

PROBEBLUETM

reading comprehension assessment

COMPANION ASSESSMENT TO PROBEGREY

STUDENT TEXTS

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PROBE **BLUE** Reading Comprehension Assessment™ **Student Texts**

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COMPANION TO PROBE **GREY**

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Round and round and round the small, black bird flew,
calling loudly again and again.

No matter how hard it tried, it just couldn't find the nest
or the tree that it was in.

Mrs Jones looked up at it and said,
"Noisy thing. Why doesn't it just go away?"

"I think it's looking for something," said the man
who had cut her old, rotting tree down that morning.

He put the wood onto the back of his truck
and slowly drove away.

He would come back tomorrow
and remove the stump of the tree.

Mrs Jones cleaned up the leaves and went inside.
She didn't give the bird another thought.

As the sun sank low in the sky, a very tired, small, black bird
settled down for the night in a tree at the end of the road.

QUESTIONS

1. Who said "Noisy thing...?"
2. Why was the bird flying round and round?
3. What were the three things the man had to do?
4. Which tree was the bird's nest in?
5. Did Mrs Jones know the bird had a nest in the tree? How do you know that?
6. '...remove the *stump*...' What does the word **stump** mean here?
7. Why did the bird have to settle in a tree at the end of the road?
8. Was it a good idea to chop the tree down? Why do you think that?

Big cats, great cats, large cats – all are names for the largest members of the cat family. Included are lions, tigers, jaguars, and leopards. Also in the family are cheetahs – big African cats; the fastest land animals in the world.

Cheetahs are different to the other big cats. They can't draw their claws back into their paws, but this is useful for extra gripping power when moving at high speeds.

Unlike other large cats, cheetahs cannot growl. They make a hissing noise or a sound like a bird chirping.

They have black marks on their faces that go from their eyes down to their mouths. The shape of the head, the very long legs, the large heart and lungs, and the rough foot pads all combine to make the cheetah a very fast runner.

They don't live very long compared to other large cats. Many cubs don't survive into adulthood. They die from starvation, disease, or are killed by other animals.

An old African story says the black marks on the cheetahs' faces are the tear stains of the mothers, crying for their lost children.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the three names given to the largest members of the cat family?
2. What animals are in the large cat family?
3. In what ways is a cheetah different to other big cats?
4. Where do cheetahs live?
5. What noise is made by all big cats except the cheetah?
6. '...*combine* to make the cheetah...fast...' What does the word **combine** mean here?
7. 'They can't *draw* their claws...' What does the word **draw** mean here?
8. Why are the black marks on a cheetah's face called 'tear stains'?
9. What two things about the cheetah's feet help it when running at speed?
10. Should cheetahs be kept in zoos? Why do you think that?

Lily is the old lady who owns the kennels on Hinton Avenue, looking after dogs when their owners go away.

Everybody knows how much she loves dogs, but her opinion of them has not always been so high. She told me her story for my magazine.

In her youth Lily had been ill. She had spent a long time in hospital.

Back home, her recovery was slow and she was often lonely.

There was an armchair by a low window overlooking the garden and when she regained her strength, Lily was able to sit in it for a short time each day.

Ruff, the neighbour's dog, would sometimes sit outside the window.

Lily didn't like dogs, so gave him no encouragement, shooing him away.

She had very little appetite, but was told that to get better she must eat everything that was cooked for her.

One afternoon, Lily was sitting in the armchair by the open window.

She looked with dismay at the meal on the tray on her lap.

'I can't eat all of this,' she thought.

She looked up and saw Ruff, tongue hanging out, staring at the tray.

That, she said, was when she realised Ruff could be useful.

"Yes. I gave him some," she said with amusement. "Well, from then on, Ruff came every day. We both enjoyed it and I slowly got better."

QUESTIONS

1. Where were Lily's kennels?
2. When was Lily in hospital?
3. Where was Ruff when he was staring at the tray?
4. Was Lily's illness serious? How do you know that?
5. Who was Lily talking to?
6. '...her *recovery* was slow...' What does the word **recovery** mean here?
7. 'She looked with *dismay*...' What does the word **dismay** mean?
8. Had Lily been able to sit up when she first came home from hospital? How do you know that?
9. What two things did Ruff do to change Lily's opinion of dogs?
10. Should Lily have fed Ruff? Why do you think that?

When the conditions are very foggy or very dark and there are no lights, therefore no visible landmarks, people lose all sense of direction. When attempting to walk directly to their destination, they usually walk around in circles. The circles are surprisingly small; on average only twenty metres in diameter. Most people end up close to where they started, but don't know it. They are totally confused.

This strange occurrence used to be explained away by saying that humans have one leg stronger than the other and that we would veer off in the direction of the weaker leg. Experiments with blindfolded people have proved this to be wrong.

Homing pigeons find their way home no matter where they start from. Like humans, they will use visual clues. They have been seen following highways, even going around roundabouts and turning at intersections.

But they are equipped with more than one method of navigation. They have iron-based crystals called magnetite in their brains. Somehow this enables them to use the Earth's magnetic field to find their way.

'Follow your nose' is a saying used if someone doesn't have a map or has only been given vague directions for getting to an unknown place. This means to act on instinct.

Interestingly, the bones in our noses contain magnetite – if only just a trace. This could suggest that early humans may have been better at finding their way through unknown territory, without relying on vision.

QUESTIONS

1. What is magnetite?
2. What two ways do homing pigeons use for navigation?
3. In finding their way home how are humans like pigeons?
4. Do people know exactly how pigeons use Earth's magnetic field? How do you know that?
5. Is the theory about one strong leg and one weak leg true? How do you know that?
6. 'When the *conditions* are...' What does the word ***conditions*** mean here?
7. '...only just a *trace*.' What does the word ***trace*** mean here?
8. Why did the people in the experiment walk around in circles?
9. How would a homing pigeon navigate its way across a sandy desert?
10. Would you like to have more magnetite in your body? Why do you think that?