobs? Why/why not?

All the jobs above are either highly unusual or at least a little different — what kind of normal, everyday jobs do you think would be difficult to do?

Think of jobs like a police officer, dentist, teacher or truck driver.

What is difficult about these jobs, do you think?

Extreme Jobs

This is a group work activity.

Get into small groups of three or four students.

Now look at the list below.

- **well paid**
- **poorly paid**
- **exciting**
- **boring**
- **glamorous**
- **dirty**

In your groups, think of two examples for each of the categories above.

Give reasons why these jobs are well-paid or exciting or dirty.

When you have a complete list, stand up in front of the class and make a presentation to your classmates.

Introduce each job and tell the class about it.

Role Play

This is a role play activity.

The role play is for two characters.

- **A job applicant**
- **An interviewer**

The Situation

Someone is going for a job interview. The interview is for one of the jobs discussed in the lesson previously.

The applicant has to prove to the interviewer why they are the best person for the job.

They have to show they have the right experience, skills and motivation to do this very demanding and difficult job.

In pairs, choose which role you will play in the role play.

Practice what you will do in the role play.

The interviewer should ask all the right questions. And the applicant should give all the right answers.

Here are some interview questions that you can use:

- Do you have any relevant experience working in this kind of

field? If so, please talk about it.

- Do you have the right skills for this job? Please tell me how your work skills can benefit from working in this job.
- This job is physically demanding and has long working hours. Are you capable of doing this kind of work every day?
- There will be times when you will be working with a team. And other times, you will be working alone.
- Are you a team player? And are you capable of working alone unsupervised?
- What do you think are the most important qualities of a person doing this job?
- When doing this kind of work, how would you make priorities or daily task lists? Give a detailed response to this.
- Are you comfortable working in these conditions?
- Safety is of paramount importance in this job. Do you have a good head for safety protocol?

Take some time in pairs to prepare your role play.

When you are ready, show the class!

Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

You are going to write an article.

The title of the article is

A Day In The Life Of A

The last word of the title should be one of the jobs that you looked at in the previous activities.

For example; A Day In The Life Of A Traffic Warden, or, A Day In The Life Of A Sewer Swimmer.

Now write your article.

You should talk about the following:

- At what time you usually start work every day.
- Do you do shift hours? And if so, what kind of shifts do you do?
- What uniform you have to wear.
- The tools and other things that you need to prepare when doing your job.
- The tasks you have to perform every day.

Write your article. Try to express the details of this job.
You could also talk about the highs and lows of doing this job.

When you have finished writing your article, read it out loud in front of the class.

Credits

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