Reading comprehension — free worksheet

Read a text and answer multiple-choice questions.

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1. In Praise of Boredom

Reading comprehension · The psychology and surprising benefits of boredom

Read the text and answer the six multiple-choice questions that follow. Choose the option (A, B, C or D) that best matches the text.

Ask yourself: when was the last time you sat in a queue, on a train, or in a waiting room with absolutely nothing to occupy your mind—no phone, no book, no conversation? For many of us, the honest answer is "I can't remember." Smartphones have made it easy to fill even the smallest gap of unoccupied time, and most of us leap at the chance. Yet a growing body of research suggests that this constant flight from boredom may be doing us more harm than good. Psychologists describe boredom as a restless craving: the mind wants something absorbing to do and cannot find it, so it protests. Far from being a modern nuisance invented by dull classrooms, the feeling appears to be universal, and some scientists argue it serves a genuine purpose. Much as physical pain warns the body that something needs attention, boredom may nudge the mind towards a more rewarding use of its time. What makes recent findings striking is that boredom, instead of being something to avoid at all costs, can act as a spark for creativity. In one often-cited study, volunteers first copied numbers from a phone directory, a dull and repetitive chore, before being asked to think of unusual uses for an everyday object. Those who had sat through the dull copying task beforehand came up with noticeably fresher, more inventive answers than people who went straight to the creative task. The explanation offered is that an understimulated mind starts to drift, and in that drifting state, ideas that would never normally meet are free to combine. None of this means boredom is pleasant while it lasts; given the choice, almost nobody would pick it over a gripping film or good company. But the sheer ease with which we can now banish every idle moment may be quietly costing us something. Children who never face an empty afternoon may never learn to invent games of their own; adults who never let their minds go blank may lose the mental space where some of their best thoughts would otherwise take shape. So the next time a queue drags on and there is nothing to look at, it might be worth resisting the urge to reach for a phone. That faintly irritating itch of boredom could simply be your brain clearing space for its next good idea.

1. According to the text, how do psychologists describe boredom?

A) A warning sign that only appears when someone feels physically unwell B) A sign of mental fatigue that follows a period of intense concentration C) A response triggered mainly by dull or repetitive teaching methods D) A mental signal that prompts someone to look for a more engaging activity

2. What did the study described in the third paragraph find?

A) Doing something tedious first led to more original thinking than skipping straight to the creative task B) Doing the creative task first produced better ideas than doing the tedious task beforehand C) Doing something tedious beforehand had no noticeable effect on how inventive people's ideas

were D) Doing something tedious first made people perform worse on the creative task than skipping straight to it

3. What can be inferred about the effect of smartphones, according to the writer?

A) By filling every spare moment, phones may rob people of chances for original thinking B) Phones are presented as the main reason that today's children lack imagination C) Phones have reduced how often people feel bored without changing their thinking D) Phones have made people more creative by exposing them to constant new information

4. How does the writer regard the idea that boredom might serve a genuine purpose?

A) He presents it as a widely accepted fact that no longer needs questioning B) He treats it as a reasonable possibility supported by the evidence he presents C) He dismisses it as an exaggerated claim made by overly eager psychologists D) He doubts it, suggesting boredom is simply an unpleasant nuisance with no function

5. What is the main purpose of the final paragraph?

A) To warn that children are forgetting how to amuse themselves without help B) To repeat the findings of the earlier creativity study in simpler terms C) To encourage readers to stay with boredom instead of quickly escaping it D) To suggest that feeling bored can actually feel enjoyable once it is accepted

6. In the phrase "this constant flight from boredom", what does "this" refer to?

A) The body of research explained later in the same passage B) The creative advantages that boredom is later said to produce C) The specific discomfort felt while waiting in a queue or a train D) The common practice of reaching for a phone to avoid every idle moment

2. The Doomsday Vault: Guarding the World's Seeds

Reading comprehension · The Svalbard Global Seed Vault and global food security

Read the text about the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Then answer the six multiple-choice questions by choosing the letter (A, B, C or D) of the best answer.

Deep inside a mountain on a remote Norwegian archipelago, roughly 1,300 kilometres from the North Pole, lies a facility with an unassuming name and an extraordinary purpose. The Svalbard Global Seed Vault, often nicknamed the "Doomsday Vault," stores duplicate samples of seeds from gene banks around the world, safeguarding the genetic diversity of the planet's food crops against war, natural disaster, equipment failure, and simple mismanagement. The vault opened in 2008, carved into permafrost that keeps its three chambers naturally cold even if the electricity fails. Seeds are kept at around -18°C, a temperature at which many varieties can remain viable for decades, and some for centuries. Rice, wheat, barley and thousands of lesser-known crops - some no longer grown anywhere - sit in sealed foil packets inside boxes, arranged on shelves that stretch back into the rock like an enormous, frozen library. What makes the vault remarkable is not just its scale, which currently holds over a million seed samples, but the philosophy behind it. No single country owns the seeds; depositing gene banks retain full control over their own material, and the vault simply acts as a backup, a kind of insurance policy that nobody hopes to have to claim. Yet that claim has already been made once. In 2015, researchers withdrew seeds they had deposited

years earlier, after their original gene bank in Aleppo became inaccessible because of the conflict in Syria - a stark reminder that the threats the vault was built to withstand are not merely hypothetical. Ironically, the vault's designers underestimated one danger closer to home. In 2017, unusually warm temperatures caused permafrost to melt, and meltwater seeped into the entrance tunnel. No seeds were damaged, but the incident forced engineers to waterproof the tunnel and install drainage channels, a costly retrofit that raised uncomfortable questions about relying on permafrost in a warming world. Despite this setback, scientists remain convinced the vault is worth maintaining. Crop diversity is shrinking everywhere as farmers switch to a handful of high-yield varieties, leaving global food supplies more vulnerable to disease and climate shocks. The seeds locked away in Svalbard's rock may never be needed. But if they ever are, they could prove indispensable to feeding a hungry world.

