Reading

Learn it the Feynman way, then practise it

NSW Opportunity Class Placement Test · for students in Year 4

10 chapters | **28** passages | **215** questions | **261** min at test pace

Every passage in this book was written from scratch for it. Each chapter explains one reading skill in plain words, shows the mistake that skill invites, then gives you three passages to practise it on.

Phase 0 hand-made sample. Every answer was re-derived from the passage text by an independent checker before printing (215/215 passed). Chapters marked *structural check* carry a weaker proof than the rest and say so on the page. Not reviewed by a qualified teacher — year-level suitability is unverified. Not for sale.

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CHAPTER 1 OF 10

Finding facts in the text

IN PLAIN WORDS

A fact question wants something the writer already told you. You are not guessing and you are not deciding - you are locating. The answer is sitting in the text and your job is to put your finger on it.

EXAMPLE

The text says Nella climbed ninety-two steps. If the question asks how many steps there were, the answer is ninety-two. Not about ninety. Not nearly a hundred. Ninety-two, because that is what it says.

> COMMON ERROR
>
> Answering from memory after one read. You remember the story was about a lighthouse and you pick the option that sounds lighthouse-ish. Go back and find the actual words - every wrong option here was written to sound right.

REMEMBER IT LIKE THIS

It is a treasure hunt where someone has already told you the treasure is in the room. You are not searching the whole house.

CHECK YOURSELF

The passage says the lamp burned oil. A question asks what fuel the lamp used. Where should you look first? (answer: The sentence with the word ‘burned’ in it - find the words, do not recall them)

THE KEEPER OF SPLIT ROCK

Nella Bray kept the light at Split Rock for eleven years. She was the only keeper the island ever had. Every evening she climbed the ninety-two steps to the lamp room and wound the clockwork by hand. The clockwork turned the lens, and the turning lens sent a beam across the water.

The lamp burned oil, so Nella carried a can up the stairs each morning. She polished the brass rail on the way down. Sailors said the Split Rock beam was the steadiest on the coast. They did not know that Nella rewound the clockwork twice a night, in fog or in frost.

In 1911 a storm tore the roof from the boat shed. Nella lashed the door shut with rope and kept the lamp alight until morning. The mail boat found her at dawn, still awake, still winding.

1. How many years did Nella keep the light? A0C2F0

( ) twenty years
( ) two years
( ) eleven years
( ) nine years

2. How many steps led to the lamp room? 557244

( ) twelve steps
( ) a hundred steps
( ) forty steps
( ) ninety-two steps

3. What did the lamp burn? 873728

( ) oil
( ) coal
( ) wood
( ) gas

4. What did Nella polish on the way down? 1DB01B

( ) the stone floor
( ) the front door
( ) the brass rail
( ) the window glass

5. What did the storm tear away? 2FFED8

( ) the roof from the boat shed
( ) the bridge across the rocks
( ) the lamp at the top of the stairs
( ) the door of the stone tower

6. What tied the boat shed door shut? A302EF

( ) a chain
( ) wire
( ) a metal bar
( ) rope

7. Who found Nella at dawn? 4D35C1

( ) Her brother
( ) The mail boat
( ) A fishing crew
( ) The harbour master

8. How often did Nella rewind the clockwork at night? 603BB5

( ) once a night
( ) four times
( ) every hour
( ) twice a night

9. What did the turning lens do? 2A8CDD

( ) opened the shutters at dusk
( ) lit the inside of the boat shed
( ) rang a bell to warn the ships
( ) sent a beam across the water

10. In which year did the storm strike? E95283

( ) 1899
( ) 1920
( ) 1911
( ) 1875

THE COLLECTOR

A male satin bowerbird does not build a nest. He builds a bower, which is an avenue of woven sticks on the forest floor. The bower is not a home. It is a stage.

He then goes hunting for blue. He gathers bottle tops, straws, feathers and petals, and lays them at the entrance in a neat fan. A rival bird will raid the pile and carry the best pieces away. So the builder guards his fan and steals from his neighbours in turn.

Females visit several bowers before choosing one. They watch the dance, judge the fan, and fly on. A bower can take a bird seven years to perfect.

Nobody is quite sure why blue. One idea is that blue is scarce in the bush, so a wide fan of it proves the bird hunted hard for weeks. Another is simpler: the male's own feathers are blue, and the fan may just be a way of matching himself. Both ideas could be true at once.

11. What is a bower made of? 534AC4

( ) green leaves
( ) soft feathers
( ) woven sticks
( ) dry mud

12. Where does the bird build it? B9F65D

( ) in a tall tree
( ) beside a river
( ) inside a log
( ) on the forest floor

13. Which colour does the male gather? AE5955

( ) yellow
( ) red
( ) blue
( ) green

14. How does he lay out his collection? 728AF0

( ) in a straight line
( ) in a neat fan
( ) in a deep pile
( ) in a circle

15. What does a rival bird do? 631E92

( ) raid the pile
( ) sing louder
( ) copy the dance
( ) break the sticks

16. How many bowers does a female visit? 418A7C

( ) exactly one
( ) none at all
( ) every bower
( ) several bowers

17. How long can a bower take to perfect? F82451

( ) one season
( ) three months
( ) seven years
( ) twenty years

18. What does the builder do with his fan? 85E68E

( ) trades it for food
( ) buries it in sand
( ) hides it in a log
( ) guards his fan

19. Name one thing the male collects. C81190

( ) straws
( ) seeds
( ) stones
( ) shells

20. What do females do after watching? 1B7235

( ) fly on
( ) stay and nest
( ) help build
( ) take the fan

SOMETHING ALIVE IN THE JAR

A sourdough starter is flour and water and nothing else. Left on a bench, it catches wild yeast from the air. The yeast eats the starch in the flour and gives off gas, and the gas is what lifts the loaf.

A baker feeds the starter every day. Half is thrown away first, which sounds wasteful but is not. Without it the jar fills in a week and the yeast runs out of food.

Some starters are older than the bakery that keeps them. One in San Francisco has been fed since 1849. The taste changes with the water and the weather, so no two cities make quite the same loaf.

Bakers carry starters when they move. They dry a spoonful onto paper, fold it into an envelope, and wake it up months later with a little warm water. The yeast does not mind the wait. It only minds being left hungry on a warm bench for weeks with the lid screwed down tight.

21. What is a starter made from? E2C8E1

( ) water and salt
( ) yeast and sugar
( ) flour and water
( ) flour and milk

22. Where does the wild yeast come from? 626C1D

( ) the oven
( ) the air
( ) a shop packet
( ) the water tap

23. What does the yeast eat? E27DDE

( ) the crust of the baked loaf
( ) the starch in the flour
( ) the syrup added by the baker
( ) the salt left in the jar

24. What lifts the loaf? 465620

( ) the salt
( ) the gas
( ) the kneading
( ) the heat

25. How often is a starter fed? 449CA7

( ) every day
( ) twice a year
( ) once a week
( ) every hour

26. What happens to half the starter? 77AAFB

( ) thrown away
( ) baked at once
( ) frozen
( ) sold

27. How long until the jar fills without that step? 1AC873

( ) in a week
( ) in a day
( ) in a year
( ) in a month

28. Since when has the San Francisco starter been fed? 080B84

( ) 1889
( ) 1749
( ) 1849
( ) 1949

29. What changes the taste? ECE42E

( ) the water and the weather
( ) the price the bakery charges
( ) the shape of the baking tin
( ) the jar and the lid it uses

30. What does the passage say about two cities? 2F2996

( ) every city makes exactly the same loaf
( ) all cities are fed from a single jar
( ) only one city in the world bakes bread
( ) no two cities make quite the same loaf

Chapter 1 — Answers: Finding facts in the text

1. eleven years

The passage says: “eleven years”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

2. ninety-two steps

The passage says: “ninety-two steps”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

3. oil

The passage says: “oil”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

4. the brass rail

The passage says: “the brass rail”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

5. the roof from the boat shed

The passage says: “the roof from the boat shed”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

6. rope

The passage says: “rope”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

7. The mail boat

The passage says: “The mail boat”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

8. twice a night

The passage says: “twice a night”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

9. sent a beam across the water

The passage says: “sent a beam across the water”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

10. 1911

The passage says: “1911”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

11. woven sticks

The passage says: “woven sticks”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

12. on the forest floor

The passage says: “on the forest floor”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

13. blue

The passage says: “blue”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

14. in a neat fan

The passage says: “in a neat fan”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

15. raid the pile

The passage says: “raid the pile”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

16. several bowers

The passage says: “several bowers”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

17. seven years

The passage says: “seven years”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

18. guards his fan

The passage says: “guards his fan”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

19. straws

The passage says: “straws”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

20. fly on

The passage says: “fly on”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

21. flour and water

The passage says: “flour and water”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

22. the air

The passage says: “the air”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

23. the starch in the flour

The passage says: “the starch in the flour”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

24. the gas

The passage says: “the gas”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

25. every day

The passage says: “every day”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

26. thrown away

The passage says: “thrown away”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

27. in a week

The passage says: “in a week”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

28. 1849

The passage says: “1849”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

29. the water and the weather

The passage says: “the water and the weather”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

30. no two cities make quite the same loaf

The passage says: “no two cities make quite the same loaf”. The other three do not appear in the text at all.

CHAPTER 2 OF 10

Working out a word from the words around it

IN PLAIN WORDS

You do not need to already know the word. The sentence around it is doing most of the work, and your job is to notice what the word is being asked to do in that sentence.

EXAMPLE

The digging is relentless. You may never have met that word. But the next sentence says the wombat keeps at the same wall night after night, long after another animal would give up. So relentless means never stopping.

> COMMON ERROR
>
> Picking the word that looks most like the hard word. Relentless looks a bit like reluctant, which means almost the opposite. Read the sentence, not the shape of the letters.

REMEMBER IT LIKE THIS

It is like one word going muffled on a phone call. You do not panic - you work it out from the rest of the sentence, and you are usually right.

