



English

Skills

*in Use*

for

Secondary

Students

by Peter Howard



PHOENIX  
EDUCATION



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# Why do earthquakes happen? \_\_\_\_\_

An earthquake is a sudden movement or trembling in the earth. Gentle earth tremors can occur anywhere, but the most severe earthquakes usually occur near the edges of the large 'plates' that make up the earth's crust.

These plates float on the mantle below the crust, and move and grind against each other. The plates move a few centimetres each year, causing mountain ranges such as the Himalayas to increase in height. The continents form a part of the plates, and move with them. Some of the plates slide past one another, and sometimes one plate is pushed underneath another. Strain and pressure slowly build up along the fault lines between the plates, and the quick release of this strain causes an earthquake.

The point where an earthquake shock originates is called the focus, and the point immediately above this on the earth's surface is called the epicentre. Shock waves radiate out from the focus. It is estimated that there are over a million earthquakes each year, but most of them are quite weak. Earth tremors at the bottom of the ocean can cause tsunamis which can rise to more than 30 metres.

Seismology is the study of earthquakes, and a seismograph is a sensitive instrument that records vibrations of the earth. Earthquakes are measured by the Richter scale, and major earthquakes usually register between 7 and 9 on this scale.

## Comprehension

- 1 Is it true to say the earth's crust is one solid layer? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Are the continents moving? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Do earthquake waves radiate inwards? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Can an earthquake take place in the Pacific Ocean? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 What scale is used to measure earthquakes? \_\_\_\_\_

## Vocabulary

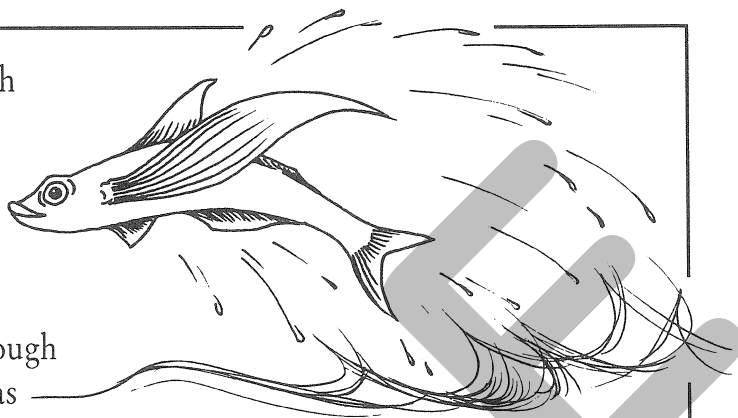
- 6 Which word means 'moves rapidly back and forwards'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Which word means the same as 'serious' or 'extreme'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 Which word means the same as 'get bigger'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 Which word means 'large sea-waves'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 Circle the synonym of the word 'sensitive' in the last paragraph.

register   responsive   accountable   delicate

## Grammar and sentence structure

- 11 Write the first adjective in the passage. \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 Write the first proper noun in the passage. \_\_\_\_\_
- 13 Rewrite the first sentence in the second paragraph as two simple sentences.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

It is a fact that some species of fish fly through the air. They are said to move their so-called wings rapidly, according to some sailors and those who make their living by fishing. Other observers have said that the fish merely glide through the air using their fins like wings as certain birds do that can skim and glide without flapping their wings.



Experts who have examined two main species in detail claim that the fish that move through the air are too heavy to really fly. Their fins, which act as wings, are too small and badly shaped to support the body. The two species are the flying gurnards and the flying herrings. Both kinds of fish give a screw-like twist of the tail that shoots them out of the water. They spread their elongated fins and are able to glide over water for a distance of about 50 metres. The flight lasts for only a few seconds with motionless fins. This starts again when the fish clips the water for another thrust into the air.

The speed of flying fish has been accurately timed. Initially the fish attains a speed of between 24 and 30 kilometres per hour as it rushes along the surface for a final twist of its tail before becoming airborne. Once airborne, the fish, with the help of extra thrusts as it hits the water, can reach speeds up to 60 kilometres an hour.