1. According to the text, what keeps the vault's chambers cold even during a power failure?

A) The vault's remote location near the North Pole B) Extra insulation built into the rock during construction C) The frozen ground surrounding the storage chambers D) A backup refrigeration system that switches on during power cuts

2. What prompted the withdrawal of seeds from the vault in 2015?

A) A dispute arose over who legally owned the seeds B) The original samples had passed their expiry date C) Their original collection became unreachable because of war D) Their government requested samples for a new breeding programme

3. What can be inferred from the fact that the 2015 withdrawal actually happened?

A) The vault was originally intended only for scientific testing purposes B) Withdrawals from the vault happen on a regular basis C) The vault can completely replace a country's own seed collection if needed D) The dangers the vault guards against can become real, not just theoretical

4. In the sentence 'Yet that claim has already been made once,' what does 'that claim' refer to?

A) A scientific assertion about seed viability B) A legal dispute over who owns the vault's contents C) The act of taking seeds out of the vault D) The reopening of the original gene bank in Aleppo

5. How does the writer seem to regard the 2017 meltwater incident?

A) A minor technical fault that the writer considers unimportant B) An unexpected problem that revealed a weakness nobody had planned for C) A disaster that proves the vault should be abandoned D) A natural process that permafrost is designed to withstand

6. Why does the writer mention that farmers are increasingly relying on a small number of high-yield crop varieties?

A) To show why protecting crop diversity through the vault matters B) To compare high-yield crops unfavourably with traditional ones C) To blame farmers for reducing the range of crops they grow D) To claim that the vault has failed to prevent this trend

3. Saddling Up for Success: The Yellowstone Phenomenon

Reading comprehension · Yellowstone - western- Cowboy - cowgirl valued series

Read the text carefully and answer questions 1-6. For each question, choose the correct answer, A, B, C or D.

When a drama about a Montana cattle ranch premiered in 2018, few executives expected it to become one of the most-watched shows on American television. Yet Yellowstone, centred on the Dutton family's fierce struggle to hold onto their land against developers, tribal claims and rival ranchers, has done exactly that, spawning several prequels and turning its stars into unlikely style icons. Part of its appeal lies in timing: after years of superhero franchises and glossy urban dramas, audiences seemed hungry for something rawer, tied to landscape and hard physical work rather than special effects. The show's popularity has triggered a broader revival of western aesthetics. Sales of cowboy boots, wide-brim hats and fringed jackets have surged, and "western core" now trends regularly on social media. Interestingly, it is not only men embracing the look; the cowgirl image, once relegated to rodeo circuits and country-music videos, has become a mainstream fashion statement, complete with denim, pearl-snap shirts and statement belt buckles. Retailers report that searches for "Yellowstone-inspired" clothing spike every time a new season airs, suggesting the series functions almost like an extended advertisement for ranch life, even though most viewers will never set foot on a working ranch. Critics are divided about what exactly explains the show's grip on viewers. Some argue it taps into genuine anxieties about land, water rights and the disappearance of traditional livelihoods in the American West, issues rarely dramatised with such scale and seriousness. Others suggest the appeal is simpler: sweeping scenery, moral ambiguity and a family willing to bend the law to protect what is theirs make for compelling, old-fashioned storytelling, regardless of the setting. Whichever explanation one favours, the numbers are hard to dispute. The franchise now spans multiple spin-offs, each following different generations of ranching families, and cable networks have scrambled to commission their own western dramas in the hope of capturing a similar audience. What seems certain is that the modern cowboy, and increasingly the cowgirl, has re-entered popular imagination not as a relic of old films but as a strikingly contemporary figure, navigating inheritance disputes, environmental pressure and family loyalty with the same intensity once reserved for boardroom dramas or crime sagas.

1. According to the text, what is the central conflict driving the Yellowstone series?

A) A rivalry between the Dutton family and property developers over ranch profits B) The Dutton family trying to keep control of their ranch land against several opposing groups C) A dispute between rival ranching families over water rights in Montana D) The Dutton family contesting a tribal claim to part of their ranch in court

2. Why does the writer mention 'superhero franchises and glossy urban dramas' in paragraph one?

A) To show that audiences had become tired of ranch-based dramas like Yellowstone B) To argue that these genres still attract larger audiences than Yellowstone does C) To contrast them with the grittier style that helps explain Yellowstone's appeal D) To suggest that Yellowstone copied key plot ideas from these popular genres

3. What does the text suggest about the cowgirl image mentioned in paragraph two?

A) It has spread from niche circles into everyday fashion trends B) It is now worn exclusively by women working in rodeo events C) It has overtaken the cowboy look as the dominant western trend D) It has stayed mostly confined to country-music videos despite rising popularity

4. What can be inferred from the observation that clothing searches 'spike every time a new season airs'?

A) Clothing interest rises mainly because of celebrity endorsements unrelated to the show B) The show's broadcasts have a direct promotional effect on shopping behaviour C) Retailers time clothing releases specifically to coincide with new seasons D) Viewers are inspired to actually work on ranches after watching new seasons

5. What is the writer's attitude toward the critical debate in paragraph three?

A) The writer stays impartial, treating both explanations as equally plausible B) The writer doubts that either explanation accounts for the show's success C) The writer leans toward the social-anxiety explanation as more convincing D) The writer leans toward the storytelling explanation as more convincing

6. What does 'that' refer to in the phrase 'has done exactly that' in paragraph one?

A) The Dutton family successfully defending their land from rivals B) The show matching the popularity of superhero franchises C) The series inspiring multiple prequel spin-offs D) The show achieving major commercial success on television

4. The Secret World of Memory Athletes

Reading comprehension · Competitive memory sports and the techniques behind extraordinary recall

Read the text carefully, then answer the six multiple-choice questions. Choose the option (A, B, C or D) that best fits according to the text.

Every spring, in a quiet conference room somewhere in the world, dozens of competitors sit in silence wearing noise-cancelling headphones and blacked-out safety glasses, staring at shuffled decks of playing cards. They are memory athletes, competing to see who can memorise the order of a deck in the shortest time, or recall hundreds of random digits after a single glance. The current world record for memorising a shuffled deck stands at under fifteen seconds, a feat many assume must depend on some rare, inborn gift. Yet research tells a different story. When scientists examined the brains of leading competitors, they found nothing physically unusual; what set these athletes apart was years of deliberate practice with an ancient technique known as the "method of loci," or memory palace. This works by placing vivid images along a familiar mental route — the rooms of a childhood home, say — so that each image marks a piece of information in order. To memorise a sequence of cards, a competitor converts each card into a strange, memorable character and imagines it performing some bizarre action at a particular point along an imagined corridor. Recall simply means retracing that mental walk and noticing what is waiting at each stop. What is striking is how quickly the technique can take hold. In one often-cited study, volunteers who had never competed received only forty minutes of instruction in the method, then practised half an hour daily for several weeks. Their recall improved so much that some began performing at a similar level to long-practised competitors, and scans revealed that their patterns of brain activity had begun to resemble those of champions — even though, notably, no obvious change appeared in the brain's physical makeup. Findings like these have led a number of psychologists to question the whole notion of "photographic memory," suggesting that what looks like natural genius is frequently nothing more than the fruit of patient, systematic rehearsal. None of this means the sport is

effortless: champions still devote hours daily to building and refining their palaces. But the underlying implication is oddly reassuring — this particular kind of extraordinary recall may depend far less on who you were born as, and much more on how willing you are to practise.