CHECK YOURSELF

Traffic had grown unbearable. Which is closer: too much to put up with, or pleasant? (answer: too much to put up with - the sentence is complaining, not praising)

THE ANIMAL THAT BUILDS ROOMS

A wombat burrow is not a hole. It is a system. The main tunnel can run twenty metres, and side tunnels branch off into sleeping chambers. Some burrows have been used by wombat after wombat for a hundred years.

The digging is relentless. A wombat shifts soil with its front claws and pushes it back with its hind feet. It will keep at the same wall night after night, long after another animal would give up.

During bushfires, other creatures shelter in these tunnels. Cameras have recorded wallabies, lizards and small birds waiting out the smoke below ground. The wombat does not invite them in. It simply tolerates the visitors and carries on digging while they sit there.

Farmers once treated the burrows as a nuisance and filled them in. Now some leave them alone on purpose. A paddock with a few old burrows in it comes through a fire with more animals alive in it afterwards.

1. In the passage: “The digging is relentless.” What does the word relentless mean here? 248962

( ) gentle and slow
( ) careless and rushed
( ) going on and on
( ) done only once

2. In the passage: “The main tunnel can run twenty metres, and side tunnels branch off into sleeping chambers.” What does the word chambers mean here? 8E1381

( ) ladders
( ) windows
( ) doorways
( ) hollows

3. In the passage: “It simply tolerates the visitors and carries on digging while they sit there.” What does the word tolerates mean here? 9697E0

( ) chases away
( ) puts up with
( ) welcomes warmly
( ) feeds daily

4. In the passage: “A wombat shifts soil with its front claws and pushes it back with its hind feet.” What does the word shifts mean here? 010676

( ) shoves
( ) waters
( ) swallows
( ) counts

5. In the passage: “It is a system.” What does the word system mean here? 37BC78

( ) a small hiding place
( ) an unlucky mistake
( ) a set of joined parts
( ) a single closed room

6. In the passage: “The main tunnel can run twenty metres, and side tunnels branch off into sleeping chambers.” What does the word branch mean here? CCE9B4

( ) fill with water
( ) fall in
( ) grow narrow
( ) split away

7. In the passage: “During bushfires, other creatures shelter in these tunnels.” What does the word shelter mean here? 399B58

( ) search for food
( ) build nests
( ) get lost
( ) hide safely

8. In the passage: “Cameras have recorded wallabies, lizards and small birds waiting out the smoke below ground.” What does the word recorded mean here? E2E810

( ) let go
( ) chased off
( ) captured
( ) imagined

9. In the passage: “A wombat shifts soil with its front claws and pushes it back with its hind feet.” What does the word hind mean here? 29FA41

( ) broken
( ) left
( ) front
( ) back

10. In the passage: “During bushfires, other creatures shelter in these tunnels.” What does the word creatures mean here? 52E3C4

( ) plants
( ) people only
( ) beasts
( ) rocks

READING THE ICE

Deep in Antarctica, scientists drill out cylinders of ice and read them like a diary. Each layer is one year of snowfall, squeezed hard by the weight above it. The oldest layers at the bottom are eight hundred thousand years old.

Trapped inside every layer are tiny bubbles of ancient air. Nobody has to estimate what the sky was like back then. The sample holds the actual air, sealed in the year it fell, waiting to be let out.

A thick band means a snowy year. A grey smear means a distant volcano threw ash across the sky. Reading a core is slow work, and it can take a whole season, but the record it leaves is remarkably clear.

The cores are kept in freezers colder than the ice they came from. Losing one to a power cut would mean losing a year of history nobody can drill twice. So the stores run on two supplies at once, and staff check them every single day.

11. In the passage: “Deep in Antarctica, scientists drill out cylinders of ice and read them like a diary.” What does the word cylinders mean here? 7B5BE4

( ) flat sheets
( ) tube shapes
( ) thin threads
( ) square blocks

12. In the passage: “Each layer is one year of snowfall, squeezed hard by the weight above it.” What does the word squeezed mean here? 04254F

( ) stretched
( ) pressed
( ) washed
( ) warmed

13. In the passage: “Trapped inside every layer are tiny bubbles of ancient air.” What does the word ancient mean here? BABE84

( ) very dirty
( ) brand new
( ) quite warm
( ) very old

14. In the passage: “Nobody has to estimate what the sky was like back then.” What does the word estimate mean here? 13D8CA

( ) prove exactly
( ) guess roughly
( ) take a photo of
( ) forget about

15. In the passage: “The sample holds the actual air, sealed in the year it fell, waiting to be let out.” What does the word sealed mean here? 4196D1

( ) labelled
( ) opened up
( ) spilled out
( ) shut in

16. In the passage: “A thick band means a snowy year.” What does the word band mean here? 3816F8

( ) hole
( ) layer
( ) bubble
( ) crack

17. In the passage: “A grey smear means a distant volcano threw ash across the sky.” What does the word smear mean here? 7A39F6

( ) sharp edge
( ) clean line
( ) bright spot
( ) dirty mark

18. In the passage: “A grey smear means a distant volcano threw ash across the sky.” What does the word distant mean here? C30BF4

( ) buried
( ) quiet
( ) nearby
( ) remote

19. In the passage: “Reading a core is slow work, and it can take a whole season, but the record it leaves is remarkably clear.” What does the word remarkably mean here? 82FF1E

( ) slightly
( ) hardly at all
( ) barely
( ) unusually

20. In the passage: “The sample holds the actual air, sealed in the year it fell, waiting to be let out.” What does the word sample mean here? 80BF79

( ) a whole sheet of ice
( ) an empty glass jar
( ) small piece taken to study
( ) a short written note

THE LINE THAT CAME BACK

In 1961 the city tore up its tram tracks. Cars were the future, the council said, and the trams were an obstacle. Crews prised the rails out of the road and poured fresh asphalt over the scars they left.

Sixty years later the city laid new rails along almost the same route. The reversal cost far more than the removal had ever saved. Traffic had grown unbearable, and buses had proved inadequate on the busiest streets.

During the digging, workers found the original rails still buried under one corner. They had never been taken out at all, merely covered over and forgotten. The old line had been waiting down there the whole time.

One of the rails is now bolted to a wall at the depot with a small plate beside it. The plate gives two dates and nothing else. Drivers walk past it every morning on their way to the new trams.

21. In the passage: “Cars were the future, the council said, and the trams were an obstacle.” What does the word obstacle mean here? 11CCFE

( ) a very good bargain
( ) a welcome reward
( ) a handy shortcut
( ) something in the way

22. In the passage: “Crews prised the rails out of the road and poured fresh asphalt over the scars they left.” What does the word prised mean here? F8D73A

( ) measured
( ) welded
( ) levered
( ) painted

23. In the passage: “The reversal cost far more than the removal had ever saved.” What does the word reversal mean here? EF12BC

( ) change back
( ) a price cut
( ) a long delay
( ) doing it again

24. In the passage: “Traffic had grown unbearable, and buses had proved inadequate on the busiest streets.” What does the word unbearable mean here? 93BBBA

( ) too much to put up with
( ) easy enough to manage
( ) unusually quiet
( ) really rather pleasant

25. In the passage: “Traffic had grown unbearable, and buses had proved inadequate on the busiest streets.” What does the word inadequate mean here? 96FCC3

( ) more than enough
( ) not enough
( ) brand new
( ) expensive

26. In the passage: “Sixty years later the city laid new rails along almost the same route.” What does the word route mean here? 14D7C0

( ) timetable
( ) price
( ) vehicle
( ) course

27. In the passage: “They had never been taken out at all, merely covered over and forgotten.” What does the word merely mean here? FBE10B

( ) only
( ) never
( ) carefully
( ) twice

28. In the passage: “Crews prised the rails out of the road and poured fresh asphalt over the scars they left.” What does the word scars mean here? E020B3

( ) a coat of fresh paint
( ) a set of new tracks
( ) marks left behind
( ) smooth clean roads

29. In the passage: “Cars were the future, the council said, and the trams were an obstacle.” What does the word council mean here? E07B0F

( ) the city authority
( ) the local newspaper
( ) the drivers of the trams
( ) the road builders

30. In the passage: “During the digging, workers found the original rails still buried under one corner.” What does the word original mean here? 0C31C4

( ) first
( ) newest
( ) spare
( ) borrowed

Chapter 2 — Answers: Working out a word from the words around it

1. going on and on

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “relentless” is doing the job of “going on and on” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

2. hollows

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “chambers” is doing the job of “hollows” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

3. puts up with

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “tolerates” is doing the job of “puts up with” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

4. shoves

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “shifts” is doing the job of “shoves” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

5. a set of joined parts

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “system” is doing the job of “a set of joined parts” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

6. split away

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “branch” is doing the job of “split away” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

7. hide safely

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “shelter” is doing the job of “hide safely” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

8. captured

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “recorded” is doing the job of “captured” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

9. back

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “hind” is doing the job of “back” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

10. beasts

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “creatures” is doing the job of “beasts” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

11. tube shapes

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “cylinders” is doing the job of “tube shapes” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

12. pressed

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “squeezed” is doing the job of “pressed” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

13. very old

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “ancient” is doing the job of “very old” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

14. guess roughly

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “estimate” is doing the job of “guess roughly” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

15. shut in

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “sealed” is doing the job of “shut in” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

16. layer

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “band” is doing the job of “layer” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

17. dirty mark

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “smear” is doing the job of “dirty mark” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

18. remote

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “distant” is doing the job of “remote” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

19. unusually

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “remarkably” is doing the job of “unusually” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

20. small piece taken to study

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “sample” is doing the job of “small piece taken to study” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

21. something in the way

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “obstacle” is doing the job of “something in the way” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

22. levered

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “prised” is doing the job of “levered” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

23. change back

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “reversal” is doing the job of “change back” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

24. too much to put up with

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “unbearable” is doing the job of “too much to put up with” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

25. not enough

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “inadequate” is doing the job of “not enough” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

26. course

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “route” is doing the job of “course” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

27. only

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “merely” is doing the job of “only” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

28. marks left behind

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “scars” is doing the job of “marks left behind” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

29. the city authority

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “council” is doing the job of “the city authority” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

30. first

Read the sentence again with the word swapped out. “original” is doing the job of “first” — the other three change what the sentence is saying.

