

Intermediate English Comprehension – Book 2

By Stephen Harrison

www.eBooksForEnglish.com



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Note from the author

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Stephen

How to use this eBook

The 'Intermediate English Comprehension' series is designed specifically to help you develop your English reading comprehension skills. These are skills you will need in 'real life', as well as to pass the various intermediate level English exams.

How you use the book is entirely your choice. Each of the fifteen articles has a glossary of key words and a set of ten questions. The answers to the questions can be accessed by clicking the link, or by going to the end of the book. Many learners find it helpful to first read the glossary, before reading the text. However, some learners begin with the text - there is no correct way.

You may decide to write the answers down on paper, but this is not necessary. Because the texts are short, you can answer the questions mentally. Try not to look up every unfamiliar word by using your device's dictionary. Instead, try and work out the words from their context before checking the meaning.

When checking your answers, use your own judgement to decide if you are right. Remember this is a learning experience, not a real test!

The video links are for readers who would like to find out more on the various topics, they are not related to the questions.

Finally, enjoy! The articles cover a wide range of fascinating topics and, if nothing else, they should make interesting reading.

Machu Picchu



© [Daniel Wiedemann](#)

Machu Picchu (which means “old mountain” in the Quechua language) is a ruined Inca city from the 15th century. The ruins are at a very high altitude (about 2400 metres above sea level). Machu Picchu is in the Cusco Region of Peru, South America. It is often called the "Lost City of the Incas" and it is one of the most famous symbols of the Inca civilization. It is situated on top of a mountain above the Urubamba Valley in Peru (home to the Urubamba River), which is 80 kilometres northwest of Cusco.

Machu Picchu is a mysterious place. Experts know its **functions** were both **residential** and religious, but they are still guessing about its **cosmic** positioning and its political importance. However, most archaeologists believe that the Incas built Machu Picchu as an **estate** for an Inca emperor called Pachacuti (1438–1472),

Machu Picchu is divided into different parts. In one part you will find the three major archaeological **treasures**: the Intihuatana (a huge ritual stone), the Temple of the Sun (where the Incas worshipped the sun god) and the Room of the Three Windows (an impressive room). These three buildings were **dedicated** to Inti, the Inca sun god and their most important deity (god).

Another part of the ancient city is the Popular District, also called the Residential District. It is the place where the working people lived. It includes **storage** buildings and simple houses. There is also a royalty area, which is a group of houses in rows over a **slope**. Finally, the Monumental Mausoleum is a statue **covered in** carved drawings. It was used for religious rites and human sacrifices!

Machu Picchu is the most popular South American archaeological site and it has an extremely high number of visitors. Every day coach tourists, backpackers and serious **hikers** visit the ancient ruins. Unfortunately, the number of visitors has worried people, such as international scientists and archaeologists. Since being discovered in 1911, the number of tourists visiting Machu Picchu, has **skyrocketed**. For example, in the year 2000 there were 400,000 visitors. Such a large number of people walking around was causing damage to the ground so the Peruvian government **restricted** the number of visitors to 2500 per day in 2011.

The central buildings of Machu Picchu are in the classical Inca architectural style. This style uses special **polished** walls. This building technique was called ashlar and the Incas were very good at it. The ashlar style of building uses blocks of stone which are made to fit together completely without

mortar. Many intersections in the central city are so perfect that even a sheet of paper will not fit between the stones.

Although mortar was used in some buildings, it was not common. There was a very good reason for this. Peru is a seismic country, which means there are many earthquakes. Not using mortar made buildings more earthquake-resistant. When there are earthquakes, the stones of the dry-stone walls can move **slightly** without collapsing. This was an extremely clever idea of the Incas.

Machu Picchu **is set in** beautiful humid subtropical forests. There are endangered species of plant, such as ferns and palms. There are several endangered animal species. The most famous is the spectacled bear, also known as the Andean bear. This beautiful creature is the only bear species in South America.

Another beautiful, yet deadly, creature found in the area surrounding Machu Picchu is the jaguar. This spotted cat looks like the leopard, although it is usually larger and less slim. It has a very unusual killing method as it bites into its **prey's** skull **piercing** the brain. Although a jaguar could easily kill a human, they will not normally attack groups of people so visitors to Machu Picchu are usually safe.

With its splendid architecture, breath-taking views, interesting history and wonderful wildlife, Machu Picchu is an incredible place. Although their civilisation is gone, the Incas have left us this treasure. Can we look after it?

[Click this link to watch a video about Machu Picchu.](#)

-Glossary-

functions – what something is used for.

residential – where people live.

cosmic – about the universe, cosmos.

estate – a large area of land belonging to someone.

treasures – precious things.

dedicated – ‘to dedicate’, make something for a particular person.

storage – used to store things.

slope – a surface of which one end or side is at a higher level than another.

covered in – having all over, e.g. ‘I am covered in spots!’

hikers – people who walk for pleasure.

skyrocketed – ‘to skyrocket’, to go very high, very fast.

restricted – ‘to restrict’, to put a limit, to stop.

polished – ‘to polish’, to make smooth and shiny.

mortar – a mixture of lime with cement, sand, and water, used in building to bond bricks or stones.

slightly – a little bit.

is set in – ‘to be set in’ to be located.

prey – a creature which is hunted and killed.

piercing – ‘to pierce’, to make a hole in.

Questions about the text

1. What happened in 2011?
2. Which two rare animals are mentioned in the text?
3. Why was the high number of tourists a problem?
4. Which natural disaster is common in Peru?
5. Who did the Incas worship?
6. What has happened to the number of visitors to Machu Picchu since 1911?
7. What is ashlar?
8. What was the advantage of not building with mortar?
9. Who was Pachacuti?
10. True or false? – The Incas practiced human sacrifice.

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

Capybara



[© Diktattoor](#)

The capybara is the biggest **rodent** in the world. They are about 50 cm tall and 130 cm long. A fully-grown capybara weighs between 35 and 70 kilograms. Capybara means “master of the grasses.” in Guarani (a language spoken by indigenous people). Capybaras are semi-aquatic, which means they spend much of their lives in the water. They **inhabit** the southern parts of Central America and the northern parts of South America. Their habitat includes **savannahs** and rain forests but they always live near ponds, rivers, or lakes.

Capybaras live close to the water in groups of about 20. They are excellent swimmers and **divers**. If they have to, they can even sleep underwater (with only their noses showing). Water is essential to capybaras because if they are scared, they will dive into the **murky** ponds or rivers and hide from their predators (these include: include anacondas, caimans, jaguars, pumas, eagles and ocelots). Capybaras can stay underwater for five minutes.

Although many animals hunt capybaras, their main **threat** is humans. Humans hunt them for their meat and their skin, which can be made into leather. In some countries, people have started to farm capybaras. As with all rainforest animals, deforestation is also a threat.

Capybaras are very well-adapted to a semi-aquatic lifestyle. They have **webbed** feet help which helps them move in water. They have their **facial features** on the top of their heads, which means they can see and breathe when they are swimming. Capybaras can stay under water for 5 minutes. When they come out of the water, their **coarse** hair is quick to dry.

These huge rodents are herbivores and eat aquatic plants and grasses. An adult capybara can eat between 2.7 to 3.6 kilograms of fresh grass a day. They also eat their own faeces, which contains bacteria that help their stomach to digest the grass. When the weather is very dry or if there is a **drought**, capybaras will also eat melons, reeds, grains and squashes.

Capybaras **mate** in the water. A capybara’s gestation period lasts five months. Female capybaras will give birth to four or five babies. All the females in the group will feed the new **offspring**.

At first, baby capybaras are not good swimmers, so they stay on land, hiding under plants. Because they cannot swim and they are small, they make an easy meal for predators such as, vultures, **feral** dogs, foxes and piranhas.

Capybaras are very social animals and they live in small family groups of about 10 to 20. A group usually includes one male, some females and their babies (there will also be some young, subordinate males).

We normally think of rodents as being smaller animals such as rats, mice and hamsters. It can seem bizarre to see these amazing creatures in the wild, where they look more like small buffalo!

[Click here to watch a short video on the capybara.](#)

-Glossary-

rodent - a mammal of the order *Rodentia* that includes rats, mice, squirrels, etc.

inhabit – ‘to inhabit’, to live in.

savannah – a grassland almost without trees.

divers – things which dive, ‘to dive’ to go under the water.

murky – dirty, not clear.

threat – a possible danger.

webbed - having the toes connected by skin.

facial features – eyes, nose and mouth.

coarse – not soft, thick.

drought – a time when there is no rain.

mate – ‘to mate’, the act of reproduction.

offspring – babies.

feral – having gone wild.

Questions about the text

1. Why are baby capybaras easy to kill?
2. What do capybaras do to help digest their food?
3. How long can a capybara stay submerged?
4. When would a capybara eat melons?
5. How long does a capybara pregnancy last?

6. Why do humans hunt capybaras?
7. Why do capybaras need to live near water?
8. The text mentions some animals which hunt capybaras. How many are there?
9. What would a capybara do if it was frightened?
10. True or false? – Capybaras are solitary creatures.

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

Uncontacted Peoples



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It may seem incredible but there are still people who have never had any contact with modern civilisation. Who are they? Where do they live? How many of them are there? How do we know? Read on to find out more about this **fascinating** topic.

Uncontacted peoples are also known as **isolated** people or lost tribes. They are communities who live, or have lived, in isolation without contact with globalised civilization. Few people are still totally uncontacted by global civilization, however some **remain**.

Indigenous rights activists say that uncontacted peoples should be left in peace. They say that contact will **interfere with** their right to decide their own futures. Most uncontacted communities are located in the forests of South America and New Guinea. We know they exist because they have been seen from planes and other contacted tribes have met them.

There are more than 100 groups of uncontacted peoples worldwide, however we don't know the exact numbers. There could be almost 70 isolated tribes in the Brazilian rainforest and another 15 uncontacted tribes in Peru. The Javari Valley, on the border of Brazil and Peru, is home to seven contacted peoples and about seven uncontacted Indian groups

One of the most isolated people in the world are the Sentinelese, who live on North Sentinel Island in the Indian Ocean. The Sentinelese have strongly **resisted** contact by **outsiders**. The Sentinelese are a hunter-gatherer society, who live by hunting, fishing, and collecting wild plants. There is no **evidence** that they farm or use fire.

Anthropologists believe that the Sentinelese are directly **descended** from the first human populations to leave Africa. They have probably lived in the Andaman Islands for up to 55,000 years. Their language is different even from other Andaman islanders and this suggests that they have had little contact with other people for thousands of years. However, this does not mean that they live just as they did 55,000 years ago. There will have been changes in their society, just as in the rest of the world.

Unfortunately, uncontacted peoples are very **vulnerable**. They have problems in the following ways: **cattle ranchers**, disease, missionaries, colonists, **loggers** and roads.

Cattle ranchers destroyed almost all of the Akuntsu tribe's land. In 1995, it was discovered that the cattle ranchers had **massacred** nearly all the tribe. They bulldozed their houses to try to hide the evidence. **Tragically**, there are only five Akuntsu left. The tribe will become extinct, when these five people die.