1. What is the main purpose of the opening paragraph?

A) To describe the format typically followed in international memory-sport tournaments. B) To compare the mental effort required by card memorisation with that of other competitive pursuits. C) To create an impression that memorising cards so quickly must stem from an unusual natural gift. D) To explain why memory athletes wear headphones and blacked-out glasses during contests.

2. According to the text, what did scientists discover when they studied top memory competitors' brains?

A) Their brains proved impossible to compare meaningfully with those of untrained volunteers. B) Their brains appeared structurally normal, with their skill attributed to dedicated practice. C) Their brains showed structural differences, though confined to areas linked to visual processing. D) Their brains contained regions that had visibly grown through years of specialised training.

3. What does 'This' refer to in the sentence 'This works by placing vivid images along a familiar mental route'?

A) The time-honoured method of associating items with locations along a mental journey B) The specific practice of turning each playing card into a memorable character C) The daily routine that experienced competitors follow to rehearse their palaces D) The scientific research that revealed no physical differences in competitors' brains

4. What was notable about the volunteers in the cited study who had no prior memory-sport training?

A) They reached performance levels similar to experienced competitors within a few weeks. B) They matched the world record after a single forty-minute lesson. C) They saw only mild gains, remaining well behind seasoned competitors. D) They needed many months of practice before showing any real progress.

5. What conclusion do some psychologists draw from this research, according to the text?

A) That competitive memorisation demands an exceptional, untrainable mental gift. B) That remarkable recall usually results from sustained, deliberate practice rather than an inherited ability. C) That photographic memory does exist, but only among those who already compete professionally. D) That photographic memory is widespread but normally goes unnoticed in most people.

6. What is the overall tone of the final paragraph towards the idea of training one's memory?

A) Doubtful, casting suspicion on whether the research can really be trusted. B) Encouraging, since it presents the skill as something nearly anyone could develop. C) Neutral, giving no real opinion about whether this skill is worth pursuing. D) Dismissive, treating memory training as a waste of most people's time.

5. The Great Green Wall: Africa's Living Barrier

Read the text about the Great Green Wall of Africa. Then answer the six multiple-choice questions by choosing the correct letter (A, B, C or D).

Imagine stopping a desert not with machines or walls of stone, but with trees. This is the idea behind the Great Green Wall, a huge project that stretches across Africa from Senegal in the west to Djibouti in the east. It is not one unbroken structure built by a single government; instead, it is a green strip of plants that many countries are growing together, little by little, along the edge of the Sahara. The project began in 2007 because the desert was spreading fast. Hot winds and years without rain were turning good farmland into dry, useless sand, and millions of people who depended on farming were losing their way of life. African leaders agreed that something had to be done, so they joined forces on one shared plan rather than acting alone. The method is simple but effective. If communities plant trees and other plants along the desert's edge, the roots hold the soil together so it cannot blow away. Trees also provide shade, which helps other plants grow, and they can produce fruit, wood and medicine that local people can sell or use. So far, workers have planted millions of trees, and in some areas the desert has actually stopped advancing. In Senegal and Ethiopia, farmers say their land is in much better condition than it was ten years ago. Still, the project has faced serious difficulties. It needs enormous amounts of money, and some countries have not received the support they were promised. Conflict in certain regions has also made it dangerous to plant and care for trees. On top of this, climate change is making the situation more urgent, since rising temperatures could bring even worse droughts in future. Despite all this, many experts remain confident. They believe that if governments, local communities and international organisations keep working together, the Great Green Wall could eventually restore millions of hectares of land and improve life for more than one hundred million people. For the farmers already watching their fields turn green again, the project shows that even a problem as big as a spreading desert can sometimes be answered with one of the oldest solutions there is: planting a tree.

1. According to the text, what exactly is the Great Green Wall?

A) A belt of vegetation being grown gradually by many countries together B) A line of fences built to block blowing sand from the desert C) A single large forest planted entirely by one international organisation D) A network of irrigation channels built to water crops in dry regions

2. Why did African leaders start the project in 2007?

A) Because conflicts had forced farming families to abandon their land B) Because governments did not have enough money to help farmers C) Because rising temperatures were already causing worse droughts D) Because expanding dry land was destroying the soil that farmers relied on

3. In the sentence "Trees also provide shade, which helps other plants grow, and they can produce fruit, wood and medicine that local people can sell or use," what does "they" refer to?

A) The local people using the products B) The communities planting along the desert's edge C) The roots holding the soil together D) The trees growing along the desert's edge

4. What can be inferred about planting work in regions affected by conflict?

A) International organisations have refused to work there B) Progress there has probably been harder than in calmer regions C) These regions no longer plan to take part in the project D) These regions have already finished their part of the wall

5. What is the writer's attitude towards the project's difficulties?

A) The writer admits the difficulties but still expects progress B) The writer suggests funding is the only problem left to solve C) The writer feels the challenges make success very unlikely D) The writer believes political conflict will end the project for good

6. What is the main purpose of the text?

A) To describe how planting trees can stop a desert from spreading B) To explain an environmental project and report on its progress C) To persuade readers to donate money to African farmers D) To warn governments that the project is likely to fail

6. Golden Seams: The Art of Kintsugi

Reading comprehension · Kintsugi – the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold lacquer

Read the text and answer the six multiple-choice questions that follow. Choose the option (A–D) that best fits according to the passage.

Not until a shattered tea bowl was mended with lacquer dusted in gold did a modest craft become a philosophy. Kintsugi, literally "golden joinery," emerged in fifteenth-century Japan as a practical response to breakage: rather than discard a cracked vessel, artisans bound the fragments with urushi lacquer and traced the seams with precious metal. What began as an economical repair technique, however, gradually accrued a symbolic weight that far outstripped its origins in domestic thrift. Central to kintsugi's appeal is its refusal to conceal damage. Where Western conventions of restoration typically strive for invisibility—smoothing over cracks until the object appears never to have suffered harm—kintsugi does precisely the opposite: it advertises the fracture, gilding it so that the eye is drawn to the very place where the vessel once failed. It is this inversion of restorative logic that has made the practice a touchstone for a broader aesthetic sensibility known as wabi-sabi, which finds beauty in transience, asymmetry and the marks left by time. Some commentators have been quick to reduce kintsugi to a convenient metaphor for personal resilience, insisting that broken people, like broken bowls, emerge more beautiful for having been mended. Such readings, while emotionally appealing, risk flattening a centuries-old craft into a self-help slogan, stripped of the material rigour that originally defined it. Genuine kintsugi demands weeks, sometimes months, of patient labour: layer upon layer of lacquer must cure in a humid chamber before the final dusting of gold, silver or platinum powder can be applied. It is a discipline as much as a philosophy, and one not easily reconciled with the instant gratification implied by its popular, watered-down invocations. What makes the tradition genuinely instructive, rather than merely decorative, is the way it reframes value itself. A kintsugi-repaired bowl is not disguised as flawless; it is, in a sense, rendered more historically legible, its scars becoming a visible ledger of use and survival. Few other crafts so directly challenge the assumption that damage necessarily diminishes worth. Whether or not one accepts the metaphorical extensions now attached to it, kintsugi remains a striking demonstration of how an object's history, far from being erased, can be turned into the very source of its distinction.

