

ANIMAL MYTHS (W.B 18-19)

- a** Criticising my brother's driving is like a red rag to a bull. He'll lose his temper and you'll end up walking instead of getting a lift! The idiom 'like a red rag to a bull' is a useful way of describing something that is guaranteed to make another person angry, but where does it come from? Well, it's common knowledge that the colour of blood makes bulls angry – that's why a matador's cape is red, right? Wrong: bulls are actually colour-blind and it is the movement of the cape, and not its colour, that makes them charge at you. This is one of many common myths about the walking, flying, swimming and crawling creatures with whom we share our beautiful planet.
- b** The idiom 'as blind as a bat' is often used to describe someone who can't find something that's right in front of them. However, even a thorough search is unlikely to reveal a truly blind bat because in fact, all species in the bat family have eyes and are capable of sight. About 70% of the **nocturnal** animals use something called echolocation to navigate, but that doesn't mean they can't see. The remaining 30%, mainly the larger species, can see well at night. Another bat myth is that they love human hair. While they are known to occasionally dive towards people at high speed, scientific evidence shows that they are actually hunting insects and are not irresistibly attracted to your beautiful long hair!
- c** The idiom 'to bury your head in the sand' means to ignore a problem in the hope that it will go away. The saying is based on the behaviour of ostriches, known for using their beaks to dig holes in which to hide their head from enemies. The only problem is that this is not actually normal ostrich behaviour. The myth that the world's largest birds do this is probably based on the writings of Pliny the Elder. He was a famous Roman naturalist who suggested around two thousand years ago that ostriches 'imagine, when they have thrust their head and neck into a bush, that the whole of their body is concealed.' Considering ostriches are the fastest creatures on two legs and have a kick powerful enough to kill a lion, they are much more likely to run or fight than try to hide.
- d** Moving from underground to underwater, there are several common myths about **marine** creatures. Firstly, the idea that fish, and especially goldfish, have a memory of just a few seconds is something people seem to remember, but ought to forget. Experiments suggest

a fish's memory is much better than that, and can be counted in months rather than seconds. Next, sharks and the disturbing idea that these incredible predators can detect a single drop of blood in the water from miles around. True, though these often-solitary hunters have poor eyesight, they do have a highly developed sense of smell, with some species able to detect a single drop of blood in about 50 litres of water. However, rather disappointingly (unless you're a fish or another of the shark's favourite food), their noses are not as sensitive as is generally believed when it comes to blood.

e Finally, let's head back to dry land where the insects and invertebrates live. Firstly, despite the rumours, earthworms do not actually become two separate slimy worms if you split them in half. Only a limited number of earthworm species can survive such serious injury – only the front half of the worm (where the mouth is located) is able to feed and so survive. Moving from zero to eight legs, you'll no doubt be relieved and thankful that it's not true that over a lifetime people swallow a large number of spiders during their sleep. While sleeping, we make all kinds of noises and movements that warn spiders of danger and prevent them from becoming unwanted furry snacks. So, armed with that knowledge, I wish you a peaceful night's sleep, and if you are curious to learn more, there are plenty more myths connected to animals that you can read about online.

Q1: Choose the correct answer in each sentence:

Paragraph A

1. What idiom describes something that is guaranteed to make another person angry?
a) Like a red rag to a bull b) As blind as a bat c) To bury your head in the sand
2. According to the text, what actually makes bulls charge at the matador's cape?
a) The colour of the cape b) The movement of the cape c) The smell of the cape
3. What is a common misconception about bulls and the colour red?
a) Bulls love the colour red b) Bulls are attracted to red c) Bulls are colour-blind

Paragraph B

4. Which idiom is used to describe someone who can't find something that's right in front of them?
a) Like a red rag to a bull b) As blind as a bat c) To bury your head in the sand
5. How do bats navigate?
a) By using echolocation b) By seeing in complete darkness c) By feeling vibrations

6. What percentage of bats use echolocation to navigate?
a) 100% b) 70% c) 30%

Paragraph C

7. What does the idiom 'to bury your head in the sand' mean?
a) To face a problem directly b) To ignore a problem c) To find a quick solution
8. Who suggested the myth about ostriches hiding their heads?
a) Aristotle b) Pliny the Elder c) Socrates
9. What is a more likely behaviour for ostriches when faced with danger?
a) Hiding b) Running or fighting c) Digging holes

Paragraph D

10. How long can fish actually remember things?
a) A few seconds b) A few minutes c) Several months
11. What sense is highly developed in sharks?
a) Sight b) Smell c) Taste
12. How much water can some shark species detect a drop of blood in?
a) 50 Liters b) 500 Liters c) 5 Liters