CHAPTER 3 OF 10

What does this word point back to?

IN PLAIN WORDS

Small words like it, they, this and that are stand-ins. Rather than repeat a long thing, a writer names it once and then points back at it. Your job is to follow the arrow backwards.

EXAMPLE

At the end of the tunnel sits a seed vault. It holds more than a million samples. What holds them? Not the tunnel and not the mountain - the seed vault, because that is what the sentence just introduced.

COMMON ERROR

Grabbing the nearest noun. The nearest noun before It might be the tunnel, and that is exactly the trap. Swap your guess in and read it back: the tunnel holds a million samples of seed. Does the passage say that? No.

REMEMBER IT LIKE THIS

Someone points over your shoulder and says that one. You have to turn round and look at what they were talking about a moment ago.

CHECK YOURSELF

The bell is barely touched by the clapper, so it has hardly worn at all. What has hardly worn? (answer: The bell - swap it in and the sentence still makes sense)

THE VAULT IN THE MOUNTAIN

On a frozen island near the North Pole there is a tunnel cut into a mountain. At the end of the tunnel sits a seed vault. It holds more than a million samples of seed sent in from farms all over the world.

The vault is a backup, not a shop. A country deposits a box of seed, and only that country may withdraw it. When war destroyed a seed store in Syria, researchers asked for their boxes back, grew the plants out, and sent fresh seed to the mountain.

The mountain itself does the hard work. Even if every freezer failed at once, the rock around the chamber would stay below zero for weeks. That is exactly why the builders chose it.

1. In the sentence “It holds more than a million samples of seed sent in from farms all over the world.” what does the word It refer to? DD4176

( ) a seed vault
( ) a tunnel
( ) the North Pole
( ) a mountain

2. In the sentence “A country deposits a box of seed, and only that country may withdraw it.” what does the word it refer to? A83547

( ) a box of seed
( ) a seed store in Syria
( ) The vault
( ) a shop

3. In the sentence “researchers asked for their boxes back, grew the plants out, and sent fresh seed to the mountain.” what does the word their refer to? D1F91E

( ) a country
( ) the rock
( ) researchers
( ) The vault

4. In the sentence “The mountain itself does the hard work.” what does the word itself refer to? B7B1BC

( ) every freezer
( ) the chamber
( ) a box of seed
( ) The mountain

5. In the sentence “That is exactly why the builders chose it.” what does the word That refer to? 1183C4

( ) more than a million samples of seed
( ) researchers asked for their boxes back
( ) war destroyed a seed store in Syria
( ) the rock around the chamber would stay below zero

6. In the sentence “On a frozen island near the North Pole there is a tunnel cut into a mountain.” what does the word there refer to? E13C34

( ) more than a million samples of seed
( ) researchers asked for their boxes back
( ) war destroyed a seed store in Syria
( ) a frozen island near the North Pole

7. In the sentence “A country deposits a box of seed, and only that country may withdraw it.” what does the word that country refer to? 84FD23

( ) A country
( ) the builders
( ) The vault
( ) researchers

8. In the sentence “researchers asked for their boxes back, grew the plants out, and sent fresh seed to the mountain.” what does the word the plants refer to? 711601

( ) a box of seed
( ) every freezer
( ) a seed vault
( ) the chamber

9. In the sentence “That is exactly why the builders chose it.” what does the word it refer to? D86E28

( ) researchers
( ) a shop
( ) a box of seed
( ) a mountain

10. In the sentence “At the end of the tunnel sits a seed vault.” what does the word the tunnel refer to? CD6FEF

( ) every freezer
( ) more than a million samples of seed
( ) a seed store in Syria
( ) a tunnel cut into a mountain

THE BELL THAT RUNS ON ALMOST NOTHING

In a glass case in Oxford sits a small brass bell and a clapper. The clapper has been swinging since about 1840. Nobody has wound the mechanism in all that time, and nobody is quite sure how much longer it can last.

The power comes from a dry pile, which is an early kind of battery. It pushes the clapper one way, then the other, about twice a second. The bell is barely touched by the clapper, so it has hardly worn at all.

Scientists would love to open the case and take the pile apart. But doing so would end the experiment, and the experiment is the whole point. So they leave the case shut and keep counting.

A prize is waiting for whoever finally works out what the pile is made from. It will only be handed over once the bell stops on its own. Nobody alive has ever heard the room go quiet.

11. In the sentence “It pushes the clapper one way, then the other, about twice a second.” what does the word It refer to? 0A333B

( ) a dry pile
( ) the bell
( ) a glass case
( ) the clapper

12. In the sentence “The bell is barely touched by the clapper, so it has hardly worn at all.” what does the word it refer to? AB1655

( ) the clapper
( ) a dry pile
( ) The bell
( ) a glass case

13. In the sentence “But doing so would end the experiment, and the experiment is the whole point.” what does the word so refer to? B23D44

( ) The clapper has been swinging since about 1840
( ) leave the case shut and keep counting
( ) an early kind of battery
( ) open the case and take the pile apart

14. In the sentence “So they leave the case shut and keep counting.” what does the word they refer to? D5A453

( ) the clapper
( ) The bell
( ) Scientists
( ) a glass case

15. In the sentence “Nobody has wound the mechanism in all that time, and nobody is quite sure how much longer it can last.” what does the word that refer to? 96A365

( ) the clapper
( ) an early kind of battery
( ) since about 1840
( ) a glass case

16. In the sentence “The power comes from a dry pile, which is an early kind of battery.” what does the word which refer to? 7116CB

( ) a small brass bell
( ) a glass case
( ) the clapper
( ) a dry pile

17. In the sentence “It pushes the clapper one way, then the other, about twice a second.” what does the word the other refer to? 89D225

( ) the experiment
( ) one way
( ) a dry pile
( ) a glass case

18. In the sentence “So they leave the case shut and keep counting.” what does the word the case refer to? 706681

( ) a glass case
( ) the mechanism
( ) a dry pile
( ) the clapper

19. In the sentence “Scientists would love to open the case and take the pile apart.” what does the word the pile refer to? 88C21D

( ) a dry pile
( ) the clapper
( ) a small brass bell
( ) the mechanism

20. In the sentence “Nobody has wound the mechanism in all that time, and nobody is quite sure how much longer it can last.” what does the word last refer to? 464B0C

( ) The clapper
( ) a small brass bell
( ) an early kind of battery
( ) a glass case

THE ISLAND THAT WAS NOT THERE

For over a century, charts showed an island in the Coral Sea. Sandy Island was printed on paper maps, drawn into atlases, and later copied into online map services. Every new map simply trusted the one before it.

In 2012 an Australian research ship sailed straight to the spot. The crew found deep open water and no land at all. They checked the depth sounder twice and then reported that the island did not exist.

The mistake had probably begun as a whaling note in the 1870s, and nobody had ever gone back to look. A copied error survives exactly as long as nobody bothers to test it.

Within days the island was scrubbed from the big online maps. A few printed atlases still carry it, sitting quietly in school libraries. Somewhere a child is looking at a place that has never once been above water.

21. In the sentence “Every new map simply trusted the one before it.” what does the word it refer to? 806F82

( ) an Australian research ship
( ) atlases
( ) the Coral Sea
( ) Every new map

22. In the sentence “They checked the depth sounder twice and then reported that the island did not exist.” what does the word They refer to? D11C40

( ) charts
( ) atlases
( ) online map services
( ) The crew

23. In the sentence “The mistake had probably begun as a whaling note in the 1870s, and nobody had ever gone back to look.” what does the word The mistake refer to? 306450

( ) deep open water and no land at all
( ) the island did not exist
( ) checked the depth sounder twice
( ) printed on paper maps

24. In the sentence “A copied error survives exactly as long as nobody bothers to test it.” what does the word it refer to? C1009C

( ) the depth sounder
( ) A copied error
( ) The crew
( ) a whaling note

25. In the sentence “In 2012 an Australian research ship sailed straight to the spot.” what does the word the spot refer to? CF3CF3

( ) checked the depth sounder twice
( ) an island in the Coral Sea
( ) copied into online map services
( ) a whaling note in the 1870s

26. In the sentence “Every new map simply trusted the one before it.” what does the word the one refer to? 2167CA

( ) the Coral Sea
( ) the depth sounder
( ) The crew
( ) Every new map

27. In the sentence “They checked the depth sounder twice and then reported that the island did not exist.” what does the word the island refer to? 3A8321

( ) atlases
( ) online map services
( ) Sandy Island
( ) The crew

28. In the sentence “A copied error survives exactly as long as nobody bothers to test it.” what does the word nobody refer to? 7BD3A6

( ) atlases
( ) The crew
( ) charts
( ) Sandy Island

29. In the sentence “The mistake had probably begun as a whaling note in the 1870s, and nobody had ever gone back to look.” what does the word look refer to? EC02B4

( ) printed on paper maps
( ) checked the depth sounder twice
( ) an island in the Coral Sea
( ) deep open water and no land at all

30. In the sentence “Somewhere a child is looking at a place that has never once been above water.” what does the word a place refer to? 08D422

( ) deep open water and no land at all
( ) Sandy Island
( ) The crew
( ) atlases

Chapter 3 — Answers: What does this word point back to?

1. **a seed vault**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “a seed vault”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “It” stands for.

2. **a box of seed**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “a box of seed”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “it” stands for.

3. **researchers**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “researchers”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “their” stands for.

4. **The mountain**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “The mountain”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “itself” stands for.

5. **the rock around the chamber would stay below zero**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “the rock around the chamber would stay below zero”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “That” stands for.

6. **a frozen island near the North Pole**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “a frozen island near the North Pole”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “there” stands for.

7. **A country**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “A country”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “that country” stands for.

8. **a box of seed**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “a box of seed”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “the plants” stands for.

9. **a mountain**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “a mountain”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “it” stands for.

10. **a tunnel cut into a mountain**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “a tunnel cut into a mountain”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “the tunnel” stands for.

11. **a dry pile**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “a dry pile”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “It” stands for.

12. **The bell**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “The bell”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “it” stands for.