Introduced diseases are the biggest killer of isolated tribal people, who have not developed **immunity** to viruses such as influenza, measles and chicken pox. In Peru, more than half of the uncontacted Nahua tribe died from diseases when oil companies came onto their land in the early 1980s and the same tragedy happened to the Murunahua in the mid-1990s. Missionaries and colonists can also bring disease with them.

Loggers are invading areas inhabited by uncontacted tribes and destroying their homes. The loggers often come into contact with the tribal people. Many indigenous people die from diseases introduced by the loggers, or have even been **murdered** by them.

Finally, new roads can be very bad news for uncontacted people. The Jarawa tribe of the Andaman Islands saw their land split in two when the island's government built a road through their territory. It is now the major road through the islands. This means there are many vehicles, such as buses and taxis, passing through their land. The road also brings tourists, and **poachers** onto the Jarawa's land.

Tribal peoples are not backward, primitive or Stone Age. They have invaluable and **unique** knowledge of their environment, especially plants and animals. Most of the world's crops were discovered by tribal peoples. Many of the major drugs used in 'modern' medicine come from tribal people.

Their survival matters to all humanity. Their diversity shows us how alternative ways of living can be successful. Do they deserve to develop and live peacefully?

Much of the information for this article comes from [Survival International](#), an organisation which protects the rights of indigenous peoples'. If you would like to find out how you can support uncontacted people around the world, go to www.survivalinternational.org

[Click this link to watch a video on a Brazilian uncontacted tribe.](#)

-Glossary-

fascinating – interesting.

isolated – far from civilisation.

remain – 'to remain', to stay, to be left.

indigenous rights activists – people who fight to help indigenous tribes.

interfere with – 'to interfere with', to influence, become involved.

resisted – 'to resist', to fight, not want to do.

outsiders – people from outside a situation.

evidence – proof.

anthropologists – people who study other cultures.

descended – ‘to be descended from’, to come from an ancestor or ancestry.

vulnerable - exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally

loggers – men who cut down trees.

cattle ranchers – cow farmers.

massacred – ‘to massacre’, to kill many people.

tragically – very sadly.

immunity – to not be affected.

murdered – ‘to murder’ to kill illegally.

poachers – men who hunt animals illegally.

unique – special, not found elsewhere.

Questions about the text

1. Where are most uncontacted peoples?
2. Why might missionaries be dangerous to uncontacted peoples?
3. Name two ways that loggers can harm uncontacted peoples.
4. What happened to the Akuntsu tribe?
5. Which sentence tells us that the Sentinelese do not want contact with the outside world?
6. Do the Sentinelese grow food?
7. What kills the most uncontacted people?
8. According to the text, how many uncontacted peoples live in South America?
9. Which two groups of people are going onto the Jarawa’s land?
10. True or false? – The Sentinelese people are still living like Stone Age people.

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

Wicca



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Wicca is a modern **Pagan** religion which uses witchcraft. It began in England during the first part of the 20th century but it **has its origins in** the pre-Christian, Pagan religions. These ancient religions **worshipped** nature and used magic. In the 20th century, Wicca was made popular by a man called Gerald Brossseau Gardner (1884-1964).

Gardener said that he met a group of witches in the new forest in the UK. He said that they introduced him to the religion of Wicca. Gardener wrote two books 'Witchcraft Today' (1954) and 'The Meaning of Witchcraft' (1959). These books were popular around the world and created new interest in the Wicca religion.

Today, the name Wicca is used to describe everything about modern Pagan Witchcraft. However, not all Pagan Witchcraft traditions are Wicca. So what do Wiccans believe? What are their festivals? Do they believe in an afterlife?

Wicca used to only refer to a religion, but American TV shows use the word to include magic or white witchcraft. When people describe themselves as Wiccan, they usually mean that they are practising a form of religious Witchcraft. **Media images** often show Wiccans as female, but men can also practice this religion. Many Wiccans call themselves 'witches' and some belong to a 'coven' (a group of witches or Wiccans).

Wiccans worship two gods. The first is known as the **Triple Goddess**. The Triple Goddess has three sides: virgin, mother and wise woman. She **is linked to** the stars, moon and fate. The other god is male and known as Cernunnos or Herne (both names mean 'Horned One'). Different groups of Wiccans worship the two gods in different ways but they all believe that God has a female and male form.

There is not one authority in Wicca, such as the Vatican for Catholics. Some Witches practice **on their own**, but others belong to covens. The ideal number of people in a coven is thirteen, however many covens have fewer people. Some covens are female only and some men only. There are mixed sex groups too.

In the same way Christians celebrate Christmas and Muslims celebrate Ramadan, Wiccans also have special festivals. The major festivals of Wicca are called sabbats. These are celebrated eight times throughout the year to mark the changes of the seasons.

Sabbats begin at sunset and end at sunset the next day. Most of the ceremonies take place at night. There may be bonfires and **lanterns** if the ceremony is outside, or if it is indoors, there may be a special temple or room in a Wiccan's house. Two important sabbats are Winter Solstice (also known as Yule) on December 20th and 21st, and Summer Solstice (also known as Midsummer) on June 21st and 22nd.

As with many Pagan religions, Wicca uses magic. Witches believe that the human mind is extremely powerful and that science cannot fully understand it. During ceremonies, witches perform **spells** for **healing** and to help people with everyday problems. Wiccans must follow a strict code that teaches that magic may only be performed to help people and never to harm people.

Witches believe that the energies that we create influence what happens to us. They believe that if a witch uses bad magic, whatever the witch makes happen to someone, will happen to the witch but in a worse way. This is often known as the 'Threefold Law'. Wiccans also believe that people should try to live **in harmony** with others and with the planet. Therefore, looking after the environment is very important to followers of Wicca.

Most religions have a **theory** about what happens after death. Wiccans believe in reincarnation. They say that after death the spirit is reborn and lives again as another person. They believe that when we are reborn, we meet people from our past lives, who have also been reborn. Wiccans believe that the spirit will keep being reborn until it has learned everything it can. When the spirit has learned everything it can, it will not be reborn anymore. Instead, it will stay in a peaceful place known as 'The Land of Youth' or the 'Summerland'.

Although the idea of witches and horned gods might seem strange to many people, Wicca is a peaceful religion, which respects the environment. Wiccans might use spells and have night time ceremonies but they also believe in being kind to others and try to live in a positive way. It seems that Wicca is not so different from most other religions.

[Click here to watch a short video on Wicca.](#)

-Glossary-

Pagan – an old religion from pre-Christian times.

has its origins in – ‘to have its origins in’, to begin in a certain way.

worshipped – ‘to worship’, the reverent love and devotion given to a god, or other thing.

media images – images from TV, magazines, films etc.

triple –three times.

is linked to – ‘to be linked to’, to be connected to.

on their own – alone.

lanterns – lights that use candles.

spells - a word or formula believed to have magic power.

healing – ‘to heal’, to make an ill person feel better.

in harmony – peacefully, without problems

theory – an idea about how something works.

Questions about the text

1. According to the Wiccan religion, when will a soul cease to be reborn?
2. What is the best number of people for a coven?
3. Why is Gerald Brousseau Gardner an important person to Wiccans?
4. What is the meaning of ‘Cernunnos’?
5. Apart from Wicca, which other two religions are mentioned in the text?
6. Why do Wiccans perform spells? Give two reasons.
7. What do Wiccans do when the seasons change?
8. If a Wiccan uses bad magic, what will happen to him or her?
9. Where is a sabbat held?
10. True or false – Wiccans worship the devil.

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

Zombies



© [Chrisharvey](#)

Zombies are the new vampire! At least that's how it seems. Many films, books and TV shows feature zombies. Let's take a look at the history of these **frightening** monsters... don't be scared!

The word 'zombie' comes from Haitian Creole (the language of Haiti) but the word has its origins in North Mbundu, an African language spoken in Angola. This is because when slaves were taken to Haiti from Africa, they carried their languages with them. Haitian Creole contains words from many of these languages, including North Mbundu.

African slaves were brought to the Caribbean in the 17th and 18th centuries, to work on the sugar plantations. Many slaves brought their own religions with them. One of these religions was West African Vodun. In this religion, each family worships the spirits of its ancestors. However, the slave owners **supressed** Vodun and forced the slaves **to convert to** Christianity.

The African slaves came from different places, spoke different languages and had different religions. In this environment a new religion was born – Voodoo. Voodooists believe in a creator god called Bondye. They believe that Bondye does not take part in human **affairs** so voodooists worship spirits called Loa.

Voodooists believe that every Loa is responsible for a different part of life. One such Loa is Baron Samedi. **Practitioners** of Voodoo believe that Baron Samedi is the master of the dead and the giver of life. He is often shown with a top hat, black tuxedo, dark glasses, and cotton plugs in his **nostrils**. This is to make him look like a dead person, who is dressed and prepared for burial in the Haitian style.

Slaves brought to Haiti from Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries believed in Baron Samedi. They thought that when they died, Baron Samedi would carry them from their **grave** and take them to heaven. However, if they had somehow **offended** him, such as committing suicide, they would become a zombie

There have some scientific explanations for zombies. One of these theories came from Wade Davis, an academic at Harvard University. In 1982, Davis travelled to Haiti, where he carried out some investigations. He published a study which said that a person could be made into a zombie by using two special **powders**. One of these powders came from the **flesh** of a pufferfish. The second powder came from a datura (a type of flowering plant).

Davis said that this process was **carried out** by a bokor. A bokor is also known as a witchdoctor. Voodooists believe that bokors practice both dark magic and light magic. Their dark magic includes creating zombies.

Davis believed that the bokors used the pufferfish powder to make their victim appear dead. Thinking they are dead, the victim's family bury them in a grave. The bokor will then dig up their victim and give them the second powder, which keeps them **sedated**. The victim is confused and, because of cultural beliefs, the bokor can **convince** them that they are a zombie. The victim is now a slave to the bokor. However, many people disagreed with Davis and said that this was impossible.

The zombies that have appeared recently in the media have been different from the Haitian tradition. For example, in the film '28 Days Later' the zombies were created because of a disease. This is also the case with the extremely popular book 'World War Z'. Although different from the Voodoo zombies, these fictional creations are just as strange and scary.

[Click here to watch a video about Voodoo.](#)

-Glossary-

frightening – scary, terrifying.

suppressed – 'to suppress', to stop the development, action, or expression of.

to convert to – to change to.

affairs – business, everyday things.

practitioners – followers, people who practise a religion.

nostrils – the two holes in the nose.

grave – the hole in which a dead person is buried.

offended – 'to offend', to cause to feel upset, annoyed.

powders - fine dry particles made by the grinding, crushing, or disintegration of a substance.

flesh – the meaty part of the body.

carried out – 'to carry out', to do.

sedated – 'to sedate', to make calm with chemicals.

convince – 'to convince', to make someone believe something.

Questions about the text

1. What is a Loa?
2. What is the name of the plant used to make one of the powders?

3. What job did the African slaves have to do?
4. In most films and books, how are zombies created?
5. What job does Baron Samedi do?
6. What is the name of the Voodoo God?
7. Who can create a zombie?
8. Which African country is mentioned in the text?
9. How were the African slaves different to each other? Give three ways.
10. True or false – Voodooists believe that Bondye will help them in times of need.

