

[This is the First Blog for the Academic Year 2019/20 \(7th September 2019\)](#)

The following are the words with which I shall finish your First Year of Chemistry with me. If you read them **now**, then it will give you a good idea of where we are going to go in the next year. Unless you are going to become a professional chemist, then Chemistry **as such** is a load of rubbish: nice interesting and even fascinating rubbish (which I personally love) – but rubbish all the same. What is important about Chemistry (and all the Sciences) however is that it trains your brain. If employers are willing to pay over-the-odds for people who have good qualifications in (alphabetically) Biology/Chemistry/Maths/and Physics, **it is because the candidates have demonstrated an ability to cut through complicated problems and to solve them! They have shown that they have a brain and that they know how to use it.** Just before you get your degree, when you start looking for a job, you will find that banks/stockbrokers/law firms/etc in ‘The City’ will pay more for a First in a Science subject than in an Arts'/Humanities'/Media Studies' subject because they believe (rightly or wrongly) that the discipline of Science will give a graduate a clearer/keener critical ability than will be the case with Arts/Humanities. Some years ago when my oldest adopted Afghan son graduated from UCL (and then went on to do his second degree at Imperial), employers in ‘The City’ went mad, and a First in an Arts Degree got you £28,000 pa / a First in a Science Degree commanded £58,000 / and a First in Maths got you £62,000, and the “Senior Wrangler” of that year **got WHATEVER he/she asked for** (and the rumour was £250,000). However, money is NOT important. All it means is that you do not have to worry about how to pay your mortgage/your bills. It does **NOT** make you happy. Money is plentiful in The City, **but happiness is in very short supply indeed.** (*Everything changed after Mrs Thatcher's 'Big Bang'.*)

OK, these are the words with which I finish the First Year.

- Amazingly, it is now almost a year ago since I started to teach you ‘A’ Level Chemistry, and at the beginning of Chapter 13 I said to you *It will take a bit of effort on your part to master some of the concepts in this Chapter, but when you **have** mastered them, then I promise you that for days thereafter you will go round muttering to yourself “**My God, I am a genius!**” – and if you are a bloke, then you might even become light-headed enough to think that some of the girls in your class are beginning to fancy you.*
- Well, as it happens you are now only days away from those First Year exams, and if you have kept up with me during the year, then you **CAN** go out and conquer the world: you will have shown that you can use the brains that you have to solve complicated problems, and you can therefore conquer the fields of medicine/law/ finance/ rocket science – **in fact you can conquer WHATEVER you put your mind to.**
- I doubt that any of you will ever do serious Chemistry again after you leave school next year. If you go into Medicine, then yes there will be a tiny bit of Chemistry involved, but other than for remembering about Hydrogen bonding and Polymers (and you will need that for Proteins/Chromosomes/Genes/DNA/etc) and occasionally you will need to know about the Henderson-Hasselbalch equations (which we will do next year), then the Chemistry that you will need will be of no great consequence whatsoever.
- **What Chemistry will have done for you however, is that it will have taught you how to use your brain – and it is THAT which will stand you in good stead for the rest of your lives.**
- **When you leave here to go to University, it is my ambition that YOU should be the one who is streets ahead of everybody else (and not the other way around).**
- **I am going to train you to use your brain to solve anything that life may throw at you.**

OK, that is the end of the First Year 'A' Level Chemistry Course.

- I have enjoyed teaching it to you, and I hope that you have enjoyed learning it.
- Let me remind you of some of the things that I said at the very beginning of the year.

Fulfil your personal potential, and you will have an immensely successful and happy life!

- Most of you will have to spend 40 years of your lives working for a living, and there is nothing more soul-destroying than doing something for a living that you do not like doing. However, if you are doing something that you **DO** like doing (irrespective of how well paid it is), then you will do it well, and if you do something well, then you will derive a large amount of satisfaction from doing it – **and that will make you satisfied, fulfilled and HAPPY!**
- Moreover, if you do something well, then you will be paid better than if you do it less well – and if you have enough money, then you are more likely to lead happy lives than if you do not have enough money.
- The objective of this class has thus been to ensure that you have all that you need to have a happy life.

Therefore in the rest of your studies and in the rest of your lives let me encourage you to

- 1) **Work hard.**
 - 2) **Improve ALL your skills** – especially (i) with a computer, and (ii) in your written English. An employee who can present a concise written report of a situation, and can put forward a clear solution to a problem **WILL** be promoted before his/her colleagues who are not able to do so.
 - 3) **Learn to think for yourself**, and learn how to use text-books to help you to understand better the subject that you are studying.
 - 4) **Learn to manage your time.** TIME is one of the most precious things that you have. Do **NOT** spend a lot of time talking to your colleagues or on social media. Spend most of your time studying/reading. Once you have a good job and are earning enough money to have a roof over your head and to keep your family, **THEN** you can spend lots of time talking.
 - 5) **Respect every human being whom you meet.** EVERY human being deserves to be treated with respect and dignity – **ESPECIALLY** those people who are less fortunate than you are. Remember, anybody can display respect for the Queen or for the head of an organisation – where is the merit in that? However, it takes a person of genuine nobility to pay the same amount of respect to a dustman/a toilet cleaner/a street-cleaner/a till check-out lady/etc.
- **Make the most of your life, and you will have a very satisfying and a very happy life.**

Good luck to all of you!

- I hope that you go on to enjoy enormously successful, fulfilled, healthy and happy lives.

I hope to see most if not all of you next year.