13. **open the case and take the pile apart**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “open the case and take the pile apart”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “so” stands for.

14. **Scientists**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “Scientists”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “they” stands for.

15. **since about 1840**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “since about 1840”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “that” stands for.

16. **a dry pile**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “a dry pile”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “which” stands for.

17. **one way**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “one way”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “the other” stands for.

18. **a glass case**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “a glass case”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “the case” stands for.

19. **a dry pile**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “a dry pile”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “the pile” stands for.

20. **The clapper**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “The clapper”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “last” stands for.

21. **Every new map**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “Every new map”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “it” stands for.

22. **The crew**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “The crew”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “They” stands for.

23. **the island did not exist**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “the island did not exist”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “The mistake” stands for.

24. **A copied error**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “A copied error”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “it” stands for.

25. **an island in the Coral Sea**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “an island in the Coral Sea”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “the spot” stands for.

26. **Every new map**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “Every new map”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “the one” stands for.

27. **Sandy Island**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “Sandy Island”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “the island” stands for.

28. **The crew**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “The crew”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “nobody” stands for.

29. **an island in the Coral Sea**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “an island in the Coral Sea”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “look” stands for.

30. **Sandy Island**

Swap it in: the sentence is about “Sandy Island”, which the passage names before this sentence. The other three appear in the passage too, but not as what “a place” stands for.

CHAPTER 4 OF 10

Putting events in order

IN PLAIN WORDS

Order questions ask what happened when. The passage already holds the answer in the order its sentences are written, so you are checking the text, not your memory of the story.

EXAMPLE

The crews sank the piers, then poured concrete, then the arch began to creep out. If a question asks which came first, the answer is the piers, because that is the sentence that comes first.

> COMMON ERROR
>
> Assuming the order things are mentioned is always the order they happened. Usually it is, but watch for words like before, after, earlier and by then, which can put a later sentence in an earlier place.

REMEMBER IT LIKE THIS

It is like sorting photos by the time stamp rather than by the order someone handed them to you.

CHECK YOURSELF

The pipe burst just after midnight. The alarm reached the caretaker an hour later. Which came first? (answer: The pipe bursting - the alarm is described as reaching him later)

THE BRIDGE BUILT FROM BOTH ENDS

The plan looked reckless. Two teams would start on opposite banks and build towards each other, meeting in the middle over open water. If the survey was out by even a little, the halves would not line up.

First the crews sank the piers, dropping huge steel tubes into the river bed. Then they poured concrete inside each tube until it reached the water line. Only after that did the steel arch begin to creep out from either shore.

For two years the two arms grew towards each other, held back by cables anchored in the rock behind them. Engineers measured the gap every morning before the sun warmed the steel and stretched it.

On the day of the join, the crews waited until dusk so the metal would cool and shrink. The two halves slid together with a gap of four millimetres. Workers drove the first pin home at nine that evening, and the cheer carried right across the water.

1. Which of these happened first? B38F8D

( ) they poured concrete inside each tube
( ) the crews sank the piers
( ) the steel arch begin to creep out
( ) the two arms grew towards each other

2. Which of these happened last? 76B8B6

( ) the crews sank the piers
( ) the steel arch begin to creep out
( ) The two halves slid together
( ) they poured concrete inside each tube

3. Which of these happened first? 9DB0C3

( ) the steel arch begin to creep out
( ) the crews waited until dusk
( ) The two halves slid together
( ) Engineers measured the gap every morning

4. Which of these happened last? 475562

( ) the steel arch begin to creep out
( ) Engineers measured the gap every morning
( ) The two halves slid together
( ) Workers drove the first pin home

5. Which of these happened first? 484DA2

( ) the steel arch begin to creep out
( ) the crews sank the piers
( ) The two halves slid together
( ) the two arms grew towards each other

6. Which of these happened last? D787F6

( ) the crews waited until dusk
( ) the steel arch begin to creep out
( ) Engineers measured the gap every morning
( ) The two halves slid together

7. Which of these happened first? E68A20

( ) Engineers measured the gap every morning
( ) the crews sank the piers
( ) Workers drove the first pin home
( ) The two halves slid together

8. Which of these happened last? C9C2F2

( ) they poured concrete inside each tube
( ) Workers drove the first pin home
( ) the steel arch begin to creep out
( ) the crews waited until dusk

9. Which of these happened first? 80D63A

( ) The two halves slid together
( ) the steel arch begin to creep out
( ) Engineers measured the gap every morning
( ) Workers drove the first pin home

10. Which of these happened last? 96068A

( ) Workers drove the first pin home
( ) The two halves slid together
( ) the steel arch begin to creep out
( ) they poured concrete inside each tube

FOUR GENERATIONS, ONE JOURNEY

No single monarch butterfly makes the whole trip. The journey takes four generations, and only the last one ever sees both ends of it.

In spring the first generation hatches in the south and flies north. It lays eggs on milkweed and dies within about six weeks. The second generation continues further north and does the same. So does the third.

The fourth generation is different. It hatches in late summer and does not breed at all. Instead it flies south, sometimes four thousand kilometres, and waits out the winter clustered in the same few groves of trees.

In spring it finally lays eggs, and the count begins again at one. Nobody has explained how the fourth generation finds groves it has never visited.

11. Which of these happened first? 0805EE

( ) It hatches in late summer
( ) It lays eggs on milkweed
( ) waits out the winter
( ) The second generation continues further north

12. Which of these happened last? 1C9885

( ) it flies south
( ) the first generation hatches in the south
( ) It hatches in late summer
( ) It lays eggs on milkweed

13. Which of these happened first? 9FAF04

( ) it finally lays eggs
( ) it flies south
( ) It hatches in late summer
( ) It lays eggs on milkweed

14. Which of these happened last? DD8CC7

( ) it finally lays eggs
( ) It lays eggs on milkweed
( ) waits out the winter
( ) it flies south

15. Which of these happened first? B73EA5

( ) It lays eggs on milkweed
( ) It hatches in late summer
( ) waits out the winter
( ) it finally lays eggs

16. Which of these happened last? 1B5A4B

( ) It hatches in late summer
( ) it finally lays eggs
( ) It lays eggs on milkweed
( ) The second generation continues further north

17. Which of these happened first? 65F3BC

( ) the first generation hatches in the south
( ) It hatches in late summer
( ) The second generation continues further north
( ) it finally lays eggs

18. Which of these happened last? 1746D0

( ) It lays eggs on milkweed
( ) it flies south
( ) it finally lays eggs
( ) The second generation continues further north

19. Which of these happened first? 3AC5E2

( ) it flies south
( ) waits out the winter
( ) the first generation hatches in the south
( ) The second generation continues further north

20. Which of these happened last? 1BCAC7

( ) It hatches in late summer
( ) The second generation continues further north
( ) it flies south
( ) it finally lays eggs

THE NIGHT THE LIBRARY FLOODED

The pipe burst just after midnight, on the floor directly above the archive. By the time the alarm reached the caretaker, water had been running for an hour.

He shut the valve first, then rang the head librarian. She arrived before two and called for volunteers on the radio. Forty people turned up before dawn, most of them still in coats over pyjamas.

They carried the wet boxes out to the car park in a chain. Someone fetched a van full of freezers from the fish market, because freezing wet paper stops the mould before it starts.

The last box came out at half past six. Only nine documents were lost, out of eleven thousand. The librarian sent the fish market a letter of thanks, and they framed it.

21. Which of these happened first? 9C9CF3

( ) rang the head librarian
( ) Forty people turned up before dawn
( ) They carried the wet boxes out
( ) the alarm reached the caretaker

22. Which of these happened last? 0F4B1D

( ) rang the head librarian
( ) The pipe burst just after midnight
( ) The last box came out
( ) They carried the wet boxes out

23. Which of these happened first? 1B457B

( ) called for volunteers on the radio
( ) They carried the wet boxes out
( ) The last box came out
( ) The librarian sent the fish market a letter

24. Which of these happened last? FB22E3

( ) The last box came out
( ) Someone fetched a van full of freezers
( ) rang the head librarian
( ) He shut the valve first

25. Which of these happened first? E8459D

( ) The librarian sent the fish market a letter
( ) Forty people turned up before dawn
( ) He shut the valve first
( ) called for volunteers on the radio

26. Which of these happened last? 9C4FA2

( ) the alarm reached the caretaker
( ) The last box came out
( ) The pipe burst just after midnight
( ) They carried the wet boxes out

27. Which of these happened first? 856691

( ) The last box came out
( ) The librarian sent the fish market a letter
( ) He shut the valve first
( ) rang the head librarian

28. Which of these happened last? 1EB356

( ) They carried the wet boxes out
( ) The pipe burst just after midnight
( ) The last box came out
( ) Forty people turned up before dawn

29. Which of these happened first? EF99D5

( ) He shut the valve first
( ) called for volunteers on the radio
( ) the alarm reached the caretaker
( ) The librarian sent the fish market a letter

30. Which of these happened last? 212647

( ) The last box came out
( ) Forty people turned up before dawn
( ) He shut the valve first
( ) The pipe burst just after midnight

Chapter 4 — Answers: Putting events in order

1. the crews sank the piers

In the passage the order is: the crews sank the piers → they poured concrete inside each tube → the steel arch begin to creep out → the two arms grew towards each other. So “the crews sank the piers” is first.

2. The two halves slid together

In the passage the order is: the crews sank the piers → they poured concrete inside each tube → the steel arch begin to creep out → The two halves slid together. So “The two halves slid together” is last.

3. the steel arch begin to creep out

In the passage the order is: the steel arch begin to creep out → Engineers measured the gap every morning → the crews waited until dusk → The two halves slid together. So “the steel arch begin to creep out” is first.

4. Workers drove the first pin home

In the passage the order is: the steel arch begin to creep out → Engineers measured the gap every morning → The two halves slid together → Workers drove the first pin home. So “Workers drove the first pin home” is last.

5. the crews sank the piers

In the passage the order is: the crews sank the piers → the steel arch begin to creep out → the two arms grew towards each other → The two halves slid together. So “the crews sank the piers” is first.

