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Minister defends 'miserable' jibe

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http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/glasgow_and_west/7464976.stm

A UK Government minister has been criticised for asking why Britons are "so bloody miserable" despite the current economic problems.

Line 1 The **comments** by Glasgow South MP Tom Harris first appeared in his blog on
 Line 2 his website. Mr Harris, a transport minister, told BBC Radio he was comparing
 Line 3 this generation with previous ones, who were not so healthy or wealthy.
 Line 4 However, he apologised if how he made his comments had caused **offence**.

Line 5 In his blog post titled Heaven knows we're miserable now, Mr Harris said:
 Line 6 "There are more two-car homes in Britain today than there are homes without a
 Line 7 car at all.

Line 8 "We live longer, eat healthier (if we choose), have better access to forms of
 Line 9 entertainment never **imagined** a generation ago (satellite TV, DVD, computer
 Line 10 games), and the majority of us have fast access to the worldwide web which
 Line 11 we use to enable even more spending and for entertainment. Crime is down.

Line 12 "So why is everyone so bloody **miserable**?"

Line 13 Speaking to Radio 5 Live, the MP defended his posting.

Line 14 He said: "If you read the **full** article I hope you'll understand that what I'm
 Line 15 trying to do is actually make a **serious** point.

Line 16 "Even if I **accept** that phrase 'why is everyone so bloody miserable' - I wrote
 Line 17 that in a **humorous** vein - I understand that if people want to take that as
 Line 18 **offensive**, I apologise, that maybe it should have been phrased differently."

Line 19 He added: "I'm not belittling the **genuine** problems people are facing. I do
 Line 20 think there is a more deep-seated cultural, even possibly spiritual problem that
 Line 21 we have in this country where, is it about consumerism, is it about the instant
 Line 22 **gratification** society, are we finding that buying stuff just doesn't make us as
 Line 23 happy as we thought?"

Line 24 But the comments were **denounced** by shadow treasury chief secretary Philip
 Line 25 Hammond, who accused him of living on a "different planet" from ordinary hard-
 Line 26 working families.

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A. Read the article on page 1

Now answer these vocabulary questions. All the words are in bold red in the text.

1. Which word could be used instead of **comments**?

- a. speeches
- b. remarks
- c. concerns
- d. lies

2. Which word could be used instead of **offence**?

- a. anger
- b. sadness
- c. insult
- d. attack

3. Which word could be used instead of **imagined**?

- a. created
- b. discovered
- c. followed
- d. envisaged

4. Which word could be used instead of **miserable**?

- a. destitute
- b. dejected
- c. dissolute
- d. deserted

5. Which word could be used instead of **full**?

- a. occupied
- b. complete
- c. packed
- d. every

6. Which word could be used instead of **serious**?

- a. severe
- b. anxious
- c. important
- d. hard

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7. Which word could be used instead of **accept**?

- a. advance
- b. agree
- c. argue
- d. admit

8. Which word could be used instead of **humorous**?

- a. sarcastic
- b. witty
- c. laughable
- d. boring

9. Which word could be used instead of **offensive**?

- a. annoying
- b. damaging
- c. frightening
- d. insulting

10. Which word could be used instead of **genuine**?

- a. real
- b. honest
- c. fair
- d. difficult

11. Which word could be used instead of **gratification**?

- a. merit
- b. pleasure
- c. credit
- d. result

12. Which word could be used instead of **denounced**?

- a. announced
- b. condemned
- c. copied
- d. ratified

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B. Now decide whether the following statements, based on the article, are true or false.

1. According to Mr Harris previous generations were healthier than we are.

True / False

2. Mr Harris is an MP for the south of England.

True / False

3. We did not have TV a generation ago.

True / False

4. There are more homes with two cars than homes with no cars.

True / False

5. Mr Hammond was speaking on BBC Radio 5 Live.

True / False

6. Mr Harris believes crime is down.

True / False

C. Can you find ten spelling mistakes?

D. What are your views on this matter?

Are we a miserable nation? Do we genuinely have something to moan about or do we just like a good whinge? Are we moaning about nothing?

Write an essay detailing your views and give reasons for your views.

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Answers

A

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----|---|
| 1. | b | 7. | d |
| 2. | c | 8. | b |
| 3. | d | 9. | d |
| 4. | b | 10. | a |
| 5. | b | 11. | b |
| 6. | c | 12. | b |

B.

1. false - the previous generations were not so healthy
2. false - Glasgow South
3. false - We did not have digital TV
4. true
5. false - Mr Harris was speaking on Radio 5 Live
6. true

C. Spelling mistakes

- Line 3 - generation should be generation
- Line 5 - misarable should be miserable
- Line 11 - entertainent should be entertainment
- Line 15 - actualy should be actually
- Line 16 - everone should be everyone
- Line 18 - apoligose should be apologise
- Line 19 - faceing should be facing
- Line 21 - instent should be instant
- Line 24 - coments should be comments
- Line 25 - acused should be accused