

**SÈRIE 5****Comprensió escrita****THE TEACHER WHO CHANGED MY LIFE**

## QUESTIONS

1. The author of the text knew about the death of Frank Miles...
  - a) a long time ago.
  - b) through a phone call.
  - c) from his colleagues.
  - d) **quite recently.**
  
2. The author also states that information about Frank Miles...
  - a) can be found on most educational websites.
  - b) was widely spread on the internet.
  - c) was not available on the internet.
  - d) **was hardly mentioned on the internet.**
  
3. According to the text, Frank Miles calmed his rebellious students thanks ...
  - a) to his physical appearance.
  - b) to his good manners.
  - c) to his weak character.
  - d) **to his strong personality.**
  
4. Frank's classes could be very funny...
  - a) **provided the students were at their best.**
  - b) only when the students behaved correctly.
  - c) provided the students did their homework.
  - d) as long as the students paid attention.
  
5. The author thinks that Frank Miles was a remarkable teacher because..
  - a) he had an intellectual understanding of English.
  - b) **he was passionate about educational values.**
  - c) he never reprimanded his rebellious pupils.
  - d) he had little interest in raising his students' results.
  
6. According to the text, which of the following is TRUE about Frank Miles' character?
  - a) He had a passion for rules and regulations.
  - b) He tolerated diversity of opinion.
  - c) **He was intolerant with his students' low standards.**
  - d) His students were never frightened by his criticism.
  
7. The author considered Frank Miles elitist because he...
  - a) fancied money and snobbery.
  - b) ignored rebellious students.
  - c) had particular mannerisms.
  - d) **demanded the best from his pupils.**
  
8. During his last decade Frank Miles lived...
  - a) surrounded by his ex-pupils.
  - b) alone in his wealthy house.
  - c) **on his own in a modest apartment.**
  - d) in a hostel for the homeless.

## Comprensió auditiva

### THE BEST ADVICE

Anthony Marra, is a young American writer who grew up in Washington, DC, and has lived and studied in Russia. His work has appeared in *Best American Nonrequired Reading 2012*. In 2013 Marra received the prestigious Whiting Writers' Award. His debut novel is entitled *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* (2013). His story "Chechnya" won First Place in *Narrative's* Spring 2009 Story Contest and has received many prizes since then. In today's programme, Bertha Morris talks with Mr Marra about his work and his career.

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**BERTHA MORRIS:** Welcome to our interview Mr. Marra

**ANTHONY MARRA:** Thank you. It's my pleasure to be here.

**BERTHA:** Mr. Marra, you are 28, but you seem simultaneously older and younger. You have a rather boyish manner, yet your hair is already flecked with gray.

**ANTHONY:** Ha, ha! I know; and yet I still have to finish writing school. I'm finishing up the second year of a Fellowship at Stanford.

**BERTHA:** And you have already published a novel and a number of short stories. Tell me about your novel. *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena*, unusual for a first novel, is purely a work of research and invention, without even a hint of autobiography.

**ANTHONY:** Yes, but I'll tell you something: I took a year off between high school and college, during which I worked in a store. I missed my girlfriend a lot and began writing short stories about a **lovelorn** guy working in the same store. One of them had three pages on a single kiss! (He laughs)

**BERTHA:** Does that mean you are no longer interested in autobiographical fiction?

**ANTHONY:** Not at the moment. I quickly realized I lived the least interesting literary life imaginable. My parents are happily married. There haven't been any major traumas in my family. I'm not sure that the story of my life would be much fun to read.

**BERTHA:** So you had a rather **uneventful** childhood. How influential were your parents in your decision making and your career?

**ANTHONY:** My father once said to me: 'If you want to be a geologist, be a geologist.' I can't recall when, exactly, my dad said this to me. Maybe I was in high school, or it could have been at someone's graduation, at a celebration, a place where the road forks, where journeys begin. It wasn't intended to be advice but the kind of thing we say and hear and forget about every day.

**BERTHA:** And did you follow his advice?

**ANTHONY:** No! I've never had the **slightest** desire to be a geologist. But my dad did, at least briefly. He studied geology in college. He served in Vietnam, went to professional school, went to work, and the necessities of earning a living and supporting a family narrowed the field of geology to a corner of his office desk that held a few quartz rocks. When I was a kid we went to a beach one afternoon to look for

prehistoric shark teeth. Instead we found all sorts of bizarre and beautiful rocks, and my dad knew all about them. It was a fun day.

