

Reading a text

Read this **text**, then answer the questions in full sentences.

The Voice of Nature



An Aboriginal myth from southern Australia relates how, in the beginning, the voice of the Ancestor spoke each day from a great gum tree, and the tribe gathered around to listen. But as time went by the people grew weary of hearing his words of wisdom. One by one they turned their backs on the voice to pursue their own pleasures, and a vast silence settled over the whole of the land and the sea. There was no wind and the tides were still, no birds sang, and the earth seemed to be dying.

The tribe soon wearied of the pleasures of their own making and began to be afraid and lonely. They returned to the great tree again and again, hoping to hear the words that would ease their misery. And one day the voice of their Ancestor spoke again.

He told them it was the last time his voice would be heard, but that he would give them a sign. The great tree split open, a huge tongue of light came down into its trunk, and then it closed up again.

Since that time the Aboriginals have known that the voice of their Ancestor exists in all things, and speaks to them through every part of nature.



From *Dreamtime Heritage* by A. & M. J. Roberts

Why did the tribe traditionally gather around the great gum tree?

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Why did the people abandon this custom (stop going to the tree)?

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What happened to the natural world when the people broke this tradition?

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What feelings made the people return to the tree?

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Reading and understanding

Reread the **text**, then answer the following questions in full sentences. What is an **ancestor**? D

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Describe the sign given to the people by the Ancestor. Explain the meaning of the sign.

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The Australian gum tree has a **scientific** name. Use **reference books** or a **computer** to find out what it is, and write it here.

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Explain the word **tribe**. What do we mean by **tribal society**? D

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What evidence can you find in the text to suggest that **nature** was important to the people? Can you explain why this was?

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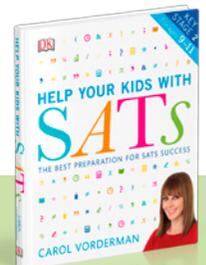
Use a **dictionary** to find out what the saying "up a gum tree" means. D

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What does this passage make you feel? Which words make you feel like this?

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Note: D means to use a dictionary for these practice pages. In the actual test, children will not be able to use a dictionary.



Reading a classic novel

In the nineteenth century, some writers wanted their readers to understand more about the lives of others. In those days before television and the Internet, books were one of the most important ways of **persuading** people to think about the rest of the world.

In Chapters 5 and 17 of his novel *Hard Times*, Charles Dickens describes Coketown, an industrial city in the north of England. Read his description of Coketown in these **extracts**.

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; ... It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.

... The streets were hot and dusty on the summer day, and the sun was so bright that it even shone through the heavy vapour drooping over Coketown, and could not be looked at steadily. Stokers emerged from low underground doorways into factory yards, and sat on steps, and posts, and palings, wiping their swarthy visages, and contemplating coals. The whole town seemed to be frying in oil. There was a stifling smell of hot oil everywhere. The steam-engines shone with it, the dresses of the Hands were soiled with it, the mills throughout their many storeys oozed and trickled it ... their inhabitants, wasting with heat, toiled languidly in the desert. But no temperature made the melancholy-mad elephants more mad or more sane. Their wearisome heads went up and down at the same rate in hot weather and cold, wet weather and dry, fair weather and foul. The measured motion of their shadows on the walls, was the substitute Coketown had to show for the shadows of rustling woods; while, for the summer hum of insects, it could offer, all the year round, from the dawn of Monday to the night of Saturday, the whirr of shafts and wheels.



Reading and understanding

Answer these questions about the **extracts**.

Charles Dickens uses more detail than many modern writers would. Why do you think this is?

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Dickens uses many long sentences and repeats words. What effect does this have on the reader?

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Find as many **adjectives** describing **colours**, **sounds** and **smells** as you can. Write them here.

Remember: An **adjective** is a describing word.

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Find a **metaphor** for smoke and write it here.

Remember: A writer uses a **metaphor** to describe something as if it were something else.

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Find a **simile** for a steam-engine and write it here.

Remember: A **simile** is used to compare one thing with another to create an image in the reader's mind. It often includes the words **like** or **as**.

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Here are some of the words that you may have found unfamiliar or difficult. Draw a line to match each one with its meaning. The first one has been done for you. **D**

interminable	.....	very sad
monotonously	.....	leaked slowly
melancholy	.....	endless
counterpart	.....	weakly
wearisome	.....	same
stokers	.....	in the same dull way
visage	.....	furnace feeders
oozed	.....	boring and tiring
languidly	.....	face