## Comprehension

- 1 Do some people believe that fish flap their wings? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Experts use another term instead of 'fly'. If the word is not 'airborne' or 'skim', what is it? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 How many main kinds of flying fish are there? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 What part of the fish provides the thrust? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Can a flying fish take off and reach a speed of 50 kilometres an hour without touching the water again? \_\_\_\_\_

## Vocabulary

- 6 Which word means the same as 'hits'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Which word means 'without moving'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 Which word means the same as 'lengthened'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 Which word means 'at first'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 Circle the synonym of the word 'observers' in the first paragraph.

keepers   bystanders   watchers   pupils

## Grammar and sentence structure

- 11 Write the first noun in the passage. \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 Write the first verb in the passage. \_\_\_\_\_
- 13 Write the coordinating conjunction in the second sentence. \_\_\_\_\_
- 14 Leave out 5 words from the first sentence to make it a simple statement.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## What was the phoenix?

The phoenix was a mythical bird of the Arabian desert that was supposed to have existed during the time of the Ancient Egyptians. The Ancient Greeks learnt of this bird and its story became one of their fables. It was known for its extraordinary beauty, having brilliant gold and reddish-purple feathers. It was larger than an eagle and was supposed to live exactly 500 years.

There was only one living bird of its kind.

It was said that when the phoenix felt it was near death, it built a funeral pyre of branches and set it on fire. After it had been consumed by the flames, it rose from the ashes with renewed youth, to live through another cycle.

According to one account, the Egyptians made a divinity of the phoenix. This bird symbolised to them the immortality of the soul. They believed that directly after a person died, a new being was formed. This new being was called the twin of the lost personality, and it was thought that it invisibly assumed the shape and features of the dead.

As this new being might inhabit the tomb or grave for a while, the Egyptians put in it food and familiar things without which the dead person would be unhappy on waking.



## Comprehension

- 1 Was the phoenix a real bird? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Were two of these ever birds alive at the one time? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Which people were said to worship the phoenix? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Did Ancient Egyptians believe in a life after death? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Was the phoenix about the size of a parrot? \_\_\_\_\_

## Vocabulary

- 6 Which word means the same as 'destroyed'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Which word means 'live in'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 Which word means the same as 'fabled'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 Which word means 'a large pile of firewood'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 Circle the synonym of the word 'divinity' in the fourth paragraph.

god    theology    companion    enemy

## Grammar and sentence structure

- 11 Write the first two articles that appear in the first sentence. \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 Write the first preposition in the passage. \_\_\_\_\_
- 13 Write the first adjective in the passage. \_\_\_\_\_
- 14 The first sentence is made up of two main clauses joined by a relative pronoun. What different relative pronoun could have been used?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Pure silk is produced by special caterpillars, or silkworms as they are called, which feed on mulberry leaves. When the caterpillar is ready to change into a moth, it makes a cocoon by weaving coarse silk round sticks, twigs or bits of leaves.

Once the cocoon is completed, the caterpillar proceeds to line the inside by emitting a finer fluid from two spinnerets. This fluid turns into pure silk when contact is made with air. The silk can be two to three hundred metres long and is unwound by the silk farmer to be washed, dyed and woven into cloth. The gathering and handling of this silk makes it expensive.

In 1883, the English inventor and chemist Sir Joseph Swan was the first to patent artificial silk that could be made in a factory. He invented a machine that squirted an emulsion of cellulose nitrate in acetic acid through minute holes into alcohol. The alcohol coagulated the emulsion into a thread.

The new filament was lustrous and reasonably strong, and Swan succeeded in making it fine enough to be twisted into threads. So now manufacturers of garments can choose whether they buy the real silk made from caterpillars or a similar product, but not quite as delicate, from manufacturers of artificial silk.

## Comprehension

- 1 Is a cocoon often made around bits of a tree or plant? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 From what parts of the caterpillar is thread ejected? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Which word tells us that the process of collecting was not cheap? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Was artificial silk first made by an Australian? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Is artificial silk as fragile in texture as natural silk? \_\_\_\_\_

## Vocabulary

- 6 Which word means the same as 'goes ahead'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Which word means 'a suspension of one liquid in another'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 Which word means the same as 'rough'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 Which word means the same as 'bright and shiny'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 Circle the synonym of the word 'emitting' in the second paragraph.

exhaling    discharging    breathing    ventilating

## Grammar and sentence structure

- 11 In what tense are the verbs of the first sentence? \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 Write the first pronoun in the passage. \_\_\_\_\_
- 13 Write the subordinating conjunction in the second sentence. \_\_\_\_\_
- 14 Is the second sentence a simple, compound or complex one? \_\_\_\_\_

## When did newspapers first appear?

Perhaps the earliest form of newspapers were the carvings in stone made in Babylonian and Assyrian cities. They were placed in prominent positions to be read by passers-by. The news was mainly confined to the king's latest decrees or news of battles being waged.