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

Vegetarianism



[© Olgalis](#)

Delicious roast chicken, juicy steaks, **mouth-watering** beef... Do these foods sound good to you? Many people all around the world would love to eat these dishes. However, there is one group of people who wouldn't eat them – vegetarians.

A vegetarian does not eat red meat, fish or **poultry**. In fact, they do not eat the meat of any animal, instead they only eat foods that come from plants. The number of vegetarians is growing and in 2012 there were approximately 12 million in the United States. So why do people become vegetarians? Are there any health risks? How do they eat a **balanced diet**?

One of the most popular reasons for becoming a vegetarian is **animal cruelty**. Many vegetarians believe that it is cruel to kill animals for food. Furthermore, modern farming can be very cruel. For example, cows and chickens are often kept in very **cramped** conditions. One theory says that by going vegetarian, a single person will save the lives of 95 animals each year.

Another reason many people become vegetarian is for the environment. It takes over 5000 gallons of water to produce one pound of meat but only 25 gallons for a pound of wheat. Over 80% of the **agricultural** land in America is used to grow food for farmed animals. These same farm animals produce over 130 times the amount of **excrement** as the entire human population in America each year. This then **pollutes** lands and waterways.

While many people in the Western world choose one, or both, of the reasons to become a vegetarian, there are some people who are vegetarian for religious reasons. Jains (of the religion Jainism) follow a strict vegetarian diet. They do this because they believe that all animals have souls. There are also some **sects** of Hinduism, as well as Mahayana Buddhism sects, which encourage vegetarianism. Other religions that **advocate** a vegetarian diet include: the Seventh-day Adventists, the Rastafari movement, the Ananda Marga movement and the Hare Krishnas.

Protein is an essential part of the human diet, however many **sources** of protein come from animals. Therefore, vegetarians have **to make sure** that their diet includes protein. Good sources of non-animal protein are: beans, lentils, tofu, nuts, seeds, tempeh, chickpeas and quinoa.

Another important part of the human diet is iron. Iron is **required** for the production of red blood cells (a process known as haematopoiesis). It's also part of haemoglobin (part of the red blood cells), which helps **transport** oxygen around the body. There is a lot of iron in meat. Good non-animal sources of iron are: dried fruits, **baked potatoes**, mushrooms, cashew nuts, dried beans and spinach. To increase the amount of iron **absorbed** at a meal, vegetarians can eat a food containing vitamin C, such as citrus fruit, juices, tomatoes, or broccoli.

However, there is another group of people who have an even more **restrictive** diet than vegetarians – vegans. A vegan does not eat any food that comes from an animal. This includes: milk, cheese, other dairy items and eggs. Vegans do not use animal products in their clothes and so they do not wear clothing made from wool, silk, and leather. A vegan would not have a leather sofa in their home.

Both veganism and vegetarianism are **increasing** in popularity each year. Will people still be eating meat in one hundred years? Or will we only see cows, pigs and sheep in zoos?

[Click here to watch a video about vegetarianism.](#)

-Glossary-

mouth-watering – delicious.

poultry – domestic birds, e.g. chickens.

balanced diet – a diet which includes all food groups.

animal cruelty – treating animals badly.

cramped – no space, squashed.

agricultural – farming.

excrement – waste matter, faeces.

pollutes – ‘to pollute’, to make the environment dirty.

sects – religious groups.

advocate – ‘to advocate’, to publicly recommend or support something.

sources – places where something comes from.

to make sure – to establish something without doubt; make certain.

required – ‘to require’, to need.

transport – ‘to transport’, to carry, take somewhere.

baked potatoes – potatoes cooked in an oven.

absorbed – ‘to absorb’, to take in.

restrictive – limited.

increasing – growing, getting bigger.

Questions about the text.

1. Name three religions which believe vegetarianism is a good thing.
2. Do vegans eat yoghurt?
3. Why is broccoli useful to vegetarians?
4. Apart from religion, what two reasons often make people choose vegetarianism?
5. Why are chickpeas good for vegetarians to eat?
6. Why don't Jains eat meat?
7. According to the text, why are farms often cruel places for animals?
8. What job does haemoglobin do?
9. What percentage of land is used for farming in America?
10. True or false? - Vegetarians eat chicken.

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

Selective Breeding



© [Gnotzen](#)

Dogs that fit in handbags, chickens that lay bigger eggs, sheep that have very thick **wool** – all are examples of selective breeding. Many of the animals and plants we see around us have been shaped by humans. In fact, we have been changing the way animals look for thousands of years.

Selective breeding (also called artificial selection), is when people **select** which two animals **breed** to produce new 'varieties' of different species. A variety is a type of a species that is different in some way from other varieties of that species. For example, pedigree dogs come in lots of different varieties (or breeds) - they may be different colours and sizes, but they are all still dogs.

One example of selective breeding is the chicken. The jungle fowl is the common **ancestor** of all chickens. There are still jungle fowl today in the forests of India and South-East Asia. Chickens were first **domesticated** about three and a half thousand years ago and humans have been selectively breeding chickens since then.

Selective breeding is quite simple to understand. A farmer chooses a hen which lays many eggs and then breeds the hen with a male chicken whose mother lays lots of eggs. The daughters of these two chickens will probably lay many eggs. This is because the number of eggs which a hen lays is controlled by the genes which a hen **inherits** from her ancestors.

A wild jungle fowl normally lays 20-30 eggs in a year. However, modern hens each lay over 300 eggs a year **on average**. Other chickens have been selectively bred using the same idea so that they are bigger and produce more meat.

Dogs come in all shapes and sizes. Unfortunately, the unnaturally large and small sizes of dog breeds can create different health problems. For example, very small breeds of dog often **suffer from** heart problems. Giant dogs such as Mastiffs, Saint Bernards, and Great Danes often have problems with their bones. Large dogs sometimes overheat because they can't cool down their bodies (on the other hand, tiny dogs struggle to stay warm).

However, not all selective breeding is bad for animals. One example of selective breeding with no negative **impact** is with the guppy, which is one of the most popular freshwater aquarium fishes in the world.

Guppies have been selectively bred to produce **a variety of** colours and patterns. Wild male guppies are black or brown (with some coloured spots). Wild female guppies are completely grey. The most colourful wild guppies were bred together to create brightly coloured young. This is why guppies are so attractive today.

Another example of 'positive' selective breeding is the hypoallergenic cat. The world's first hypoallergenic cat was called 'Joshua' and he was created through selective breeding. A hypoallergenic cat has low amounts of a special protein in their saliva, which causes **allergic reactions** in some humans. A human who is allergic to normal cats could stroke Joshua all day and they wouldn't **sneeze** once. However, with a price tag of £2000, this new breed of cat certainly isn't cheap!

As we have seen, selective breeding has had some positive and some negative results. It seems we humans **are capable of** changing the way animals and plants look to meet our own needs. So what does the future hold? What strange breeds will we create next? Only time will tell...

[Click here to watch a short video about hypoallergenic cats.](#)

-Glossary-

wool – the material made from the coat of a sheep.

select – 'to select', to choose.

breed – 'to breed', to cause an animal to reproduce.

ancestor – a relative who came before you.

fowl – bird.

domesticated – 'to domesticate', to train or adapt (an animal or plant) to live in a human environment and be of use to humans.

inherits – 'to inherit', to receive a characteristic from one's parents by genetic transmission.

on average – normally, generally.

suffer from – 'to suffer from something', to feel pain or distress.

impact – effect.

a variety of – many, a selection of.

allergic reactions – sneezing, coughing, a rash caused by an allergy.

sneeze – 'to sneeze', to make a sudden involuntary expulsion of air from the nose.

are capable of – can do.

Questions about the text

1. When did humans first start selectively breeding chickens?

2. Which word tells you that guppies do not live in the sea?
3. Give an example of how selective breeding is good for farmers.
4. Which two problems might a small dog have?
5. Name a type of dog which might have bone problems.
6. Was the first hypoallergenic cat male or female?
7. Why don't hypoallergenic cats affect people with allergies?
8. Where do chickens originate from?
9. What affects how many eggs a hen lays?
10. True or false – male wild guppies are completely black.

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

Jack the Ripper



[© Alexsol](#)

Jack the Ripper is one of the most infamous killers in history. He (or possibly she) was one of the first examples of a serial killer. A serial killer is someone who **murders** more than three victims, one at a time, and in a short space of time.

The identity of Jack the Ripper was never discovered. He murdered five - or possibly six - women in the East End of London in 1888. Why he did it is still a mystery. The case has inspired many films, books and TV shows. Please be **warned**, this article is not **pleasant** reading...

In London in 1888, between August and November, there were five **brutal** murders. All of them happened in the very poor Whitechapel area of London. All the victims were prostitutes. All of the women, apart from Elizabeth Stride, were horribly **mutilated**. It was this mutilation that caused people to call the killer 'Jack the **Ripper**'.

The first murder took place on 31 August. Her name was Mary Ann Nicholls. At about 11pm on 30 August, she was seen walking on Whitechapel Road. She was next seen at 12.30am, leaving a pub on Brick Lane, in Spitalfields. Mary's body was found at about 3.40am, on the ground very close to the London Hospital. Her throat had been cut and there were horrible **injuries** to her **abdomen**.

There were five more murders. Annie Chapman was killed on 8th September, Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddoweson on 30th September and Mary Jane Kelly on 9th November. However, some '**ripperologists**' believe that Martha Tabram, who was **stabbed** to death on 6 August 1888, was the first victim.

Martha Tabram had been stabbed 39 times. People thought it was Jack the Ripper for four reasons. First, the murder was extremely violent. Secondly, there was no **motive**. Thirdly, she was murdered close to Whitechapel. Finally, the date of her murder was very close to the other killings.

Because of these four facts, at the time the police thought she was the first victim of Jack the Ripper. However, many experts today do not connect her murder with the later murders because of the difference in the **wounds**. Martha was stabbed but the other five victims had been **slashed**.

Even today we don't know who Jack the Ripper was and there has been much discussion about his identity. Many experts believe that he or she was a doctor or butcher, because of the **weapons** and the mutilations. For example, the killer removed some of the victims' **organs**. This demonstrated knowledge of human anatomy.

There have been many ideas about who the killer was. One famous theory connects the murders with Prince Albert Victor (Queen Victoria's grandson). However, there is no real evidence for this.

At the time of the murders there was a lot of violence towards prostitutes, however the evidence strongly suggests that one crazed killer **committed** these murders. After 1888, the murders stopped. What happened? Had he died? Did he **emigrate**? Or was he sent to prison? Ultimately, we will never know but one thing is certain, Jack the Ripper's name will live on as an example of pure evil.

[Click here to watch a short video about Jack the Ripper.](#)

-Glossary-

murders – illegal killings, from 'to murder', to kill illegally.

warned – 'to warn', to tell someone in advance of a possible danger or problem.

pleasant – nice, agreeable.

brutal – extremely violent.

mutilated – 'to mutilate', to inflict a violent and disfiguring injury on someone.

ripper – 'to rip', to tear.

injuries – an injury, e.g. an arm injury, a head injury.

abdomen – the part of the body with the heart and stomach.

ripperologists – people who study Jack the Ripper.

stabbed – 'to stab', to put a knife or other pointed weapon into (someone) so as to wound or kill: "he stabbed him"

motive – reason for doing a crime.

wounds – an injury such as a cut or stab.

slashed - 'to slash', to cut (something) with a violent sweeping movement, typically using a knife.

weapons – objects used to hurt or kill.

organs – heart, lungs, stomach etc.

committed – 'to commit', to do, 'to commit a crime'.

emigrate – 'to emigrate', to move to another country.

