

Year 7

# Reading Magazine

## Example test

# Read books – and change lives!

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Every \$4 you raise will help send one brand new book to a library in Sub-Saharan Africa, where books really can change lives.



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- 1 Register on the Internet.**
- 2 Find sponsors. Ask friends and family to give you money for every book you read.**
- 3 Read as many books as you can in one month.**
- 4 Collect the money from your sponsors.**
- 5 Send the money you raise to Book Aid International.**

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## **Why should you help?**

Many adults and children in Sub-Saharan Africa cannot read very well. Families often do not have money to pay for books of their own. Book Aid International helps to provide books and libraries. Without this help, many African children might not see or read a book during their childhood.



“I am a Maasai boy and one day our school was invited to a reading tent in Vigwaza. We walked for almost three hours to reach the main road. From there we boarded a bus to Vigwaza. There were many other children from other schools there. I chose a book called *Mgabga Pazi*. The story was very, very nice and I enjoyed it. In our school there were no such books. When we arrived home everybody was exhausted, but we were very excited to tell our parents what we had seen. The reading tent made me see these books for the first time in my life, so I will always remember it.”

# A Special Day

*An extract from Finders Keepers by Emily Rodda*

On Saturday Patrick woke up with a little shock, knowing that this was a special day. For a moment he couldn't think exactly why, and then, with an excited flutter of his stomach, he remembered. At ten o'clock today he was going to find out once and for all about Finders Keepers. He got dressed more carefully than usual, went downstairs and turned on the TV. Quickly he switched channels. Cartoons, cartoons, advertisement, man talking, snow, snow ... and still nothing at all on Channel 8.

"Patrick, tune it in, darling, if you're going to watch." Judith wandered past with the newspaper under her arm and her eyes half closed. She headed for the kitchen. Patrick turned off the TV and followed.

"What's for breakfast, Mum?"

"We'll see," Judith murmured vaguely, plugging in the electric kettle. She blinked sleepily at him and smiled. "You look nice, darling," she said. "You're all ready. But we can't go till eight-thirty at the earliest, you know. Nothing'll be open till then."

Patrick's stomach lurched. "We aren't going out, are we?" he asked anxiously.

She began to make the tea. "Don't say you've forgotten!" she said.

"I promised you, last Saturday. Your new sneakers, remember?"

"Oh—oh, but I can't go out this morning, Mum. There's something I've got to watch on TV. At ten o'clock. I've got to! My sneakers'll be all right for another week," gabbled Patrick, panic-stricken.

Judith faced him, hands on hips. "Patrick," she said wearily, "it's all organised."

# The outsider

*On an Arctic island long ago, a stranger is approaching a village.*

"Papa," I yell. "Someone is coming."

Papa gathers Uncle and the other men. They come to stand beside Finn, Tuaq and me in a show of communal strength.

"He must be from one of the groups that have already arrived at the coast," Uncle suggests. Papa nods. He doesn't take his eyes off the approaching figure.

"Get Nana," he tells Miki.

If the man wants to stay, Nana will decide. She's already walking towards us, wearing her priestess cape trimmed with raven feathers and arctic fox fur.

"Hullo-o-o," the man calls into the wind.

Papa waits until he can see the stranger's eyes. The man is not from any villages we join with on the coast.

"Good morning," Papa says cautiously.

"I am Hulag," the man responds.

Papa doesn't say his name. Instead he nods in Nana's direction. "This is Ananaksaq." Nana is famous throughout the icelands and Papa is reminding Hulag how powerful our village is.

"It's an honour to meet you." Hulag's eyes measure Nana up and down. He doesn't look impressed. His grin says he thinks it will be easy to charm this old woman with an oil-stained parka and dirty face.

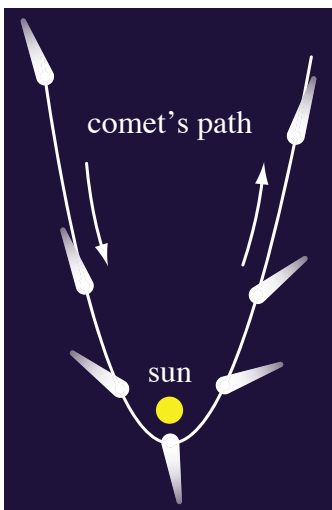
Papa leads, but Nana decides, and she has made her first decision. This man must wait out in the cold.



# Comets

*tail of gas and dust*

*the nucleus of a comet*



*Figure 1: A comet's path around the Sun*

Comets are made from debris left over when our Solar System was formed. The solid part of a comet, the nucleus, is a chunk of ice typically measuring a few kilometres across. The ice in a comet is mainly made up of frozen ammonia, methane and water. Harvard University astronomer Fred L. Whipple, a pioneer in comet research, described the nucleus as a 'dirty iceberg' to reflect the fact that bits and pieces of dust and rocky material are mixed in with the ice.

There are over 3000 known comets. They travel in various orbits around the Sun, usually going deep into the far reaches of our Solar System. The orbits of some comets bring them close to the Sun after many years in darkness. When they come near the Sun, comets reflect the Sun's light and can therefore be seen in our sky. Some comets take between two and three hundred years to orbit the Sun.

The Sun's heat and light cause comets to shed material, which normally forms into the characteristic long tail. As a comet approaches the Sun, the heat makes it expand, evaporating gas and releasing dust. The gas and dust form a fuzzy head and a long tail. Comet tails always point away from the Sun, regardless of the direction of the comet's motion.

One of the most famous comets is Halley's Comet, which appears in our skies approximately every 75 years. When it last came close to the Sun, in 1986, it was not as bright as expected. Recently, a much more spectacular comet was Hale-Bopp. It shone brightly in the night skies in 1996 and 1997, and had an impressive double tail that was easy to see with the naked eye for several months.



# Pet dogs – what do you think?

May 21

Dear Editor,

Dogs are working animals, not pets. They belong out on the farm, rounding up sheep and cattle. In the city they are just a smelly, noisy nuisance. They leave their mess all over the streets, and some of them never stop barking.

Where are their owners? Why are these supposedly wonderful friends left alone to pine and whine and dig up the garden, or to bark at anyone who dares to walk past 'their' house?

If we must have dogs in the city, they need to be trained properly. Aside from the street-poopers and the barkers, there are the chasers and the bounders. These dreadful creatures rush up and almost knock you flat before you have time to decide if they are greeting you or attacking you.

Farm dogs earn their keep, but these city slickers consume far more than their fair share of the world's resources. And of course, it's not just scraps. It's gourmet cuisine, individually tinned or freeze-dried, which the pampered darlings can eat at their leisure from personalised doggy bowls, before having a home-visit haircut and shampoo or retiring to their fur-lined baskets.

Sarah Williston

May 28

Dear Editor,

Yes, Sarah Williston (May 21), we do give dogs a good life, but they pay us back generously, with affection and intelligence and good humour.

Dogs are wonderful companions, loyal and trustworthy. They will play safely with the kids, or keep a house-bound person company all day long. Dogs are increasingly being used in nursing homes and hospitals as a welcoming and calming presence, and in some places, teachers even have a pet dog in the classroom.

It is true that training a dog takes considerable time and effort, but it is time well-spent. Taking responsibility for a canine pet builds character, as well as offering a lot of pleasure.

Sincerely,  
John Bonavista



# The first day

*On his first day at a new school, Michael has been sent to the Principal's office.*

'I'm Michael. I'm new here.' I gave her my best shallow smile and hoped she'd take the offer. She had to have better things to be doing with her time.

'I know who you are, Michael, and I know why you're here.' In other words shut up and let me do the talking. Fair enough too. I took the advice. She didn't look all that angry though. If anything she almost seemed amused by me and her tone was friendly. I tried to remind myself who she was, in case it was some sort of trap. She took a deep breath, like I was a small part in a big battle she'd long since stopped trying to win, and smiled at me.

'You're hardly the first person to change schools, Michael, and you're certainly not the first to try to make an impression. And just between you and me, you're not the first to be sent here by Mr Jensen.' She stopped, so I gave a little nod and mumbled my agreement, which seemed to please her. 'Quite. So what do you think we should do about this?'

'Maybe we could just chalk it up to experience,' I tried, heartened by her apparent good humour. She acted as if she hadn't heard me.

'Were you pleased your family decided to move here, Michael?'

'Um, not pleased exactly,' I admitted.

'And how have you found us?' It was bizarre. She was beginning to sound like some old auntie stuck for conversation during a Christmas visit.

'All right, I suppose.'

'Yes, we are.' She smiled at something I couldn't even guess at.

'And you think we should just leave this here do you?' It had to be a trap. I nodded, not trusting myself to say anything useful.

'Let me just tell you this then. You don't want to cross me, Michael. You'll find me a very loyal person to my staff. Do you understand that?' Again I nodded. 'Of course I'll have to ring home, to let them know things haven't started too well for you, but apart from that I think you should just get back to class and concentrate on keeping a low profile, don't you?'

It didn't feel right. She was being reasonable, no doubt about that, but I couldn't quite trust her. There was something about the way she looked at me when she spoke, like she had some private joke going I would never understand. And she was an adult. There had to be something in it for her.

# Salinity – an environmental emergency

Salinity is one of Australia's greatest environmental problems. It occurs when too much salt rises from under the ground to the surface and ruins the soil. In 2000, there were 2.5 million hectares of salt-affected land in Australia. This may increase to 17 million hectares by 2050.

## Rising watertable

Land clearing is the major cause of Australia's dryland salinity problem. Trees act as pumps, removing water from the soil and keeping the water level in the ground well below the surface. This level is called the watertable. Water absorbed by the roots travels through the trunk and out through the leaves into the air. In a day, over 700 litres of water may pass through the leaves of a fully grown river red gum.

Beneath the ground across much of Australia there are large deposits of salt laid down by ancient seas. The salt is harmless underground, but when it comes to the surface it does damage. When trees are removed the watertable rises, bringing the salt with it.

## Costs

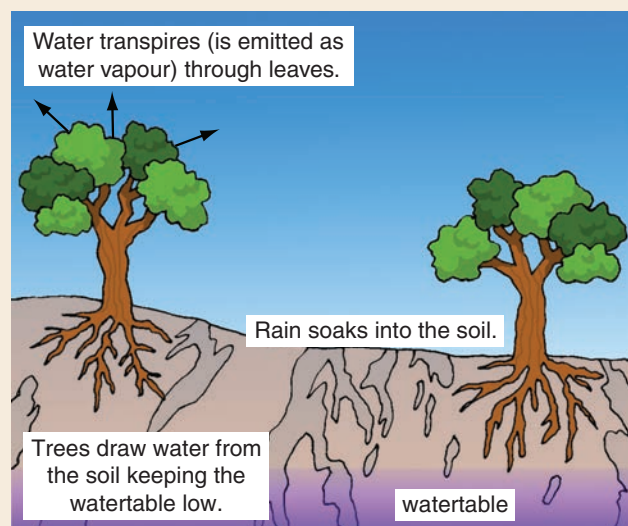
The cost of salinity to Australia's farming production is over \$250 million a year, and the cost is increasing. The CSIRO estimates that salinity will cause the extinction of 1000 species of Australian plants and animals. Salinity also damages water pipes, roads, houses and parks. In the city of Wagga Wagga, this type of damage costs over \$3 million each year. The level of salt in the Murray River is also increasing, and by 2020 the water in Adelaide piped from the Murray may be too salty to drink.

## Halting the salt

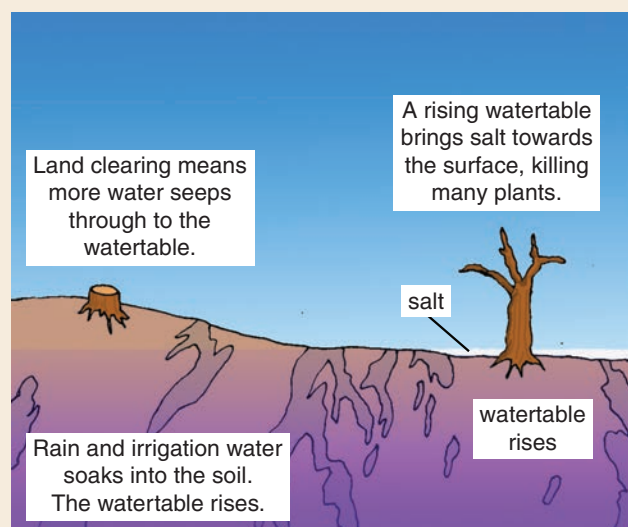
Replanting native trees is a very effective method of lowering the watertable. Native grasses have long roots that prevent water from rising to the surface, unlike many introduced grasses that have shallow roots.

## Slow change

For many years, the practices that led to today's salinity problems went on without anyone knowing the consequences. This was because the effects of land clearing on watertables were not immediately obvious. Similarly, the effects of changing these practices will not become noticeable for decades, because it will take that long for seedlings planted now to become trees and restore watertables to their natural levels.



**Figure 1** *Uncleared landscape*



**Figure 2** *Cleared landscape*



# Avatar

*Below are two reviews of the science-fiction film, Avatar, written and directed by James Cameron and starring Sam Worthington.*

## Review 1

There's no argument that, as a showcase for the immersive potential of 3D visual effects technology, James Cameron's long-awaited \$300 million sci-fi epic Avatar is an unqualified triumph.

But as a story designed to engage, enthrall and entertain adult audiences for almost three hours, it is a major disappointment, strewn with weak characters, environmental platitudes and anti-progress clichés.

Set on the distant, forest-covered moon of Pandora, the story tells of Jake Sully (Sam Worthington), a paraplegic former marine recruited by the heavily-militarised security division of an interplanetary mining corporation that is having trouble with the natives, an aggressive blue-skinned race known as the Na'vi, who look like they have spent too long at the gym.

The lush alien world Cameron creates is a magnificent, photo-realistic landscape of multicoloured dinosaurs, waterfalls and floating mountains. But with its patronising, predictable images of noble savages, evil technology and gigantic bulldozers crunching their way through precious rainforests, the film often feels like a megalithic piece of green propaganda.

A compulsive envelope-pusher, Cameron invented ground-breaking visual processing techniques for the film, but perhaps he should have spent a little less time obsessing over the technology and a tad more developing the story beyond the compendium of clichés it regrettably is.

## Review 2

The good news is that the most costly film ever made is one of the best films of the year; not because the plotting is original, but because of the sheer film-making skills, soaring imagination and technical expertise that James Cameron brings to a timeless story of good and evil.

Much in the film may not be very new (though the film is spectacularly three-dimensional, the plotting constantly threatens to lapse into two dimensions), but somehow it all works wonderfully well, thanks mainly to Cameron's storytelling skills and to the movie's fantastically detailed vision, including six-legged horses and futuristic war machines.

Sam Worthington acquits himself extremely well as the hero, even though he's transformed and unrecognisable as the avatar Jake for much of the time. Stephen Lang and Giovanni Ribisi are wonderfully hissable villains. However, Avatar succeeds not so much because of its cast and narrative, but for the amazing world created by Cameron and his designers and special effects wizards.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### Comets

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### Pet dogs – what do you think?

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### The first day

Extract from *Lester* by Bernard Beckett, Longacre Press, 1999. Reproduced with permission of Random House New Zealand.

### Salinity – an environmental emergency

Adapted extract and illustrations from *Australia's Environment: how people have changed the environment* by Greg Pyers, Echidna Books, 2002. Reproduced with permission of Pearson Education Australia. Illustrations re-drawn by Yuko Fujita.

### Avatar

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