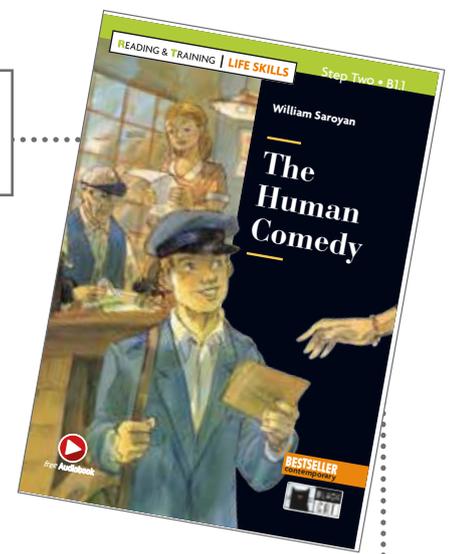


READING ACTIVITY

1/4

THE HUMAN COMEDY

Read the excerpt from Chapter Two of *THE HUMAN COMEDY* and then do the activities below.



The telegraph box rattled, which meant that a message was coming in. Mr Grogan took his place at the typewriter and listened to the Morse code taps. He quickly typed the telegram. It was addressed to Mrs Rosa Sandoval, 1129 G Street, Ithaca, California. The telegram informed her that her son, Juan Domingo Sandoval, had been killed during a battle of the war.

Mr Grogan gave Homer the telegram. He folded it carefully, put it in an envelope, put the envelope in his cap and quickly left the office. He got off his bicycle in front of Mrs Sandoval's house and knocked on the door. A Mexican lady came to the door and was very surprised to see the messenger.

"Oh!" she said and studied Homer's eyes. She understood that the message was not a good one. It wasn't Homer's fault, but he felt responsible for the message. He wanted to say, "I'm only a messenger, Mrs Sandoval. I'm very sorry to bring you this telegram, but it's my job..."

However, he only said, "Mrs Rosa Sandoval?" He tried to give her the telegram but she didn't touch it.

"Please come in," she said, softly. "Who sent the telegram? My son Juan Domingo?" Homer opened the envelope with nervous fingers. "No, the telegram is from the War Department."

"War Department?" Mrs Sandoval asked, anxiously.

"Mrs Sandoval," Homer said quickly, "your son is dead. Maybe it's a mistake. Maybe it wasn't your son. Maybe the telegram is wrong."

The Mexican woman pretended not to hear. "Take a piece of candy. Sit down, please!"

Homer took a piece of candy and tried to eat it, but then he heard her crying very softly. She didn't want to cry, but she couldn't stop. She looked at him through her tears. He didn't know what to do. He wanted to make her feel less unhappy. But how? He felt terrible about all the sad things in life—suffering, pain, death..."What can I do?" he thought. "I'm only the messenger!"

Suddenly he was on his bicycle, riding away as fast as possible down the dark street. Tears covered his face and he couldn't stop them. Before he got to the telegraph office, he had to stop crying and he did. "I've just delivered my first War Department telegram about the death of a young soldier, and it was a terrible experience," he thought. "But I must go on living!"

When Homer walked into the telegraph office, he heard the telegraph box begin to rattle, but Mr Grogan didn't answer. Homer ran to his desk and cried, "Mr Grogan! They're calling you!" He shook the old man gently, but he didn't move.

"Wake up, Mr Grogan!" Homer ran to get a cup of cold water and threw some on the telegraph operator's face. Mr Grogan opened his eyes and woke up saying, "You did the right thing, Homer! There's work to do!"



READING ACTIVITY

2/4

EXERCISES

1 Choose the correct answer—a, b, or c.

1. Who typed the telegram for Mrs Sandoval?

- a. Mr Spangler
- b. Mr Grogan
- c. Homer

2. What happened to Mrs Sandoval's son?

- a. He was going to war.
- b. He was coming home from war.
- c. He was killed at war.

3. What did Mrs Sandoval do when Homer tried to give her the telegram?

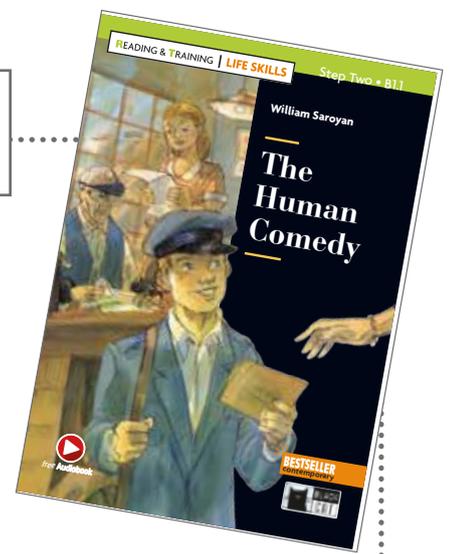
- a. Mrs Sandoval shut the door in Homer's face.
- b. Mrs Sandoval didn't touch the telegram.
- c. Mrs Sandoval told Homer to go away.

4. How did Homer feel about delivering telegrams about the death of young soldiers?

- a. He felt terrible.
- b. He decided to find another job.
- c. He didn't care because he needed the job.

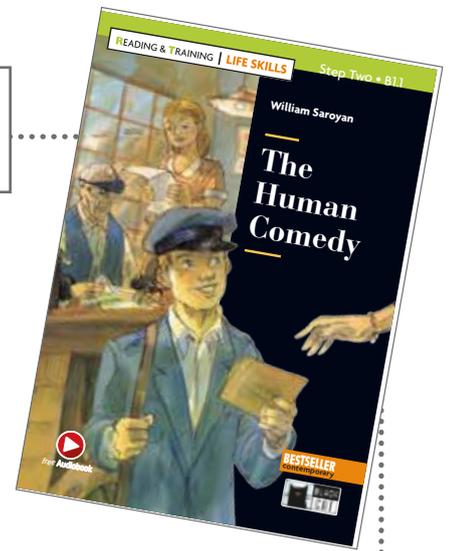
5. What happened when Homer returned to the telegraph office?

- a. Mr Grogan was drinking a cup of cold water.
- b. Mr Grogan was asleep.
- c. Mr Grogan wasn't feeling well.



READING ACTIVITY

3/4



2 Are the following sentences true (T) or false (F)?

1. Homer put the telegram addressed to Mrs Sandoval in his pocket. T F
2. Homer told Mrs Sandoval that her son was dead. T F
3. Homer rode away on his bicycle on the dark street and cried a lot. T F
4. When Homer got back to the telegraph office, his face was covered with tears. T F
5. Homer gave Mr Grogan a cup of hot coffee. T F