Questions about the text

1. In which part of London did Jack the Ripper kill his victims?
2. Why did the police think that Jack the Ripper killed Martha Tabram? Give at least two reasons.
3. Why do today's experts think that Martha Tabram was not killed by Jack the Ripper?
4. The text gives three possible reasons why Jack the Ripper stopped killing. What are they?
5. How did Jack the Ripper's victims earn their money?
6. According to the text, what might have been the killer's profession?
7. How was the murder of Elizabeth Stride different from the others?
8. How many times must someone kill to be called a serial killer?
9. Why might Queen Victoria have been annoyed at this time?
10. True or false – Jack the Ripper removed all his victims' hearts.

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

Lake Baikal



[© Stranniks](#)

Lake Baikal is a rift lake in the south of the Russian region of Siberia. A rift lake is a lake **formed** by the earth's seismic movement. They are often found **within** rift valleys and may be very deep. Other rift lakes include: Lake Balaton in Hungary, Lake Khuvsgul in northern Mongolia and Lake Tana in Ethiopia.

Lake Baikal is enormous and has an average **depth** of about 744 metres. Although its surface area is not as large as the Great Lakes of North America, it contains approximately 20% of the earth's freshwater. Because of this, it has been said that World War III will start because of Lake Baikal as countries fight over water resources. Hopefully this will not happen!

Lake Baikal is full of life. It contains a huge amount of plants and animals. In fact, more than 80% of the plant and animal life cannot be found anywhere else in the world. One example is the Baikal seal, which is found throughout Lake Baikal. It is one of only three freshwater seal species in the world. Another example is the omul, which is a small, salmon-like fish. It is caught, **smoked** and then sold in markets around the lake.

The lake is frozen for five months every year. During this time, it gets so cold that the ice sheet is over 1 metre thick. In winter, the water is so cold that it could kill a person in less than one minute. In fact, during the winter months the temperature is too low for almost all species of bacteria **to survive**.

Lake Baikal has **several** islands and the largest is called Olkhon. It has an area of 730 square kilometres and a population of about 1500 people. Most of these people are Buryats. The Buryat people have inhabited the Lake Baikal Region for thousands of years. There are about half a million of them in Siberia.

Just like another deep lake, Loch Ness in Scotland, Lake Baikal has its own monster legend. There have been reports of a giant beast in the lake since 1850. Some people describe it as a giant sturgeon, although others say that it **resembles** a seal. However, like many of these legends, there is no real **proof** of the monster.

Unfortunately, this beautiful lake has not always been **cared for** and there has been some pollution. The Baykalsk Pulp and Paper Mill was built in 1966. It is located right on the shore of Lake Baikal and it **discharged** bleach and chlorine into the waters.

Another threat to the lake happened when the state-owned oil company (called 'Transneft') was planning to build a pipeline that would pass very close to the lake. This was a problem as there are many earthquakes in the area and if the pipeline was **ruptured**, oil would pollute the lake.

There were many **protests** from local residents and environmental groups, such as Greenpeace. Fortunately, the pipeline was built 40 km away, after the Russian president Vladimir Putin **intervened**.

Lake Baikal is truly one of the world's most spectacular and unique places. With its strange wildlife, interesting people and beautiful scenery, a visit there would be unforgettable.

[Click here to watch a short video on Lake Baikal.](#)

-Glossary-

within – here it means 'inside'.

formed – 'to form', to make.

depth – how deep something is.

smoked – 'to smoke' here it means to prepare fish by keeping them in a place full of smoke.

to survive - to continue to live or exist, esp. in spite of danger or hardship

several – more than two but not many.

resembles – 'to resemble', to look the same as.

proof – evidence.

cared for – 'to care for', to look after.

discharged – 'to discharge', to release, let out.

ruptured – 'to rupture', to break.

protests - a statement or action expressing disapproval.

intervened – 'to intervene', to become involved in a situation to stop it.

Answers about the text

1. Which other lake is said to have a mythical creature?
2. Which two harmful chemicals are mentioned in the text?
3. The omul resembles another fish. Which one?

4. Why might Lake Baikal cause a war?
5. For how long each year is the lake covered by ice?
6. Why is it dangerous to swim in Lake Baikal in the winter?
7. Why was it a bad idea to build a pipeline near Lake Baikal?
8. How many people live on the island of Olkhon?
9. Which politician is mentioned in the text?
10. True or false – the Great Lakes in the US are bigger than Lake Baikal.

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

Easter Island



[© Barsik](#)

Easter Island is most famous for its **distinctive** stone statues. However, the island's fascinating history is a story of colonisation, war, disease and environmental disaster.

Easter Island (known as Rapa Nui by the original inhabitants), is an island in the south eastern Pacific Ocean. Easter Island is an extremely **isolated** location and the closest inhabited island is Pitcairn Island, which is 2075 km away. The island is about 25 km long and 12 km across at its widest point.

Anthropologists believe that the island was probably first discovered by Polynesians, who travelled in **canoes or catamarans** from the Gambier Islands (2600 km away) or the Marquesas Islands, (3200 km away). Experts are unsure when these first settlers arrived but it was certainly between 1700 and 800 years ago.

When these people first arrived, the island was a tropical paradise. It was covered in huge palm trees and there were many birds, including five species of **flightless** bird. At first, there was **plentiful** food. The islanders fished in boats they made from the huge trees and they caught and ate sea birds. The population grew until it reached around 15,000 people.

Because food was so plentiful, the islanders had time to build the most famous symbols of Easter Island - its huge statues, called moai. The islanders carved the statues between 1250 CE and 1500 CE. The moai **represented** dead ancestors and some anthropologists believe that they also represented powerful **chiefs**, both living and dead.

Although the island had been a paradise full of trees and birds, things started **to go badly wrong**. The island became overpopulated and the people cut down all the trees. This meant that the islanders could not build new boats to go fishing. They also hunted all the flightless birds until they became **extinct**.

It was at this time that the 'Bird Man Cult' began. In this tradition, the chiefs of the island would come together once a year. Each chief would choose a young man from his **clan**. This young man had to swim to a small island and bring back a bird egg. The quickest young man would then give the egg to his chief. The islanders would treat this chief as the creator's (God's) representative on Earth for one year.

However, with no food, people began **to starve** to death. As life began to get worse on the island, wars started between the clans. People pushed over the moai to try and **upset** the other clans. Thousands of people died from hunger and violence. The once beautiful island was now a terrible place full of desperate and miserable people.

The first recorded European visit to the island was on April 5th 1722. It was a Dutch ship and because it was Easter Sunday, the **navigator** called the island 'Easter Island'. The next foreign visitors to the island were two Spanish ships on November 5th 1770 and then four years later, Captain Cook visited the island in 1774.

Things went from bad to worse in the 1800s. In December 1862, slave traders from Peru came to the island. Over the following months, they violently **kidnapped** over 1500 men, women and children. When the Peruvian government discovered what was happening, they made the slave traders return the kidnapped islanders.

Unfortunately, this was disastrous for the island. The returning people brought back **smallpox**, which killed hundreds of people. A few years later, **whalers** brought tuberculosis, which killed even more people. Towards the end of the 19th century, approximately 97% of the island's population was dead.

Today, the island is now part of Chile and there are approximately 5700 inhabitants. Easter Island is a popular tourist attraction, made famous by its incredible stone statues. However, the island, with its tragic history, is a lesson to humanity about the dangers of **abusing** our environment and treating each other with respect.

[Click here to watch a short video on Easter Island.](#)

-Glossary-

distinctive – stands out, unusual, gets your attention.

isolated – far away from everything.

canoes or catamarans – types of boat.

flightless – unable to fly.

plentiful – many, lots of.

represented – 'to represent', to stand for something.

chiefs – leaders.

to go badly wrong – 'to go wrong', to have problems, not function as hoped.

extinct – when a species no longer exists.

clan – a group of related people, bigger than a family.

to starve – to suffer severely or die from hunger.

upset - 'to upset', to make sad.

navigator - a person who navigates a ship, aircraft, etc.

things went from bad to worse – ‘to go from bad to worse’, to become very bad.

kidnapped – ‘to kidnap’ to take someone against their will.

smallpox – a terrible disease.

whalers – people who hunted whales.

abusing – ‘to abuse’, to treat badly.

Questions about the text

1. Why was cutting down all the trees a bad idea?
2. Which country did the slave traders come from?
3. What two illnesses are mentioned in the text?
4. Which island is nearest to Easter Island?
5. Apart from cutting down all the trees, what other mistake did the islanders make?
6. From which country did the first visiting European ship come?
7. Name two things which reduced the population of Easter Island.
8. Which country does Easter Island belong to now?
9. Where did the original Easter Islanders come from?
10. True or false – The bird man cult was a type of competition.

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

Reality TV



[© Uatp1](#)

Celebrities eating insects in the jungle, twelve strangers living **under 24 hour surveillance**, brides **judging** each other's weddings, young girls competing to be a top model – do these situations sound familiar? They are all are examples of reality television.

Reality television (also known as 'reality shows') is a type of television programming. Reality television shows are often documentaries, competitions and chat shows. They have one thing in common – they do not have a script and they do not use actors.

One of the first reality TV shows was 'An American Family'. It **aired** in 1973 and it was about a family **going through** a divorce. Unlike many later reality shows, it was a documentary. The programme **inspired** TV producers in the UK to make the series 'The Family' about a family in the town of Reading.

During the 1980s, there were more reality TV shows around the world. However, it was the Dutch TV show 'Number 28', which had the idea of putting strangers together in an artificial environment. 'Number 28' also used **confessionals** where contestants talked about other contestants **behind their backs**. This is something many other reality shows have also used since.

However, it was during the late 1990s and early 2000s that reality TV became really popular. Programmes like 'Big Brother', 'Pop Idol', 'I'm a Celebrity...', and 'Survivor' were very successful and many countries made their own versions. In fact, at least nine reality-television shows have had over 30 international versions.

'Big Brother' **featured** a group of 12 to 16 strangers living together in a large house. They were completely isolated from the outside world and they were under 24 hour surveillance, using cameras. Each series lasted for about three months and every week contestants had to vote **to evict** one person from the house.

The 'Idol' shows (which are a type of singing contest), have made some of their contestants into stars. For example, Kelly Clarkson, who won the first season of 'American Idol', has had a successful

singing career. Will Young was the winner of 'Pop Idol', the original version of the show from Britain, and he has had several bestselling albums.

One very popular example of reality television is 'America's Next Top Model', often **abbreviated** to ANTM or Top Model. The female contestants have to compete in special '**modelling**' challenges. The judges **eliminate** a contestant each week and the winner is given the title of 'America's Next Top Model'.

While reality television has been extremely popular, it has also been very **controversial**. One criticism made about these shows is that they **exploit** vulnerable individuals. People who dislike reality TV shows say that desperate people, who will do anything for attention, **humiliate** themselves and **ruin** their chances of a normal life.

