



## Would you like to be a pupil

### at Summerhill ?



(Summerhill is an experimental school, founded by the author A.S. Neill, in 1921. It is based on his very modern ideas about children and education.)

[personality: 'pə:se'neɪlɪti - impeding: ɪm'pi:diŋ - activities: æk'tɪvɪtɪz - linoleum: lɪ'neɪljəm - haunt: ha:nt - onward: 'ɒnwəd - engineering: ɛndʒɪ'nɪərɪŋ - managing director: 'mænɪdʒɪŋ dɪ'rektə - Eton: 'i:tən - uncomfortable: ʌn'kɒmfərtəbl - transfer: trəns'fɔ:ʃ]

We have no class examinations in the school... Learning in itself is not as important as personality and character.

No pupil is compelled to attend lessons. But if Jimmy comes to English on Monday and does not make an appearance again until Friday of the following week, the others quite rightly object that he is holding back the work, and they may throw him out for impeding progress.

Afternoons are completely free for everyone... I see the juniors playing gangsters. Some of the seniors busy themselves with motors and radios, and drawing and painting. In good weather, seniors play games. Some tinker about in the workshop, mending their bicycles or making boats or revolvers.

Tea is served at four. At five, various activities begin. The juniors like to be read to. The middle group likes work in the Art room—painting, linoleum cuts, leather work, basket making. There is usually a busy group in the pottery: in fact, the pottery seems to be a favourite \*haunt morning and evening. The oldest group works from five onward. The wood and metal workshop is full every night...

I think of Jack who left us at the age of seventeen to go into an \*engineering factory. One day, the managing director sent for him. "You are the lad from Summerhill," he said, "I'm curious to know how such an education appears to you now that you are mixing with lads from the old schools. Suppose you had to choose again, would you go to \*Eton or Summerhill?"

"Oh, Summerhill, of course," replied Jack.

"But what does it offer that the other schools don't offer?"

Jack scratched his head. "I dunno," he said slowly; "I think it gives you a feeling of complete self-confidence".

"Yes", said the manager dryly, "I noticed it when you came into the room."

"Lord", laughed Jack, "I'm sorry if I gave you that impression."

"I liked it," said the director. "Most men when I call them into the office fidget about and look uncomfortable. You came in as my equal. By the way, what department did you say you would like to \*transfer to?"

Jack failed in his university exams because he hated book learning. But his lack of knowledge about *Lamb's Essays* or the French language did not handicap him in life. He is now a successful engineer.

From *Summerhill* : A Radical Approach to Child Rearing, by A.S. NEILL © 1960 Hart Publishing Company, New-York

\* **haunt** : a place they very often go to.

\* **engineering** : *construction mécanique*.

\* **Eton** : the most famous Public school. Several Prime Ministers went to Eton.

\* **transfer to** : *être muté*.

\* **Lamb** : a 19th century writer.

**1 Do you understand the words?  
Choose the right explanation.**

- No pupil is compelled to attend lessons.
  - No pupil is obliged to be present in class.
  - No pupil is obliged to learn his lessons.
  - No pupil is asked to speak in class.
- The others object that he is holding back the work.
  - He is making the work more difficult.
  - He is making the work slower.
  - He is making the work more interesting.
- The others quite rightly object...
  - Their objection is unfounded.
  - Their objection is well-founded.
  - Their objection is excessive.
- They may throw him out for impeding progress.
  - Because he is too noisy in class.
  - Because he is not intelligent enough.
  - Because he prevents the others from making progress.
- Some tinker about in the workshop.
  - Work very hard.
  - Learn a lot of things.
  - Work for pleasure but not in a very effective way.
- ... mending their bicycles.
  - Repairing.
  - Cleaning.
  - Painting.
- The oldest group works from five onward.
  - Starts working at five.
  - Stops working at five.
  - Never works after five.
- Jack scratched his head.
  - Because he had a headache.
  - Because he had a cap on.
  - Because he was perplexed.
- It gives you a feeling of complete self-confidence.
  - When you leave Summerhill, you aren't afraid of life any more.
  - When you leave Summerhill, you feel very proud.
  - When you leave Summerhill, you feel superior.
- Fidget about.
  - Talk too much.
  - Become red in the face.
  - Can't keep still, move nervously.
- His lack of knowledge about Lamb's Essays.
  - He knew nothing about Lamb's Essays.
  - He could not understand Lamb's Essays.
  - He hated Lamb's Essays.

**2 Fill in the gaps with reflexive pronouns and possessives:**

- The seniors busy ..... tinkering about in the workshop.
- Others occupy ..... with mending ..... bicycles.
- Did he hurt ..... mending ..... bicycle?
- One can hurt ..... doing that.
- Would you like me to help you? No, I can do it .....
- The headmaster welcomed us .....

**PRONOMS RÉFLÉCHIS**

Oneself, myself, yourself,  
himself, herself, itself,  
ourselves, yourselves,  
themselves.

**Make a few sentences beginning with:**

- As for myself, .....
- For someone like myself, .....

**3 Fill in the gaps with: can, can't, could, may, must or should:**

- ..... we smoke here?
- In most schools, pupils ..... attend all classes.
- The English system ..... be better than ours, but I prefer ours.
- If you were at Summerhill, you ..... spend your afternoons tinkering about in the workshop.
- ..... we play in the class-room? No, I'm afraid you .....
- You ..... work harder if you want to succeed.
- In this school, they ..... do what they want.
- Language lessons ..... be optional; unfortunately they aren't.
- No child under 11 ..... cycle on the street alone.
- It ..... be very interesting to teach in such a school.

