



Vanity Fair (B2 Upper Intermediate)

A – Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. Do you like novels or films set in the past?
2. If so, which period in the past do you prefer as a setting? Why?
3. What were the most important events in Europe in the early 19th century?
4. Who are your country's most important novelists of the 19th century?

B – Listen and answer

Read these statements. Then listen (without reading) and write T (true) or F (false).

1. William Makepeace Thackeray's novel contains some elements of his own life.
2. The main characters are two women with similar personalities.
3. Becky refuses to marry Amelia's brother Jos.
4. Becky marries the man she works for.
5. Becky and her husband Rawdon Crawley have no money but live well.
6. Amelia and Becky both lose their husbands in battle.
7. Major Dobbin loves Amelia but she doesn't want to marry him.
8. All the characters in Vanity Fair have some weaknesses.

C – Read and answer

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. What information does the article give you about the historical setting of the novel?
2. Why is Becky Sharp an anti-heroine?
3. Why does Amelia cry after reading the note her brother has left?
4. What do Becky and Rawdon's friends find mysterious about the kind of life the couple lead?
5. Why does Major Dobbin warn Amelia not to trust Becky?
6. What faults does Major Dobbin see in Amelia?
7. In what way does she take advantage of him?
8. How did the people who were the objects of Thackeray's satire react to the novel?

D – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense, or change from plural to singular.)

1. I didn't enjoy the show because someone in the row behind talked _____ the performance.
2. When Ian was little, he didn't see his parents very often. He was brought up by a _____.
3. Sandra will manage to persuade her parents to let her come. She's very _____.
4. When plastic was invented, it was _____ as a miracle material. Now it's everywhere!
5. The main _____ in his character is that he's very competitive and always wants to win.
6. The story follows the lives of two groups of people whose destinies eventually _____.

E – Ready for the B2 FIRST Certificate in English? (Reading and Use of English, Part 3)

Use the word in brackets to form a word that fits in the space given.

1. *Vanity Fair* was published in monthly _____ (INSTALL) during 1847-1848.
2. Its anti-heroine Becky Sharp is one of literature's most _____ (MEMORY) characters.
3. She and her husband have no income but live extravagantly in a _____ (COMFORT) house.
4. Major Dobbin speaks _____ (RESPECT) about Becky, describing her as a "little devil".
5. He reproaches Amelia and says she isn't _____ (WORTH) of his devotion.
6. He realises Amelia has become _____ (CUSTOM) to taking advantage of him.
7. Thackeray's contemporaries regarded *Vanity Fair* as a _____ (MASTER).
8. The novel made Thackeray famous and brought him _____ (PROSPER).

F – Write about it

Write about one of your country's best-known 19th-century novelists. Mention:

- some biographical facts;
 - the type of novels he/she wrote;
 - his/her best-known works;
 - how they were received at the time;
 - whether they are still read today.
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Answers: Vanity Fair (B2)

B – Listen and answer

1. T 2. F – They are two women with very different characters. 3. F – Jos rejects Becky as a possible wife. 4. F – She marries the son of the man she works for. 5. T 6. F – Only Amelia loses her husband in battle. 7. T 8. T

C – Read and answer

1. It tells us the novel is set in the Regency period, at the time of the Napoleonic Wars. 2. She is an anti-heroine because she's amoral and manipulative and doesn't follow the rules of society. 3. Because she's upset that her brother has rejected Becky. 4. They find it mysterious that the couple are able to live well "on nothing a year" (= without an income). 5. Because he knows Becky brings mischief wherever she goes and he suspects she has been living dishonestly. 6. He sees her as weak and ungrateful. 7. She wants him to continue being devoted to her, although she doesn't love him or want to marry him. 8. They hailed it as a work of genius.

D – Learn it! Use it!

1. throughout 2. governess 3. strong-willed 4. hailed 5. flaw 6. intertwine

E – Ready for the B2 FIRST Certificate in English?

1. instalments 2. memorable 3. comfortable 4. disrespectfully 5. worthy 6. accustomed 7. masterpiece 8. prosperity