

Reading Magazine



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HOW TO USE THIS MAGAZINE

Use this magazine with the question paper "Reading Year 7 — Practice Paper 1". Each part of the question paper tells you which text to read and the page it is on. Read the text first, then answer its questions. You may look back at the magazine as often as you like.

The night shift

The alarm went off at 2.45 am. For a moment Mei didn't know where she was. Then she remembered: she was thirteen today, and she had asked for the strangest birthday present any of her friends had ever heard of.

"You're sure?" Dad whispered from the doorway. He was already in his white apron, and the hallway light made a halo of his messy hair. "You can go back to sleep. No one would blame you."

"I'm sure," she said, although her body was begging her to stay under the doona.

For as long as she could remember, Dad had left for the bakery while the rest of the street was asleep. She knew him as a man who napped on the couch in the afternoons, who smelled faintly of yeast, and who missed every school assembly that started before lunch. She had always wanted to know what he actually did in those dark hours. Now she was going to find out.

The bakery was a cave of warmth after the cold street. Two ovens ticked as they heated. Flour dusted every surface like a light fall of snow, and the radio murmured an old song Mei half recognised.

Dad handed her an apron that reached her ankles. "Rule one," he said. "Everything happens in order. You can't rush bread."

For the next three hours she weighed flour on the big steel scales, watched the mixer fold the dough over and over like a slow wave, and learned to shape rolls by cupping her hand and turning the dough against the bench until it pulled itself tight. Her first ones were lumpy and lopsided. Dad baked them anyway.

At half past five the first trays came out, and the smell was so good it was almost a sound. By six, Mrs Kowalski from the flats next door was knocking on the glass, as she did every morning, to buy a loaf of rye before her shift at the hospital. Then came the tradies, the nurses, the bus drivers — all the people who were awake while Mei usually slept.

"They're my people," Dad said, sliding a warm roll into her hand. "Someone has to feed the ones who start early."

Mei looked at the line of tired faces brightening as they reached the counter, and something clicked into place. All those missed assemblies had not been because Dad didn't care. He had been here, making sure a nurse could eat before a twelve-hour shift.

At seven he drove her home to get ready for school. She fell asleep in the car with flour still in her hair.

That afternoon there was a small paper bag on the kitchen bench. Inside was one lumpy, lopsided roll, and a note in Dad's blocky capitals: YOUR FIRST BATCH. NOT BAD FOR A BEGINNER.

Why do we yawn?

Everybody does it. Babies do it before they are even born. Dogs, cats, snakes and fish do it too. Yet for such a common action, the yawn is surprisingly mysterious. Scientists still disagree about why we yawn at all.

The oxygen idea

For a long time, the most popular explanation was that we yawn to take in extra oxygen when our blood is running low. It sounds sensible, but it does not hold up. In one well-known experiment in the 1980s, volunteers breathed air with extra oxygen, and then air with extra carbon dioxide. They yawned just as often either way.

The cooling idea

A newer theory is that yawning cools the brain. When we yawn, we stretch our jaw wide and pull in a big gulp of air, which may carry heat away from the blood flowing to the head. Some studies have found that people yawn more when the air around them is cooler than their body, and less on very hot days, when a gulp of air would not cool them down. Supporters of this theory say a cooler brain is a more alert brain, which could explain why we yawn when we are bored or sleepy: the body may be trying to wake us up.

Catching a yawn

Then there is the strangest thing about yawning: it is contagious. Seeing someone yawn, hearing a yawn, even reading about yawning can set you off. (Are you yawning yet?) Contagious yawning seems to be linked to empathy, our ability to understand other people's feelings. People are more likely to catch a yawn from a family member or friend than from a stranger, and children usually do not start catching yawns until they are about four or five years old.

So why do we yawn? The honest answer is that nobody knows for certain. The yawn may do more than one job. For now it remains one of the everyday mysteries of the human body — and if you have yawned while reading this, you have just helped prove how powerful it is.

Balloons belong on the ground

Opinion — Tariq Hassan

It is a moment that looks magical in photographs: hundreds of bright balloons drifting up into a blue sky at a wedding, a sports final or a memorial. But what goes up must come down, and when balloons come down, they become rubbish, often in the places least able to cope with it.

A released balloon can travel hundreds of kilometres before it bursts or slowly loses its gas. Many end up in the ocean. There, a deflated balloon with its trailing ribbon looks remarkably like a jellyfish, one of the favourite foods of sea turtles. A study of seabirds found that although balloons made up only a small share of the plastic the birds had swallowed, they were by far the most likely item to kill them. Ribbons tangle around the legs and wings of birds and other animals.

Some balloon makers claim their latex balloons are biodegradable. The word sounds reassuring, but latex can take months or even years to break down, especially in cold sea water. Months is more than enough time for a turtle to mistake one for a meal.

Several Australian states have already banned or restricted deliberate mass balloon releases. The rest of the country should follow.

None of this means our celebrations have to be dull. Bubbles, flags, paper streamers, planting a tree or lighting candles can all mark an important moment without leaving a trail of litter across the sea.

When we release a balloon, we are not sending it to the sky. We are sending it to someone else's beach, or into someone else's stomach. It is time we kept our balloons on the ground.

Nan's garden, after

The tomatoes didn't know she'd gone.
They kept on reddening in rows,
the beans kept climbing up their strings,
the roses kept their pink and gold.

We came in March to clear the house.
Mum boxed the plates. I found her gloves
still on the tap, still curled to fit
the shape of hands that pulled the weeds.

