

I came across some interesting information the other day, bizarre information, crazy information, that has led me on a journey of discovery. I was watching one of my sons run during a track meet (1). There were six middle schools all competing in the various track events, and the place was packed. I sat in the middle of the large crowd of parents who had come to cheer on (2) their children. A lady who I knew was talking to me about children growing up, entering high school, and applying for scholarships. "My oldest is a few years away from all of that," I said. "But still (3), I should probably start looking into (4) scholarships." She told me that she had already done so, as her son is older than mine. "There are all kinds of private scholarship funds out there. You won't believe it. There's even one for being blonde!" There was a long pause, as I frowned and thought about what she had said. "For being blonde?" I asked in disbelief(5). So many questions rushed into my head. "How blonde do you have to be?" "Could I bleach (6) my hair blonde to get a scholarship?" "And who decides if you qualify? Does a little old lady with a huge Madonna wig come to your house and check-out your hair?" This couldn't be true, I decided. How ridiculous. But, my friend told me that lots of rich individuals will leave money for people who have certain qualities. I had to investigate. So, back at home, I did some research on the internet. I came across a website called '45 of the weirdest college scholarships'. Well, I didn't find any scholarships for being blonde, even though there were many searches for 'scholarships for blondes'. But I did find a lot of other bizarre ones: if you are a male over 6' 2" or a female over 5'10", you could qualify for \$1000 by writing an essay entitled 'What being tall means to me.' If you're a nudist, a vegetarian, if you wish to study fungi, if you enjoy duck calling, or if you like to watch the series 'Star Trek', then you can get money for college! Or if you can predict the future, play the bagpipes, or can design clothes for the prom (7) out of duct tape (sticky tape), then you are also eligible (8) for money. If only I had known about all of this 20 years ago! I could have joined all of those groups, and got a PhD for free! I could have been a duck calling, bagpipe playing, fungi studying, future predicting nudist vegetarian (well, perhaps not the nudist part) who could predict her own shining educational future..... and not even have to change from a brunette to a blonde.

1. 'Track' has several meanings. It can mean a small path created by man or animals. It can mean 'to follow', or it is a noun meaning the sporting events that are running based.
 - a. My son competed in the running long jump and did quite well.
 - b. The mile run was the last event in the track meet.
2. 'To cheer on' can also be expressed as 'to cheer for'. The first expression implies encouraging someone in their event, the second implies supporting an individual or group.
 - a. As the athletes ran, we cheered them on.
 - b. Though he was last, we cheered him on, and tried to encourage him to go faster.
3. 'But still' is often used like 'however' when you are using 2 slightly contrasting ideas.
 - a. They won't arrive until later, but still we should get the house ready now.
 - b. We have plenty of food in the fridge, but still we shouldn't be wasteful.
4. 'To look into' can mean to investigate.
 - a. We looked into getting a loan, but we didn't qualify.
 - b. They looked into scholarships and found one for bald people!
5. 'Disbelief' means 'not believing' and is usually preceded by 'in' or 'with'.
 - a. I looked at him in disbelief; I couldn't believe what he had just said.
 - b. He put his hand to his mouth in disbelief when he saw how beautiful she looked.
6. 'Bleach' is a powerful chemical cleaner that is used to remove color from hair. It can be used as a verb sometimes.
 - a. I used some bleach to clean out the garbage can. That should clean it!
 - b. The sun has bleached our patio chairs; they look so pale now!
7. The 'Prom' is a very important dance at High School.
 - a. Are you going to ask someone to go to the Prom with you?
 - b. Their Prom costume is very elegant, but if you look closely, you can see that it is made of duct tape!
8. 'Eligible' is when you satisfy characteristics for something, it could be age, gender, ethnicity, background etc.
 - a. He wants to run for President of the Student Body, but he is too young; he's not eligible.
 - b. At 65 years of age, you're eligible for a pension.

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