**I year Reading Comprehension exam (45 mins)**

Young lovers are fond of (*piace*) using the subjunctive (*il congiuntivo*) . This is because they are frequently separated. The most typical postcard from one to the other carries the traditional message ‘Having a lovely time. Wish you were here’; probably, the one who writes it is on holiday with his or her parents. When they say goodnight to each other at the bus stop or the girl’s front door, it is quite natural for them to say: ‘I wish you didn’t have to go home so soon. I wish we could always be together.’

Even unsuccessful lovers can express themselves better in the subjunctive. ‘I wish I were more attractive.’ ‘If only I knew her address.’ ‘I wish she’d take some notice of me.’ ‘If only he’d call.’

And when they are dreaming about their future, the subjunctive is the perfect grammatical form for imagining their happiness. There used to be a well-known song that began:

*‘If you were the only girl in the world*

*And I were the only boy,*

*Nothing else would matter in the world…’*

We suppose that, like Adam and Eve, they would live in a garden full of fruit trees. Otherwise, they would be too busy to enjoy their dreams very much!

Once the couple get married, however, the subjunctive is not a very satisfactory area. To begin with, there are the everyday complaints: ‘I wish you’d listen when I’m talking to you.’ ‘I wish you wouldn’t drop your cigarette ash on the carpet.’ When the couple start using the third person and ‘you’ becomes ‘he’ or ‘she’, this gets worse. By now they are complaining to their friends: ‘If only she’d learn to cook!’ ‘If only he would snore (*russare*). I can’t get to sleep at night.’

The present subjunctive is bad enough for married couples, but the past is fatal. When two people get used to speaking to each other in the past subjunctive, there isn’t much hope left for the marriage. ‘I wish I’d never met you’ and ‘If only I’d listened to Mother’ are almost certain to provoke answers like ‘Yes, I wish you’d listened to her, too’—and from there it’s a short step to the divorce court.

The reason for all this is that the subjunctive is all about what we haven’t got, we never had or we’ll probably never get. And most marriages survive better if the couple think about what they have got now—each other—and make the best of it in the present indicative: ‘I’m so happy with you.’ ‘You look lovely in that dress.’ ‘I don’t care if you don’t earn much money. I love you anyway.’ From ‘Love, Marriage and Grammar’.

**Reading Comprehension** - *Please answer the following questions. Questions 3, 4 and 5 are to be answered in your own words as far as possible*.

1. ‘unsuccessful lovers’ means lovers who a) are not rich b) have no job c) cannot find love d) are unable to have children
2. ‘make the best of it’ means a) improve it b) turn it into a positive situation c) make up d) give compliments
3. ‘it’s a short step to the divorce court’ means………………………………………
4. Why do young lovers like using the subjunctive?
5. Why is the past subjunctive ‘fatal’?