Another criticism is that reality television is ruining other shows. The theory is that because reality television is so cheap to make, television networks do not **invest** much money in other types of quality shows, such as educational programmes and documentaries.

Since it began, reality television had exploded in popularity. It has made many people rich, others famous and caused much controversy. Viewers have seen shocking things, such as famous people eating live insects or groups of drunken strangers fighting.

These facts leave one question, where will reality television go next? What is left that will shock people? It seems certain that television producers are asking themselves the exact same questions, as they plan their next shows...

[Click here to watch a video about reality television.](#)

-Glossary-

under 24 hours surveillance – being watched all day.

judging – 'to judge', to form an opinion or conclusion.

aired – 'to air', to show a TV show.

going through – 'to go through', to experience.

inspired – 'to inspire', to give someone a good idea.

confessionals – telling secrets.

behind their backs – 'to talk about someone behind their back', to talk about someone when they aren't there.

featured – 'to feature', to show.

to evict – to make leave a house.

abbreviate – 'to abbreviate', to shorten a word.

modelling – the act of being a model.

eliminate – ‘to eliminate’, to get rid of, to remove.

controversial – something which many people disagree about.

exploit – ‘to exploit’, to take advantage of.

humiliate – ‘to humiliate’, to make someone look stupid.

ruin – ‘to ruin’, to spoil.

invest – ‘to invest’, to put money into something, e.g. a business.

Questions about the text

1. What do participants do on ‘American Idol’?
2. What are two of the criticisms of reality television?
3. What does ANTM stand for?
4. Which country did ‘Number 28’ air in?
5. Which of the reality shows mentioned in the text is about fashion?
6. According to the text, what two things do all reality shows have in common?
7. When did reality television become popular?
8. Which two types of ‘high quality’ shows are mentioned in the text?
9. In which reality show were the contestants constantly watched by cameras?
10. True or false? – the reality television show ‘The Family’ was filmed in Great Britain?

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

The Ancient Egyptians



[© Foxie_aka_ashes](#)

Few civilisations are as fascinating as the ancient Egyptians. The story of ancient Egypt has survived for thousands of years. Their incredible monuments and the mysterious tombs of their Pharaohs are still standing today - 4,000 years later!

The population of ancient Egypt lived on the banks of the river Nile. Farmers first **settled** in Egypt along the River Nile around 5000 B.C. In fact, about 95% of Egypt's population still live in the Nile valley today.

The ancient Egyptians **depended on** the Nile for food, water and transportation. The Nile also **provided fertile** land, which helped farmers to cultivate their crops and **raise** their animals. Nowadays, there are dams on the River Nile, which stop the river from flooding. However, before these dams were built, the river used to **flood** each year. When the river flooded each year, it left lots of dark mud on the land on each side of the river. This mud was brilliant for growing crops.

The ancient Egyptians divided Egypt into two parts. One area was the 'red land'. This area was the deserts and it protected Egypt on two sides. It protected Egypt from neighbouring countries and **invading** armies. The black land was the fertile land (near the Nile River), where the ancient Egyptians lived.

At first there were two independent kingdoms (each one was ruled by different kings) in Ancient Egypt. Their names were 'the white crown' in Upper Egypt and 'the red crown' in Lower Egypt.

In about 3200 B.C. the pharaoh of the northern kingdom **conquered** the southern kingdom and he made the two countries into one new kingdom. The pharaoh's name was King Menes. After winning the battle, King Menes built a new capital city called Memphis. The word 'Memphis meant' "Balance of the Two Lands", in Ancient Greek.

Pharaohs were the king or queen of Egypt. Most pharaohs were men, however some famous pharaohs were women, such as Nefertiti and Cleopatra. A Pharaoh was the most important and powerful person in the whole kingdom. He (or she) was **the head of** the government and high priest (or priestess) of every temple. The ancient Egyptians believed that the pharaoh was half-man, half-god.

The pyramids are the stone tombs (burial place) of Egypt's pharaohs. They are one of the world's greatest historical mysteries and thousands of people visit them each year. They have stood for thousands of years. When archaeologists discovered them, they were filled with many hidden secrets and **clues** about what life (and death) was like in Ancient Egypt.

The ancient Egyptians thought it was very important to **preserve** the human body after death. They invented a method of preservation for their dead people (called mummification). Mummification was a complicated process which lasted up to 70 days.

The Egyptians believed that if they mummified the pharaoh's body after death, then the pharaoh would live forever. The Egyptians designed the tombs inside the pyramids to protect the buried Pharaoh's body and his treasures.

Many of the pharaohs' tombs were **plundered** by tomb raiders, who stole their treasures. However, in 1922 Howard Carter discovered Tutankhamen's tomb and it was full of incredible, breath-taking treasures. Nobody had been in it for thousands of years!

Tutankhamen's tomb contained hundreds of precious objects (they are now in the Egyptian Museum, in Cairo). Many of these treasures were unique and beautifully decorated. Some were covered in gold. The ancient Egyptians put over 3000 treasures in the tomb to help Tutankhamen in his afterlife. They painted the walls of the burial chamber with scenes of his voyage to the afterworld after he died in 1323 B.C.

Today, Tutankhamen's name is known all over the world and his burial mask is one of the most popular images of ancient Egypt. We can only imagine what he would have thought about our world, or how he would feel about his treasures being in a museum.

[Click here to watch a video about ancient Egypt.](#)

-Glossary-

settled – 'to settle', to stay in a place to live.

depended on – 'to depend on', to rely on.

provided – 'to provide', to give.

fertile – very good for growing crops.

raise – 'to raise', here 'to grow an animal from a baby to an adult'

flood – 'to flood', when a river overflows.

invading – 'to invade', to enter another land with an army.

conquered – 'to conquer', to take control of (a place or people) by use of military force.

the head of – the leader.

clues – things which help you understand something.

preserve – 'to preserve', to maintain (something) in its original state.

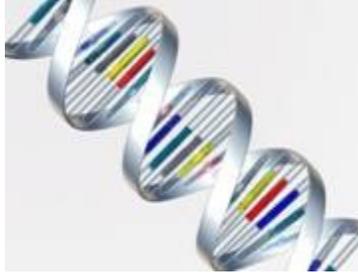
plundered – ‘to plunder’, to steal, to rob.

Questions about the text

1. Why was the desert useful to the ancient Egyptians?
2. Name three things that the river Nile was good for.
3. Which two female pharaohs are mentioned in the text?
4. Who found Tutankhamen’s tomb?
5. Where do you think ‘the black land’ got its name?
6. What two roles of the pharaoh are mentioned?
7. How long might it take to mummify a dead body?
8. From which part of ancient Egypt did King Menes come?
9. Why did the ancient Egyptians put treasures in the pharaohs’ tomb?
10. True or false - Cleopatra and Nefertiti were the only female pharaohs.

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

DNA



© [Rodolfoelix](#)

Imagine you were having a quiet drink in an English pub and two men **burst in** and said ‘We’ve discovered the secret of life!’ What would you think? They were crazy? Drunk? Well this is exactly what happened in 1953 when James Watson and Francis Crick entered ‘The Eagle’ pub. Both men were **researchers** at Cambridge University and they had discovered the existence of DNA.

DNA **stands for** deoxyribonucleic acid and is one of the two types of nucleic acid found in our cells. Humans are all made of trillions of cells. There are about 2.5 billion cells in a human hand, however these cells are tiny and invisible to the **naked eye**.

Every cell in the human body has a different **function**. Some cells help us detect light, other cells fight diseases, some cells allow us to reproduce, some cells carry oxygen and other cells help us digest food. There are over 200 cell types in the body - that is more than 200 different functions!

With all these different functions, you might think that your body would be **chaos**. However, it isn’t. In fact, the human body works incredibly well. So how do all the cells know what to do? The answer: DNA. A good way to think of DNA is as the instructions for life. Every cell in a human being, and not just humans, all other organisms too, is controlled by DNA.

Information is **stored** in DNA by using four different kinds of molecules. These molecules are always **in pairs**. There are billions of these pairs and they are contained in the familiar double helix structure, shown in the photograph above.

The DNA is stored in a paired **bundle**, called a chromosome. The chromosomes are stored in the nucleus of each cell. Different species have different numbers of chromosomes. For example, humans have 23 pairs of 46 chromosomes. Normally, at the time of **conception**, a baby inherits genetic information from its parents in the form of 46 chromosomes: 23 from the mother and 23 from the father.

However, one case when this process does not work **properly** is with children who are born with Down syndrome. In most cases of Down syndrome, a baby receives an extra chromosome. This means they have 47 chromosomes instead of 46. This extra genetic material is what causes the **symptoms** of Down syndrome.

Chromosomes contain many genes. A gene is a smaller part of DNA, which holds instructions for a protein. Proteins are essential for life. It is proteins that control cells and make a species look a certain way.

A collection of genes for a particular species is called a genome. A tiger looks like a tiger because the information is in its genes, which make the tiger genome. A genome is the complete set of instructions for a species. A genome for a species will contain billions of genes. The genome is passed from parent to baby during reproduction.

Scientists have studied DNA and found that humans share 96% of their DNA with chimpanzees. Chimpanzees are our closest relative, however humans also share DNA with plants, animals, fish and birds. This makes them think that all life on Earth **originated with** the same ancestor billions of years ago.

Today, some scientists are experimenting with DNA. They are now able to 'rewrite' the DNA **sequence** of some animals. One such example is the GloFish. This fish has been genetically **engineered** by scientists. They took a gene from a jellyfish which glows in the dark and **inserted** it into the genome of a zebra fish. The GloFish is now luminous like the original jellyfish. These fish are bright pink, orange or green. They are available as pets in the US.

Genetic engineering is a very controversial topic and it has many critics. Some people say that we still don't understand enough about DNA and that we shouldn't be **meddling with** it. Others say that if we can improve things, why not? What do you think? Should humans rewrite the instruction book of life? Or is that one book we should not edit?

[Click here to watch a short video on DNA.](#)

-Glossary-

burst in - 'to burst in', to enter a place suddenly.

researchers - scientists who do research (finding out new facts).

stands for - 'to stand for', to mean, to represent.

naked eye - unassisted vision, without a telescope, microscope, or other device.

function - job.

chaos - complete disorder and confusion.

stored - 'to store', to keep, accumulate.

in pairs - in twos.

bundle - a collection of something, e.g. a bundle clothes.

conception - the action of conceiving a child or of a child being conceived (made).

properly - very well, 'I can't speak German properly'.

symptoms - the signs of a disease.

originated with – ‘to originate with’, to start with.

sequence – an order of something, e.g. letters, numbers.

engineered – ‘to engineer’, to plan, construct.

inserted – ‘to insert’, to put in.

meddling with – ‘to meddle with’, to involve yourself in a matter without right or invitation.

Questions about the text

1. When was DNA discovered?
2. Why do scientists think all life on Earth started with the same ancestor?
3. Where are the chromosomes located?
4. How did scientists make the GloFish?
5. What causes Down syndrome?
6. The text describes five different cell functions. Name three.
7. How many chromosomes does a human being have? (a person without Downs Syndrome)
8. To which animal are humans most closely related?
9. DNA is an abbreviation of which words?
10. True or false – DNA was discovered at Oxford University?