6. The two halves slid together

In the passage the order is: the steel arch begin to creep out → Engineers measured the gap every morning → the crews waited until dusk → The two halves slid together. So “The two halves slid together” is last.

7. the crews sank the piers

In the passage the order is: the crews sank the piers → Engineers measured the gap every morning → The two halves slid together → Workers drove the first pin home. So “the crews sank the piers” is first.

8. Workers drove the first pin home

In the passage the order is: they poured concrete inside each tube → the steel arch begin to creep out → the crews waited until dusk → Workers drove the first pin home. So “Workers drove the first pin home” is last.

9. the steel arch begin to creep out

In the passage the order is: the steel arch begin to creep out → Engineers measured the gap every morning → The two halves slid together → Workers drove the first pin home. So “the steel arch begin to creep out” is first.

10. Workers drove the first pin home

In the passage the order is: they poured concrete inside each tube → the steel arch begin to creep out → The two halves slid together → Workers drove the first pin home. So “Workers drove the first pin home” is last.

11. It lays eggs on milkweed

In the passage the order is: It lays eggs on milkweed → The second generation continues further north → It hatches in late summer → waits out the winter. So “It lays eggs on milkweed” is first.

12. it flies south

In the passage the order is: the first generation hatches in the south → It lays eggs on milkweed → It hatches in late summer → it flies south. So “it flies south” is last.

13. It lays eggs on milkweed

In the passage the order is: It lays eggs on milkweed → It hatches in late summer → it flies south → it finally lays eggs. So “It lays eggs on milkweed” is first.

14. it finally lays eggs

In the passage the order is: It lays eggs on milkweed → it flies south → waits out the winter → it finally lays eggs. So “it finally lays eggs” is last.

15. It lays eggs on milkweed

In the passage the order is: It lays eggs on milkweed → It hatches in late summer → waits out the winter → it finally lays eggs. So “It lays eggs on milkweed” is first.

16. it finally lays eggs

In the passage the order is: It lays eggs on milkweed → The second generation continues further north → It hatches in late summer → it finally lays eggs. So “it finally lays eggs” is last.

17. the first generation hatches in the south

In the passage the order is: the first generation hatches in the south → The second generation continues further north → It hatches in late summer → it finally lays eggs. So “the first generation hatches in the south” is first.

18. it finally lays eggs

In the passage the order is: It lays eggs on milkweed → The second generation continues further north → it flies south → it finally lays eggs. So “it finally lays eggs” is last.

19. the first generation hatches in the south

In the passage the order is: the first generation hatches in the south → The second generation continues further north → it flies south → waits out the winter. So “the first generation hatches in the south” is first.

20. it finally lays eggs

In the passage the order is: The second generation continues further north → It hatches in late summer → it flies south → it finally lays eggs. So “it finally lays eggs” is last.

21. the alarm reached the caretaker

In the passage the order is: the alarm reached the caretaker → rang the head librarian → Forty people turned up before dawn → They carried the wet boxes out. So “the alarm reached the caretaker” is first.

22. The last box came out

In the passage the order is: The pipe burst just after midnight → rang the head librarian → They carried the wet boxes out → The last box came out. So “The last box came out” is last.

23. called for volunteers on the radio

In the passage the order is: called for volunteers on the radio → They carried the wet boxes out → The last box came out → The librarian sent the fish market a letter. So “called for volunteers on the radio” is first.

24. The last box came out

In the passage the order is: He shut the valve first → rang the head librarian → Someone fetched a van full of freezers → The last box came out. So “The last box came out” is last.

25. He shut the valve first

In the passage the order is: He shut the valve first → called for volunteers on the radio → Forty people turned up before dawn → The librarian sent the fish market a letter. So “He shut the valve first” is first.

26. The last box came out

In the passage the order is: The pipe burst just after midnight → the alarm reached the caretaker → They carried the wet boxes out → The last box came out. So “The last box came out” is last.

27. He shut the valve first

In the passage the order is: He shut the valve first → rang the head librarian → The last box came out → The librarian sent the fish market a letter. So “He shut the valve first” is first.

28. The last box came out

In the passage the order is: The pipe burst just after midnight → Forty people turned up before dawn → They carried the wet boxes out → The last box came out. So “The last box came out” is last.

29. the alarm reached the caretaker

In the passage the order is: the alarm reached the caretaker → He shut the valve first → called for volunteers on the radio → The librarian sent the fish market a letter. So “the alarm reached the caretaker” is first.

30. The last box came out

In the passage the order is: The pipe burst just after midnight → He shut the valve first → Forty people turned up before dawn → The last box came out. So “The last box came out” is last.

CHAPTER 5 OF 10

Numbers hiding in the text

IN PLAIN WORDS

Some reading questions are really maths questions wearing a coat. The numbers are in the passage, and you have to find the right ones and then do one small step with them.

EXAMPLE

The passage says the tide covers the road twice in 24 hours. Asked how many times in 3 days, you take the 2 from the text and multiply by the 3 in the question. The answer is 6.

> COMMON ERROR
>
> Grabbing the first number you see. A passage about a causeway is full of numbers - 24, 5, 50, 12, 8 - and only one or two of them belong in your sum. Read the question again and ask which number it is actually about.

REMEMBER IT LIKE THIS

It is like a shopping list where half the items belong to somebody else. Pick out yours before you start adding.

CHECK YOURSELF

The book cost 15 shillings and the fine was 2 pence a day. Which number do you need to work out 10 days of fines? (answer: The 2, not the 15 - the fine is the per-day number)

THE ROAD THAT VANISHES

The causeway to Holy Island is only a road for part of each day. Twice in every 24 hours the tide covers it completely, and twice it drains away again.

The safe crossing window is about 5 hours long. The council posts the times on boards at both ends, and the times shift by roughly 50 minutes each day as the moon moves on.

Halfway across stands a wooden refuge box on stilts, reached by 12 steps. It is there for drivers who ignore the boards. In a normal year the coastguard rescues about 8 vehicles from the water.

A rescue costs roughly 2000 pounds. The signs are free to read.

Most drivers who get caught say the same thing afterwards. The water looked shallow when they started, and the far side looked close. Neither is a safe way to judge a tide that rises across flat sand faster than a person can walk.

1. How many times does the tide cover the causeway in 24 hours? 7B0AC7

( ) 3
( ) 1
( ) 4
( ) 2

2. How many hours long is the safe crossing window? E72BC0

( ) 6
( ) 10
( ) 5
( ) 4

3. By about how many minutes do the crossing times shift each day? E2547A

( ) 50
( ) 51
( ) 49
( ) 100

4. How many steps lead up to the refuge box? EDD356

( ) 24
( ) 13
( ) 11
( ) 12

5. About how many vehicles are rescued in a normal year? 23D678

( ) 9
( ) 7
( ) 16
( ) 8

6. If the tide covers the road twice a day, how many times in 3 days? 49D13F

( ) 6
( ) 5
( ) 12
( ) 7

7. Two rescues in one year would cost roughly how many pounds? F3811B

( ) 3999
( ) 4000
( ) 4001
( ) 8000

8. If the times shift 50 minutes a day, how far do they shift in 4 days? 16D2E2

( ) 201
( ) 199
( ) 400
( ) 200

9. The window is 5 hours. How many minutes is that? 9F11AD

( ) 299
( ) 600
( ) 301
( ) 300

10. If 8 vehicles are rescued a year, how many over 5 years? FB12F0

( ) 80
( ) 41
( ) 39
( ) 40

THE OVERDUE BOOK

In 2011 a man returned a library book that had been borrowed in 1948. It had sat in his late father's attic for decades, still holding its paper card.

The library had charged 2 pence a day for late books back then. Nobody worked out the full sum, because the fine had been capped at the price of the book, which was 15 shillings.

The librarian waived the fine entirely. She said the book was worth more as a story than as a debt, and put it on display for 6 weeks.

During those weeks the branch signed up 340 new members, which was more than it had managed in the previous 2 years.

The card in the back of the book still carries the stamp from the week it left the shelf. The man asked to keep a photograph of it. The library said yes, and kept the book, and the story has been told at every staff meeting since.

11. In which year was the book returned? 23D899

( ) 2010
( ) 2012
( ) 2011
( ) 4022

12. In which year was it borrowed? F271ED

( ) 1947
( ) 1948
( ) 1949
( ) 3896

13. How many pence a day was the late charge? 50CF11

( ) 4
( ) 2
( ) 1
( ) 3

14. How many shillings did the book cost? 65C4DE

( ) 30
( ) 14
( ) 15
( ) 16

15. For how many weeks was the book displayed? 45CE70

( ) 6
( ) 5
( ) 7
( ) 12

16. How many new members signed up? B9A293

( ) 680
( ) 339
( ) 341
( ) 340

17. How many years passed between borrowing and returning? F8954B

( ) 62
( ) 64
( ) 126
( ) 63

18. At 2 pence a day, what would 10 days have cost in pence? E37DFA

( ) 20
( ) 21
( ) 19
( ) 40

19. How many days are in the 6 weeks it was displayed? 85CA69

( ) 43
( ) 42
( ) 84
( ) 41

20. If the branch signed up 340 members and wanted to double that next year, how many would that be? F73D7B

( ) 680
( ) 679
( ) 681
( ) 1360

THE ROOF THAT PAYS RENT

The school put 96 solar panels on the hall roof in one weekend. Each panel is rated at 400 watts, and together they cover about 180 square metres.

The system cost 42000 dollars. The state paid half, and the parent group raised the rest over 3 years of fetes and raffles.

In the first full year the panels made 52000 units of power. The school used most of it and sold the leftovers back to the grid, which cut the yearly electricity bill from 19000 dollars to 4000.

At that rate the panels pay for themselves and then keep going. They are expected to last 25 years.

The hall is now the coolest room in the school on a hot day, because the panels shade the roof they sit on. Nobody planned that part. The students noticed it first, and the caretaker checked the thermometer and found they were right.