Paragraph E

13. What happens when you split an earthworm in half?
a) It becomes two separate worms
b) Only the front half may survive
c) Both halves die
14. How do people typically prevent swallowing spiders in their sleep?
a) By staying completely still
b) By making noises and movements
c) By sleeping with their mouths closed
15. What part of the worm is necessary for it to survive after being split?
a) The back half b) The middle part c) The front half

Answers:

1. a) Like a red rag to a bull
2. b) The movement of the cape
3. c) Bulls are colour-blind
4. b) As blind as a bat
5. a) By using echolocation
6. b) 70%
7. b) To ignore a problem
8. b) Pliny the Elder
9. b) Running or fighting
- 10.c) Several months
- 11.b) Smell
- 12.a) 50 liters
- 13.b) Only the front half may survive
- 14.b) By making noises and movements
- 15.c) The front half

T. Hussein Ghunaim

THEY NEED SAVING TOO! (S.B 20)

A It's no accident that the symbol of the World-Wide Fund for Nature is a giant panda. These animals are cute or beautiful, or both, and of course we all want to save them. This popularity enables organisations such as the WWF to raise money to support a range of critically endangered species. However, less well-known or 'exciting' creatures are far more likely to become extinct because they don't get enough attention from researchers. **Invertebrates** (animals without a **backbone**) make up over 90% of all the creatures on Earth, but get only a tiny percentage of the money available to protect our wildlife.

B And what about those creatures that many people would find positively ugly? With its tiny eyes, big mouth and **slimy** pink body, the blobfish is far from attractive. This **marine** creature lives deep in the ocean, where the pressure is very high. As a result, it has tiny **fins** and no **skeleton**, which keeps it from being crushed by the water pressure. Unfortunately, when fishing boats sweep the ocean floor, looking for other fish and **crustaceans**, these fish can get swept into the nets accidentally.

C The threat faced by the pangolin, however, is far from accidental. They are more often targeted by poachers than any other animal in the world. Unique among **mammals**, it is covered in **scales**, like a **reptile**. They may not look very **cuddly** or cute, but these scales are highly prized in traditional Chinese medicine, which has caused the population of pangolins in China to fall by around 90% since the 1960s. Their scales protect them from their natural predators, but it's simple for a poacher to just pick them up.

D Other creatures become endangered precisely because people find them ugly. Take the aye aye for example. Found only on the island of Madagascar, the aye aye is the world's largest **nocturnal primate**. During the day they sleep in nests in the trees, coming out to hunt at night. They are **solitary** creatures, furry, and harmless but unfortunately, they are often killed.

Q1: Answer the following questions:

Paragraph A

1. **What** is the symbol of the World-Wide Fund for Nature?
2. **Why** are invertebrates less likely to receive funding for protection?
3. **How** much of the Earth's creatures are made up of invertebrates?
4. **Which** organization uses the giant panda as its symbol?

Paragraph B

5. **What** makes the blobfish unattractive to many people?
6. **Where** does the blobfish live?
7. **Why** can the blobfish get swept into fishing nets?
8. **How** does the blobfish survive high water pressure?

Paragraph C

9. **Who** are pangolins targeted by?
10. **Why** are pangolin scales highly prized?
11. **What** has caused the pangolin population in China to decline by 90% since the 1960s?
12. **How** do pangolin scales protect them?

Paragraph D

13. **Where** can the aye aye be found?
14. **When** does the aye aye come out to hunt?
15. **What** is unique about the aye aye's daily routine?
16. **Why** do people kill aye ayes?

Q1 Answers:

1. The symbol of the World-Wide Fund for Nature is a giant panda.
2. Invertebrates are less likely to receive funding for protection because they are less well-known or 'exciting' compared to other animals.
3. Invertebrates make up over 90% of all the creatures on Earth.
4. The World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) uses the giant panda as its symbol.
5. The blobfish is considered unattractive due to its tiny eyes, big mouth, and slimy pink body.
6. The blobfish lives deep in the ocean.
7. The blobfish can get swept into fishing nets accidentally when fishing boats sweep the ocean floor looking for other fish and crustaceans.
8. The blobfish survives high water pressure by having tiny fins and no skeleton, which prevents it from being crushed by the water pressure.
9. Pangolins are targeted by poachers.
10. Pangolin scales are highly prized in traditional Chinese medicine.
11. The demand for their scales in traditional Chinese medicine has caused the pangolin population in China to decline by 90% since the 1960s.
12. Pangolin scales protect them from their natural predators.
13. The aye aye can be found only on the island of Madagascar.
14. The aye aye comes out to hunt at night.
15. The aye aye sleeps in nests in the trees during the day and hunts at night.
16. People kill aye ayes because they find them ugly.