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

Buddhism



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Buddhism is one of the world's major religions, although many people do not classify it as a religion (more on this later). It is older than Christianity and Islam and the number of Buddhists is growing in the Western world. So what is Buddhism? What do Buddhists believe?

Buddhism is a belief system that **centres on** personal spiritual development and on trying to obtain a **deep insight** into the meaning of life. **Currently**, there are about 375 million Buddhists worldwide.

Buddhists do not believe in a god or creator, like Christians and Muslims. Because of this, Buddhism is often called a philosophy and not a religion. Buddhists believe that nothing in life is **fixed** or permanent - change is a constant part of life. A huge part of Buddhism is the path to **Enlightenment**. The history of Buddhism is the story of one man's spiritual journey to enlightenment or Nirvana. Buddhism comes from his teachings and ways of living.

That man was called Siddhartha Gautama (now known as the Buddha), who was born a prince in a royal family. He lived in Nepal over 2500 years ago. Siddhartha had never seen pain or **suffering**. He had never left the palace and lived a luxurious, privileged life. However, one day he left the palace for the first time...

He walked towards the village and found an old man, a sick man, and **a corpse**. Siddhartha was shocked because his family had protected him from life's **hardships**. He was so upset that he decided to become a monk. He wanted to try and understand the meaning of life and why people suffer.

Siddhartha tried many different religions but he still didn't understand the meaning of life. Buddhists say that one day Siddhartha went and sat **beneath** a Bodhi tree. He began **to meditate**, concentrating hard. He thought about his life until he became enlightened. By finding the path to enlightenment,

Siddhartha became the Buddha or 'awakened one'. Today, Buddhists try to reach a state of enlightenment by following Siddhartha's example.

After his Enlightenment, the Buddha's first lesson to others centred on the Four Noble Truths, which are the foundation of Buddhism. The truths are:

1. The truth of suffering.
2. The truth of the cause of suffering.
3. The truth of the end of suffering.
4. The truth of the path that frees us from suffering.

Buddhists use these four truths to tell them where unhappiness comes from and how to end it. The fourth noble truth is the Buddha's **prescription** for the end of suffering. This is a set of **principles** called the Eightfold Path.

Today there are two major types of Buddhism. One is Theravada ("The School of the Elders") and the other is Mahayana ("The Great Vehicle"). Theravada has followers in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar. Mahayana Buddhism is found **throughout** China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Singapore and Taiwan.

Within Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism there are many smaller groups, such as Zen, Nichiren Buddhism and Shingon. There is also a third the kind of Buddhism called Vajrayana, which is found **mainly** in Tibet and Mongolia. However, some **scholars** classify it as a part of Mahayana Buddhism.

Other well-known Buddhist ideas are: karma, reincarnation, yoga and meditation. All of these are extremely interesting. Many of these ideas, such as yoga, have become part of everyday Western life. In fact, it's easy to forget that these ideas have their origins in one man's search for the meaning of life over 2000 years ago.

[Click here to watch a short video about Buddhism.](#)

-Glossary-

centres on – 'to centre on', to focus on

a deep insight – an insight is understanding something fully.

currently – at the moment.

fixed – not moving.

enlightenment – being spiritually awake.

suffering – being in pain.

a corpse – a dead body.

hardships – things which make life difficult.

beneath – under, underneath.

to meditate - think deeply or focus for a time for spiritual purposes or to relax.

prescription – an instruction written by a doctor to make an ill person well again.

principles – ideas.

throughout – in all parts.

mainly – mostly.

scholars – people who study something seriously.

Questions about the text

1. Who was the founder of Buddhism?
2. What sort of Buddhism might you find in Thailand?
3. On which continent did Buddhism originate?
4. What was the Buddha doing when he first became enlightened?
5. Once the Buddha became enlightened, what was the first thing he talked about?
6. Which other two world religions are mentioned in the text?
7. How many Buddhists are there?
8. Some people classify Buddhism as a philosophy, not a religion. Why?
9. Which word in the text means ‘being reborn’?
10. True or false – the number of Buddhists in Europe is rising?

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

Helen Keller



[Helen Keller 1904](#)

Helen Keller was an American author, **political activist**, and lecturer. She was the first deaf blind person to gain a university degree in the United States. Her **courage**, bravery, intelligence and **achievements** make her one of the most **inspirational** people in history.

Helen Adams Keller was born on June 27, 1880, in Tuscumbia, Alabama. Helen Keller was born with normal sight and hearing. However, when she was 19 months old, she **contracted** a serious illness (it might have been scarlet fever or meningitis). The illness left her both deaf and blind.

Helen's parents were **devastated** but her mother refused **to give up hope**. In 1886, she asked her husband to take six year old Helen to see a specialist doctor in Baltimore. After seeing the doctor, the family **got in touch with** Perkins Institute for the Blind. This is the moment when Helen's life began to change.

In March 1887, the school sent a **former** pupil, called Anne Sullivan, to the Keller's home. Like Helen, she was also blind. Anne lived with the Keller family and her job was to teach Helen to communicate.

Anne taught Helen how communication skills. She used her finger to spell words onto Helen's hand. Her first lesson was to spell d-o-l-l onto Helen's hand. She then gave Helen a doll as a present. At first, Helen became frustrated and she even broke the doll in anger. However, the **breakthrough** came when Anne poured cool water over Helen's hand and spelled w-a-t-e-r onto her hand. From this moment on, the intelligent young Helen made wonderful progress.

In May 1888, Keller **attended** the Perkins Institute for the Blind. In 1894, Helen and Anne Sullivan moved to New York to attend the Wright-Humason School for the Deaf. Eight years later, Anne and Helen returned to Massachusetts so that Helen could study at The Cambridge School for Young Ladies. When she was 24, in 1904, Helen was awarded a degree from Radcliffe College. She was the first deaf blind person in America to obtain a university degree.

A long and loving friendship had developed between Anne and Helen. Anne stayed with Helen after her education was over. When Anne married in 1905, Helen moved to New York with Anne and her new husband. At the same time, Anne's health was **deteriorating** and a young Scottish girl called Polly Thompson came to work at the house.

Sadly, Anne died in 1936 after falling into a coma. Helen was at her side and held her hand when she **passed away**. Polly Thompson was now Helen's secretary, companion and friend. The two women travelled the world together, **raising money** for the deaf and blind.

Tragedy happened once more in 1957, when Polly had a **stroke**. She never recovered fully from her stroke and she died in 1960. A nurse had been brought in to care for Polly in 1957. Her name was Winnie Corbally and she stayed at the house after Polly's death. Winnie was Keller's companion for the rest of her life.

Helen achieved many amazing things in her life. For example, she was a world-famous speaker and author. She worked hard to raise money for people with disabilities and **numerous** other causes.

Helen had many strong views. She was a **suffragist**, a **radical** socialist, a pacifist and a supporter of birth control. In 1915, she helped start the Helen Keller International organization (HKI). This organization does research into vision, health and **nutrition**. Furthermore, she helped **to found** the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

Incredibly, Helen wrote a total of 12 books. Two of her most famous books are her autobiographies 'The Story of my Life' and 'The World I Live in'. In her lifetime, Helen Keller visited over 40 countries and met many American presidents. She was also had many famous friends, like Alexander Graham Bell, Charlie Chaplin and Mark Twain.

Helen's life is a wonderful example of someone who never gave up and who, despite great **challenges**, achieved many incredible things.

"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart" ? Helen Keller

[Click here to watch a short video about Helen Keller.](#)

-Glossary-

political activist – a person who fights for a political cause.

courage - strength in the face of pain or grief.

achievements - things done successfully.

inspirational – something which inspires people, 'to inspire' to make others believe in themselves.

contracted – 'to contract', to catch a disease.

devastated – 'to devastate', to make very sad.

to give up hope – to stop believing things will get better.

got in touch with – 'to get in touch with', to contact.

former – from the past.

breakthrough - a sudden, dramatic, and important discovery or development.

attended – 'to attend', to go somewhere regularly.

deteriorating – 'to deteriorate', to become worse.

passed away – ‘to pass away’, to die.

raising money – ‘to raise money’, to ask people to donate money for a cause.

a stroke - the sudden death of brain cells.

numerous – many.

suffragist – a person who believes in ‘suffrage’, which is the right to vote (especially for women).

radical – extreme.

nutrition - the process of providing the food necessary for health.

to found – to start an organisation, religion etc.

challenges – difficult things.

Questions about the text

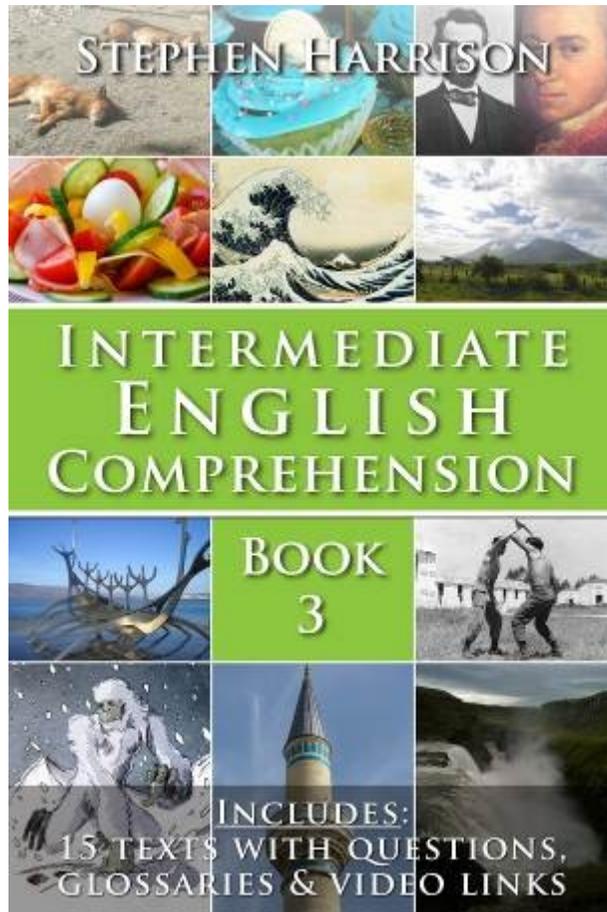
1. Which two organisations did Helen Keller help set up?
2. What did Anne Sullivan have in common with Helen Keller?
3. What two diseases might have caused Helen’s disability?
4. What word tells you that Helen believed in peace?
5. How old was Helen when she finished her education?
6. Which three celebrities are mentioned in the text?
7. Where did Polly Thompson come from?
8. Helen believed that women should be able to vote? What word tells us this?
9. Which of five senses did Anne Sullivan use to teach Helen to communicate? (The five senses are – sight, taste, hearing, touch and smell).
10. True or false – Helen Keller was well-travelled.

