

## The Secret Millionaire

### 1 SPEAKING Read the first few lines of the article and discuss the questions.

Nowadays Mike Greene is a multi-millionaire. He lives in the lap of luxury, in a 7 bedroom mansion, with his wife and two daughters. But he wasn't always so well-off. In fact, when he was a child he lived on the breadline. His family were so hard up that they couldn't even afford a house; all five of them lived in a small caravan...

- How do you think Mike's life now is different from his childhood? Possessions? Leisure? Food?
- How do you think Mike became wealthy?
- What do you think are the good and bad things about being rich or poor?

### 2 Predicting: *Before you read a text, there are several things you can do to help you understand better when you read.*

- 1 Look at the title and any pictures and think how they might relate to the topic.
- 2 Read the first few lines- these sometimes summarise the text.
- 3 Read the first line of each paragraph- these often summarise the main point of the paragraph.

### 3 Look at the title and the photos. What do they show? How might they be connected?

## *The Secret Millionaire*



### 3 Now read the first line of each paragraph and compare with your ideas.

Nowadays Mike Greene is a multi-millionaire. He **lives in the lap of luxury**, in a 7 bedroom mansion, with his wife and two daughters. But he wasn't always so **well-off**. In fact, when he was a child he was **living on the breadline**. His family were so **hard up** that they couldn't even afford a house; all five of them lived in a small caravan. At the age of 7, Mike decided he had to help his Mum, a single parent. He got his first job, delivering newspapers.

When he was a little older, the same newsagent gave Mike another job, working in the shop on Saturdays. Mike found he was good at retail, eventually becoming a millionaire at the age of 38.

Mike wanted to do something to help kids and young adults in the same deprived areas of Peterborough where he grew up. So he appeared on the popular reality TV show, Secret Millionaire.

In each episode, a millionaire leaves their **well-heeled** life behind to go and live undercover in an poor area of the country, working and volunteering in the community to find people or projects they think deserve to be given some financial help.

Mike first went to take a look at Time Stop, a hostel for homeless young people. More than 78,000 young people in Britain experience homelessness every year. Time Stop provides temporary accommodation for 16-25 year olds, helping them to learn some life skills, such as cooking and budgeting, to make them less dependent and better able to look after themselves.

Mike realised that many of these young people had given up hope of ever getting a job, so, using his professional experience and expertise, he helped one of them, Jay, to write a more impressive CV and apply for jobs.

Mike also wrote a letter to thank the newsagent who had helped him by giving him his first job. The newsagent had believed in him, and helped him to believe in himself. Otherwise, Mike felt, he might never have achieved what he had.

Next Mike visited New Ark- an award-winning adventure playground and city farm. New Ark provides affordable childcare in one of the most deprived areas of the city. Many of the children come from single-parent families, and their parents are only able to work because they can send their children there. The average cost of after school child-care in Britain is £97 pounds a week. For these parents, always **strapped for cash**, such a sum of money would be impossible. Run as a charity, New Ark provides the same care for £55 a year. But when Mike visited, New Ark was **living from hand to mouth**. The project had lost funding, and looked likely to have to close down; disastrous for the families that depend on it.

Mike spoke to Nicky, one of the workers at New Ark, who told him about how she'd missed out on her childhood looking after her brothers and sisters, and how she wanted to help other children have somewhere safe and fun to go after school. Talking about this made Mike realise that he had also not really had a childhood, and he made the decision to stop working quite so hard, and spend more time with his daughters while they were growing up.

In the final part of the programme, Mike revealed that he was actually a millionaire, and **rolling in money**! He gave First Stop a cheque for £20,000 and promised to volunteer two evenings a month, helping young people to write successful job applications. He gave New Ark a generous £40,000 and promised to personally make sure that they never had to close. Since then he has become the President of New Ark, helping to raise money, and he and his family visit regularly.

Through Secret Millionaire, Mike has certainly changed the lives of many young people for the better, but he has also changed his own life. 'Giving money is easy', he said, 'Giving time, emotion and dedication is a far greater gift.'

### Read the whole text carefully. Are the sentences True [T], False [F] or not given [NG]? Correct the false ones.

- 1 Mike got his first job to earn some extra pocket money.
- 2 He made his first million when he became a reality TV star.
- 3 Most youth homelessness is caused by family problems.
- 4 With Mike's help, Jay got his first job.
- 5 Mike felt he succeeded in life because someone else believed that he could.
- 6 New Ark was closing down because the parents who used it couldn't afford to pay the fees.
- 7 Mike's TV experience had an impact on his own family life.
- 8 Mike believes that giving money is the best thing he can do for these charities.

### 5 Did anything in the text surprise or shock you? Are there any similarities with your own country?



**6 Study the highlighted idioms in the text. Do they refer to being poor or to being wealthy? Complete the sentences with a suitable idiom.**

1. She couldn't save because she needed all her money to survive; she \_\_\_\_\_  
(2 possibilities)
2. Can we stay in tonight rather than go out? I'm a bit \_\_\_\_\_ at the moment. (2 possibilities)
3. Staying in that 5\* hotel was amazing; we were \_\_\_\_\_.
4. He doesn't need to worry about what he spends; he's \_\_\_\_\_.
5. She looks pretty \_\_\_\_\_. Look at that designer jacket she's wearing.

**7 Comment on the facts below, using some of the idioms from exercise 6.**

- Recent research shows that the wealthiest ten percent of society in the UK now earns 12 times as much as the poorest, a significant increase from 8 times as much in the 1980s.
- The top 1% now earn 14% of the total income for the country, double the amount in the 1980s.
- Workers in the top ten percent now earn an average £55,000 a year, compared with £4,700 for the poorest 10 per cent.

**8 SPEAKING Work in groups. Discuss the questions**

- Why do you think some people live on the breadline, while others live in the lap of luxury?
- Do you think that everyone can become well-off if they work hard enough?
- Should those who earn more, pay more tax? Why/why not?
- Do better off people have a responsibility to help the poor? How?
- Do you do anything to help those poorer than you? If so, what do you do?

**9 WRITING Mike Green felt that the newsagent who had given him his first job had made a real difference to his life by believing in him.**

**Can you think of anyone who has made a difference in your life in that way? A teacher? A parent or other relative? Write a letter thanking them for what they did and explaining the difference their actions have made to you.**



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**Key****4**

- 1 F (He wanted to help his mother)  
 2 F (He made it through his business)  
 3 NG  
 4 NG  
 5 T  
 6 F (It was losing funding)  
 7 T (He cut down his hours)  
 8 F (Giving time is even more important) .

**6**

Wealthy	Poor
<b>Very rich</b> Living in the lap of luxury Rolling in money  <b>Quite rich</b> Well heeled	<b>Not having very much money</b> Hard up Strapped for cash  <b>Only just enough money to survive</b> Living on the breadline Living from hand to mouth



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