

# Happiness

## ACADEMIC PATHWAYS

Lesson A: Identifying an author's main ideas  
Guessing meaning from context

Lesson B: Understanding a classification text

Lesson C: Introduction to the paragraph  
Writing a topic sentence



## Think and Discuss

1. What does it mean to be happy?
2. Think of someone you know who seems happy.  
How do you know he or she is happy?  
Describe the person.

▲ A zebra butterfly brings joy to a young girl in Lincoln, Nebraska.



## Exploring the Theme

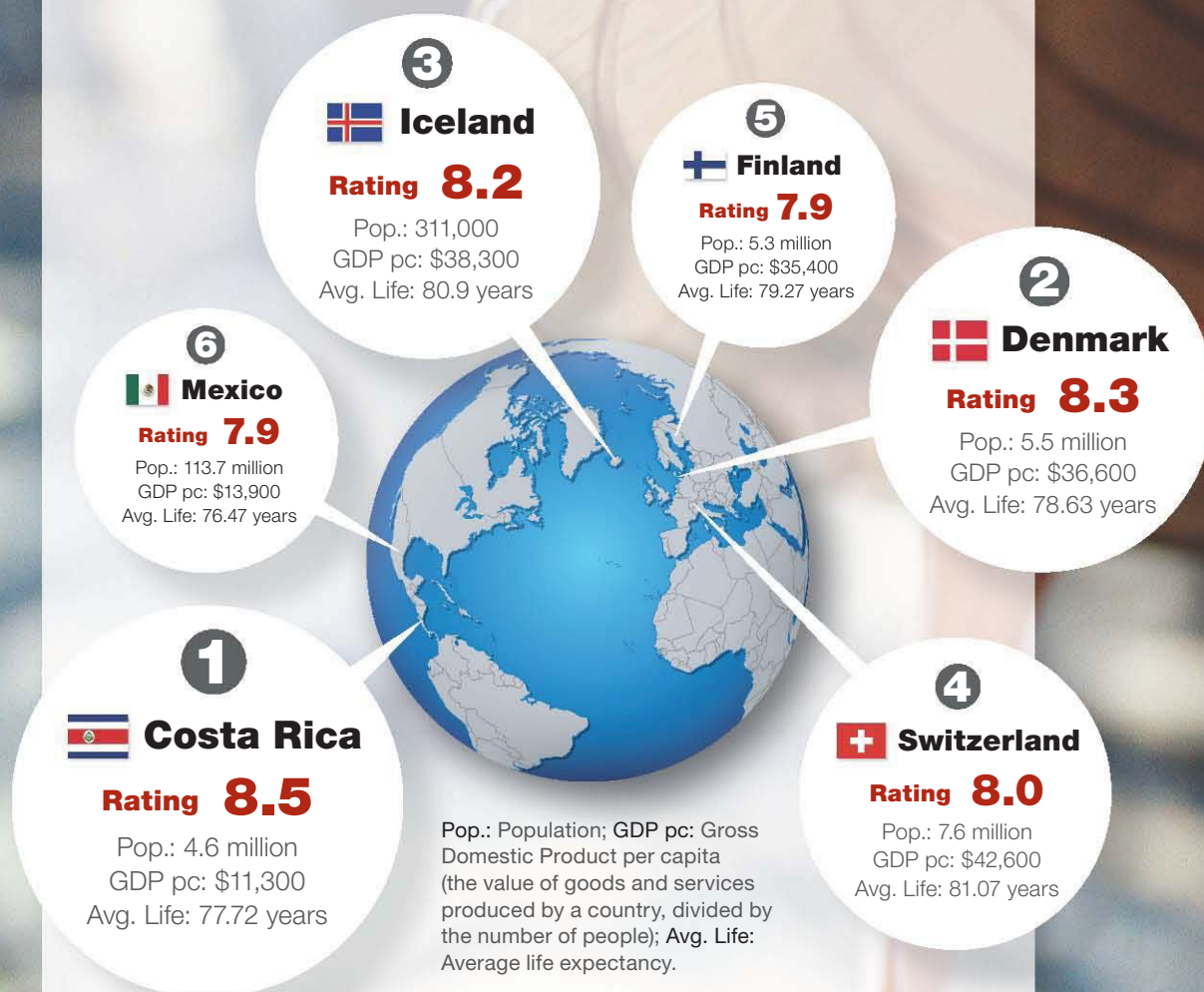
Look at the information about two surveys and discuss the questions.

1. Where are the happiest places on Earth, according to the two surveys? How do the results compare?
2. Why do you think people from these countries are happy?
3. Imagine you want to find the happiest place in your country. What information would you look at? What questions would you ask?

### World Happiness Survey ①

## Happy Hot Spots

The **World Database of Happiness** brings together scientific reports on happiness from 149 countries around the world. The researchers ask people to rate their enjoyment of life on a scale from 0 to 10. The top six happiest nations according to the survey (2000–2009) are listed below. The happiest Asian country, Singapore, is 37th in the list; Malawi (62nd) is Africa's happiest nation. The world's richest nation, the United States, placed 21st.



Source: <http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/>





## World Happiness Survey <sup>2</sup> **Happy Planet**

The **Happy Planet Index** was started in 2006 by the New Economics Foundation (NEF). It measures average personal happiness together with a country's average life expectancy and environmental impact. The highest-rated countries have happy, long-living people without harming the environment.

The top six countries in the 2009 Index are listed below. Other countries in the top 20 include Brazil (9th), Egypt (12th), Saudi Arabia (13th), the Philippines (14th), Argentina (15th), and China (20th).