[Click here to check your answers.](#)

~~~~ Free sample ~~~~

## Intermediate English Comprehension – Book 3

**ON SALE NOW!**



‘Book 2’ includes articles on dingoes, Nicaragua, ice hockey, Islam, Iceland, the Vikings, Abraham Lincoln, Krav Maga, social media, Mozart, tsunami, the yeti, superfoods and geisha.

# Dingoes



[Image courtesy of Pixabay](#)

Dingoes are wild dogs which are found almost **exclusively** in the region of Australia (where they are known as Australian wild dogs). Some scientists believe that **seafaring** humans brought dingoes to Australia, between 4,600 and 18,300 years ago. They believe that people brought them from Asia, either as food or as guard dogs – possibly both. There is also a traditional aboriginal dance, which shows dogs acting excitedly on a boat that is arriving at a new place. **Furthermore**, genetic studies show they are related to wild Asian dogs.

The dingo is the largest land predator in Australia. It is an apex predator, which means it is at the top of the **food chain** and it has few predators of its own. The two main predators of dingoes are crocodiles and humans. Crocodiles catch dingoes when they come to drink from rivers and lakes. Humans often shoot or **poison** them because they see dingoes as a threat to their farm animals (sadly, many dingoes are also hit by cars and killed).

The diet of dingoes is extremely varied and includes about 170 species! Their diet is also different in different **habitats**. For example, in the Australian outback (a desert environment) dingoes eat kangaroos and wallabies, while in rainforests they eat smaller mammals and reptiles. In coastal areas, dingoes search for dead fish and dead seals, which the sea has **washed up**.

Dingoes share many characteristics with domestic dogs and wolves. They can be up to 60 centimetres tall and have an average weight of about 30-35 kilos. Their fur is reddish orange but some dingoes can have white, sandy or black fur. The fur of dingoes can be short or long, depending on the climate where they live.

Like dogs and wolves, dingoes are social animals and live in **packs**. The size of these packs depends on the area they live in and if there is enough prey for them to catch. In each pack there is an alpha male and female. The alpha male and female are the only animals which breed. The other dingoes in the pack help look after the puppies but they do not have their own **offspring**.

One difference between dogs and dingoes is barking. Dingoes do not bark very often and when they do, their bark is short. When dingoes want to communicate with other dingoes, they use a type of **howling**. This is usually used to warn other dingoes, for example, if there is a danger nearby (such as a crocodile).

Dingoes usually live between 15 and 20 years on average and males are usually bigger than females. Dingo pups are usually born in litters of 3-4, but there have been cases of up to 10 puppies in a **litter**. Normally, dingoes can care for themselves after about 3-6 months.

Many people know about dingoes because of the Azaria Chamberlain dingo attack. Azaria Chamberlain was a nine-week old baby girl and she was taken from her parents' tent, while they were camping at Uluru (Ayers Rock) in 1980. Azaria's mother, Lindy Chamberlain, was convicted of murder and spent three months in prison. Lindy was freed when Azaria's clothing was found in a dingo's **den**. The story was made into a film called 'A Cry in the Dark' and starred Meryl Streep.

Unfortunately, dingoes are an endangered species. This is because they are **interbreeding** with domestic dogs. If dogs and dingoes continue to interbreed, there will be no pure blood dingoes in less than fifty years. At the moment, the Australian government does not have any plans to try and stop dingoes interbreeding with dogs. Only time will tell if the dingo can be saved, or if it will lose its identity forever.

[Click here to watch a video about dingoes.](#)

### **-Glossary-**

exclusively – only.

seafaring humans – people who regularly travel by sea

furthermore – in addition; besides (used to introduce a new point in an argument).

food chain - a series of animals which eat each other.

poison – to give poison to a person or animal to kill them.

habitats – a habitat is a place an animal lives.

washed up – 'to wash up', when the sea leaves something on the beach.

packs – a pack is a group of dogs or wolves (not other animals, e.g. a herd of elephants, a pride of lions).

offspring – babies.

howling – 'to howl', when a wolf makes a long, loud call.

a litter – the name for a group of babies produced by a mammal.

den – the place where dingoes and other animals, e.g. foxes, live.

interbreeding – 'to interbreed', when two different species have babies.

### **Questions about the text**

1. What two predators of dingoes are mentioned in the text?

2. Why do humans kill dingoes?
3. Which three types of habitat are mentioned in the text?
4. Are dingoes only found in Australia?
5. On average, how long do dingoes live?
6. Name two types of animal which dingoes eat.
7. How many pups does a female dingo normally give birth to?
8. How are male and female dingoes different?
9. At what age are dingoes able to look after themselves?
10. True or false – dingoes are endangered because humans are hunting them.

# Nicaragua



[Image courtesy of Pixabay](#)

There are many countries in the world which have characteristics that make them special. In the case of Nicaragua, its natural beauty is what is most **striking** to tourists. Each year, many people visit this beautiful land in the central region of the American continent.

The region that is now Nicaragua was conquered by the Spanish empire in the sixteenth century. Before the Spanish arrived, the western area was inhabited by indigenous people, who were related to the Aztec and Maya civilisations. Meanwhile, the Caribbean coasts were inhabited by different ethnic groups. Nicaragua remained a Spanish colony until 1821, when it **declared** its independence on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September (**nowadays** this date is a public holiday).

For many years, Nicaragua **exported** agricultural produce, such as coffee and sugar. However, all the money went to a few very rich families. Things changed in 1979 when there was a revolution by the Sandistas (a **left-wing** political party). The Sandistas began **to share out** the wealth of the country and they also became friendly with the Cuban and USSR governments. This angered the US government. Because of this, the US government gave weapons to the Contras (another political party) and fighting began. In 1990, the Sandistas lost power and the economy had very big problems.

Today, the country has a population of about 6 million people. It is **emerging** as one of the Central American countries with the highest potential for economic growth. However, Nicaragua is still the poorest country in Central America with a **GDP per capita** of only \$4,500 (compare this to the USA, which has a GDP per capita of \$49,800).

The country is also known as the land of lakes and volcanoes. It has some spectacular natural sites and attractions. One amazing place is the famous *Isla de Ometepe*. The island was created by two volcanoes, which are in the middle of Lake Nicaragua. The name 'Ometepe' is a combination of the Nahuatl words 'ome' and 'tepetl', which means 'two mountains'. Many people **consider** the amazing island a natural wonder of the world.

Another excellent choice for tourists is the city of Granada, in western Nicaragua. It is the eighth largest city in the country and it was **founded** by Francisco Hernández Córdoba in 1524. For many years, Granada was perhaps Nicaragua's most important city. Its architecture is impressive and its style has an Arabic influence (much like the city of Granada in Spain). In fact, it is also known as *La Gran Sultana* ('The Great Sultan' – a sultan is a Muslim king).

The city of Masaya is another **must-see** for visitors to Nicaragua. The central market is filled with beautiful arts and crafts, which are created by hand. Masaya is located close to Lake Apoyo. The lake is formed from a **crater** that is over 650 km deep. There are many popular restaurants and hotels around the lake.

Nicaragua 's beaches are **exceptionally** beautiful and can be found on both coasts. Many beaches, like *San Juan del Sur*, are the preferred destination for thousands of tourists from around the world, as well as Nicaraguans. In fact, tourism is now Nicaragua's second biggest industry and it has **risen** by over 300 per cent in the last decade.

The capital city of Nicaragua is called Managua. It is the largest city in the country and has a population of almost one million, if you include the surrounding areas the population **rises** to two million. During the last couple of decades, there has been a lot of new building and the city now has many galleries, several universities, shopping centres and many luxury hotels.

[Click here to watch a video about Nicaragua.](#)

### **-Glossary-**

striking – something which is striking is really noticeable in a good way.

declared – ‘to declare’ means ‘to say’ or ‘to make known’.

nowadays – these days, today.

export – ‘to export’ means to sell produce to other countries.

left-wing – this describes socialist politics (the opposite of ‘right-wing’).

share out – ‘to share out’ is a phrasal verb meaning ‘to share equally’.

emerging – ‘to emerge’ means ‘to come out’.

GDP per capita – GDP stands for ‘gross domestic product’, which is all the money made in a country.

‘GDP per capita’ is this amount divided by the population of the country.

consider – ‘to consider’ means ‘to think’.

founded – ‘to found’ is to start a city, hospital etc.

must-see – this noun means something that you must go and see, such as a tourist attraction or a really good movie.

crater – ‘a crater’ is large hole in the ground, usually made by a meteorite.

exceptionally - extremely, very much.

risen/rises – ‘to rise’ means ‘to ascend’ or ‘to go up’. Here its meaning is closest to ‘to increase’.

### **Questions about the text**

1. By what name is Nicaragua also known?
2. What is the population of Nicaragua?
3. What is 'San Juan del Sur'?
4. In what architectural style are many of Granada's buildings?
5. Where is a good place to find handmade goods?
6. Why did the US government become angry with the Sandistas?
7. Why is Lake Apoyo special?
8. What makes the biggest impression on tourists when they visit Nicaragua?
9. Where would you find two volcanoes?
10. True or false – Tourism is the biggest industry in Nicaragua.

~~~~~ **End of free sample** ~~~~~

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About the author

After graduating with a first class degree in Linguistics in 2001, Stephen moved to Spain where he taught English and learned Spanish. He has since taught adults and children as well as training other teachers. Stephen currently lives in Manchester, in the UK.

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Answers

Machu Picchu

1. What happened in 2011?

The Peruvian government restricted the number of visitors to 2500 people per day.

2. Which two rare animals are mentioned in the text?

The spectacled bear (or Andean bear) and the jaguar.

3. Why was the high number of tourists a problem?

They were damaging the ground by walking on it.

4. Which natural disaster is common in Peru?

Earthquakes.

5. Who did the Incas worship?

Inti, the sun god.

6. What has happened to the number of visitors to Machu Picchu since 1911?

It has gone up fast.

7. What is ashlar?

A building technique which doesn't use mortar.

8. What was the advantage of not building with mortar?

It means that buildings didn't collapse during earthquakes.

9. Who was Pachacuti?

The Incan emperor.

10. True or false? – The Incas practiced human sacrifice.

True.

[Back to Machu Picchu](#)

Capybara

1. Why are baby capybaras easy to kill?

Because they are small and not good swimmers.

2. What do capybaras do to help digest their food?

They eat their own faeces.

3. How long can a capybara stay submerged?

A capybara can stay under water for five minutes.

4. When would a capybara eat melons?

During a drought or dry weather

5. How long does a capybara pregnancy last?

Five months.

6. Why do humans hunt capybaras?

For their skin and meat.

7. Why do capybaras need to live near water?

To escape from predators.

8. The text mentions some animals which hunt capybaras. How many are there?

Ten - jaguars, anacondas, caimans, pumas, ocelots, eagles, foxes, vultures, feral dogs, and piranhas.

9. What would a capybara do if it was frightened?

Dive into the water.

10. True or false? – Capybaras are solitary creatures.

False – they live in groups.

[Back to Capybara](#)

Uncontacted Peoples

1. Where are most uncontacted peoples?

South America and New Guinea.

2. Why might missionaries be dangerous to uncontacted peoples?

Because they bring diseases.

3. Name two ways that loggers can harm uncontacted peoples.

Two from – destroying their homes, killing them or bringing diseases.

4. What happened to the Akuntsu tribe?

They were killed by loggers.

5. Which sentence tells us that the Sentinelese do not want contact with the outside world?

The Sentinelese have strongly resisted contact by outsiders.