1. According to the text, what was the original motivation behind kintsugi?

A) A pragmatic repair method that only later took on deeper symbolic meaning B) An adaptation of restoration methods imported from Western ceramic traditions C) A decorative showcase for

artisans' skill in working with precious metals D) A symbolic ritual intended from the start to express ideas about transience

2. How does kintsugi differ from Western restoration conventions, according to the passage?

A) It relies on techniques first developed by Western conservators B) It is typically reserved for ceremonial vessels rather than everyday items C) It smooths over damage so thoroughly that no trace remains visible D) It calls attention to the crack rather than attempting to hide it

3. What can be inferred about the author's view of using kintsugi as a metaphor for personal resilience?

A) The author regards it as a fair encapsulation of the craft's laborious technique B) The author treats it as a natural extension of the craft's original economic purpose C) The author regards it as a seductive oversimplification that drains the practice of its disciplined substance D) The author views it as merely one of many equally valid ways to interpret the craft

4. What is the function of the detailed description of the lacquering process (curing in a humid chamber, successive layers) in the third paragraph?

A) To contrast the slow Japanese method with faster Western restoration practices B) To demonstrate that the craft's demands make popular shorthand versions of it inaccurate C) To instruct readers in the practical steps required to attempt kintsugi themselves D) To highlight the craft's connection to other Japanese decorative arts of the period

5. In the phrase "Such readings, while emotionally appealing, risk flattening a centuries-old craft into a self-help slogan," what does "Such readings" refer to?

A) The claims that people, like mended bowls, become more beautiful through hardship B) The historical accounts describing how kintsugi developed in fifteenth-century Japan C) The contrast drawn between Western restoration and kintsugi's visible repairs D) The technical descriptions of layering lacquer before applying gold powder

6. What is the main purpose of the final paragraph?

A) To situate kintsugi within the broader context of other Japanese artisanal crafts B) To argue that the tradition changes how we judge the worth of a damaged object C) To soften the earlier criticism of resilience metaphors by partly endorsing them D) To explain the practical sequence of materials used in the restoration process

7. The Quiet Return of the Handwritten Letter

Reading comprehension · The modern revival of handwritten letters in a digital age

Read the text and answer the questions. Choose the correct option (A, B, C or D) for each question.

In an age of instant messaging and disappearing stories, it seems strange that something as slow and old-fashioned as the handwritten letter is making a quiet comeback. Over the past decade, several postal services in Europe and North America have reported a modest but steady rise in personal correspondence, reversing a decline that had lasted for more than twenty years. Stationery shops that once struggled to survive are now expanding, and a handful of subscription boxes promise customers a "slow correspondence kit" complete with paper, ink and stamps. Part of the

explanation lies in simple fatigue. Many people spend their working days answering emails and their evenings scrolling through notifications, and a letter offers something screens cannot: a pause. Psychologists who study attention have pointed out that writing by hand forces the brain to slow down, because the hand cannot keep pace with the speed of thought the way a keyboard can. This, they argue, encourages more deliberate, reflective language — the opposite of the clipped abbreviations typical of text messages. There is also a sentimental dimension. A letter is a physical object that can be kept, reread and eventually inherited, whereas a text message usually vanishes into the depths of a phone's memory. Several people interviewed for a recent newspaper feature admitted that they still owned letters from grandparents who had died decades earlier, and that rereading them felt like hearing a familiar voice again. No one, they said, kept old text messages with the same affection. None of this means that letters are about to replace digital communication; the numbers, while encouraging to stationery manufacturers, remain tiny compared with the billions of messages sent every day. What seems to be happening instead is a kind of conscious balancing act: people are not abandoning their phones, but they are deliberately choosing to write occasional letters as a way of resisting the relentless speed of everyday communication. For a birthday, a thank-you or simply to stay in touch with a distant friend, a letter has become less a necessity than a small, considered gesture — proof, perhaps, that slowness itself can be a kind of luxury.

1. According to the text, what have several postal services reported in recent years?

A) A steady increase in business correspondence over the last decade B) A decline in stationery sales despite growing interest in letters C) A small increase in personal letters following years of decline D) A sharp rise in letters that has overtaken digital messaging

2. What does the comparison between handwriting and typing in paragraph two imply about typing?

A) Typing demands more concentration, which slows the writer down B) Typing moves more slowly than handwriting, despite appearances C) Typing proceeds exactly as fast as a person's thoughts D) Typing encourages more thoughtful, reflective sentences than handwriting does

3. What is the writer's overall attitude towards the revival of letter writing?

A) Mildly positive, viewing letters as meaningful but still a marginal practice B) Skeptical, doubting that the rise in letter writing will continue much longer C) Neutral, simply reporting the statistics without expressing any personal opinion D) Enthusiastic, confident that letters will become the main way people communicate

4. In the phrase "that rereading them felt like hearing a familiar voice again," what does "them" refer to?

A) Newspaper features written about communication habits B) Old letters kept from grandparents who had died C) Old text messages that people had saved D) Stationery kits bought through subscription boxes

5. Why does the writer mention expanding stationery shops and subscription boxes?

A) To argue that fewer people now rely on digital communication at all B) To show that letter writing has become a costly pursuit for most people C) To support the claim that letter writing is becoming more popular D) To suggest that stationery shops are now more profitable than postal services

6. According to the final paragraph, how do people now typically view letter writing?

A) As a thoughtful act done now and then, rather than a duty B) As the primary way people now stay in touch with distant friends C) As a custom kept alive mainly by stationery manufacturers D) As an expected duty for birthdays and thank-you messages

8. Our First Night Under the Stars

Reading comprehension · A family's first camping trip in the mountains

Read the text and answer the questions. Choose the correct option (A, B, C or D) for each question.

Last summer, my family decided to try something new. We always stayed in hotels before, but this time we wanted an adventure, so we decided to go camping in the mountains. My dad bought a big tent, and my mum packed food for three days. My little sister was very excited, but I felt a bit nervous because I had never slept outside before. We drove for four hours and arrived at a small campsite near a lake. The campsite was much quieter than I expected, with only a few other tents around. We put up our tent together, but it took longer than we thought because none of us knew how to do it properly. My dad kept reading the instructions again and again, and we all laughed when the tent fell down twice. In the evening, we cooked dinner on a small fire. The food tasted better than any meal I remembered, maybe because we were so hungry after all that work. After dinner, we sat outside and looked at the sky. There were thousands of stars, more than I had ever seen in the city. My sister said it was the best night of her life, and even I had to agree it was pretty amazing. The next morning, it started to rain heavily, and water came into our tent. We were cold and wet, and for a moment I thought the whole trip was a disaster. But my dad just laughed and said camping always teaches you something new. We packed quickly and decided to find a small café in the nearest town instead of waiting for the sun. Even though the trip wasn't perfect, we talked about it for weeks afterwards. My mum said she wants to go camping again next year, but this time she wants to buy a better tent. I think camping is harder than it looks on television, but now I understand why so many people love it.

