

Born Without Luck

By ReadWorks

Once there was a man who was born without luck. This may not seem like such a tragedy. After all, many people are born without good looks, or charm, or athletic ability. Most of these people do just fine. But to be born without luck—that is a curse that can't be overcome.

Eddie was born, completely and utterly without luck, on January 1, 1990. Nothing seemed that special about January 1, 1990 to most people. But Eddie spent hours hunched over his keyboard, looking at Google records for the date. He searched for some hidden clue that would explain why luck had decided to forsake him. But Eddie couldn't find anything special about the date. New York City swore in its first black mayor, and Japan had a new women's wrestling champion. Neither of these seemed connected to how unlucky he was.

Eddie began these Google searches when he was 12 years old. By then, he knew that he had no luck. It's not the type of thing that a person can ignore forever. There was the mysterious escape of every single pet he'd ever owned. Eddie understood that other children had dogs, hamsters, and rabbits that ran away, too. But he had never heard of another child whose pet snail had managed to escape. Eddie knew that if he planned a birthday party outside, it would rain. He knew that if he had a big test, he would become violently ill just before it began. He knew that if he returned to the test, sweating and shaking after being sick in the bathroom, he would find that every single question was on the only part he had forgotten to study.

This was normal for Eddie, and for years he accepted, as a fact, that life was unfair. It wasn't until age 23 that Eddie began to wonder if life always had to be this way. It seemed like a normal day. He was standing in line at the DMV, waiting to get a new driver's license. His previous license had fallen out of his pocket and down a flushing toilet. A busload of slow-moving senior citizens had arrived just before Eddie, and he knew it would be hours before his number was called. By now, Eddie was no longer frustrated by such events. He took them in stride.

He sat down on one of the hard, plastic chairs, discovered it was broken, and shifted to a second chair. Immediately, someone with a deep, hacking cough sat down to his right. Eddie scooted slightly away as the coughing continued. It was a marathon of a cough, one that seemed to come from deep within the person's belly, rattling their entire frame. By Eddie's estimation, the coughing had now gone on for five solid minutes without pause. He wondered if the person was going to die while sitting beside him. That would be new, Eddie thought. That was one unlucky thing that hadn't happened—yet. The coughing stopped, and Eddie snuck a glance at the cougher. She seemed to still be alive. Her face was red, and tears were streaming down her cheeks, but she was definitely breathing.

Eddie looked closer. In fact, even with the red face, the coughing girl was quite pretty. Eddie drew in his breath quickly. Usually his luckless state kept away the pretty girls. Before they could sit beside him, someone else always grabbed the seat. Eddie debated whether he

should speak to her and quickly decided that he should. Knowing that the worst possible scenario would always occur had given Eddie a reckless bravura. After all, if there was no way to make things go right, he might as well do what he wanted.

“Do you need a tissue?” Eddie leaned over and asked. The girl sniffled and nodded. “I always carry a pack with me, and I never have a cold. I lost them last week, and now I have my first cold in years.” Eddie nodded wisely. This was just the kind of situation he understood. He held out the tissue, “Here, take it. My name is Eddie.”

“I’m Mara,” said the girl, smiling. Eddie felt a strange, happy feeling spread through his chest. Was this what luck felt like?

Just then, the DMV called his number. Eddie felt his heart sink. He said goodbye to Mara and went up to the desk. The DMV official made Eddie fill out fifteen forms, then told him they were the wrong forms and gave him fifteen new forms, then finally told him that a new license would be \$200. Eddie sighed, paid the money, and got his new license. By the time he finished, Mara was gone. In her place sat a cranky-looking man who was picking his teeth with a credit card. Go figure.

Eddie stepped outside the DMV, and it began to rain. He walked to the bus stop to take the bus to his apartment, which had probably become infested by mice, or maybe snakes, while he was gone. He had just gotten to the bus stop when his phone began to ring. It was an unknown number. “Probably a bill collector,” he thought. “Or maybe another terrorist with my exact name has been put on the FBI’s watch list.” He let it go to voicemail and reluctantly dialed to listen to the message. To his surprise, Eddie heard a female voice.