**4 Supply the missing prepositions: (at, by, during, from, on, to, until):**

- Breakfast is ..... 8.15 ..... 9.
- Beds must be made ..... 9.30.
- ..... the beginning of each term, a timetable is posted up.
- Tea is served ..... four.
- We usually work ..... five onward.
- ..... Monday nights, the pupils go to the local cinema.
- When the programme changes ..... Thursday, those who have the money go again.
- ..... the winter months, Sunday is theatre evening.

**5 Compare:**

Every child is a good actor.  
All children are good actors.  
Not every child is a good actor.  
Not all children are good actors.  
Most of them are, but not all of them.  
A lot of them are, but not all of them.

**Give the other form, then qualify the generalization.**

- Every child is interested in music.
- All lessons are boring.
- Every child can understand this.
- All schools are equipped with labs.
- All children would like to become engineers.
- All teachers will agree with me on this point.

**6 Compare:**

Attending lessons is optional.  
Attending lessons is not compulsory.  
You aren't compelled to attend lessons.  
You needn't attend lessons if you don't want to.  
You don't have to attend lessons if you don't want to.

**HOW TO GENERALIZE  
and**

**HOW TO QUALIFY  
A GENERALIZATION  
(nuancer)**

**ALL/EVERY**

ALL s'emploie lorsqu'on considère tous les éléments d'un ensemble.  
EVERY lorsqu'on met l'accent sur ses divers éléments. On notera la place de la négation.

**Give the other forms:**

Learning a foreign language is optional.  
Sitting for the exam is not compulsory.  
Studying maths is optional.  
Going to physics lessons is not compulsory.  
Taking part in the games is optional.

**7 Make 5 sentences beginning with:**

- a) I have no choice, I .....
- b) If I'd got the choice, I .....

L'absence d'obligation  
s'exprime par : *you haven't got to, you hadn't got to...*  
*you don't have to.*  
On trouve également :  
*you won't have to change, it's a through train (tu n'auras pas à changer, c'est un direct) ou : you won't need to change.*

HOW TO EXPRESS  
ABSENCE OF  
OBLIGATION

YOU MUST ≠

YOU DON'T HAVE TO  
YOU NEEDN'T + BY

HOW TO COMPARE  
and EXPRESS  
ONE'S PREFERENCE

**8 Using the prompts, make dialogues as in the example:**

Maths/physics. English/French.  
Drawing/music. Sewing/cooking. Geography/history.  
Intellectual work/manual work.  
easy, interesting, useful, gratifying, stimulating, difficult, creative.

**Example:**

Which do you like better: physics or maths?  
I prefer maths, because it's easier.  
I don't agree with you, physics is as easy as maths (or: isn't more difficult than...).

**9 Now ask questions like these:**

Would you rather go to Summerhill or to a traditional school?  
or: If you could go either to Summerhill or to a traditional school, which would you prefer?

Prompts: be a boarder/be a day boy, a day girl  
be a manual worker/be an intellectual.  
play/learn, play games/spend the afternoon reading.

**10 Imagine other possible choices.**

**11 Read aloud.**

1. Tea is served at four.
2. The juniors like to be read to.
3. The wood and metal workshop is full every night.
4. I think it gives you a feeling of complete self-confidence.

RHYTHM

**12 Paragraph writing.**

Expand into a paragraph of five sentences: "I think it gives you a feeling of complete self-confidence."

**Were you happy at school?**

**Michael Hoban**, headmaster of Harrow (educated at Charterhouse): I enjoyed my work, I enjoyed my games, I enjoyed my music. I think if you're very busy you don't have time to be unhappy. I was also very lucky in the housemaster I had. In fact, I married his daughter. She was 12 when I left. I married her seven years later.

**Jack Solomons**, boxing promoter (Old Castle Street School in London's East End): I didn't mind it at all. There was much more loyalty among friends in those days. Luckily, I was good at practically everything. I was captain of football, vice-captain of cricket. Once I didn't have any shoes to play cricket and I wore my sister's high heels. I practically twisted my ankle.

**Beryl Reid**, actress (day schools in Manchester): I was very happy at my kindergarten. There were no rules. It was very carefree until something went wrong, then you really got knocked about. If you were caught kicking a girl, she was allowed to kick you back. You learnt to inflict rules on yourself. At 11 I went on to high school, where there were bags of totally unreasonable rules.

**Auberon Waugh**, author (Downside): I disliked the false atmosphere, the games ethos and everything to do with it and the threat of punishment hanging over everything. I also disliked the little things like the food and the cold. On the other hand, there are moments of excitement at school one doesn't encounter in later life.

**Kenneth Williams**, actor (day schools in London): There were days when I felt utterly wretched. In no subject did I excel. I hated anything to do with physical exercise. The only way I survived was by getting big tough boys to look after me. I was a great toady. I told them that one day they would be Prime Minister and that sort of \*crap.

**Margaret Hampshire**, principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College (Malvern): I enjoyed the academic work and, as an only child, I enjoyed the companionship. I really can't think of anything I disliked about being at school. Perhaps I was rather compliant.

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★ toady : a servile flatterer.

★ crap : nonsense.