

Golden noose

Business



1.

What is smart? 2. TRUE or FALSE: To be smart has no drawbacks. Answer 1: Trick question. There is no correct answer. No “ smart” person could give you one.

Of course, like any word, there is a basic meaning found in depths of heavy, dust-ridden dictionaries and often vague-online glossaries. Otherwise, it would not be a part of language. And yet, smart is more than this definition can convey. It is both a key to elite clubs and a branding on a forehead, a distinguishing marker esteemed and mocked, envied and scorned. Smart is, often, being lonely.

Everyone surrounding you doesn't care to converse, because you use big words that are simply part of your vocabulary. It is quickly shoving your paper in your bag before anyone can see the brilliantly red 100 scrawled on the front of the page, remark and talk about it, signaling you out as different. Smart is getting an average grade and everyone around you saying, “ I got higher than her!” It is staying up late every night to finish the homework you have from all of your classes, double and triple checking all of your work to make certain that it is perfect. Smart is a defining characteristic, the first word to come to mind when someone mentions your name. Smart.

Like a curse word on their tongue saying different different different in a way that wasn't meant to be cruel but not nice either. Of course, this seemingly effortless intelligence is a blessing—right? Get perfect grades, have little worry about whatever college you want to attend or the career you want to follow. But smart is almost always accompanied by hard work, unlike gifted

or talented. It is based on grades, a title reserved for those that do not accept low scores from themselves, driving themselves to be better and better. The Best.

Growing up, smart was what you were. Smart. Just smart. Like a drug, hearing these thoughtlessly-given compliments trained your mind into craving the praise, hooked and hopeless on drug that seemed so harmless. Grades become your worth, a simple numerical translation from flesh and bones to a percent out of one hundred.

They become your most prized possession and most practiced goal. You strive to be this perfect smart, this almost abstract idea so closely related to perfection it is nearly impossible to distinguish where one ends and the other begins. With the two so closely wrapped around each other like lovers in an embrace, there is no reason to try. Smart takes over your life. It is your life.

You are smart, you get good grades, you do well on tests and quizzes and always turn in your homework while everyone else looks at you with anger or resentment. You look at an average grade and seeing nothing but a large F in imaginary red ink like blood on crisp a white page, betrayed by your eyes and mind. Smart is alienation, smart is perfection, smart is beautiful, smart is unobtainable, smart is sought, smart is judged. Smart is not a part of life. It is your life, having quietly taken it over with every “ Good job” and “ Wow” that found its way into your ears. It has slowly grown, like a flowering, choking, vine, around your mind, gently and insistently clinging, refusing to be ignored or shaken off.

Answer 2: Yes, smart is a blessing, helping with grades and college entries and jobs. Smart pushes you to do your best, to learn more and work harder than you would otherwise. But the answer is false. Smart is also a noose of perfection painted gold and tied around your neck, meant to confine you into doing nothing but pursuing this perfection, while slowly suffocating you by raising the bar, tightening the rope, one little “ I could have done better” at a time.