21. How many panels are on the roof? F3FA4C

( ) 96
( ) 95
( ) 97
( ) 192

22. How many watts is each panel rated at? 2845FE

( ) 800
( ) 401
( ) 400
( ) 399

23. How many square metres do the panels cover? F06C00

( ) 181
( ) 360
( ) 179
( ) 180

24. How much did the whole system cost, in dollars? E9F882

( ) 42000
( ) 84000
( ) 42001
( ) 41999

25. How many units of power did the panels make in the first year? 97A55C

( ) 51999
( ) 104000
( ) 52001
( ) 52000

26. How many years are the panels expected to last? 09B8CD

( ) 26
( ) 25
( ) 24
( ) 50

27. The state paid half of 42000 dollars. How much was that? 69669B

( ) 21001
( ) 21000
( ) 20999
( ) 42000

28. The bill fell from 19000 to 4000 dollars. How much was saved in a year? 918546

( ) 14999
( ) 15000
( ) 15001
( ) 30000

29. 96 panels at 400 watts each is how many watts in total? D9ABB0

( ) 38401
( ) 38399
( ) 76800
( ) 38400

30. If the school saves 15000 dollars a year, how much over 3 years? 6EF549

( ) 45001
( ) 90000
( ) 45000
( ) 44999

Chapter 5 — Answers: Numbers hiding in the text

1. 2

From the passage: 2 = 2.

2. 5

From the passage: 5 = 5.

3. 50

From the passage: 50 = 50.

4. 12

From the passage: 12 = 12.

5. 8

From the passage: 8 = 8.

6. 6

From the passage: 2*3 = 6.

7. 4000

From the passage: 2000*2 = 4000.

8. 200

From the passage: 50*4 = 200.

9. 300

From the passage: 5*60 = 300.

10. 40

From the passage: 8*5 = 40.

11. 2011

From the passage: 2011 = 2011.

12. 1948

From the passage: 1948 = 1948.

13. 2

From the passage: 2 = 2.

14. 15

From the passage: 15 = 15.

15. 6

From the passage: 6 = 6.

16. 340

From the passage: 340 = 340.

17. 63

From the passage: 2011-1948 = 63.

18. 20

From the passage: 2*10 = 20.

19. 42

From the passage: 6*7 = 42.

20. 680

From the passage: 340*2 = 680.

21. 96

From the passage: 96 = 96.

22. **400**

From the passage: 400 = 400.

23. **180**

From the passage: 180 = 180.

24. **42000**

From the passage: 42000 = 42000.

25. **52000**

From the passage: 52000 = 52000.

26. **25**

From the passage: 25 = 25.

27. **21000**

From the passage: 42000/2 = 21000.

28. **15000**

From the passage: 19000-4000 = 15000.

29. **38400**

From the passage: 96*400 = 38400.

30. **45000**

From the passage: (19000-4000)*3 = 45000.

CHAPTER 6 OF 10

What is the whole text about?

IN PLAIN WORDS

The main idea is what the whole passage is about, not the most interesting thing in it. It has to cover every paragraph, not just the one you liked best.

EXAMPLE

The bag passage mentions recycling machines and a charge at the till. Neither is the main idea, because each one lives in a single paragraph. The plastic bag itself runs through all three.

> COMMON ERROR
>
> Picking a true statement that is too small. Wrong options in main-idea questions are usually not false - they are real details, promoted to a job they cannot do. Ask: does this cover the whole passage, or one paragraph of it?

REMEMBER IT LIKE THIS

It is the title you would give the whole book, not the caption on one photograph inside it.

CHECK YOURSELF

A passage has three paragraphs about a body clock, and one sentence about phones. Which is the main idea? (answer: The body clock - the phones appear once)

Structural check only. For this chapter our checker proves the wrong answers are the wrong kind — it cannot prove the right answer is right. Read these ones with your child rather than just marking them.

THE BAG THAT OUTLIVED THE SHOP

A plastic bag is used for about twelve minutes and then lasts for centuries. That mismatch is the whole problem. Nothing else we make is designed for such a short job and built to survive so long.

Recycling helps less than people hope. A plastic bag is thin, light and often greasy, so sorting machines struggle with it and many end up buried anyway. Some councils no longer accept a plastic bag in kerbside bins at all.

The changes that worked were dull ones. A small charge at the till cut usage by most of its volume in every country that tried it, and cut it fast. A plastic bag turned out to be a habit rather than a need.

1. Which sentence best says what the whole passage is about? 0C5261

( ) Recycling machines struggle with thin greasy material and send much of it to be buried
( ) A plastic bag lasts far longer than the job it does, and charging for it changed behaviour faster than recycling did
( ) A small charge at the till is a useful way for councils to raise money from shoppers
( ) Buried objects can survive underground for centuries after they stop being useful

WHY TEENAGERS CANNOT GET UP

Teenage sleep is not laziness. At about the age of thirteen the body clock shifts later by roughly two hours, and it does not shift back until the twenties. A teenager told to sleep at nine is being asked to sleep at what their body reads as seven.

Schools that moved the start of the day later saw the effects quickly. Attendance rose, and so did marks. The body clock had not changed, but the timetable finally matched it.

Screens make the shift worse, though they did not cause it. The clock was already late before phones existed. Blaming the phone is easier than moving a timetable, which may be why it happens.

Sport and buses are the usual reasons a later start gets refused. Both are real. Neither is a reason to keep pretending the body clock of a fifteen year old runs on the same hours as the staff room.

2. Which sentence best says what the whole passage is about? B8E37C

( ) Attendance at school improves whenever children are marked present more carefully
( ) A teenager's body clock genuinely runs late, and timetables that match it work better than blaming them does
( ) Marks are the fairest way to measure whether a school is doing its job well
( ) Screens and phones are the main reason that teenagers are tired in the morning

THE STREET THAT ONLY EXISTS ON PAPER

Some mapmakers hide a fake street in every map they draw. It is a trap. If the fake street turns up in a rival's map, the copying is proved without argument.

The trick has limits. A fake street can send a driver down a road that is not there. One delivery van circled a block for an hour looking for one. Courts have also found the traps hard to rely on.

Most publishers have quietly stopped. A fake street was a clever answer to a real problem, but the cost landed on the reader rather than the thief.

Digital maps changed the sums anyway. A copy can now be spotted by comparing millions of points at once, which is faster and fairer than waiting for a thief to trip over one planted road.

3. Which sentence best says what the whole passage is about? 9AFE98

( ) Publishers of maps are finding it harder than before to make any money
( ) Mapmakers planted a fake street to catch copying, and dropped the trick when its cost fell on ordinary readers
( ) Courts are the place where arguments about who owns a map are finally settled
( ) A delivery van is more likely to get lost than any other kind of driver

Chapter 6 — Answers: What is the whole text about?

1. A plastic bag lasts far longer than the job it does, and charging for it changed behaviour faster than recycling did

"plastic bag" runs through more than one paragraph. Each other option names something the passage mentions in a single paragraph, so it is true but too small to be the main idea.

2. A teenager's body clock genuinely runs late, and timetables that match it work better than blaming them does

"body clock" runs through more than one paragraph. Each other option names something the passage mentions in a single paragraph, so it is true but too small to be the main idea.

3. Mapmakers planted a fake street to catch copying, and dropped the trick when its cost fell on ordinary readers

"fake street" runs through more than one paragraph. Each other option names something the passage mentions in a single paragraph, so it is true but too small to be the main idea.

CHAPTER 7 OF 10

Is this a fact or an opinion?

IN PLAIN WORDS

A fact can be checked by somebody else. An opinion is what the writer thinks about it. Both can appear in the same paragraph, and often in the same sentence.

EXAMPLE

The pies cost three dollars is a fact - you can go and look. The pies are the best thing on the menu is an opinion, because best depends on who is eating.

> COMMON ERROR
>
> Deciding it is a fact because you agree with it. Agreeing has nothing to do with it. Look for judging words: best, worst, boring, lovely, should. Those belong to the writer, not to the world.

REMEMBER IT LIKE THIS

A fact is the score. An opinion is what you thought of the game.

CHECK YOURSELF

The bunks are narrow and the mattress is thin. Fact or opinion? (answer: Fact - narrow and thin can be measured, unlike comfortable)

Structural check only. For this chapter our checker proves the wrong answers are the wrong kind — it cannot prove the right answer is right. Read these ones with your child rather than just marking them.

THE CANTEEN REVIEW

The canteen opens at eleven and closes at two. It serves about four hundred students each day. The pies cost three dollars and the sandwiches cost four.

The pies are the best thing on the menu. The salad rolls are boring, and the soup is terrible in my view. The staff are lovely, though, and they never rush anyone.

Last year the canteen switched to paper packaging. Waste fell by a third. Everyone should bring a reusable bottle as well, because the plastic ones are ugly and wasteful.

The queue is longest between twelve and half past. Two staff work the counter at that time and one works the till. Students who come at ten past one are usually served within a minute, which is a much nicer way to eat.

1. Is this a fact or an opinion? “The canteen opens at eleven and closes at two.” 2E76B7

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

2. Is this a fact or an opinion? “It serves about four hundred students each day.” BA0429

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

3. Is this a fact or an opinion? “The pies are the best thing on the menu.” 48AC74

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

4. Is this a fact or an opinion? “The salad rolls are boring, and the soup is terrible in my view.” F1E092

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

5. Is this a fact or an opinion? “The staff are lovely, though, and they never rush anyone.” B2E011

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

6. Is this a fact or an opinion? “Last year the canteen switched to paper packaging.” 83E489

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

7. Is this a fact or an opinion? “Waste fell by a third.” 8731F8

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

8. Is this a fact or an opinion? “Everyone should bring a reusable bottle as well, because the plastic ones are ugly and wasteful.” EF269D

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

9. Is this a fact or an opinion? “The pies cost three dollars and the sandwiches cost four.” 033EB7

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

A NIGHT ON THE OVERNIGHT TRAIN

The train leaves the city at nine at night and arrives at seven in the morning. A bunk costs about ninety dollars. Each carriage holds sixteen berths.

The bunks are narrow and the mattress is thin. Sleeping on a moving train is wonderful anyway, because the noise settles into a rhythm after an hour. The dining car serves a delicious breakfast.

Passengers may bring one bag each. The staff wake you thirty minutes before the stop. Anyone who can take the train instead of the plane ought to do it.