Outside, the lemon tree was heavy.
Nobody spoke. Mum picked one, then
another, till her arms were full,
and held them like she used to hold me.

We drove home with the windows down,
the whole car smelling sharp and bright,
and every meal that week had lemon —
Nan's way of staying for a while.

How do noise-cancelling headphones work?

If you have ever worn noise-cancelling headphones on a plane, you will know the strange moment when you switch them on and the roar of the engines suddenly fades away. It feels a little like magic, but it is really a clever use of the science of sound.

Sound is a wave

Sound travels through the air as a wave of pressure. Air particles are squeezed together, then spread apart, over and over again, and our ears detect these changes. We can draw a sound wave as a wavy line with peaks, where the air is squeezed, and troughs, where it is spread out.

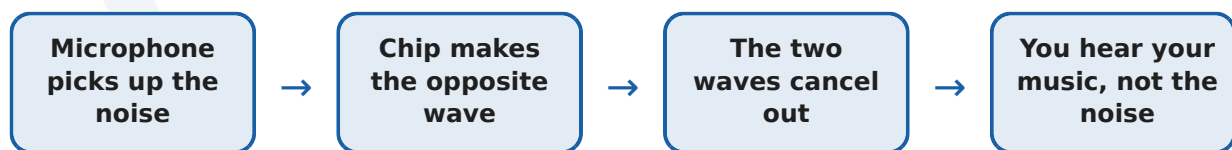
Fighting a wave with a wave

Noise-cancelling headphones have tiny microphones on the outside of each ear cup. The microphones pick up the noise around you: the engine hum, the air conditioner, the traffic. A small computer chip inside the headphones then creates a new sound wave that is the exact opposite of the noise. Where the noise has a peak, the new wave has a trough.

When the two waves meet, they cancel each other out, and the noise seems to disappear. Scientists call this destructive interference.

Why some sounds still get through

Noise cancelling works best on steady, low sounds, like the drone of an engine, because the chip can predict what is coming next. Sudden or high sounds, like a baby crying or a door slamming, change too quickly to cancel completely. That is why the headphones also have soft, padded ear cups, which block some sound in the ordinary way.



Fred Hollows: the doctor who gave sight

Fred Hollows was born in New Zealand in 1929. He trained as a doctor and specialised in eye surgery, and in 1965 he moved to Sydney, where he became the head of the eye department at a large hospital.

Seeing the problem

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Hollows visited communities in outback Australia and was shocked by what he found. Many Aboriginal people, including children, had trachoma, an infectious eye disease that scars the inside of the eyelids and can lead to blindness. Trachoma had been wiped out in most wealthy countries, yet here it was, in one of the richest nations on Earth.

Taking the clinic on the road

From 1976 to 1978, Hollows led a national program in which teams of doctors and nurses travelled to Aboriginal communities across Australia. They visited more than four hundred communities, examined tens of thousands of people, and treated thousands for trachoma and other eye diseases.

A cheaper way to see

Hollows later worked in Nepal, Eritrea and Vietnam, where millions of people were blind from cataracts, a clouding of the lens inside the eye. Cataracts can be fixed with a short operation that replaces the cloudy lens with a plastic one, but the plastic lenses were too expensive for poor countries. Hollows believed they could be made for a small fraction of the price. After his death, the foundation he had started built factories in Nepal and Eritrea to do exactly that.

A lasting gift

Fred Hollows died in 1993. He had been named Australian of the Year in 1990, although he was famously blunt and had little interest in fame. The Fred Hollows Foundation has since helped restore sight to millions of people. His belief was simple: every person, wherever they live, deserves to see.

Tidebreaker

Film review

Tidebreaker, the new animated adventure from Lantern Studios, is gorgeous to look at and frustrating to watch.

The film follows Nia, a twelve-year-old who lives in a floating village and dreams of sailing beyond the reef. When a storm sinks the village's fishing fleet, she sets out in a stolen boat to find the legendary Tidebreaker, a whale said to calm any sea.

Visually, the film is stunning. The ocean is almost a character in its own right, shifting from glassy calm to towering grey walls of water, and the underwater scenes glow with a light that seems to come from inside the screen. Younger viewers will love Scuttle, Nia's wisecracking hermit crab companion, who steals every scene he is in.

Unfortunately, the story does not match the pictures. The first half moves slowly, with too many scenes of Nia gazing sadly at the horizon, and the ending is rushed. Characters who seem important early on simply vanish, and the big final twist can be seen coming from a mile away.

The songs are pleasant but forgettable. I could not hum a single one on the way out of the cinema.

Still, there is plenty here for families. Tidebreaker has heart, a brave and likeable hero and some genuinely breathtaking moments. Just don't expect it to stay with you once the lights come up.

Rating: 3 out of 5



How Year 7 spends its afternoons

This term, the Student Council at Lakeside College asked 200 Year 7 students how they usually spend the three hours between the end of school and dinner. The survey was anonymous, so students could answer honestly without worrying about what teachers or parents might think. Here are the results.

Screens took up the biggest share of the afternoon by far, about 40 per cent. Reading for fun came last, at just 11 minutes.

One result surprised the Student Council. When students were asked what they would most like to do more of, the most popular answer was not more screen time. It was to hang out with friends in person.

What would you like to do more of?

- Hang out with friends in person: 38%
- Sport: 24%
- Sleep: 19%
- Screens: 12%
- Something else: 7%

The Council plans to use the results to argue for more lunchtime and after-school clubs.

Average time per afternoon

Activity	Minutes
Screens (phones, games, TV)	72
Homework	34
Sport or exercise	31
Chores and jobs	18
Other	14
Reading for fun	11