1. Why did the family decide to go camping instead of staying in a hotel?

A) They had grown tired of booking hotel rooms every year. B) The father wanted to try out his newly bought tent. C) They wanted an exciting adventure instead of a normal holiday. D) The sister had begged them to sleep outdoors for once.

2. What problem did the family have when they set up the tent?

A) They did not know the correct way to set it up. B) They misunderstood the instructions each time they read them. C) They were too tired after the long drive to work quickly. D) The tent kept falling because of strong wind.

3. Why did the dinner taste especially good that evening?

A) Because they bought fresh food in town that day. B) Because the mother used a special family recipe. C) Because everyone was extremely hungry after working hard. D) Because they ate it looking out at the lake.

4. In the text, what does the word "it" refer to when the sister says "it was the best night of her life"?

A) the day they first arrived at the campsite. B) the evening spent watching the stars together. C) the dinner they cooked over the fire. D) the whole camping trip from start to finish.

5. What does the writer think about camping after the trip?

A) It was fun, but the writer prefers hotels in the future. B) It was difficult, but the writer now understands why people enjoy it. C) It was difficult and the writer never wants to try it again. D) It was exactly like it looks on television.

6. What is the main purpose of this text?

A) To share a personal story about trying camping for the first time. B) To warn people about the risks of sudden rain while camping. C) To describe the scenery around a mountain campsite in detail. D) To give instructions on how to put up a tent correctly.

9. Drawing the City: The Rise of Urban Sketching

Reading comprehension · Urban sketching as a creative hobby and community activity

Read the text and answer the questions. For each question, choose the correct option (A, B, C or D).

Urban sketching has become a popular hobby in cities all over the world. Unlike traditional painting, which often happens indoors in a studio, urban sketching means drawing exactly what you see, right there on the street, in a park, or in a busy café. Sketchers carry small notebooks and pens, find a comfortable spot, and quickly capture the scene in front of them — a crowded market, an old building, or people waiting for a bus. The movement began in 2007, when a journalist in Seattle started a blog to share his drawings of the city and invited others to join him. Within a few years, thousands of people around the world had formed local groups, meeting regularly to sketch together. Today, these groups organise walks through their cities, stopping every hour or so to draw whatever catches their eye. What makes urban sketching different from simply taking a photograph is the time it takes. A quick photo can be taken in a second, but a sketch usually takes between fifteen minutes and an hour. During that time, sketchers say they notice details they would otherwise miss: the pattern of shadows on a wall, the way a street vendor moves, or the exact shade of blue in an awning. Many sketchers describe the activity as a kind of meditation — a chance to slow down and really look at a place instead of rushing past it. The social side of urban sketching is just as important as the drawing itself. Beginners often worry that their sketches are not good enough to show anyone, but experienced sketchers insist that mistakes are part of the process. In fact, most groups welcome anyone, regardless of skill level, and the atmosphere tends to be supportive rather than competitive. Sketchbooks are rarely perfect, and that is exactly the point: a wobbly line or a messy corner simply shows that a real person was there, at that moment, paying close attention. As more people spend their free time staring at screens, urban sketching offers something different: a reason to go outside, sit still for a while, and connect with both a place and the people around it.

1. According to the text, how does the time needed for a sketch compare with the time needed for a photograph?

A) A sketch and a photo usually take about the same amount of time to finish B) A sketch takes only slightly longer, as both are fairly quick to produce C) A sketch can sometimes take several hours longer than any photograph D) A sketch takes a great deal longer, since a photo is almost instant

2. How did the urban sketching movement begin?

A) A journalist in Seattle organised an exhibition of local artists' drawings in a gallery. B) A journalist in Seattle began a blog of his own drawings and asked other people to draw too. C) A journalist in Seattle wrote a newspaper column about local architecture and asked readers to send photos. D) A journalist in Seattle published a book of sketches and asked for submissions by mail.

3. Why do sketchers seem to prefer drawing a scene over photographing it?

A) It lets them decide freely which parts of the scene to include, unlike a photograph B) It helps them relax by clearing their mind of what they see around them C) It encourages them to notice small details they would usually pass by D) It helps them remember the scene far more accurately than any photograph

4. What is the attitude of experienced sketchers towards beginners who worry about their skill?

A) They believe sketching groups should stay competitive to help beginners improve faster. B) They see mistakes as a normal part of learning and welcome everyone. C) They think beginners should focus on practising alone until mistakes disappear. D) They think beginners' worries are usually fair, since skill really does affect enjoyment.

5. What is the main purpose of the final paragraph?

A) To describe how digital technology has changed hobbies in general B) To present urban sketching as a calmer alternative in a screen-filled world C) To criticise people who use screens too often D) To warn readers about the health risks of too much screen time

6. In the sentence 'Sketchbooks are rarely perfect, and that is exactly the point', what does 'that' refer to?

A) The fact that most sketches contain small flaws or imperfections. B) The fact that sketchbooks need to be redrawn until they are flawless. C) The fact that a messy sketch shows someone drew it carelessly, without much attention. D) The fact that only skilled sketchers produce neat sketchbooks.

10. The Wood Wide Web: How Trees Talk Underground

Reading comprehension · Mycorrhizal fungal networks connecting forest trees

Read the text and answer the six questions. Choose the option (A, B, C or D) that best fits according to the text.

For decades, foresters pictured trees as solitary competitors, locked in a silent struggle for light and soil. That picture has been overturned by a growing body of research into mycorrhizal fungi, the thread-like organisms that colonise root systems and, in doing so, stitch entire forests together into something resembling a single organism. It is this fungal web, rather than any direct contact between branches, that allows a towering Douglas fir to funnel surplus sugars to a shaded seedling several metres away, or a dying stump to be kept alive for decades by nutrients supplied through its neighbours' roots. The ecologist whose work first brought this phenomenon to public attention, Suzanne Simard, spent years tracing the flow of carbon between trees using radioactive isotopes, and what she found was startling: older, better-connected trees - she called them "mother trees" - appeared to recognise their own offspring and divert resources towards them preferentially. Her findings, popularised in a bestselling memoir, inspired a wave of enthusiasm for the idea that forests

are cooperative, even nurturing, communities rather than arenas of ruthless competition. Not every scientist, however, is persuaded that the network deserves quite so romantic a reading. Critics point out that fungi are not charitable intermediaries but opportunists pursuing their own interests: a fungus that shuttles sugar from one tree to another may simply be following the path of least resistance, siphoning off whatever surplus is available rather than orchestrating any deliberate act of generosity. Nor is it clear how widespread or reliable such transfers are outside the particular forest types in which they have been studied. Some researchers worry that media coverage has run ahead of the evidence, turning a modest and still-contested finding into an unqualified parable of arboreal altruism. What nobody seriously disputes is that the underground fungal network exists and that it moves water, carbon and warning signals - chemical alarms triggered by insect attack - between trees at a scale previously unimagined. Whether this amounts to communication in any meaningful sense, or merely to the passive by-product of a shared plumbing system, remains an open question. Either way, the discovery has already reshaped how foresters manage woodland, encouraging practices that preserve the oldest, most richly connected trees rather than simply replanting bare ground after logging.

