

Why go to university? 2015 bk1

Which graduate

says people should be allowed to consider a range of options apart from university?

43

A Sonia

says that some people are expected to make important decisions before they are ready?

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While I was doing my physics degree people would often say I was acquiring skills I'd be able to use in my future career, even if I didn't become a physicist. It sounded like nonsense to me: if I did another job in the end, what could be relevant about knowing what's inside an atom or how to operate a laser? It turns out they were referring to the wealth of other skills you pick up along the way. Communication and problem-solving are just two of these. In contrast to the way you may have been taught before, university teaches you to be innovative and to think for yourself. Going to university is about more than just studying though! I got to make friends from all over the world and they have proved to be useful work contacts.

initially rejected something she was told?

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was unaware of the alternatives to university?

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says that the type of learning at university is different from that at other institutions?

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felt when she was a student that she might not be doing the right course?

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says that some people discover that what is studied at university is not useful in the workplace?

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was uncertain about her reasons for going to university?

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says graduates have an advantage when applying for jobs?

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B Jane

was expected to go to university despite being a fairly average student at school?

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I went to university because it was the career path expected by school, parents and classmates (to an extent) and also because I didn't really have a clue about what other options were open to me. It's difficult to know how things would have turned out if I hadn't gone. I do know that the job I do 'requires' a degree to do it, though there must be alternative ways of developing these skills. The degree, like it or not, is the screening method used by large numbers of employers and as such opens certain doors. It's certainly harder to get into all sorts of careers without a degree. The debates about university education typically revolve around routes into employment, yet for many the degree is barely relevant to the work we end up doing later on. It gives access to a certain type of career but the actual degree can often be of little practical value.

C Lydia

There is a lot of pressure on teenagers to know exactly what they want to do with their lives. As a high-achieving student at school, the alternatives to university didn't really appeal to me. So I took up a place at a good university but ended up studying something I wasn't sure I was interested in. Some people know what they want to do from a young age, and for those people, going to university straight out of school may be a great idea. However, many of us are very unsure of our future ambitions aged 18, and should therefore be given as many choices as possible, rather than being pushed into a degree course. Many of my friends went to university straight from school.

D Bethany

I don't really remember making the decision to go to university. Everyone always assumed I would, even though I was never the most gifted academically. Someone asked me during my second year why I had gone, and I remember not being able to answer the question. Maybe it was the way I was raised? Maybe it was the school I went to? But university was the next step. I had a great time there, I must say. It's so much more than the place you go to get a degree. You learn so many life skills that I would urge anyone to give the idea some thought. Since graduation I've had a string of jobs. University is an excellent decision for some, and may provide the right qualifications to start a career. But for others, going straight into a job is just as appropriate.

5 Finding a good flat in Dublin at a price you could afford was like finding gold in the gold rush. The best way was by personal contact: if you knew someone who knew someone who was leaving a place, that often worked. But if, like Jo, you had only just arrived in Dublin, there was no chance of any personal contact, nobody to tell you that their bedsit would be vacant at the end of the month. No, it was a matter of staying in a hostel and searching.

For Jo, Dublin was a very big blank spot. She really felt she was stepping into the unknown when she got on the train to go and work there. She didn't ask herself why she was going there in the first place. It had been assumed by everyone she went around with at school that she would go. Who would stay in a one-horse town, the back of beyond, the end of the world, the sticks? That's all she had heard for years. They were all going to get out, escape, see some life, get some living in, have a real kind of existence, and some of the others in her class had gone as far as the towns of Ennis or Limerick, where an elder sister or an aunt would see them settled in. But out of Jo's year, none of them were going to Dublin. She was heading off on her own.

Jo's mother thought it would be great if she stayed permanently in the hostel. It was run by nuns, and she would come to no harm. Her father said that he hoped they kept the place warm; hostels were well known for being freezing. Jo's sisters, who worked in a hotel as waitresses, said she must be off her head to have stayed a whole week in a hostel. But Jo didn't know they were all still thinking about her and discussing her, as she answered the advertisement for a flat in Ringsend. It said, 'Own room, own television, share kitchen, bathroom.' It was very near the post office where she worked and seemed too good to be true. Please, please let it be nice, let them like me, let it not be too dear!

There wasn't a queue for this one because it wasn't so much 'Flat to Let', more 'Third Girl Wanted'. The fact that it said 'own television' made Jo wonder whether it might be too high a class for her, but the house did not look in any way overpowering. An ordinary red-brick terraced house with a basement. But the flat was not in the basement, it was upstairs. And a cheerful-looking girl with a college scarf, obviously a failed applicant, was coming down the stairs. 'Desperate place,' she said to Jo. 'They're both awful. Common as dirt.' 'Oh,' said Jo and went on climbing.

31 'Hello,' said the girl with 'Nessa' printed on her T-shirt. 'Did you see that toffee-nosed girl going out? I can't stand that kind, I can't stand them.' 'What did she do?' asked Jo. 'Do? She didn't have to do anything. She just poked around and pulled a face and sort of giggled and then said, "Is this all there is to it? Oh dear, oh dear," in a posh accent. We wouldn't have her in here, would we, Pauline?'

Pauline had a psychedelic shirt on, so colourful it almost hurt the eyes, but even so it was only slightly brighter than her hair. Pauline was a punk, Jo noted with amazement. She had seen some of them on O'Connell Street, but hadn't met one close up to talk to. 'I'm Jo, I work in the post office and I rang.' Nessa said they were just about to have a mug of tea. She produced three mugs; one had 'Nessa' and one had 'Pauline' and the other one had 'Other' written on it. 'We'll get your name put on if you come to stay,' she said generously.

A flat in Dublin (2008 bk1)

- 1 What does 'it' in line 5 refer to?
A the accommodation available
B finding accommodation
C getting advice on accommodation
D the shortage of accommodation
- 2 What do we learn about Jo's schoolfriends in paragraph 2?
A They would have liked to be as independent as Jo was.
B They had more self-confidence than Jo had.
C They had made Jo feel that she ought to leave her home town.
D They were not as happy as Jo was to move to a new town.
- 3 What impression do we get of Jo's home town?
A It was an uninteresting place in the middle of the countryside.
B It was a place where people struggled to earn a living.
C It was a place where the population had fallen greatly.
D It was an unfriendly place, where young people were treated badly.
- 4 What did Jo think about the flat in Ringsend before she saw it?
A that she was likely to be able to afford it
B that the advertisement for it was confusing
C that it might not be as suitable for her as it first sounded in the advertisement
D that it did not really have all the facilities mentioned in the advertisement
- 5 What do we learn about the girl who passed Jo on the stairs?
A She was upset that she was not going to live in the flat.
B She liked neither the flat nor the other girls living there.
C She had not been seriously intending to live in the flat before seeing it.
D She had not realised that other people were already living in the flat.
- 6 What is meant by 'toffee-nosed' in line 31?
A feeling superior
B being curious about others
C strange-looking
D appearing nervous
- 7 What did Jo think when she first met Pauline?
A She probably wouldn't like Pauline because of her appearance.
B Pauline was different from other punks she had met.
C Pauline would probably not want to make friends with her.
D She knew very little about people who looked like Pauline.
- 8 By the end of the extract, we learn that
A Nessa and Pauline did not really want anyone to share their flat.
B other people had moved out of the flat because they had not enjoyed living there.
C Nessa felt that Jo would be more suitable than the previous applicant.
D Nessa and Pauline were not expecting anyone to want to share their flat.