- 1 Costa Rica 
- 2 Dominican Republic 
- 3 Jamaica 
- 4 Guatemala 
- 5 Vietnam 
- 6 Colombia 

Source: <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>

▲ An elderly Vietnamese woman smiles for a photo. Vietnam was rated #5 in the 2009 **Happy Planet Index**, the highest-placed Asian nation in that survey.

- A | Building Vocabulary.** Find the words in **blue** in the reading passage on pages 5–6. Read the words around them and try to guess their meanings. Then write the correct word or phrase from the box to complete each sentence (1–10).



access	basic necessities	confident	financial	freedom
poverty	provides	secure	socialize	standard of living

- When you \_\_\_\_\_, you spend time with other people for fun.
- A country with a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ has a lot of people who don't have money.
- If you have \_\_\_\_\_ to something, you can use it.
- If you have complete \_\_\_\_\_, you can do anything you want to do.
- If a government \_\_\_\_\_ jobs to people, it gives jobs to people.
- If you have a high \_\_\_\_\_, you are very comfortable and wealthy.
- If you discuss your \_\_\_\_\_ situation, you are talking about money.
- If you are \_\_\_\_\_, you feel safe and are not worried about anything.
- If you have the \_\_\_\_\_, you have a home and enough food to eat.
- If you are \_\_\_\_\_ about something, you are sure about it.



- B | Using Vocabulary.** Answer the questions. Share your ideas with a partner.

- What do you think are the **basic necessities** in life, besides food and a home?
- Do you feel **confident** about your future? Why, or why not?
- Who do you **socialize** with?



- C | Brainstorming.** List six things you think a person needs in order to be happy. Share your ideas with a partner.

- |          |          |          |
|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 3. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 4. _____ | 6. _____ |

- D | Predicting.** Read the title and the subheads of the reading passage on pages 5–6. What do you think the reading passage is about?

- Different things make different people happy.
- Security is the most important thing for happiness.
- Everyone needs the same basic things to be happy.

### Strategy

#### Read titles and subheads

to predict what a passage is about. This will help you know what to expect as you read.



### Word Link

To increase your vocabulary, use a dictionary to find other forms of a word, e.g., (*adj.*) confident, (*n.*) confidence; (*adj.*) secure, (*n.*) security; (*n.*) freedom, (*adj.*) free; (*v.*) socialize, (*adj.*) social; (*adj.*) financial, (*n.*) finance.





▲ A happy street seller shows off his fruit selection at an open-air market in Singapore.



A

**WHAT MAKES US HAPPY?** Money? Friends? A good job? Are the answers the same for everyone? According to world surveys, Mexico and Singapore are two happy countries—but their people may be happy for different reasons.

## Safety and Security

B

There are more than 19,000 people per square mile<sup>1</sup> in the small nation of Singapore. People on the island work an average of 70 hours per week. The country has strict laws, for example, against littering,<sup>2</sup> graffiti,<sup>3</sup> and even for not flushing a toilet. But according to the World Database of Happiness, Singapore is the happiest country in Asia. Why?

C

One reason for Singapore's happiness is that the government provides the basic necessities, such as jobs and housing. There is almost no poverty, and Singapore has one of the lowest levels of unemployment in the world. The government creates jobs for people who are unemployed. It “tops up”<sup>4</sup> poorer people's income so everyone can have a minimum standard of living. The government also offers tax breaks<sup>5</sup> to people who look after their aging parents. This may be why 84 percent of older people live with their children. The result is a lot of closely connected families with roughly equal standards of living.

D

People may not all be happy about the laws, but they are generally happy with the results—they don't step in litter, the public toilets work, and the streets are safe and clean. So for Singaporeans, it seems that living in a secure, clean, and safe place may be more important than having a lot of personal freedom. As Dr. Tan Ern Ser of Singapore's Institute of Policy Studies explains, “If you are hopeful and confident of getting what you want in life, then you are happy.”

<sup>1</sup> A **square mile** = 2.59 square kilometers

<sup>2</sup> **Littering** is leaving garbage or trash lying around outside.

<sup>3</sup> **Graffiti** is words or pictures that are written or drawn on walls or other public places.

<sup>4</sup> If you **top** something **up**, you add to it to make it full.

<sup>5</sup> If the government gives someone a **tax break**, it lowers the amount of tax they have to pay.



## Friends and Neighbors

**E** In many ways, Mexico is the opposite of Singapore. There are some parts of Mexico where people do not have a safe or secure life. Many people do not have jobs, enough food, or **access** to education. But, as in Singapore, most people in Mexico feel that they are happy. Why?

**F** One reason is the importance of socializing. According to psychologists, much of our happiness comes from remembering the small joys that happen throughout the day. Simple acts of socializing, such as talking with a neighbor or having dinner with friends, can greatly increase our overall happiness. People in Mexico **socialize** with family and friends a lot, and this adds to their happiness.

**G** But what about poverty? In Mexico, about half of the population is poor. However, most people in Mexico live near people in a similar **financial** situation. If your neighbor doesn't have expensive items, such as a big house or an expensive car, you don't feel the need to have those things. So money, by itself, may not be so important for happiness. What matters more is how much money you have compared to the people around you.



▲ About 60 percent of Mexico's population rates itself as "very happy"—about 24 percent more than Mexico's richer neighbor, the United States.

## A Mixed Recipe?

**H** So the question "What makes people happy?" does not seem to have a simple answer. Work, security, safety, freedom, and socializing with friends and family can all play important roles. As the examples of Singapore and Mexico suggest, there may be no single recipe for happiness. The good news is that we can each find our own.

Adapted from *Thrive: Finding Happiness the Blue Zones Way* by Dan Buettner, 2010