



Reading comprehension EXAM

G.EXP B2 EoY-B

Read the article and choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

1 In the first paragraph, the writer says that most people

- A are afraid of bees.
- B enjoy stories about bees.
- C don't try to understand bees.
- D know how important bees are.

2 What does the writer say about the 'explorers'?

- A They choose the final site for new hives.
- B They use very complex thought processes.
- C They enable all the bees to choose the new hive.
- D They are often incapable of choosing the best sites.

3 The word 'it' , in the last line of the fourth paragraph, refers to

- A the system bees use to choose a hive.
- B the location of the new hive.
- C the result of the search for a new hive.
- D the conclusion the writer reaches about bee hives.

4 Why does the writer quote from Mr Spock in *Star Trek*?

- A to show how sci-fi can influence the way people think
- B to clarify the priorities people should have when making group decisions
- C to describe how people should talk to each other
- D to make a joke in what is a serious article

5 What does the writer think about restaurants in 'out-of-the-way locations'? (paragraph5)

- A People don't discover them by chance.
- B They are always difficult to find.
- C No-one knows about them.
- D They are often excellent.

Let's all think about bees ...

Like many people, I've always had a fear of bees. I don't know whether it's how they look, the way they fly, the noise they make – whatever it is, I've usually chosen the easy way and tried to ignore them. Yet I've discovered that this is a short-sighted attitude for any of us to take. It's common knowledge that bees are vital for the environment –they play a crucial role in the circle of life, though total awareness of what they actually do is frequently incomplete or even wrong. Sci-fi stories base whole plot-lines on what might happen were the bees to leave the planet, and surprisingly I really enjoy those!

However, there's even more to bees than one might suspect. Apparently they're great at decision-making – who knew? When bees need to find a new hive, they don't simply fly around looking for any old place. No, they're more sophisticated than that. What they do is send out groups of bees – let's call them 'explorers' – to assess potential places, and report back. Clearly they don't write reports or give presentations – they use particular body movements to explain what they've found. All the bees then make a group decision by going back to each of the most popular sites identified by the explorers and repeating their body movements. When all the bees (the swarm) perform the same movements at the same time in the same place – bingo, that's the site for them. It must be great fun to watch!

Ok - so what do we learn from these bees? One study shows that if they had simply chosen a single site by chance, the swarm might have been left without a hive and would therefore have been exposed to danger. On the other hand, if they had simply followed the initial suggestions of the explorers without doing any follow-up research for themselves, then they might not have achieved the best outcome. The conclusion is that *it* seems to be a very efficient way of making decisions.

Apparently, we could all learn a thing or two from this process. People in general tend to be poor at making group decisions because things get in the way –time, ego, promotion prospects can all influence the thinking process of individuals within a group. It's not easy to put self-interest to one side and make a decision that's in the best interests of everyone. Mr Spock in *Star Trek* said, 'the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few' – but how often is that actually the case in real life?

Let's look at some examples of how people make bad decisions. Think about something as simple as the restaurant we choose to go to. If we visit a new town and need to choose a restaurant, knowing nothing about any of them in advance, it's likely that we will choose the one with the most people eating in it. This is based on the theory that everyone has chosen to eat there because it's good. But this could be misleading. Everyone there could have followed the same line of thought, but the first people in the restaurant could simply have chosen it by chance. The result – we all make a bad decision and eat bad food. Likewise, if people make their choice simply by wandering around and eating in restaurants they happen to come across, superb restaurants in *out-of-the-way locations* may not get many customers because people just don't find them.

The bees' approach avoids both these problems. Nature has given them the right mix of independence (they make their own initial choice) and interdependence (they accept the final decision together). So, when drawing conclusions about human behaviour, you should take a leaf out of their book. Understanding the way they make decisions can improve the way people make their own group decisions. Obviously it's a mistake to ignore bees!

Part3

You are going to read an article about the famous novelist Charles Dickens. For questions 11–18, choose from the members A–D. The members may be chosen more than once.

Which member(s):

- 1 admires Dickens for getting what he wanted in life?
- 2 talks about how Dickens' own life made him very aware of social problems?
- 3 explains how publishers helped to keep Dickens's readers interested?
- 4 explains how most people get to know Dickens's work these days?
- 5 gives examples of things Dickens did to improve society?
- 6 mentions that Dickens worried about money even as an adult?
- 7 says that readers these days prefer modern books?
- 8 thinks that even today life is hard for people at the bottom of the social ladder?

What do you know about Charles Dickens?

This week Book Club invites members to write about England's most famous novelist

A
 In the course of thirty-four years Charles Dickens wrote fifteen long novels with strong storylines, complicated plots, unexpected twists and unforgettable characters with extraordinary names – Fagin, Oliver Twist, The Artful Dodger, Uriah Heep, Ebenezer Scrooge, Tiny Tim and Abel Magwitch. He also had a huge number of short stories and newspaper articles published. He used his sharp observation and dark humour to bring people's attention to the social problems of his time. It's really easy to learn something about the injustice and awful living conditions of Victorian England from books like *Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times*, *Bleak House*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield*. Apart from writing fiction, Dickens contributed money to help poor children and tried hard to get laws changed on child employment. By the time he died in 1870, this hardworking, energetic and talented writer had achieved what he deserved. His childhood dreams of fame, success and climbing the social ladder had come true and he had become a literary celebrity in England and America.

B
 Dickens didn't have an easy start in life. He was born in 1812, and was the second of eight children. His father had a habit of spending too much and they were always short of cash. The family moved house constantly with his parents struggling to pay the rent. Family life reached a crisis point in 1824, when Charles was twelve. His father had got into serious debt and his mother had sold everything the family owned, but still there wasn't enough to pay the money they owed and put food on the table. His father was sent to debtors' jail and young Charles was forced to leave school and get a factory job, working ten hours a day in his attempt to earn enough money to get his father out of prison. This experience left Dickens with a fear of poverty for the rest of his life. But Dickens's extremely difficult childhood had a positive side; it gave him great understanding of the lives of poor people and he was able to write about life at the bottom of society from his own personal experience.

C

Dickens was fantastically popular in his time. There was a brilliant way of getting his audience hooked: His novels were published just a chapter at a time in weekly or monthly publications, and each chapter ended with the hero in an extremely dangerous situation, or with a shocking discovery about a main character. Just as with soap operas today, it made people hungry for more. Anyone who couldn't read tried to get someone more educated to read the new chapter to them when it came out. Today the books are classics and still sell well but they aren't as widely read as in Dickens's day. For one thing, they're far from being quick to read. The old-fashioned language as well as the length of the novels requires a lot more concentration than today's popular novels.

D

There have been a huge number of adaptations of Charles Dickens's work for TV, stage and film – more than 200, in fact. It is through these adaptations more than through reading the original texts that many people get to know his work today. As a result, almost everyone is familiar with some of Dickens's stories and characters. One reason for their continuing and lasting popularity, whether as books or on screen, is that Dickens is not afraid to look critically at the dark side of Victorian society, revealing a tough, hard world. In fact, to describe disgusting housing or terrible working conditions, for instance, or cruel and strict people we use the word 'Dickensian', a term which comes from Charles Dickens's name. Sadly, many of Dickens's views of society are still relevant today. People still beg on city streets, society is still cruel to the poor and opportunities are not equal.