**BERTHA:** It is true, isn't it, that our lives are often shaped by small, seemingly trivial choices and the advice that guides those choices can come to us just by chance.

**ANTHONY:** Indeed! When my father said, "If you want to be a geologist, be a geologist," what I heard were his words of encouragement, a paternal **blessing**. Now I think of it less as advice than as a reminder to thank my lucky stars. Few people have the privilege to do what they love for a living, and in that sense I am, in a way at least, a geologist.

**BERTHA:** Let's go back to your novel. Six years after starting to think about Chechnya, the disputed Russian republic that became the setting for your acclaimed new novel, you visited Russia for the first time. Until the Boston Marathon bombings most Americans paid little attention to Chechnya. How did your interest on Chechnya **arise**?

**ANTHONY:** My own interest actually began during an undergraduate semester studying in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 2006. I arrived there not long after the murder of Anna Politkovskaya, a journalist who exposed Russian atrocities in Chechnya. At a metro stop near my apartment, I could see Russian veterans of the Chechen wars, drinking and begging for change.

**BERTHA:** And what did you find there?

**ANTHONY:** I didn't know what to expect, I traveled with a guide and talked to Chechens, many of whom were still trying to recover from years of war and occupation.

**BERTHA:** So, although your novel is not autobiographical you did make a great deal of research and documentation to be **accurate** about facts.

**ANTHONY:** Oh, yes. Research is not an obstacle or something to be frightened of. It can be one of the real joys of writing. Someone once said, 'Don't write what you know; write what you want to know.' But to make a book convincing, it's less important that the right tree be in the right place than that the characters are emotionally real. I did the best I could to make the environment and the setting as realistic as possible, but I hope it's the characters and the emotional reality that make the book true.

**BERTHA:** One literary critic, writing in The New York Times, called your book "ambitious and intellectually restless." Another fan of yours is Sarah Jessica Parker, who in a review for Entertainment Weekly described it as "full of humanity and hope." So it seems you have fully succeeded.

**ANTHONY:** I was deeply moved by the Chechens who were just trying to retain their humanity. I'll be pleased if my readers appreciate that.

**BERTHA:** Anthony, thank you very much for sharing your time with us. And the best of luck with your books.

**ANTHONY:** That's very kind. It's been my pleasure.

**QUESTIONS**

1. In the conversation we hear that Anthony Marra looks young...
  - a) **although he has quite a lot of gray hair.**
  - b) and yet he is already a classical writer.
  - c) and old at the same time.
  - d) although he has not finished school yet.
  
2. *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena*,
  - a) is a novel about the author's personal experience.
  - b) is based on the life of the author's family.
  - c) **is based both on research and fiction.**
  - d) was inspired by the author's first love.
  
3. Why isn't Anthony Marra interested in writing autobiography?
  - a) **It would have no literary interest.**
  - b) It would cause a trauma to his family.
  - c) He wants to keep his life private.
  - d) His parents would not like to read about it.
  
4. In the interview we hear that Anthony Marra's father,
  - a) was a professional geologist.
  - b) convinced his son to become a geologist.
  - c) **became an amateur geologist.**
  - d) collected shark teeth and kept them by his desk.
  
5. In which way was the writer influenced by his father's advice?
  - a) He never followed his father's advice.
  - b) **He remembers his father's words as encouragement.**
  - c) He decided to choose a very different route.
  - d) He always felt lucky enough without his father's help.
  
6. Which of the following statements is NOT TRUE about the author's interest on Chechnya?
  - a) It arose during a visit in Russia as an undergraduate student.
  - b) It was inspired by watching Russian veterans beg for money in the streets
  - c) **It came after watching the Boston Marathon bombings.**
  - d) It was influenced by reading about the Russian actions in the Chechen wars.
  
7. According to Anthony Marra, what is most important in order to make his books convincing?
  - a) To have the exact details about the trees and the place.
  - b) To be able to make the story ring true.
  - c) To make the setting as realistic as possible.
  - d) **To be able to capture the character's feelings.**
  
8. The interviewer thinks that Marra has succeeded in his novel, because...
  - a) **of the humanity in his characters.**
  - b) Sarah Jessica Parker liked the book.
  - c) the critics praised its intellectual ambition.
  - d) many readers were identified with the story.