Q2 Answers:

1. b) A giant panda
2. c) They are less well-known or 'exciting'
3. c) Over 90%
4. b) World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
5. b) Its slimy pink body
6. b) In deep ocean
7. b) It lives near the ocean floor
8. b) It has tiny fins and no skeleton
9. b) Poachers
10. a) They are used in traditional Chinese medicine
11. b) Demand for their scales
12. b) They are tough enough to ward off predators
13. b) Madagascar
14. b) At night
15. b) It sleeps in nests during the day
16. b) Because they find them ugly

THE FUTURE'S... (S.B 16)

... BRIGHT

In many ways, human life on this planet is better than it's ever been. In many countries across the world, crime has been dropping steadily. This may be due to better education, or perhaps to a reduction in extreme poverty. In 2018, the proportion of the world's population living in extreme poverty fell to around 10%. With luck, no one **1 will be living** in this way within a few decades. Technology is also making our lives easier and safer, and this trend is bound to continue. For example, driving is sure to become safer. Human error is the key reason for most car accidents, and well-programmed driverless cars may save huge numbers of lives. Such cars are already a reality and are going to become more common in the next few years. And finally, life expectancy is already higher than it's ever been and as a result of better medicine, people are likely to live until the age of 100.

... TERRIFYING!

We may have seen some improvement in poverty and crime in recent decades, but why assume that this pattern will continue? I'd argue that for most people life is actually unlikely to get better. Advances in robotics and artificial intelligence will not only reduce the number of unskilled jobs available, but will also eliminate semi-skilled jobs which can be done by a computer. By 2050, young people **2 will have been trying**, and failing, to get a job for most of their 'working' lives! In 30 years' time, a few lucky people will be rich and the rest of us will be poor. Within 20 years, we **3 will have stopped fighting** over oil – **4 we'll be fighting** over water instead, as global warming is certain to lead to more water shortages.

Q1: Answer the following questions:

Paragraph A

1. Why has crime been dropping steadily in many countries?

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2. What percentage of the world's population was living in extreme poverty in 2018?

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3. How might driverless cars impact road safety?

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4. How high might life expectancy become due to better medicine?

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Paragraph B

5. Why is it argued that life is unlikely to get better for most people?

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6. What impact will advance in robotics and artificial intelligence have on jobs?

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7. By when will young people have been trying and failing to get jobs?

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8. What resource might people fight over instead of oil in the future?

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Q2: Circle the correct answers in each sentence:

Paragraph A

1. Why has crime been dropping steadily in many countries?
a) Better healthcare b) Better education c) Increased population
2. What percentage of the world's population was living in extreme poverty in 2018?
a) 20% b) 10% c) 5%
3. How might driverless cars impact road safety?
a) Increase accidents b) Have no impact c) Reduce accidents
4. How high might life expectancy become due to better medicine?
a) 80 years b) 90 years c) 100 years

Paragraph B

5. Why is it argued that life is unlikely to get better for most people?
a) Job opportunities may increase
b) Job opportunities may decrease c) Education may decline
6. What impact will advance in robotics and artificial intelligence have on jobs?
a) Increase unskilled jobs
b) Eliminate unskilled and semi-skilled jobs c) Create more manual labour jobs
7. By when will young people have been trying and failing to get jobs?
a) 2025 b) 2035 c) 2050
8. What resource might people fight over instead of oil in the future?
a) Gold b) Water c) Food

Q1 Answers:

1. Crime has been dropping steadily in many countries due to better education and a reduction in extreme poverty.
2. In 2018, around 10% of the world's population was living in extreme poverty.
3. Driverless cars might reduce accidents caused by human error and save many lives.
4. Life expectancy might become higher, likely reaching up to 100 years due to better medicine.
5. It is argued that life is unlikely to get better for most people because job opportunities may decrease.
6. Advances in robotics and artificial intelligence will reduce the number of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.
7. By 2050, young people will have been trying and failing to get jobs.
8. People might fight over water instead of oil in the future due to global warming leading to water shortages.

Q2 Answers:

1. b) Better education
2. b) 10%
3. c) Reduce accidents
4. c) 100 years
5. b) Job opportunities may decrease
6. b) Eliminate unskilled and semi-skilled jobs
7. c) 2050
8. b) Water