“Eddie? This is Mara, from the DMV. Your business card was with the tissue so I thought I’d call...” Her voice was interrupted by a coughing fit, which lasted until the message cut off. Eddie stared at the phone, incredulously. He had the phone number of a girl, a pretty girl. Eddie looked over his shoulder carefully, worried that his stroke of good luck would have to be balanced out by something horrible. Perhaps he was about to get mugged or hit by the bus he was waiting for. But Eddie made it home safely. He woke up the next morning without any disfiguring illnesses and was even able to call Mara back.

Years later, Eddie thought back on that day, trying to figure out what had changed. Had he just been patient long enough? Had the fates given up on punishing him and decided to give him a break? After the day at the DMV, Eddie’s curse was broken. His life wasn’t perfect, by any means, but good things happened. When he died, at the respectably old age of 88, Eddie’s will divided his fortune in two: half for Mara and half for the DMV.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What does Eddie begin to wonder at age 23?

- A whether life always has to be unfair
- B whether he will ever have a pet that does not escape
- C whether there is a connection between his unluckiness and a mayor of New York City
- D whether there is a connection between his unluckiness and a women's wrestling champion in Japan

2. What is the main conflict of this story?

- A a conflict between Eddie and the DMV official
- B a conflict between Eddie and the FBI
- C a conflict between Eddie and his bad luck
- D a conflict between Eddie and Mara

3. Eddie was born completely and utterly without luck. What evidence in the story supports this statement?

- A "But Eddie couldn't find anything special about the date. New York City swore in its first black mayor, and Japan had a new women's wrestling champion."
- B "Eddie knew that if he planned a birthday party outside, it would rain. He knew that if he had a big test, he would become violently ill just before it began."
- C "The coughing stopped, and Eddie snuck a glance at the cougher. She seemed to still be alive. Her face was red, and tears were streaming down her cheeks, but she was definitely breathing."
- D "When he died, at the respectably old age of 88, Eddie's will divided his fortune in two: half for Mara and half for the DMV."

4. Read these sentences from the text.

"It seemed like a normal day. He was standing in line at the DMV, waiting to get a new driver's license. His previous license had fallen out of his pocket and down a flushing toilet. A busload of slow-moving senior citizens had arrived just before Eddie, a"

Based on these sentences, how has Eddie's attitude toward having no luck changed?

- A Eddie was once upset that he had no luck, but now he is used to it.
- B Eddie was once annoyed that he had no luck, but now he is happy about it.
- C Eddie did not used to mind that he had no luck, but now he is bitter about it.
- D Eddie used to feel comfortable with having no luck, but now he feels confused about it.

5. What is a theme of this story?

- A Trusting your instincts can be dangerous.
- B It takes more than money to be happy.
- C If you do something wrong today, you will pay for it tomorrow.
- D Bad luck does not last forever.

6. Read this sentence from the text.

"Eddie was born, completely and utterly without luck, on January 1, 1990."

The words "completely" and "utterly" mean the same thing. Why might the author have used two words that mean the same thing in this sentence?

- A to entertain the reader
- B to capture the reader's attention
- C to emphasize Eddie's lack of luck
- D to suggest a cause-and-effect relationship between Eddie's lack of luck and the day he was born

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Eddie never had any luck when he was growing up. _____, every single pet he'd ever owned mysteriously escaped.

- A Otherwise
- B For example
- C Previously
- D In summary

8. What happens to Eddie at the "respectably old age of 88"?

9. Read this sentence from the text.

"After the day at the DMV, Eddie's curse was broken."

What was Eddie's curse? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

10. Cite two pieces of evidence from the text that Eddie's curse was broken after the day at the DMV.
