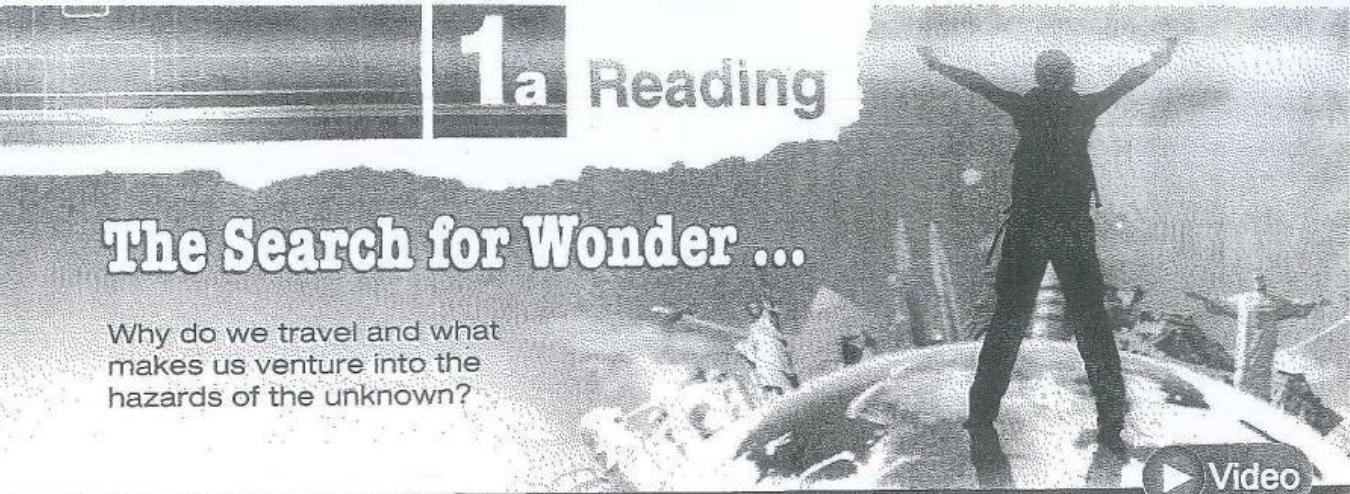


The Search for Wonder ...

Why do we travel and what makes us venture into the hazards of the unknown?



▶ Video

We travel, initially, to lose ourselves; and we travel, next, to find ourselves. We travel to 1) open our hearts and eyes and learn more about the world than our newspapers will accommodate. We travel to bring what little we can, in our ignorance and knowledge, to those parts 5 of the globe whose riches are differently dispersed. And we travel, in essence, to become young fools again — to slow time down and get taken in, and lose ourselves. Travel is a wondrous thing that guides us toward a better balance of wisdom and compassion — of seeing the world clearly, and yet feeling it truly. For seeing without feeling can be 10 uncaring; while feeling without seeing can be blind. Yet for me the first great joy of travelling is simply the luxury of leaving all my beliefs and certainties at home, and seeing everything I thought I knew in a different light, and from a crooked angle.

The sovereign freedom of travelling comes from the fact that it whirls 15 you around and 2) turns you upside down, and 3) stands everything you took for granted on its head. If a diploma can famously be a passport (to a journey through hard realism), then a passport can be a diploma (for a crash course in cultural relativism). And the first lesson we learn on the road, whether we like it or not, is how provisional and provincial 20 are the things we imagine to be universal.

We travel, then, in part just to shake up our complacencies by seeing all the moral and political urgencies, the life-and-death dilemmas, that we seldom have to face at home. Travel is the best way we have of rescuing the humanity of places, and saving them from abstraction 25 and ideology. And in the process, we also get saved from abstraction ourselves, and come to see how much we can bring to the places we visit, and how much we can become a kind of carrier pigeon transporting back and forth what every culture needs. For in closed or impoverished places, like Pagan or Lhasa or Havana, "we are the eyes and ears 30 of the people we meet", their only contact with the world outside. One of the challenges of travel, therefore, is learning how to import — and export — dreams with tenderness.

1 Read the text. Look at the phrases in bold and try to understand their meaning from the context. Then match them to the meanings below.

- 1 become young fools again
- 2 lose ourselves
- 3 feeling without seeing can be blind
- 4 shake up our complacencies
- 5 (to be) objects of scrutiny
- 6 latch onto some sense of spirituality

- a to attach oneself to sth more meaningful
- b to return to a silly youthful state
- c to be closely judged
- d to get carried away
- e to react only emotionally can lead to not understanding sth correctly
- f to challenge our sense of security

By now, all of us have heard the old Marcel Proust line about how the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new places but in seeing with new eyes. Yet one of the subtler beauties of travel is that it enables you to bring new eyes to the people you encounter. Thus even as holidays help you appreciate your own home more — not least by seeing it through a distant admirer's eyes — they help you bring new appreciative — distant — eyes to the places you visit. For many of us, travel is a quest not just for the unknown, but the unknowing; I, at least, travel in search of an innocent eye that can return me to a more innocent self. I tend to believe more abroad than I do at home and I tend to be more easily excited abroad, and even kinder.

In that spirit, it's vitally important to remember that all travel is a two-way transaction, a point intrinsic to travel that we all too easily forget. For what we often ignore when we go abroad is that we are objects of scrutiny much as the people we scrutinise, and we are being consumed by the cultures we consume. At the very least, we are objects of speculation (and even desire) who can seem as exotic to the people around us as they do to us.

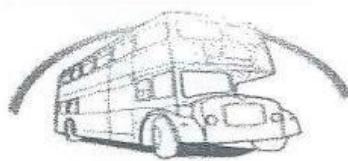
Travel, at heart, is a kind of life-changing ritual. A desperate way for modern secular selves to latch onto some sense of spirituality that enriches us as people. A chance to share something meaningful with others while keeping our minds mobile and awake. As Harvard philosopher George Santayana wrote, "There is wisdom in turning often as possible from the familiar to the unfamiliar; it keeps the mind nimble; it kills prejudice, and it fosters humour." Travel, in the end, is a heightened state of awareness, in which we are receptive, undimmed, familiar and ready to be transformed. That is why the best trips, I think, are the best adventures, never really end.

Check these words

- venture • ignorance • disperse
- from a crooked angle • sovereign
- whirl sb around • famously
- relativism • provisional • provincial
- abstraction • ideology • impoverish
- subtle • appreciative • intrinsic
- scrutinise • secular • latch onto
- nimble • prejudice • receptive
- undimmed

2

 Work with a partner and discuss what the author's opinion about travel is. Find the phrases in the text that support your answer.



Unit 1a

1. Venture:
2. Ignorance:
3. Disperse:
4. From a crooked angle:
5. Sovereign:
6. Whirl sb around:
7. Famously:
8. Relativism:
9. Provisional:
10. Provincial:
11. Abstraction:
12. Ideology:
13. Impoverished:
14. Subtle:
15. Appreciate:
16. Intrinsic:
17. Scrutinize:
18. Secular:
19. Latch onto:
20. Nimble:
21. Prejudice:
22. Receptive:
23. Undimmed: