

20 If only . . .

Type of activity

whole class

matching

Function practised

expressing past regrets

Exponent

I wish I hadn't . . .

I shouldn't have . . .

If I had done X, I wouldn't be doing Y now.

If only I hadn't . . .

Lexical areas

life decisions

Problem vocabulary

fulfilling, benefits, colleagues, engaged, promotion, put off, qualifications, apprenticed, carpenter, heartbroken, jealous, routine, frustrating, retrain, put up with, make a break, stressful, bustle, dead-end

How to use the game

Copy one card for each person in the class, making sure that as far as possible each role card has a 'mate'.

Give out one role card to each student in the class. Tell them that they all regret some decision they made at sometime in the past, but that somewhere in the class is someone who took the path that they failed to take.

The object of the game is to find the person who did what you didn't.

To do this, they must move around the class, talking to other students, and describing their past lives and in particular their past regrets.

When they find the person who *did* do what they regret not having done, they should go and sit down together and discuss the situation further: maybe they can offer each other some advice!

You are a successful businesswoman at the top of your profession. You have everything you want: a fulfilling career, a good salary, comfortable house, car ... You enjoy your job and the benefits it brings. You have plenty of friends and get on well with your colleagues at work, so you aren't lonely. You do regret one thing, however: you were once engaged to a boy from your home town. A few years ago, you had to make a difficult decision: you were offered promotion in the company you work for, but this meant moving to another town. Your fiancé did not want to leave his job, so you had to choose between marriage and a career. You chose a career. Recently, though, you've been wondering if you made the right decision. You haven't met anyone else since leaving him, and you find yourself thinking about him more and more ...

You are married with three small children. You love your husband and children, but in many ways you wonder if you made the right decision in marrying so young. You gave up your job when you got married, and now you think that that was a big mistake. You were doing well in your career, and had just been offered promotion, but at the time, marriage and a family seemed much more important to you. Now you wish you had kept your job and put off having children until later.

You work in a factory – and you hate it! The trouble is, you left school at 16 with no qualifications because you were bored at school and were in a hurry to get a job and earn some money. How you wish you'd worked harder when you had the chance and done some kind of training course when you left school: you might have a more interesting job now if you'd been sensible then. You're trying to take some exams at night school, but studying is so much harder when you're older, and it's difficult to study as well as work full-time.

You spent the best years of your life working for examinations – school, college, university, and two years training after university. What a waste of time! Your parents wanted you to be an accountant, so to please them, you took an accountancy course and then did two years training – and more studying for more exams – with a firm of accountants in London. You hated every minute of it! But it wasn't until last year that you finally decided you had to make a change; that you wanted to leave office life and work with your hands instead of your head. You'd always been good at and enjoyed woodwork, so you became apprenticed to a carpenter and learnt how to make furniture. You're much happier now, but regret spending the ten best years of your life studying for exams that you didn't need.

You are an engineer. You don't mind your job: it's well paid and quite interesting, but it isn't what you really wanted to do. You really wanted to become a pilot. Ever since you were small, it's been your one big ambition. You were heartbroken when you failed the exams and realised that you were never going to be a pilot. It is the big disappointment of your life. Even now you can never hear a plane flying overhead without feeling jealous of the person who is flying it.

You are a pilot – and fed up with your job! You thought being a pilot would be an exciting and interesting life, and it was exciting for the first few years. But flying can become routine, like any other job, and it's very frustrating, because you never stay in places for long enough to see them properly: your life is a succession of airport lounges and hotel rooms. It's been worse since you got married – you'd like to see a lot more of your children and have a proper family life. You feel that it's too late to retrain for another job at your age, so you'll have to put up with it, but really, you regret the day you passed your flying exams!

You moved to London about six months ago – and you regret it already! You used to have a job in the small country town where you lived all your life, but you decided it was time to make a break and try something different. You'd always wanted to live in London, and so you were really happy when you were successful in getting a job there – but now you'd give anything to go back home! You find London so stressful, and you miss all your friends back home. You even tried ringing your old firm to see if they could give you your job back, but it was too late: they had someone else. If only you'd realised how lucky you were ...

You moved out of London to a small country town a few months ago – and you regret it already! You miss London so much – the life, the bustle, the activity. Nothing ever happens here and it's so hard to make friends. You moved here with your family because you thought it would be good for the children to grow up in the country, but now you think you've made a big mistake. You feel more dead than alive here. You'd give anything to have your old job and your old flat back again!

A couple of years ago, you were offered a job which you turned down. The job was with a firm called Meunier, based in Paris and you refused it. When you look back, you don't really know why you refused it; you just didn't feel ready to make a move. But you've been regretting the decision almost ever since! You're really bored with your job here now, and have been trying to leave, but you haven't been successful in getting any of the jobs you've applied for. It looks as if you're here for life. *Why* didn't you take the job when you had the chance? You'd give anything to be in Paris now!

You live in Paris and work for a firm called Meunier. You've been there for a couple of years and you're trying to get out. Just about everything is wrong with the job: the place is disorganized and badly run, your colleagues are unfriendly, and the work itself is boring – it's a real dead-end job. You're having trouble finding another job and are beginning to be afraid that you won't be able to get out. You wish you'd never taken the job in the first place.