Reading 3
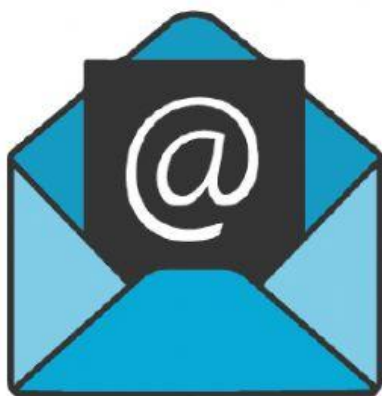
Skills:

- Details

- Cause-effect

- Make inferences

- Understand negative facts.

Getting started: How do you pronounce this symbol (**@**) in English?

THE ORIGIN OF THE SYMBOL @

@ is one of the essential elements of electronic communication, thanks to e-mail addresses and Twitter interactions. Its name changes from language to language, and it even has nicknames. For example, it is called the "snail" by Italians, the "monkey tail" by the Dutch, while Germans call it *Klammeraffe* (meaning 'spider monkey'). @ has even been inducted into the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art of New York, United States, which understands its modern use as an example of "elegance, economy, intellectual transparency, and a sense of the possible future directions that are part of the arts of our time."

The origin of the symbol itself, one of the most stylish characters on the keyboard, is something of a mystery. One theory is that medieval monks, looking for **shortcuts** while copying manuscripts, turned a Latin word into a kind of d with a tail. It is also said that it came from the French word for "at"—à—with was aesthetically modified. The first documented use was in 1536, in a letter by Francesco Lapi, a

Florentine merchant, who used @ to represent units of wine, which were shipped in large containers.

The symbol's modern obscurity ended in 1971, when a computer scientist named Ray Tomlinson, developer of a network called Arpanet (precursor of the Internet), was facing a dilemma: how to connect people who programmed computers with one another. At that time, each programmer was typically connected to a particular machine via a phone connection and a teletype machine—basically a keyboard with a **built-in** printer. The problem was these computers weren't connected to one another.

Tomlinson's challenge was how to address a message created by one person and sent through Arpanet to someone at a different computer. The address needed an individual's name as well as the name of the computer, which might service many users. Tomlinson's eyes fell on @, poised above "P" on his Model 33 teletype. "I was mostly looking for a symbol that wasn't used much," he told Smithsonian. "And there weren't a lot of options. It could have been an exclamation point or a comma or an equal sign, but that wouldn't have made much sense." Tomlinson chose @, "probably because it wasn't part of the alphabet," he said. Using his naming system, he sent himself an e-mail, which traveled from one teletype in his room, through Arpanet, and back to a different teletype in his room. With that message, the ancient @, once nearly obsolete, became the essential symbol of a revolution in how humans connect.

Adapted from https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-accidental-history-of-the-symbol-18054936/

Glossary:
- **Shortcut**: a record of the address of a file, website, or other data that is made so you can access the file, etc. quickly.
- **Built-in**: incorporated

Answer the following questions:

1. Who call the symbol @ "Monkey Tail?"
   a. People from the United States
   b. People from Italy
   c. People from Germany
   d. People from the Netherlands

2. What is NOT stated about @ in the text?
   a. Its origin is completely clear.
   b. It was already being used in the 16th century.
   c. Medieval monks may have given birth to the symbol.
   d. It is now part of a museum because it symbolizes our current world.

3. The modern use of the symbol @ is the consequence of
   a. the work of a team of programmers.
   b. a connectivity problem.
   c. a big effort to create the internet.
   d. connecting phones to a machine.

4. What is implied about @ in the last paragraph?
   a. The message Ray sent was forwarded to some colleagues.
   b. It was an extremely popular symbol at that time.
   c. It could have disappeared if Tomlinson hadn't chosen it.
   d. Thanks to that symbol, people nowadays can connect.

What do you think?

How do you pronounce the following symbols?

.   /   *   #   %   _