

Prova scritta: Inglese B2 Tandem – 10 aprile 2015

Maximum time for the exam: 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Part 1 Reading comprehension

Read the text and answer the five comprehension questions.

- Answer the questions **in your own words** in complete sentences.
- Do not begin sentences with 'Because'.
- **Do not copy** whole phrases from the text.
- Write a **maximum of 25 words** for each answer (long answers will be penalised).
- Do not use a dictionary.

Questions

1. *What difficulty does the writer express about her students' attitude toward alcoholism?*
 2. *How did the WCTU's attitudes towards alcoholism differ from those of the Anti-Saloon League?*
 3. *What two aspects make A.A. different from earlier organizations which also fought against alcohol consumption?*
 4. *What is the A.A. position on social drinking?*
 5. *What evidence does the writer present to refute the idea that alcoholics who continue to drink are merely too lazy to stop?*
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Part 2 Composition

Write a 150-180 word composition on the following topic:

Alcohol prohibition in the United States (1919-1933) is generally considered to have been a failure. In recent years, a growing number of people have criticized the ineffectiveness, expense and severity of drug prohibition and have called for the decriminalization of "light drugs" like cannabis. Other people believe that all drugs are dangerous and should be banned.

Compare these two points of view. Which do you agree with? Support your choice with specific examples.

Alcoholism Through a Doctor's Eyes

When I teach medical students about alcohol abuse, it is never easy. Students arrive with preconceived notions and stereotypes about the subject, obtained from books, television and films.

So I am especially glad that students from my university, have been attending the play "Bill W. and Dr. Bob" as part of their studies. The drama, about the founding of A.A. (Alcoholics Anonymous), is a great way to learn how defining something as a disease is only a starting point for understanding the patients who experience it. Yet as I watched the play recently, I was amazed by how little has changed through the years in our beliefs about alcoholism and what we can do about it.

Bill W. and Dr. Bob were Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith, the two alcoholics who started A.A. in the late 1930s. Prior to that time, heavy drinking was largely seen as a moral failing. Organizations like the (WCTU) Women's Christian Temperance Union held the idea that "drunks" were sinners too weak to resist the temptation of "demon rum". The "treatment" for this condition was both abstinence and an evangelical Christianity.

With the emergence of the Anti-Saloon League in the 1890s, the focus shifted to legislative control of alcohol, which culminated in 1919 with the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibiting the production, sale and transport of "intoxicating" beverages. Although the prohibitionists had triumphed, their success was limited. By 1933, Americans had become fed up with Prohibition, which was abrogated by an amendment to the Constitution.

Now able to obtain alcohol freely, heavy drinkers once again began to have high rates of liver disease, alcohol withdrawal, delirium tremens and other complications of their pastime.

Attitudes, however, were changing. What if heavy drinking — alcoholism — was not a sin or a sign of weakness but a disease? In 1937, scientists established the Research Council on Problems of Alcohol, which studied alcohol metabolism and drinking behaviors while trying to avoid moral judgments.

But the most notable development in the 1930s was the founding of A.A. As depicted in the play, A.A. resulted from the chance meeting of Bill Wilson, a New York stockbroker, and Dr. Bob Smith, an Ohio surgeon in 1935. Both drank heavily and were destroying their marriages and lives. "You want to drink more than you want to live!" Bob's wife screams at him at one point.

Although it did not specifically call alcoholism an illness, A.A. popularized this notion. Alcoholism, Bill explains during the play, is like tuberculosis. Later on, he calls his condition an "alcohol allergy." The point was that some men — and the disease was originally believed to affect almost entirely men — could simply not drink in moderation. The only solution was abstinence.

What made A.A. unique was its emphasis on members helping one another stay away from alcohol. Bill hopes that he and Bob can create a "chain reaction to reach all the drunks in the world." As Bob says, "Our service keeps us sober." There was a religious component to A.A. Five of the original "12 Steps" followed by A.A. members mention God. But "Bill W. and Dr. Bob" largely emphasizes a non-denominational spiritual awakening in which alcoholics admit that they are powerless as the first step to abstinence and recovery.

Of course, calling something a disease did not automatically eliminate the deeply-rooted cultural beliefs about the condition. As with patients who developed lung cancer from smoking or diabetes from being overweight, alcoholics are still often viewed as lazy and merely lacking the willpower to stop an unhealthy habit. At my hospital, chronic alcoholics who promise future sobriety are generally met with disbelief and, at times, derision.

These reactions still occur, even though scientists have recently identified a genetic component to alcoholism. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse, there are multiple genes responsible for about half the risk of someone becoming an alcoholic.

Another aspect of alcoholism that remains familiar is the lack of good treatment options. Detoxification and rehabilitation programs are expensive and not that effective. And while new research suggests that drugs can be used to facilitate drinking in moderation, I still refer the vast majority of my alcoholic patients to A.A., just as doctors did 80 years ago. Yet even A.A.'s ability to maintain ongoing sobriety among its participants is only about 10 percent, although certain populations, with stronger social supports, do better.