6. Do the Sentinelese grow food?

No, they are a hunter-gatherer society.

7. What kills the most uncontacted people?

Introduced diseases.

8. According to the text, how many uncontacted peoples live in South America?

About 85 -70 isolated peoples in the Brazilian rainforest and an estimated 15 uncontacted tribes in Peru (about between 85 and 100 in total).

9. Which two groups of people are going onto the Jarawa's land?

Poachers and tourists.

10. True or false? – The Sentinelese people are still living like Stone Age people.

False - there will have been changes in their society, just as in the rest of the world.

[Back to Uncontacted Peoples](#)

Wicca

1. According to the Wiccan religion, when will a soul cease to be reborn?

When it has learned everything it can.

2. What is the best number of people for a coven?

Thirteen.

3. Why is Gerald Brousseau Gardner an important person to Wiccans?

Because he made the religion popular in the 20th century.

4. What is the meaning of 'Cernunnos'?

It means 'horned one'.

5. Apart from Wicca, which other two religions are mentioned in the text?

Christianity and Islam.

6. Why do Wiccans perform spells? Give two reasons.

To heal people and help them with problems.

7. What do Wiccans do when the seasons change?

They celebrate a sabbat (eight times a year).

8. If a Wiccan uses bad magic, what will happen to them?

The magic will come back to them, but worse.

9. Where is a sabbat held?

Outside or inside.

10. True or false – Wiccans worship the devil.

False.

[Back to Wicca](#)

Zombies

1. What is a Loa?

A spirit from the Voodoo religion.

2. What is the name of the plant used to make one of the powders?

A datura.

3. What job did the African slaves have to do?

They worked on the sugar plantations.

4. In most films and books, how are zombies created?

Disease.

5. What job does Baron Samedi do?

He takes the dead to heaven.

6. What is the name of the Voodoo God?

Bondye.

7. Who can create a zombie?

A bokor (also known as a witchdoctor).

8. Which African country is mentioned in the text?

Angola.

9. How were the African slaves different to each other? Give three ways.

They came from different places, spoke different languages and had different religions.

10. True or false – Voodooists believe that Bondye will help them in times of need.

False – Bondye does not involve himself in human affairs.

[Back to Zombies](#)

Vegetarianism

1. Name three religions which believe vegetarianism is a good thing.

Three from – Jainism, Hinduism, Mahayana Buddhism, the Seventh-day Adventists, the Rastafari movement, the Ananda Marga movement and the Hare Krishnas.

2. Do vegans eat yoghurt?

No because it is a dairy product.

3. Why is broccoli useful to vegetarians?

It contains vitamin C which helps vegetarians absorb iron.

4. Apart from religion, what two reasons often make people choose vegetarianism?

Animal cruelty and the environment.

5. Why are chickpeas good for vegetarians to eat?

They contain protein.

6. Why don't Jains eat meat?

Because they believe every animal has a soul.

7. According to the text, why are farms often cruel places for animals?

Because the animals have little space to move.

8. What job does haemoglobin do?

It helps transport oxygen around the body.

9. What percentage of land is used for farming in America?

80%

10. True or false? - Vegetarians eat chicken.

No – chicken is poultry, which is meat.

[Back to Vegetarianism](#)

Selective breeding

1. When did humans first start selectively breeding chickens?

3400 years ago.

2. Which word tells you that guppies do not live in the sea?

Freshwater.

3. Give an example of how selective breeding is good for farmers.

Hens that lay more eggs, sheep that produce thick wool or hens that produce more meat.

4. Which two problems might a small dog have?

Heart problems and not being able to keep warm.

5. Name a type of dog which might have bone problems.

One from - Mastiffs, Saint Bernards, and Great Danes.

6. Was the first hypoallergenic cat male or female?

Male – Joshua is a male name.

7. Why don't hypoallergenic cats affect people with allergies?

Because they don't have a special protein in their saliva.

8. Where do chickens originate from?

India and South-East Asia.

9. What affects how many eggs a hen lays?

Her genes.

10. True or false – male wild guppies are completely black.

False – in the wild male guppies are black or brown, with some coloured spots.

[Back to Selective breeding](#)

Jack the Ripper

1. In which part of London did Jack the Ripper kill his victims?

In the East End (Whitechapel).

2. Why did the police think that Jack the Ripper killed Martha Tabram? Give at least two reasons.

Two from – same time, same location (place), very violent killings, she was a woman and there was no motive.

3. Why do today's experts think that Martha Tabram was not killed by Jack the Ripper?

She was stabbed but the other women were slashed. The kind of wounds.

4. The text gives three possible reasons why Jack the Ripper stopped killing. What are they?

He emigrated, he was sent to prison or he died.

5. How did Jack the Ripper's victims earn their money?

They were prostitutes.

6. According to the text, what might have been the killer's profession?

A butcher or a doctor.

7. How was the murder of Elizabeth Stride different from the others?

She was not mutilated.

8. How many times must someone kill to be called a serial killer?

Three times.

9. Why might Queen Victoria have been annoyed at this time?

Some people thought the killer was her grandson (also, possibly because someone was killing her people/subjects).

10. True or false – Jack the Ripper removed all his victims' hearts.

False – he removed the organs of some victims.

[Back to Jack the Ripper](#)

Lake Baikal

1. Which other lake is said to have a mythical creature?

Loch Ness.

2. Which two harmful chemicals are mentioned in the text?

Bleach and chlorine.

3. The omul resembles another fish. Which one?

The salmon.

4. Why might Lake Baikal cause a war?

Because countries might fight over its freshwater.

5. For how long each year is the lake covered by ice?

Five months.

6. Why is it dangerous to swim in Lake Baikal in the winter?

It is so cold it will kill a person.

7. Why was it a bad idea to build a pipeline near Lake Baikal?

There are many earthquakes and the pipeline could break and pollute the lake.

8. How many people live on the island of Olkhon?

About 1500.

9. Which politician is mentioned in the text?

Vladimir Putin

10. True or false – The Great Lakes in the US are bigger than Lake Baikal

True.

[Back to Lake Baikal](#)

Easter Island

1. Why was cutting down all the trees a bad idea?

Because they couldn't build boats to go fishing.

2. Which country did the slave traders come from?

Peru.

3. What two illnesses are mentioned in the text?

Smallpox and tuberculosis.

4. Which island is nearest to Easter Island?

Pitcairn Island.

5. Apart from cutting down all the trees, what other mistake did the islanders make?

They hunted all the flightless birds until there were none left.

6. From which country did the first visiting European ship come?

Holland ('Dutch' is the adjective for things from Holland).

7. Name two things which reduced the population of Easter Island.

Two from - war, disease, famine (lack of food), and kidnapping.

8. Which country does Easter Island belong to now?

Chile.

9. Where did the original Easter Islanders come from?

The Gambier Islands or the Marquesas Islands.

10. True or false – The bird man cult was a type of competition

True – it was a swimming race for an egg.

[Back to Easter Island](#)

Reality TV

1. What do participants do on 'American Idol'?

Sing.

2. What are two of the criticisms of reality television?

It exploits people and it takes investment away from other shows.

3. What does ANTM stand for?

America's Next Top Model.

4. Which country did 'Number 28' air in?

Holland.

5. Which of the reality shows mentioned in the text is about fashion?

America's Next Top Model.

6. According to the text, what two things do all reality shows have in common?

They do not have a script and they do not use actors.

7. When did reality television become popular?

During the 1990s and early 2000s.

8. Which two types of 'high quality' shows are mentioned in the text?

Educational programmes and documentaries.

9. In which reality show were the contestants constantly watched by cameras?

Big Brother.

10. True or false? – The reality television show 'The Family' was filmed in Great Britain?

True.

[Back to Reality TV](#)

Ancient Egypt

1. Why was the desert useful to the ancient Egyptians?

Because it separated them from other countries and invading armies.

2. Name three things that the river Nile was good for.

Three from - food, travel, water, and fertile land.

3. Which two female pharaohs are mentioned in the text?

Cleopatra and Nefertiti.

4. Who found Tutankhamen's tomb?

Howard Carter.

5. Where do you think 'the black land' got its name?

Because of the black, fertile mud left by the river Nile after flooding.

6. What two roles of the pharaoh are mentioned?

The head of government and the high priest of every temple.

7. How long might it take to mummify a dead body?

Up to 70 days.

8. From which part of ancient Egypt did King Menes come?

The North.

9. Why did the ancient Egyptians put treasures in the pharaohs' tomb?

To help them in the afterlife.

10. True or false - Cleopatra and Nefertiti were the only female pharaohs.

False – they are two well-known female pharaohs, there are others.

[Back to Ancient Egypt](#)

DNA

1. When was DNA discovered?

1953.

2. Why do scientists think all life on Earth started with the same ancestor?

Because all organisms share some of the same DNA.

3. Where are the chromosomes located?

The nucleus of each cell.

4. How did scientists make the GloFish?

They took a gene from a jellyfish and inserted it into the genome of a zebra fish.

5. What causes Down syndrome?

People with Down syndrome have an extra chromosome.

6. The text describes five different cell functions. Name three.

Three from – digestion, carrying oxygen, fighting disease, detecting light and reproduction.

7. How many chromosomes does a human being have?

46 (23 pairs).

8. To which animal are humans most closely related?

Chimpanzees ('chimps' for short).

9. DNA is an abbreviation of which words?

Deoxyribonucleic acid.

10. True or false – DNA was discovered at Oxford University?

False – it was discovered at Cambridge University.

[Back to DNA](#)

Buddhism

1. Who was the founder of Buddhism?

Siddhartha Gautama.

2. What sort of Buddhism might you find in Thailand?

Theravada Buddhism.

3. On which continent did Buddhism originate?

Asia.

4. What was the Buddha doing when he first became enlightened?

Meditating.

5. Once the Buddha became enlightened, what was the first thing he talked about?

The four noble truths.

6. Which other two world religions are mentioned in the text?

Christianity and Islam.

7. How many Buddhists are there?

Approximately 376 million.

8. Some people classify Buddhism as a philosophy, not a religion. Why?

Because Buddhism has no god.

9. Which word in the text means 'being reborn'?

Reincarnation.

10. True or false – the number of Buddhists in Europe is rising?

True - the number of Buddhists is growing in the Western world.

[Back to Buddhism](#)

Helen Keller

1. Which two organisations did Helen Keller help set up?

The Keller International organization (HKI) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

2. What did Anne Sullivan have in common with Helen Keller?

She was also blind.

3. What two diseases might have caused Helen's disability?

Scarlet fever or meningitis.

4. What word tells you that Helen believed in peace?

Pacifist (someone who believes in peace and is anti-war).

5. How old was Helen when she finished her education?

24.

6. Which three celebrities are mentioned in the text?

Alexander Graham Bell, Charlie Chaplin and Mark Twain.

7. Where did Polly Thompson come from?

Scotland.

8. Helen believed that women should be able to vote? What word tells us this?

Suffragist.

9. Which of five senses did Anne Sullivan use to teach Helen to communicate? (The five senses are – sight, taste, hearing, touch, smell).

Touch.

10. True or false – Helen Keller was well-travelled.

True – she visited over 40 countries.

[Back to Helen Keller](#)

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