

Introduction

Download the LearnEnglish stories and poems podcast. You'll find more information on this page:
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-podcasts-stories-poems.htm>

This support pack contains the following materials:

- the poem that you can listen to in the podcast
- a comprehension activity based on the poem.

Read the poem**Tom Beatty**

by Edgar Lee Masters

I was a lawyer like Harmon Whitney
Or Kinsey Keene or Garrison Standard,
For I tried the rights of property,
Although by lamp-light, for thirty years,
In that poker room in the opera house.
And I say to you that Life's a gambler
Head and shoulders above us all.
No mayor alive can close the house.
And if you lose, you can squeal as you will;
You'll not get back your money.
He makes the percentage hard to conquer;
He stacks the cards to catch your weakness
And not to meet your strength.
And he gives you seventy years to play:
For if you cannot win in seventy
You cannot win at all.
So, if you lose, get out of the room -
Get out of the room when your time is up.
It's mean to sit and fumble the cards,
And curse your losses, leaden-eyed,
Whining to try and try.

After reading

Exercise 1: Below are 10 statements about the text. Decide if each statement is True or False.

1. Tom Beatty went to court as a lawyer.
2. Tom Beatty played poker for many years.
3. The author compares life to gambling.
4. The gambler in the poem is very tall.
5. In the poem 'Life' is a person.
6. There's no point complaining if you lose.
7. It's more difficult to lose than win in life.
8. You've got seventy years to win in life.
9. You should accept your losses.
10. 'Your time is up' means 'sit and fumble the cards'.

Answers

Exercise 1: 1. False (F); 2. True (T); 3. T; 4. F; 5. F; 6. T; 7. F; 8. T; 9. T; 10. F