

True Beauty B2/C1

What if a photo showed how beautiful you were on the inside? Read what happens when people download a new app called TrueBeauty.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the text and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–j) with the vocabulary (1–10).

Vocabulary

1. to scroll
2. a feed
3. blessed
4. buffed
5. a selfie
6. a filter
7. a sewer
8. an influencer
9. to turn out
- 10..... to wander

Definition

- a. a photo you take of yourself with a mobile phone
- b. to happen in a particular way or have a particular result
- c. to move up and down through text or pictures on a screen
- d. a large pipe or tunnel under the street where dirty water from sinks and toilets goes
- e. lucky to have the kind of life you have
- f. to walk slowly and without any clear purpose or direction
- g. a tool that makes photos look different after you take them
- h. slang to describe someone's body when they exercise a lot
- i. a place where you see new posts on social media
- j. a person on social media who affects or changes the way other people behave

True Beauty — B2/C1

Steph scrolled through her Instagram feed. There were #blessed yoga photos and #SundayBrunch pictures. Freshly baked bread sat next to coffees with hearts drawn on the top of the milk.

Somewhere in another corner of the internet, Matt was doing the same. His feed was filled with #buffed gym-selfies and #beachlife holiday shots.

Steph took a photo of her carefully arranged breakfast and flowers. Her eggs and her coffee had gone cold, but the plate looked really cool. It was from an expensive art market she had visited that morning. The flowers were ones she'd 'borrowed' from her neighbour's garden. No one had noticed. *Besides*, she thought, *flowers are for everyone to enjoy, aren't they?* And,

probably only ten people a day walked past old Mrs Robinson's garden. Posting the picture on Instagram meant far more people would get to appreciate them.

Steph adjusted the colours on her picture to make the orange juice and the pink roses brighter. As she scrolled through the Instagram filters, TrueBeauty caught her eye. She'd installed it yesterday and forgotten about it. The picture looked perfect with that filter. She posted the photo for her 15k followers to envy. Then she threw the food on her plate into the bin. There was no point eating it now that it was cold.

Matt was about to give up. He'd worked out for an hour, and he'd drunk very little water since the night before to make his skin tighter and show off his muscles better. But he still couldn't get the photos to look good. Fake tan hadn't helped, neither had spraying himself with cooking oil. There was almost no point being fit if you couldn't get a good photo for social media. He scrolled through his feed again, looking for inspiration and checking out the competition. An ad for TrueBeauty caught his eye.

Pictures as gorgeous as you are. See the real you with TrueBeauty. Available in your app store for £0. Because True Beauty comes for free.

That's what he needed. He downloaded the app and, in minutes, he had the perfect selfie. In the photos, his body looked tanned and perfect. He posted the photo for his 27k followers and then got in the shower to wash off all the cooking oil. He remembered reading about all the fat down in the sewers. He lived in a city full of millions of people and most of them washed the oil in their frying pans down the sink. The oil blocked up the sewers with a disgusting mess that some poor worker had to remove. Or did it end up in the ocean killing dolphins? He couldn't remember, but, whatever it was, it was someone else's problem.

Neither Steph nor Matt were expecting to get so few likes. And they definitely weren't prepared for the negative comments they got.

susieQ :- (Remind me never to get breakfast at your place!

gymguy21 Ewww, disgusting!

Those were the half-polite ones. The rest of the comments were even worse.

And then both social media influencers looked again at the pictures they'd posted.

Steph's picture showed green-looking eggs with flies crawling on them. The flowers were dead, and the coffee had a horrible grey layer floating on the surface. Matt's picture showed his body covered in a layer of something that looked like dirty butter. It was in his hair and coming out of his nose. And, worst of all, his nails were filthy. It looked as if he had been digging up dirt – or worse.

In panic, they both tried to delete the photos, but it was impossible to get rid of them. The negative comments kept coming. In one way, it was Steph's most popular post. And Matt's had already been shared 50 times.

Just then, both Steph and Matt, along with all the other people who had installed the TrueBeauty filter, received a message from the person who had created it.

Dear User,

Thank you for making TrueBeauty such an amazing success! Fifty million downloads in the first 24 hours is more than I ever hoped for. Honestly, guys, I am so #blessed and #thankful.

I know that each of you really, truly cares about showing yourself as you really are – just as beautiful on the inside as you are on the outside. If you want your pictures to show the real you, it's time to *be* as beautiful in real life as you are on your social media.

Have a truly beautiful day, beautiful people!

Love,

TrueBeauty

PS. You can't remove the filter or delete the pictures you posted using it.
#SorryNotSorry

PPS. By the way, after the first time you use TrueBeauty, it automatically gets added to all your photos from now on.

For the next 24 hours, not many people posted photos anywhere online. Newspapers ran articles with headlines like *Who is behind TrueBeauty?* But no one really had any ideas. The biggest problem was that there was only one way people could see if the filter had stopped destroying their photos: by posting pictures to see how they turned out.

The results were not pretty.