1. According to the second paragraph, what did Suzanne Simard's isotope research suggest about older, well-connected trees?

A) Channelled surplus nutrients preferentially towards trees that shared their genetic lineage. B) Transmitted warning signals about insect attacks faster than younger trees could. C) Competed more aggressively with young seedlings growing nearby than younger trees did. D) Depended completely on fungal partners to supply every nutrient they used.

2. What is implied in the third paragraph about the fungi's role in moving sugar between trees?

A) Benefit every tree in the network to the same degree. B) Deliberately orchestrate sugar transfers as acts of cooperation. C) Transfer sugar reliably across every forest type studied so far. D) Take advantage of any excess sugar a tree happens to produce.

3. What is the writer's overall attitude towards the popular 'mother tree' narrative?

A) Confident that the evidence firmly supports widespread communication between trees. B) Largely persuaded that forests function as nurturing, interdependent communities. C) Convinced that the fungal network is overstated and of little scientific value. D) Open to the network's existence yet skeptical that it proves deliberate cooperation.

4. In the second paragraph, what does the phrase "this phenomenon" refer to?

A) The historical view of trees as competitors for light and soil. B) The practice of replanting bare ground after logging operations. C) The use of radioactive isotopes to trace nutrient flow. D) The underground fungal connections linking separate trees together.

5. Why does the writer introduce the critics' views in the third paragraph?

A) To argue that mycorrhizal fungi play no meaningful role in connecting forest trees. B) To highlight how little is actually known about fungal networks in general. C) To temper the popular, cooperative reading of the fungal network with scientific caution. D) To suggest that forestry practices based on the network should be reconsidered.

6. According to the final paragraph, what question remains genuinely unresolved?

A) Whether the network has influenced how woodlands are managed today. B) Whether every tree in a network benefits from it to the same degree. C) Whether the exchanges count as genuine communication or merely an incidental side-effect. D) Whether the fungal web actually links trees across entire forests.

Answer Key

1. In Praise of Boredom

1. D) A mental signal that prompts someone to look for a more engaging activity

2. A) Doing something tedious first led to more original thinking than skipping straight to the creative task

3. A) By filling every spare moment, phones may rob people of chances for original thinking

4. B) He treats it as a reasonable possibility supported by the evidence he presents

5. C) To encourage readers to stay with boredom instead of quickly escaping it

6. D) The common practice of reaching for a phone to avoid every idle moment

1. The text compares boredom to a bodily signal that pushes the mind toward a more rewarding activity, which matches the idea of a signal prompting someone to seek something more engaging; the paragraph explicitly rejects the classroom-based explanation, and nothing in the text links boredom to tiredness after concentrating or to physical illness.

2. The study found that the group who did the dull copying task first came up with fresher ideas afterward, so their performance clearly differed from those who skipped it, and the order of the tasks was not reversed or irrelevant to the outcome.

3. Linking the opening point about phones filling idle time with the later claim that boredom sparks fresh thinking, the writer implies that avoiding boredom through phone use may cost people chances for original ideas; the text never claims phones boost creativity, and it discusses children's imagination separately, not as something phones are blamed for.

4. The writer introduces the comparison with physical pain and the creativity study as support for the claim, treating it as a credible possibility rather than rejecting it, presenting it as settled fact, or dismissing it as unfounded.

5. The closing paragraph advises readers not to immediately distract themselves when boredom sets in, showing its purpose is to encourage patience with the feeling rather than to summarise the earlier study, repeat the point about children, or claim boredom feels enjoyable, something the text denies elsewhere.

6. The pronoun sums up the idea in the previous sentence, where people are said to leap at the chance to fill every spare moment using their phones; it does not refer to the discomfort of queuing, the research, or the creative benefits discussed later.

2. The Doomsday Vault: Guarding the World's Seeds

1. C) The frozen ground surrounding the storage chambers

2. C) Their original collection became unreachable because of war

3. D) The dangers the vault guards against can become real, not just theoretical

4. C) The act of taking seeds out of the vault

5. B) An unexpected problem that revealed a weakness nobody had planned for

6. A) To show why protecting crop diversity through the vault matters

1. The text says the vault is carved into permafrost that keeps the chambers cold even if the electricity fails, so the frozen ground itself provides the cooling; a backup refrigeration system is wrong because the whole point is that no power source is needed, and the remote location and added insulation are never given as the reason for the cold.

2. The passage states that researchers withdrew seeds after their gene bank in Aleppo became inaccessible because of the conflict in Syria, so war cutting off the original collection is the stated cause; a government requesting samples for a breeding programme, an ownership dispute and expired samples are never mentioned as reasons for the withdrawal.

3. The writer calls the 2015 withdrawal 'a stark reminder that the threats the vault was built to withstand are not merely hypothetical', showing the risks it insures against can really occur; this does not mean the vault replaces a gene bank entirely, since depositing banks keep control of their material, nor does one event show such withdrawals are frequent or that the vault was meant only for research.

4. The sentence before compares the vault to an insurance policy nobody hopes to need, so 'that claim' refers to actually taking seeds out, as happened in 2015; it does not refer to a legal dispute, a scientific statement, or the reopening of the original gene bank, which the text never reports happening.

5. The writer frames the incident as a danger the designers had underestimated, closer to home than the threats they had planned for, which matches a problem exposing an overlooked weakness; this is not treated as trivial, as proof the project should end, or as something permafrost was built to handle.

6. This detail leads straight into the writer's closing argument that shrinking diversity makes food supplies more vulnerable, which is exactly why the vault's mission matters; it is not used to criticise farmers personally, to claim the vault has failed, or to judge the quality of different crops.

