

## **TASK: ANTHOLOGY PRACTISE FOR YEAR 11-12s**

**Read and annotate the extract for uses of language – how is this comedic, entertaining, informative, influential, controversial, providing guidance?**

**The full speech is linked here:**

**[9 Life Lessons - Tim Minchin UWA Address](#)**

**Answer analytically, as best you can, how the speech uses language to convey an opinion.**

**Think about:**

- **Its context – where it is, who the audience is, what is significant about this kind of speech**
- **Cultural/geographical influences**
- **Influences of the speaker – do some research and find out who he is**
- **The educational influence of the speaker and the audience**

In darker days, I did a corporate gig at a conference for this big company who made and sold accounting software. In a bid, I presume, to inspire their salespeople to greater heights, they'd forked out 12 grand for an Inspirational Speaker who was this extreme sports dude who had had a couple of his limbs frozen off when he got stuck on a ledge on some mountain. It was weird. Software salespeople need to hear from someone who has had a long, successful and happy career in software sales, not from an overly-optimistic, ex-mountaineer. Some poor guy who arrived in the morning hoping to learn about better sales technique ended up going home worried about the blood flow to his extremities. It's not inspirational – it's confusing.

And if the mountain was meant to be a symbol of life's challenges, and the loss of limbs a metaphor for sacrifice, the software guy's not going to get it, is he? Cos he didn't do an arts degree, did he? He should have. Arts degrees are awesome. And they help you find meaning where there is none. And let me assure you, there is none. Don't go looking for it. Searching for meaning is like searching for a rhyme scheme in a cookbook: you won't find it and you'll bugger up your soufflé.

Point being, I'm not an inspirational speaker. I've never lost a limb on a mountainside, metaphorically or otherwise. And I'm certainly not here to give career advice, cos... well I've never really had what most would call a proper job.

However, I have had large groups of people listening to what I say for quite a few years now, and it's given me an inflated sense of self-importance. So, I will now – at the ripe old age of 38 – bestow upon you nine life lessons. To echo, of course, the 9 lessons and carols of the traditional Christmas service. Which are also a bit obscure.

You might find some of this stuff inspiring, you will find some of it boring, and you will definitely forget all of it within a week. And be warned, there will be lots of hokey similes, and obscure aphorisms which start well but end up not making sense.

So, listen up, or you'll get lost, like a blind man clapping in a pharmacy trying to echo-locate the contact lens fluid.

Here we go:

### 1. You Don't Have To Have A Dream.

Americans on talent shows always talk about their dreams. Fine, if you have something that you've always dreamed of, like, in your heart, go for it! After all, it's something to do with your time... chasing a dream. And if it's a big enough one, it'll take you most of your life to achieve, so by the time you get to it and are staring into the abyss of the meaninglessness of your achievement, you'll be almost dead, so it won't matter.

I never really had one of these big dreams. And so, I advocate passionate dedication to the pursuit of short-term goals. Be micro-ambitious. Put your head down and work with pride on whatever is in front of you... you never know where you might end up. Just be aware that the next worthy pursuit will probably appear in your periphery. Which is why you should be careful of long-term dreams. If you focus too far in front of you, you won't see the shiny thing out the corner of your eye. Right? Good. Advice. Metaphor. Look at me go.

### 2. Don't Seek Happiness

Happiness is like an orgasm: if you think about it too much, it goes away. Keep busy and aim to make someone else happy, and you might find you get some as a side effect. We didn't evolve to be constantly content. Contented Australopithecus Afarensis got eaten before passing on their genes.

### 3. Remember, It's All Luck

You are lucky to be here. You were incalculably lucky to be born, and incredibly lucky to be brought up by a nice family that helped you get educated and encouraged you to go to Uni. Or if you were born into a horrible family, that's unlucky and you have my sympathy... but you were still lucky: lucky that you happened to be made of the sort of DNA that made the sort of brain which – when placed in a horrible childhood environment – would make decisions that meant you ended up, eventually, graduating Uni. Well done you, for dragging yourself up by the shoelaces, but you were lucky. You didn't create the bit of you that dragged you up. They're not even your shoelaces.

I suppose I worked hard to achieve whatever dubious achievements I've achieved ... but I didn't make the bit of me that works hard, any more than I made the bit of me that ate too many burgers instead of going to lectures while I was here at UWA.

Understanding that you can't truly take credit for your successes, nor truly blame others for their failures will humble you and make you more compassionate.

Empathy is intuitive, but is also something you can work on, intellectually.