A handful of the richest and most powerful influencers even offered a reward to whoever could find a way to remove the filter. But each time they tried to post a picture of themselves holding the money, the results produced such awful, ugly pictures, they were forced to stop promoting the reward. It didn't matter anyway. The person who developed TrueBeauty was always one step ahead of anyone who tried to interfere with the technology.

Steph had given up trying to take pictures after five more horrible pictures. Nothing she tried worked, and the only thing she could do to stop people seeing the ugly pictures she had posted was to make her account private. Now, no one could see anything she had ever posted in her life. What was the point of anything any more?

Depressed, she wandered downstairs and past Mrs Robinson's garden. The flowers were more beautiful than ever, and she noticed the smell for the first time. Heaven! She stopped to smell a large, purple rose.

'Hello,' said Mrs Robinson, making Steph jump. 'Oh, sorry, I didn't mean to frighten you. I was just here watering the plants. At this time of year, there's always so much to do.'

Steph looked around. She hadn't ever thought about how much work it was to maintain the garden. In fact, she'd never really spoken to Mrs Robinson at all. A new thought occurred to her.

'Do you want some help?' Steph asked. After all, she didn't have much else to do that day.

'Oh, thank you, dear! That would be lovely!' Mrs Robinson looked so delighted, Steph actually felt happy for the first time since the whole TrueBeauty nightmare had started.

A couple of hours later, to be honest, the garden didn't look much different to Steph. But Mrs Robinson said she had been a great help and Steph had enjoyed herself a lot. It had been nice to hear Mrs Robinson's stories about the street and how it had changed. She'd been an actress in the past and she had some amazing stories to tell.

'Take a picture of us, dear,' said Mrs Robinson as Steph was leaving. 'One of those selfies everyone loves nowadays.'

Steph almost refused because what was the point of photos now? But Mrs Robinson would be happy with an ordinary picture so she supposed she might as well take one. She took a quick picture of the two of them standing together in front of the roses, smiling and sweating slightly.

Later that evening she looked at the picture on her phone. Out of habit, she adjusted the colours slightly. But the roses looked beautiful anyway, with or without the changes she'd made. And nothing could really improve the smiles on her and Mrs Robinson's faces.

That's a really beautiful picture, she thought. It's a shame TrueBeauty would destroy it if she posted it.

But then she had a thought. She went back and read the message from TrueBeauty again.

And then she posted her picture. When the picture went online, it looked exactly as Steph had taken it! She made her account public again and added some text.

Me and my neighbour doing the gardening #TrueBeauty #BeautyIsOnTheInside <3 <3
<3

One of Steph's followers, Matt, saw her photo. At first, he was just pleased to see some activity in his feed that wasn't showing something horrible. He hadn't been to the gym for two days and he supposed he was kind of depressed. But he wasn't sure whether he was feeling bad because he hadn't exercised or because of all the horrible and upsetting photos he'd seen.

Then he had an idea as he looked at @Steph's post. Maybe it wouldn't work, but there was no harm in trying. He looked around his flat and gathered up all the paper, plastic and glass he could find and separated it into three piles. Then he went to knock on his neighbour's door to see if he could take her rubbish to the bins. The young mother who answered the door was pleasantly surprised at his offer of help.

By the time Matt returned from the recycling bins and posted the smiling selfie he had taken next to the green glass bin, #TrueBeauty was the fifth most popular hashtag. His picture, like

many of the others, was nothing special. Just a smiling guy doing an ordinary task after helping his neighbour. It was a truly beautiful photo.

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Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. Steph was more interested in how the food looked than how it tasted.	True	False
2. Matt worried about the environment at the beginning of the story.	True	False
3. TrueBeauty made people's photos more beautiful.	True	False
4. Powerful influencers wanted to reward the creator of TrueBeauty.		
5. Steph would not have got to know Mrs Robinson without TrueBeauty.	True	False
6. Steph and Matt know each other in real life.	True	False
7. The creator of TrueBeauty made their identity public.	True	False
8. TrueBeauty improved Matt's and Steph's lives in the end.	True	False
	True	False

Task 2

Put the words in the correct order to make sentences.

- the woman stole Steph lived downstairs. who flowers from
- clean up. a mess workers The oil had to caused that
- Matt and Steph created TrueBeauty. got a message the person who from
- a reward to could offered the problem. Some famous influencers anyone who solve
- that pictures to see Matt was happy disgusting. weren't
- Matt The woman surprised. helped who was

Discussion

Did you like the story? Would you download TrueBeauty? Why/Why not?

Answers

Preparation task

1. c
2. i
3. e
4. h
5. a
6. g
7. d
8. j
9. b
10. f

Task 1

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. False
7. False
8. True

Task 2

1. Steph stole flowers from the woman who lived downstairs.
2. The oil caused a mess that workers had to clean up.
3. Matt and Steph got a message from the person who created TrueBeauty.
4. Some famous influencers offered a reward to anyone who could solve the problem.
5. Matt was happy to see pictures that weren't disgusting.
6. The woman who Matt helped was surprised.