3. Saddling Up for Success: The Yellowstone Phenomenon

1. B) The Dutton family trying to keep control of their ranch land against several opposing groups
2. C) To contrast them with the grittier style that helps explain Yellowstone's appeal
3. A) It has spread from niche circles into everyday fashion trends
4. B) The show's broadcasts have a direct promotional effect on shopping behaviour
5. A) The writer stays impartial, treating both explanations as equally plausible
6. D) The show achieving major commercial success on television

1. The text says the family fights 'against developers, tribal claims and rival ranchers' together as one connected struggle, not just one of these groups; the other options each isolate a single conflict that the text only partly supports.

2. The phrase 'after years of' introduces a contrast: audiences wanted something different from these genres, namely a grittier, landscape-based drama, which explains Yellowstone's timing; the text never suggests borrowed plots or that these genres outperform it.

3. The text states the cowgirl image, 'once relegated to rodeo circuits and country-music videos, has become a mainstream fashion statement' — it moved beyond its original niche, unlike the distractors, which either keep it confined to its origin or wrongly claim it now dominates over the cowboy look.

4. The correlation between new seasons and spikes in searches shows the show drives consumer interest, acting like an advertisement; the text explicitly says most viewers never set foot on a ranch, and nothing is said about retailers planning releases or celebrity endorsements.

5. The writer reports both views neutrally ('Some argue... Others suggest...') without endorsing either, then notes only that the numbers are undeniable regardless of which explanation one accepts, so the writer neither favours one view nor doubts both.

6. 'That' points back to the earlier clause stating few executives expected the show to reach huge viewing figures on television; the following 'has done exactly that' confirms this specific outcome, not the family's land battle, the spin-offs, or a comparison with superhero franchises, which appear elsewhere in the text.

4. The Secret World of Memory Athletes

1. C) To create an impression that memorising cards so quickly must stem from an unusual natural gift.

2. B) Their brains appeared structurally normal, with their skill attributed to dedicated practice.

3. A) The time-honoured method of associating items with locations along a mental journey

4. A) They reached performance levels similar to experienced competitors within a few weeks.

5. B) That remarkable recall usually results from sustained, deliberate practice rather than an inherited ability.

6. B) Encouraging, since it presents the skill as something nearly anyone could develop.

1. The paragraph's vivid scene and mention of the world record builds up the assumption of a rare natural talent, which the next paragraph then challenges; it does not explain the equipment's purpose, describe tournament rules, or compare different competitive pursuits.

2. The text says the scientists found nothing physically unusual and credited the athletes' skill to years of practice with the method of loci; the other options wrongly claim visible brain growth, vision-only differences, or that comparison was impossible.

3. The pronoun picks up the ancient technique just named, the method of loci, which the sentence then describes; turning cards into characters is a later, more specific step, the daily routine and the brain research are separate ideas mentioned elsewhere.

4. The text states that after a short introduction and weeks of daily practice, some of the untrained volunteers began performing at a similar level to long-practised competitors; the other options wrongly claim they matched the record instantly, made little progress, or took months to improve.

5. The final paragraph concludes that extraordinary recall is generally built through patient, systematic practice rather than being a born gift; the other options wrongly claim photographic memory is common, limited to professionals, or that such memorisation cannot be learned.

6. The paragraph calls the implication 'oddly reassuring' and stresses that recall depends on willingness to practise, producing an encouraging tone; it does not dismiss training, remain neutral, or doubt the research, as the other options suggest.

5. The Great Green Wall: Africa's Living Barrier

1. A) A belt of vegetation being grown gradually by many countries together

2. D) Because expanding dry land was destroying the soil that farmers relied on

3. D) The trees growing along the desert's edge

4. B) Progress there has probably been harder than in calmer regions

5. A) The writer admits the difficulties but still expects progress

6. B) To explain an environmental project and report on its progress

1. The text says the project is not one structure built by a single government, but a green strip of plants grown bit by bit by many countries together; the other options describe fences, one organisation's forest, or irrigation works, none of which the text mentions.

2. Paragraph two explains that hot, dry conditions were turning farmland into useless sand, which is why leaders acted; funding problems, conflict and rising temperatures are described later as separate, ongoing challenges, not the original reason for starting the project.

3. Within this same sentence, "they" picks up the subject "Trees" mentioned earlier in it, since trees are what provide shade and can also produce fruit, wood and medicine; the roots, the communities and the local people are different nouns introduced elsewhere and do not fit this verb.

4. The text says conflict has made it dangerous to plant and care for trees in certain regions, which implies that progress there has likely been more difficult than elsewhere; the text never suggests those areas have finished, been abandoned, or lost outside support.

5. The text lists real obstacles such as funding and conflict, but ends by saying experts 'remain confident', showing the writer recognises the problems without predicting failure or claiming only one issue remains.

6. The text covers the project's background, method, progress and ongoing challenges, which shows its overall aim is to inform readers about the whole project rather than to focus only on the tree-planting method, raise money, or warn of failure.

6. Golden Seams: The Art of Kintsugi

1. A) A pragmatic repair method that only later took on deeper symbolic meaning
2. D) It calls attention to the crack rather than attempting to hide it
3. C) The author regards it as a seductive oversimplification that drains the practice of its disciplined substance
4. B) To demonstrate that the craft's demands make popular shorthand versions of it inaccurate
5. A) The claims that people, like mended bowls, become more beautiful through hardship
6. B) To argue that the tradition changes how we judge the worth of a damaged object

1. The text says kintsugi began as a practical, economical repair response to breakage and only 'gradually accrued a symbolic weight' later; the symbolic and Western-origin options reverse this sequence or invent a motive the text never gives.

2. The passage states that kintsugi 'advertises the fracture' while Western restoration 'strives for invisibility'; the option describing smoothing over damage actually describes the Western method, not kintsugi, so it inverts the contrast.

3. The author calls such readings 'emotionally appealing' yet warns they risk 'flattening a centuries-old craft... stripped of the material rigour' that defines it, which signals mild disapproval rather than treating the metaphor as a natural extension of its founding purpose, an equally valid reading among many, or a fitting summary of the craft's demanding method.

4. The description of weeks of curing and layering is followed by the claim that this discipline is 'not easily reconciled with the instant gratification' of popular invocations, so the detail serves to expose the gap between the real craft and its simplified metaphor, not to teach a technique, link it to other arts, or compare restoration speeds.

5. The pronoun immediately follows the sentence about commentators insisting that 'broken people, like broken bowls, emerge more beautiful for having been mended,' so it points back to that specific claim rather than to the craft's history, technique, or the earlier restoration contrast.

6. The paragraph argues that kintsugi 'reframes value itself' and turns an object's history 'into the very source of its distinction,' which is a claim about redefined worth, not a retraction of earlier criticism, a technical summary, or a comparison with other crafts.