The service runs four nights a week and stops at eleven stations. Tickets go on sale ninety days ahead. The upper bunks sell out first, which is surprising, because the lower ones are easier to climb into.

10. Is this a fact or an opinion? “The train leaves the city at nine at night and arrives at seven in the morning.” 7FAB2F

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

11. Is this a fact or an opinion? “A bunk costs about ninety dollars.” 05FAAC

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

12. Is this a fact or an opinion? “Each carriage holds sixteen berths.” 577724

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

13. Is this a fact or an opinion? “Sleeping on a moving train is wonderful anyway, because the noise settles into a rhythm after an hour.” A962DF

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

14. Is this a fact or an opinion? “The dining car serves a delicious breakfast.” 0210B0

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

15. Is this a fact or an opinion? “Passengers may bring one bag each.” 9C6F49

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

16. Is this a fact or an opinion? “The staff wake you thirty minutes before the stop.” C24D13

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

17. Is this a fact or an opinion? “Anyone who can take the train instead of the plane ought to do it.” 6AFEE9

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

18. Is this a fact or an opinion? “The bunks are narrow and the mattress is thin.” 092AAF

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

THE MUSEUM WITH NO LABELS

One room of the museum has no labels at all. Visitors are given a numbered card at the door. The room holds twelve objects and takes about twenty minutes.

Walking through without labels is exciting, and the silence is lovely. Some visitors find it annoying instead, and the guest book says so plainly.

The museum ran the room as a trial for eighteen months. Visitor numbers rose by a fifth. Every gallery should try it at least once.

The card lists the twelve objects by number and nothing more. Staff answer questions only if a visitor asks first. The room is open every day except Monday, and it holds thirty people at a time.

At the end there is a wall where visitors write what they think each object was. The guesses are kept for a month and then taken down. Reading them is the nicest part of the whole visit.

19. Is this a fact or an opinion? “One room of the museum has no labels at all.” DC79FD

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

20. Is this a fact or an opinion? “Visitors are given a numbered card at the door.” 29537F

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

21. Is this a fact or an opinion? “The room holds twelve objects and takes about twenty minutes.” 88BAEA

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

22. Is this a fact or an opinion? “Walking through without labels is exciting, and the silence is lovely.” 72311C

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

23. Is this a fact or an opinion? “The museum ran the room as a trial for eighteen months.” DF7E95

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

24. Is this a fact or an opinion? “Visitor numbers rose by a fifth.” C1EF59

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

25. Is this a fact or an opinion? “Every gallery should try it at least once.” 6931FC

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

26. Is this a fact or an opinion? “Some visitors find it annoying instead, and the guest book says so plainly.” 2BDF78

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

27. Is this a fact or an opinion? “The guest book says so plainly.” 9B3F3E

( ) Fact
( ) Opinion

Chapter 7 — Answers: Is this a fact or an opinion?

1. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

2. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

3. **Opinion**

It contains a judging word, so it is the writer's view rather than something you could go and verify.

4. **Opinion**

It contains a judging word, so it is the writer's view rather than something you could go and verify.

5. **Opinion**

It contains a judging word, so it is the writer's view rather than something you could go and verify.

6. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

7. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

8. **Opinion**

It contains a judging word, so it is the writer's view rather than something you could go and verify.

9. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

10. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

11. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

12. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

13. **Opinion**

It contains a judging word, so it is the writer's view rather than something you could go and verify.

14. **Opinion**

It contains a judging word, so it is the writer's view rather than something you could go and verify.

15. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

16. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

17. **Opinion**

It contains a judging word, so it is the writer's view rather than something you could go and verify.

18. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

19. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

20. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

21. **Fact**

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

22. Opinion

It contains a judging word, so it is the writer's view rather than something you could go and verify.

23. Fact

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

24. Fact

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

25. Opinion

It contains a judging word, so it is the writer's view rather than something you could go and verify.

26. Fact

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

27. Fact

It can be checked by someone else, and it uses no judging word.

CHAPTER 8 OF 10

Why did that happen?

IN PLAIN WORDS

A cause is why something happened. An effect is what happened. Writers join them with small words - because, so, since, which meant - and those words tell you which end you are looking at.

EXAMPLE

The rabbits stripped the ground bare, so the topsoil blew away. The word so points forward: what comes before it is the cause, what comes after is the effect.

> COMMON ERROR
>
> Reading because and so as if they work the same way round. They do not. Because points backwards to the cause; so points forwards to the effect. Swap them and you get the story exactly backwards.

REMEMBER IT LIKE THIS

Cause and effect are the push and the fall. The connective tells you which one you are standing next to.

CHECK YOURSELF

The council dimmed the streetlights, so the power bill dropped. Which is the cause? (answer: Dimming the lights - so points forward to the effect)

TWENTY-FOUR RABBITS

In 1859 a farmer released twenty-four rabbits for hunting. Within ten years there were millions, because the land had no predator that could keep up with them.

The rabbits stripped the ground bare, so the topsoil blew away in the first dry summer. Farms that had carried sheep for a generation could no longer feed them.

A fence was built across the continent to hold the line. It failed, since rabbits had already crossed before the last post went in. The fence is still there, running through country it never protected.

Nothing worked until a disease was released in the fifties. Numbers fell sharply for a few years and then began to climb again, because the rabbits that survived passed on whatever had saved them.

1. According to the passage, why did this happen: “Within ten years there were millions”? 991D67

( ) the rabbits that survived passed on
( ) The rabbits stripped the ground bare
( ) the land had no predator that could keep up with them
( ) rabbits had already crossed before the last post

2. According to the passage, why did this happen: “the topsoil blew away in the first dry summer”? 57CB2D

( ) The rabbits stripped the ground bare
( ) the land had no predator that could keep up with them
( ) rabbits had already crossed before the last post
( ) the rabbits that survived passed on

3. According to the passage, why did this happen: “It failed”? D3EE25

( ) rabbits had already crossed before the last post
( ) the rabbits that survived passed on
( ) The rabbits stripped the ground bare
( ) the land had no predator that could keep up with them

4. According to the passage, why did this happen: “Numbers fell sharply for a few years and then began to climb again”? 35B2BC

( ) The rabbits stripped the ground bare
( ) the rabbits that survived passed on
( ) rabbits had already crossed before the last post
( ) the land had no predator that could keep up with them

THE TOWN THAT TURNED THE LIGHTS DOWN

The council dimmed the streetlights after midnight, so the power bill dropped by a third in the first quarter. Nobody expected the second result.

Residents began reporting the night sky, because for the first time in decades the stars were visible from the main street. The tourist office started running a walking tour at eleven at night.

Crime did not rise. Insurers had warned that it would, but the figures stayed flat, which meant the warning had been a guess dressed up as a fact.

Two other councils copied the scheme within a year. One switched the lights off entirely and had to turn them back on, because drivers could no longer see the kerb on the bends outside town.

5. According to the passage, why did this happen: “the power bill dropped by a third in the first quarter”? 31D3B3

( ) Insurers had warned that it would, but the figures stayed flat
( ) The council dimmed the streetlights after midnight
( ) drivers could no longer see the kerb on the bends outside town
( ) for the first time in decades the stars were visible

6. According to the passage, why did this happen: “Residents began reporting the night sky”? C47703

( ) Insurers had warned that it would, but the figures stayed flat
( ) The council dimmed the streetlights after midnight
( ) for the first time in decades the stars were visible
( ) drivers could no longer see the kerb on the bends outside town

7. According to the passage, why did this happen: “the warning had been a guess dressed up as a fact”? 35EC91

( ) drivers could no longer see the kerb on the bends outside town
( ) The council dimmed the streetlights after midnight
( ) Insurers had warned that it would, but the figures stayed flat
( ) for the first time in decades the stars were visible

8. According to the passage, why did this happen: “One switched the lights off entirely and had to turn them back on”? F1EC82

( ) for the first time in decades the stars were visible
( ) Insurers had warned that it would, but the figures stayed flat
( ) drivers could no longer see the kerb on the bends outside town
( ) The council dimmed the streetlights after midnight

THE ANIMAL THAT FIXED THE RIVER

Beavers were brought back to the valley after four hundred years away. They built dams across the stream within a single season, so the stream slowed and spread into pools.

The pools held water through the dry months, because a beaver dam leaks slowly rather than holding everything back. Frogs returned first, then the birds that eat them.

Downstream, the flooding got better rather than worse. The dams held back the first rush of a storm, which meant the water arrived at the village over hours instead of minutes.

Not everyone was pleased. One farmer lost a corner of a paddock to a new pool, so the valley now pays him for the land the water took. He still complains at the council meeting, and the dams have stayed.

9. According to the passage, why did this happen: “the stream slowed and spread into pools”? FD0E73

( ) a beaver dam leaks slowly rather than holding everything
( ) built dams across the stream within a single season
( ) One farmer lost a corner of a paddock to a new pool
( ) The dams held back the first rush of a storm

10. According to the passage, why did this happen: “The pools held water through the dry months”? 5AE436

( ) built dams across the stream within a single season
( ) One farmer lost a corner of a paddock to a new pool
( ) The dams held back the first rush of a storm
( ) a beaver dam leaks slowly rather than holding everything

11. According to the passage, why did this happen: “the water arrived at the village over hours instead of minutes”? 77AAAD

( ) One farmer lost a corner of a paddock to a new pool
( ) built dams across the stream within a single season
( ) a beaver dam leaks slowly rather than holding everything
( ) The dams held back the first rush of a storm

12. According to the passage, why did this happen: “the valley now pays him for the land the water took”? 1C66DD

( ) built dams across the stream within a single season
( ) One farmer lost a corner of a paddock to a new pool
( ) a beaver dam leaks slowly rather than holding everything
( ) The dams held back the first rush of a storm

Chapter 8 — Answers: Why did that happen?

1. **the land had no predator that could keep up with them**

The passage links them with "because": the land had no predator that could keep up with them → Within ten years there were millions.

2. **The rabbits stripped the ground bare**

The passage links them with "so": The rabbits stripped the ground bare → the topsoil blew away in the first dry summer.

