

COMPREHENSION

1. What do you know about Levi: approximate age, job, plans for the future? Explain in your own words. (40-50 words)

Levi is probably in his late twenties. He is a sales-assistant in the local branch of what looks like Richard Branson's Virgin mega-stores. Levi is clearly impressed by the creator of the firm he works for and wishes he could launch the same type of multi-faceted business later. (48 words)

2. What values particularly impressed Levi in the application form (Find three elements).

Levi is impressed by the family-like aspect of the business, the freedom of management and organization granted to each store and the fact that one branch or company is never left alone when having to cope with difficulties.

3. True or false? Justify by quoting from the text.

a. Levi found a job in a small independent store.

False. "Global brand" (l. 1)

"it wasn't such a bad idea to get a little sales assistant job with this enormous firm" (l. 10-11)

b. Levi was impressed by the stores' owner.

True. "Levi liked the way the mythical British guy who owned the brand" (l. 7)

c. Levi worked for a one-product brand.

False. "Planes, trains, finance, soft drinks, music, cellphones, vacations, cars, wines, publishing, bridal wear - anything with a surface" (l. 8-9)

d. One of Levi's aims was to understand how the firm worked.

True. "to see how their operation worked from the inside" (l. 11-12)

"Watch, learn, supplant" (l. 12)

e. Levi thought he was getting a good salary for his job.

False. "tough work for bad pay" (l. 12)

"despite the \$6.89 an hour he was being paid" (l. 14)

4. What was Levi's secret dream? Quote the text.

Levi's secret dream was to imitate the tycoon who created the brand he works for and, why not, outdo him on his own ground. "That was the kind of thing Levi wanted to do one day" (l. 10) ;

"Watch, learn, supplant" (l. 12)

5. Observe the main verb form in the first part of the text (l. 1-14): He had taken, he had been particularly impressed... Compare it to the main verb form in the rest of the text. What does the change indicate?

1- Plain explanation

From line 1 to line 13, there are five instances of the use of the pluperfect/past perfect. This tense is used as a reference to the remote period of time when Levi still didn't work for one of the mega-stores but contemplated working for them. The shift to the preterit indicates his actual involvement in the company.

2- Elaborate explanation

From line 1 to line 13, there are five instances of the use of the pluperfect/past perfect. This tense is used as a reference to the time when Levi still had illusions, hopes and expectations about the brand he would eventually work for.

Then, around the fourth paragraph, the preterit becomes the most frequent tense used, as if to signal Levi's brutal awakening to the harsh reality of how a global brand works, the loss of his naivety.

6. When does the action take place: time in the year, day, time of the day?

The scene probably takes place on a Sunday, at breakfast time, in December, a few days before Christmas.

7. Explain what Tom announced to Levi. (20 words)

Tom announced that all the employees would probably be required to work on Christmas, which Levi had apparently not planned. (20 words)

8. How did Levi react to this news? What explains this reaction? (30 words)

Levi claimed he would refuse to work on Christmas. He has just realized that his employer manipulates and exploits people and that he's deprived of the liberty to choose. (29 words)

9. Howard's reaction.

a. What did he think of the firm's mottoes? (30 words)

Howard thinks the firm's mottoes are lies and use culture and availability as alibis to hide the truth about the greedy and mercantilist face of the company his son works for. (31 words)

b. What did he think of his son's intention? (15 words)

Howard agrees with his son's decision and encourages him to rally his colleagues around him. (15 words)

c. What did he advise him to do? (20-30 words)

Howard advises him to convince his colleagues to do something that will strike people's attention, like going on strike or organizing a happening inside the store. (26 words)

10. How did Levi react to his father's speech? (40 words)

As his father spoke to him, Levi acted as if he had heard that speech a hundred times before. He would definitely not do what his father told him, but pretended to agree with him not to hurt his feelings. (40 words)

11. Translate from "I don't think..." (l. 34) to "... late for work." (l. 35)

"Je ne crois que c'est comme ça que ça se passe maintenant," dit enfin Levi, doucement. Il ne voulait pas décevoir son père, mais il avait un bus à attraper. Elle était bien sympa son histoire, mais elle allait le mettre en retard au travail/boulot.

12. Explain in what way Levi's job changed and what his reaction to this change was. Answer in your own words, including quotations from the text (50-60 words)

As a rookie, Levi used to go wherever he was needed and do whatever he was asked to. Then, thanks to his qualification, he got promoted to one particular section of the store, which should have been gratifying and intellectually challenging. In fact, it proved to be immensely boring and dull. Levi is now disillusioned and disheartened. (57 words)