7. The Quiet Return of the Handwritten Letter

1. C) A small increase in personal letters following years of decline
2. C) Typing proceeds exactly as fast as a person's thoughts
3. A) Mildly positive, viewing letters as meaningful but still a marginal practice
4. B) Old letters kept from grandparents who had died
5. C) To support the claim that letter writing is becoming more popular
6. A) As a thoughtful act done now and then, rather than a duty

1. The text says postal services reported a modest but steady rise in personal correspondence after a long decline; the other options exaggerate the scale, reverse what happened to stationery shops, or wrongly mention business mail, which is never discussed.

2. The text says the hand cannot keep pace with the speed of thought the way a keyboard can, implying that typing proceeds at the same speed as thinking itself, which is why text messages end up clipped. The claim that typing produces more reflective sentences reverses this, since reflective language is linked to the slower process of handwriting, not typing.

3. The writer calls the figures encouraging yet tiny compared with digital messages, describing letters as a small, considered gesture rather than a dominant trend, which shows cautious approval rather than the extremes or detachment in the other options.

4. The pronoun follows the mention of people who still owned letters from grandparents who had died decades earlier; the other nouns appear nearby in the text but are not the objects being reread.

5. These business examples back up the opening claim that letter writing is reviving; the text never discusses cost, compares profitability between businesses, or claims digital communication is declining overall, which the other options wrongly suggest.

6. The passage concludes that a letter has become less a necessity than a small, considered gesture, meaning writing one is now a deliberate, occasional act rather than something expected; describing it as an expected duty for birthdays and thank-yous reverses this by treating it as an obligation.

8. Our First Night Under the Stars

1. C) They wanted an exciting adventure instead of a normal holiday.
2. A) They did not know the correct way to set it up.
3. C) Because everyone was extremely hungry after working hard.
4. B) the evening spent watching the stars together.
5. B) It was difficult, but the writer now understands why people enjoy it.
6. A) To share a personal story about trying camping for the first time.

1. The text says the family "wanted an adventure", which matches choosing an exciting adventure instead of a normal holiday; wanting to try out the new tent, feeling tired of hotels, and the sister begging to sleep outdoors are not given as the reason for the

decision.

2. The text explains that "none of us knew how to do it properly", so the delay came from lacking the skill, not from misreading the instructions, being tired from the drive, or wind blowing the tent down.

3. The writer guesses the food "tasted better... maybe because we were so hungry after all that work", linking the taste to hunger, not a recipe, fresh shopping or the view.

4. "It" follows right after the description of sitting outside watching the stars, so it points to that evening, not the whole trip, the meal or the arrival day.

5. The final sentence says camping "is harder than it looks on television, but now I understand why so many people love it," showing a mixed view: tough but newly appreciated, not outright rejection, agreement with television, or a wish to return to hotels.

6. The whole passage tells one family's personal experience of trying camping for the first time, rather than giving tent-building instructions, a weather warning, or a description of the scenery alone.

9. Drawing the City: The Rise of Urban Sketching

1. D) A sketch takes a great deal longer, since a photo is almost instant
2. B) A journalist in Seattle began a blog of his own drawings and asked other people to draw too.
3. C) It encourages them to notice small details they would usually pass by
4. B) They see mistakes as a normal part of learning and welcome everyone.
5. B) To present urban sketching as a calmer alternative in a screen-filled world
6. A) The fact that most sketches contain small flaws or imperfections.

1. The third paragraph contrasts a photo taken in a second with a sketch that takes much longer, so the idea that a sketch needs a great deal more time is correct; the other options wrongly suggest the difference is small, non-existent, or stretched to several hours, none of which the text supports.

2. The second paragraph states that a journalist started a blog to share his own drawings and invited others to join him, matching the option about beginning a blog and asking others to draw too; the distractors invent a newspaper column, a gallery exhibition or a published book that the text never mentions.

3. The third paragraph explains that the slower pace of sketching helps people notice shadows, movement and colour they would normally walk past without seeing; the other options misread this as artistic selection, mental escape, or improved memory, none of which the text claims.

4. The fourth paragraph says experienced sketchers insist mistakes are part of the process and that groups welcome anyone regardless of skill level; the other views wrongly suggest beginners should work alone, that groups should be competitive, or that their worries are justified.

5. The closing paragraph contrasts screen time with going outside and connecting with a place, offering sketching as a different kind of activity rather than attacking or warning about screens directly.

6. The pronoun 'that' points back to the idea just stated — sketchbooks being rarely perfect — which the writer praises as proof of attention, not an idea about redrawing, skill level, or carelessness.

10. The Wood Wide Web: How Trees Talk Underground

1. A) Channelled surplus nutrients preferentially towards trees that shared their genetic lineage.
2. D) Take advantage of any excess sugar a tree happens to produce.
3. D) Open to the network's existence yet skeptical that it proves deliberate cooperation.
4. D) The underground fungal connections linking separate trees together.
5. C) To temper the popular, cooperative reading of the fungal network with scientific caution.
6. C) Whether the exchanges count as genuine communication or merely an incidental side-effect.

1. The paragraph reports that older, well-connected trees 'appeared to recognise their own offspring and divert resources towards them preferentially', which the option about channelling nutrients towards related trees paraphrases; the warning-signal detail belongs to the last paragraph, and neither total dependence on fungi nor fiercer competition with seedlings is ever claimed.

2. Critics argue that a fungus moving sugar may simply be 'siphoning off whatever surplus is available' rather than acting as a charitable intermediary; the option describing fungi taking advantage of any excess sugar a tree happens to produce captures this same idea in different words, whereas the text explicitly denies that fungi deliberately orchestrate generous transfers, casts doubt on how reliable transfers are across forest types rather than confirming such reliability, and never claims every tree benefits equally.

3. The writer reports the network's existence as settled while giving weight to critics who doubt the 'romantic' cooperative reading, a stance of openness mixed with scepticism that the option describing acceptance of the network but doubt about deliberate cooperation captures; the writer neither fully embraces the nurturing-community idea nor dismisses the research as worthless nor claims the evidence firmly proves communication.

4. The phrase follows directly on from the first paragraph's description of fungi that 'stitch entire forests together', so it refers back to that underground connection, which the option about fungal connections linking trees restates; the isotope method and the old competitive view are different ideas mentioned near the phrase but are not themselves what it describes.

5. The critics are introduced to complicate the 'romantic' cooperative story and warn that coverage has run ahead of the evidence, which matches the option about tempering that story with scientific caution; the paragraph never suggests abandoning current forestry practices, a point raised only in the final paragraph, never denies that fungi connect trees at all, since their existence is accepted throughout, and never claims that fungal networks in general are poorly understood, only that one interpretation of them is contested.

6. The final paragraph states plainly that whether the exchanges amount to communication or are merely a passive by-product of shared plumbing 'remains an open question', matching the option about genuine communication versus an incidental side-effect; the network's existence across forests and its effect on management are presented as settled facts, and equal benefit to every tree is never addressed.

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