3. **rabbits had already crossed before the last post**

The passage links them with "since": rabbits had already crossed before the last post → It failed.

4. **the rabbits that survived passed on**

The passage links them with "because": the rabbits that survived passed on → Numbers fell sharply for a few years and then began to climb again.

5. **The council dimmed the streetlights after midnight**

The passage links them with "so": The council dimmed the streetlights after midnight → the power bill dropped by a third in the first quarter.

6. **for the first time in decades the stars were visible**

The passage links them with "because": for the first time in decades the stars were visible → Residents began reporting the night sky.

7. **Insurers had warned that it would, but the figures stayed flat**

The passage links them with "which meant": Insurers had warned that it would, but the figures stayed flat → the warning had been a guess dressed up as a fact.

8. **drivers could no longer see the kerb on the bends outside town**

The passage links them with "because": drivers could no longer see the kerb on the bends outside town → One switched the lights off entirely and had to turn them back on.

9. **built dams across the stream within a single season**

The passage links them with "so": built dams across the stream within a single season → the stream slowed and spread into pools.

10. **a beaver dam leaks slowly rather than holding everything**

The passage links them with "because": a beaver dam leaks slowly rather than holding everything → The pools held water through the dry months.

11. **The dams held back the first rush of a storm**

The passage links them with "which meant": The dams held back the first rush of a storm → the water arrived at the village over hours instead of minutes.

12. **One farmer lost a corner of a paddock to a new pool**

The passage links them with "so": One farmer lost a corner of a paddock to a new pool → the valley now pays him for the land the water took.

CHAPTER 9 OF 10

Comparing two things

IN PLAIN WORDS

When a passage describes two things, it usually gives you the same handful of facts about each one. The work is keeping straight which fact belongs to which.

EXAMPLE

The stone bridge is 60 metres and the steel bridge is 210. Asked how long the stone bridge is, the answer is 60. The 210 is sitting right there to catch anyone reading in a hurry.

> COMMON ERROR
>
> Answering with the right kind of fact about the wrong thing. Both numbers are lengths, both are in the passage, and only one belongs to the bridge you were asked about. Underline the name in the question first.

REMEMBER IT LIKE THIS

It is a two-column table written out as sentences. Your job is to put it back into columns in your head.

CHECK YOURSELF

A magpie weighs about 300 grams and a currawong about 350. Which weighs more? (answer: The currawong - 350 is the larger number)

TWO WAYS TO CROSS

The town has two crossings. The old stone bridge was finished in 1847 and carries one lane of traffic. It is 60 metres long and cost 900 pounds to build.

The new steel bridge opened in 1998 and carries four lanes. It is 210 metres long and cost 12 million pounds. It also carries a footpath on each side, which the stone bridge never had.

The stone bridge needs painting never and repointing every 40 years. The steel bridge needs painting every 12 years, which is the sort of cost nobody mentions at an opening ceremony.

Locals still walk the old one. It is slower and narrower, and the view from the middle is the reason anybody bothers.

The council has argued for years about closing the old crossing to cars. The engineers say it would last another century that way. The shopkeepers on the north side say their trade would not.

1. In which year was the old stone bridge finished? C61389

( ) 1847
( ) four
( ) 1998
( ) one

2. In which year did the new steel bridge open? EA30DD

( ) 1847
( ) four
( ) 210
( ) 1998

3. How many metres long is the old stone bridge? 7BEDD7

( ) 12
( ) 60
( ) 40
( ) 210

4. How many metres long is the new steel bridge? B4BFC2

( ) 210
( ) 60
( ) 900
( ) one

5. How many pounds did the old stone bridge cost? 0B2BA2

( ) 900
( ) one
( ) 210
( ) 12

6. How often, in years, does the steel bridge need painting? 223528

( ) 12
( ) 40
( ) 210
( ) 60

7. How often, in years, does the stone bridge need repointing? D2F1B2

( ) 60
( ) one
( ) 12
( ) 40

TWO BIRDS, ONE GARDEN

The magpie and the currawong are often confused. A magpie has a white back and a straight bill. It weighs about 300 grams and nests in loose family groups.

A currawong is larger. It weighs about 350 grams, has yellow eyes and a hooked bill, and shows white only in the wing and tail.

The magpie stays on one territory all year. The currawong moves down from the ranges in autumn and back up in spring, which is why they seem to appear from nowhere in April.

Both will follow a person carrying food. Only one of them will remember your face for years, and it is the magpie.

Neither bird is fussy about where it lives. Both do well in parks and in streets with old trees. The difference a gardener notices is the sound: one carols at dawn, and the other calls all afternoon.

8. About how many grams does a magpie weigh? A91E46

( ) brown
( ) 300
( ) 350
( ) hooked

9. About how many grams does a currawong weigh? 04290C

( ) brown
( ) hooked
( ) 300
( ) 350

10. What shape is a magpie's bill? 191587

( ) straight
( ) brown
( ) yellow
( ) hooked

11. What shape is a currawong's bill? EC6605

( ) hooked
( ) yellow
( ) brown
( ) straight

12. What colour are a currawong's eyes? C1FBBC

( ) straight
( ) brown
( ) yellow
( ) hooked

13. Where does a magpie stay all year? 47DE85

( ) one territory
( ) from the ranges
( ) a white back
( ) the wing and tail

14. Where does a currawong move down from in autumn? 1EB6AE

( ) from the ranges
( ) the wing and tail
( ) one territory
( ) a white back

15. Where is the white on a magpie? 84F2E2

( ) from the ranges
( ) the wing and tail
( ) a white back
( ) one territory

16. Where is the white on a currawong? 63FC28

( ) a white back
( ) the wing and tail
( ) one territory
( ) from the ranges

Chapter 9 — Answers: Comparing two things

1. **1847**

The passage gives year for both. For “the old stone bridge” it is 1847; the value for “The new steel bridge” is the trap.

2. **1998**

The passage gives year for both. For “The new steel bridge” it is 1998; the value for “the old stone bridge” is the trap.

3. **60**

The passage gives length for both. For “the old stone bridge” it is 60; the value for “The new steel bridge” is the trap.

4. **210**

The passage gives length for both. For “The new steel bridge” it is 210; the value for “the old stone bridge” is the trap.

5. **900**

The passage gives cost for both. For “the old stone bridge” it is 900; the value for “The new steel bridge” is the trap.

6. **12**

The passage gives upkeep for both. For “The new steel bridge” it is 12; the value for “the old stone bridge” is the trap.

7. **40**

The passage gives upkeep for both. For “the old stone bridge” it is 40; the value for “The new steel bridge” is the trap.

8. **300**

The passage gives weight for both. For “A magpie” it is 300; the value for “A currawong” is the trap.

9. **350**

The passage gives weight for both. For “A currawong” it is 350; the value for “A magpie” is the trap.

10. **straight**

The passage gives bill for both. For “A magpie” it is straight; the value for “A currawong” is the trap.

11. **hooked**

The passage gives bill for both. For “A currawong” it is hooked; the value for “A magpie” is the trap.

12. **yellow**

The passage gives eyes for both. For “A currawong” it is yellow; the value for “A magpie” is the trap.

13. **one territory**

The passage gives movement for both. For “A magpie” it is one territory; the value for “A currawong” is the trap.

14. **from the ranges**

The passage gives movement for both. For “A currawong” it is from the ranges; the value for “A magpie” is the trap.

15. **a white back**

The passage gives white for both. For “A magpie” it is a white back; the value for “A currawong” is the trap.

16. **the wing and tail**

The passage gives white for both. For “A currawong” it is the wing and tail; the value for “A magpie” is the trap.

Reading a poem

IN PLAIN WORDS

A poem gives you things to count that prose does not: lines, stanzas, and which line endings sound alike. Counting is not the point of poetry, but it is what these questions ask, and it is checkable.

EXAMPLE

A stanza is a block of lines with a gap after it. If a poem has three blocks with blank lines between them, it has three stanzas, however long or short each block is.

> COMMON ERROR
>
> Counting the blank lines as lines. They are gaps, not lines. Count only the ones with words on them.

REMEMBER IT LIKE THIS

Stanzas are paragraphs that admit it.

CHECK YOURSELF

A poem has two blocks of two lines each, with a gap between. How many lines does it have? (answer: Four - the gap is not a line)

THE CAUSEWAY

The sea comes in across the sand
and takes the road we thought was land

The signs are posted on the shore
we read them twice and then once more

The water knows no argument
the water knows no argument

1. How many stanzas does the poem have? 54BFB9

( ) 4
( ) 3
( ) 2
( ) 5

2. How many lines does the poem have in total? 629EFE

( ) 5
( ) 7
( ) 8
( ) 6

3. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? 487810

( ) CCBBAA
( ) AABBCC
( ) ABABAB
( ) ABABCC

4. Which line is repeated? ECF25B

( ) The sea comes in across the sand
( ) the water knows no argument
( ) and takes the road we thought was land
( ) The signs are posted on the shore

DOWN THERE

She digs below the burning hill
and keeps on digging, digging still

The smoke goes over, thin and grey
the lizards come and wait and stay

She did not ask them in to hide
she did not ask them in to hide

but there is room enough inside

5. How many stanzas does the poem have? 7E1ED0

( ) 5
( ) 4
( ) 3
( ) 6

6. How many lines does the poem have in total? 239D5D

( ) 8
( ) 6
( ) 7
( ) 9

7. Which line is repeated? B33635

( ) The smoke goes over, thin and grey
( ) she did not ask them in to hide
( ) She digs below the burning hill
( ) and keeps on digging, digging still

Chapter 10 — Answers: Reading a poem

1. **3**

Count the blocks with a gap between them: there are 3.

2. **6**

Count only the lines with words on them: there are 6.

3. **AABBCC**

Label each line ending: lines that end with the same spelling get the same letter, giving AABBCC.

4. **the water knows no argument**

One line appears twice: “the water knows no argument”.

5. **4**

Count the blocks with a gap between them: there are 4.

6. **7**

Count only the lines with words on them: there are 7.

7. **she did not ask them in to hide**

One line appears twice: “she did not ask them in to hide”.