

The Farmer and the Fortune Teller

THERE was once a young farmer who wanted to know what the future would be like. He prayed to God, but got no answer. He asked the old men in the village, but they were not sure. Then one day a wise fortune teller arrived in the village. The farmer was the first person to visit her, and he asked her to tell him about his future.

“Why do you want to know about your future?” the fortune teller asked.

“If I know about my future, I will be able to change the things I don’t want to happen,” replied the farmer.

“But if you change these things, they won’t be part of your future.”

The farmer thought about this for a few seconds and then said:

“You’re right... But if I know about my future, I will be able to prepare for it.”

The fortune teller smiled: “And if it’s good news what will you do?” she asked.

“If it’s good news, I will be happy to know it.”

“But will you be even more happy if it surprises you one day?”

The farmer thought for a while: “Yes, I suppose so,” he agreed.

“And if it’s bad news?” asked the fortune teller, looking the farmer in the eye.

“If it’s bad news, I will start to prepare for it.”

“But will you also start to worry if you know about it now?”

Again the farmer thought for a moment, and then agreed: “Yes. I suppose I will worry even more.”

“And what if I tell you that the news is neither good nor bad?”

Now the farmer was starting to understand. He said: “If the news is neither good nor bad, I won’t do anything... I will be bored and I will stop trying to improve my life.”

“So are you sure that you want to know about your future?”

“No. I have changed my mind. Thank you,” and the farmer stood up to leave.

“That will be \$25.00 please. Cash only,” said the fortune teller.

The farmer paid her happily and went back to his sheep and his cows. He never wanted to know about the future again!



The Fortune Teller
by Claudio Bravo

Story adapted from *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho (p. 107, Harper Collins, 1999)

A) Read the story and answer the questions:

1. Why did the farmer want to know about his future?
2. Why didn’t the fortune teller want to tell him?
3. Would you be happy to pay \$25.00 for this advice?
4. Would you like to know about your future? Why? / Why not?

B) Underline any sentences in the story with the word ‘if’.

C) Complete the rules. Use the examples in the story to help you:

‘If’ sentences for real future possibilities (first conditional)

Positive sentences:

If + subject + _____ tense, subject + _____ tense

E.g. _____ , _____

Questions:

(question word) + _____ + subject + _____ if + subject + _____ tense

E.g. _____

D) Without looking back at the original story, try to complete the gaps from memory:

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“Why do you want to know about your future?” the fortune teller asked.

“If I know about my future, I will be able to change the things I don’t want to happen,” replied the farmer.

“But if you change these things, they won’t be part of your future.”

The farmer thought about this for a few seconds and then said: “You’re right... But if I _____ (know) about my future, I _____ (be able to) prepare for it.”

The fortune teller smiled: “And if it _____ (be) good news what _____ you _____ (do)?” she asked.

“If it _____ (be) good news, I _____ (be) happy to know it.”

“But _____ you _____ (be) even more happy if it _____ (surprise) you one day?”

The farmer thought for a while: “Yes, I suppose so,” he agreed.

“And if it _____ (be) bad news?” asked the fortune teller, looking the farmer in the eye.

“If it _____ (be) bad news, I _____ (start) to prepare for it.”

“But _____ you also _____ (start) to worry if you _____ (know) about it now?”

Again the farmer thought for a moment, and then agreed: “Yes. I suppose I _____ (worry) even more.”

“And what if I _____ (tell) you that the news is neither good nor bad?”

Now the farmer was starting to understand. He said: “If the news _____ (be) neither good nor bad, I _____ (do) anything... I _____ (be) bored and I _____ (stop) trying to improve my life.”

“So are you sure that you want to know about your future?”

“No. I have changed my mind. Thank you,” and the farmer stood up to leave.

“That will be £25.00 please. Cash only,” said the fortune teller, smiling.

The farmer paid her happily and went back to his sheep and his cows. He never wanted to know about the future again!



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E) Roleplay

Work in pairs. One of you is the farmer and the other is the fortune teller. Role play the conversation, trying to work from memory! If you forget a line, just improvise!