

5.4 Reading

Multiple choice

I can find specific detail in a literary text.

1 In pairs, read *US TODAY* and answer the questions.

- 1 What percentage of women earn the biggest salary in the family?
- 2 How much time do men spend doing the housework and child care?
- 3 What is the trend for couples where both people work compared to previous eras?

US TODAY

Work/Home life for the average American family

- Seventy percent of American children live in households where both parents are employed.
- Women are **primary breadwinners** in forty percent of homes with children. Two thirds of these women are single parents.
- With the rise of **dual-income marriages**, women do less housework than in previous **generations**, and men do more. However, women still tend to do more housework than men; in the USA, women spend 248 minutes per day on domestic work, while American men spend 161 minutes per day cooking, cleaning or on **child-rearing duties**.



2 Replace the underlined words and phrases in Exercise 1 with the words and phrases in blue in *US TODAY*.

3 In pairs, discuss what similarities/differences there are between working life in the US and in your country.

4 Read the text and answer the questions.

- 1 What was the author's mother's job and what did his father think about it?
- 2 How many siblings did the author have and what sort of house did they live in?
- 3 Which of these descriptions do you think best describes the book that this extract was taken from?
 - a historical novel
 - a memoir
 - a travel guide

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CHAPTER 1

Harper's magazine in December 1951 published an article by Nancy B. Mavity on an unsettling new phenomenon, the two-income family, in which husband and wife both went out to work to pay for a more ambitious lifestyle. Mavity's worry was not how women would cope with the demands of employment on top of child-rearing and housework, but rather what this would do to the man's traditional status as breadwinner. 'I'd be ashamed to let my wife work,' one man told Mavity tartly, and it was clear from her tone that Mavity expected most readers to agree. Remarkably, until the war many women in America had been unable to work whether they wanted to or not. Up until Pearl Harbor, half of the forty-eight states had laws making it illegal to employ a married woman.

In this respect, my father was commendably – I would even say enthusiastically – liberal, and was completely in favour of my mother working. She worked for the *Des Moines Register*, as the Home Furnishings Editor, in which capacity she provided calm reassurance to two generations of homemakers who were anxious to know whether the time had come for paisley in the bedroom and whether they should have square sofa cushions or round. [...]

Because they both worked, we were better off than most people of our socio-economic background (which in Des Moines in the 1950s was most people). We – which is to say, my parents, my brother, Michael, my sister, Mary Elizabeth (or Betty) and I – had a bigger house on a larger lot than most of my parents' colleagues. It was a white clapboard house with black shutters and a big screened porch on top of a shady hill on the best side of town. [...]