An inscription dating back to 700 BC in Biblical Hebrew was found over a hundred years ago in a rocky aqueduct at the south-east end of Jerusalem. Scholars worked out that it was a kind of news bulletin, inscribed in stone, to be read by people living there at the time. It describes the progress of workmen who were cutting a new water supply for Jerusalem.

The Romans did not actually have newspapers. They did, however, send accounts, written on parchment, of the daily happenings in Rome to various parts of the empire. These were read out by generals to their officers, who in turn passed the news on to the common soldiers.

A newspaper in its modern form was first printed in 1566 when the government in Venice issued written news-sheets and exhibited them in the streets. Anyone could read them on payment of a coin called a 'gazetta'.

Newspapers were then called gazettes, and printed in most large cities of Europe. London's first newspaper was the *Weekly News* which was first put on sale in 1622. Australia's first newspaper was the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, which appeared in 1803.

## Comprehension

- 1 Were the earliest form of newspapers liable to blow away? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 What language was used in Jerusalem in Biblical times? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Is it likely that Roman generals were the only ones in the army who could read? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 In which city was the first newspaper in its present form printed? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 The name 'gazette' is still used today. From what object was this name derived?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Vocabulary

- 6 Which word means the same as 'conspicuous'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Which word means 'animal skin prepared for writing'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 Which word means the same as 'engraving'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 Which word means 'showed or displayed'? \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 Circle the synonym of the word 'confined' in the first paragraph.

edged    covered    limited    imprisoned

## Grammar and sentence structure

- 11 In which sentence of the first paragraph is there an infinitive verb form? 1st, 2nd or 3rd?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 12 What degree is the first adjective in the passage? \_\_\_\_\_
- 13 In the last paragraph, which sentence is compound? 1st, 2nd or 3rd? \_\_\_\_\_
- 14 What kind of pronoun is used in the last sentence? \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Why do earthquakes happen?**

1 no 2 yes 3 no 4 yes 5 Richter 6 tremors 7 severe 8 increase  
9 tsunami 10 responsive 11 sudden 12 Himalayas 13 These plates  
float on the mantle below the crust. They move and grind against  
each other.

**2 Can fish fly?**

1 yes 2 glide 3 two 4 tail 5 no 6 clips 7 motionless 8 elongated  
9 initially 10 watchers 11 fact 12 is 13 and 14 Some species of fish  
fly through the air.

**3 What was the phoenix?**

1 no 2 no 3 Egyptian 4 yes 5 no 6 consumed 7 inhabit 8 mythical  
9 pyre 10 god 11 the, a 12 during 13 mythical 14 which

**4 What is artificial silk?**

1 yes 2 spinnerets 3 expensive 4 no 5 no 6 proceeds 7 emulsion  
8 coarse 9 lustrous 10 discharging 11 present 12 they 13 when  
14 complex

**5 When did newspapers first appear?**

1 no 2 Hebrew 3 no 4 Venice 5 coin 6 prominent 7 parchment  
8 inscription 9 exhibited 10 limited 11 2nd 12 superlative 13 1st  
14 relative (which)

**6 What is a cataract of the eye?**

1 yes 2 yes 3 yes 4 focusing 5 yes 6 opacity 7 deficiencies 8 hereditary  
9 renowned 10 obscured 11 of sight, since antiquity 12 and 13 loss  
14 adverbial (of reason)

**7 What are fingerprints?**

1 yes 2 dust 3 computer 4 four 5 yes 6 criminal/offender  
7 automatically 8 pore 9 classified 10 wetness 11 often 12 Each  
13 adjectival, prepositional 14 We read that police have taken  
fingerprints

**8 Do plants go to sleep?**

1 yes 2 no 3 carbon dioxide 4 yes 5 yes 6 fabricate 7 condition  
8 substances 9 definition 10 irregular 11 We 12 adjective  
13 sleeping 14 Plants sleep when they rest and give up work.

**9 What was the sword of Damocles?**

1 no 2 no 3 horse hair 4 yes 5 of Damocles 6 implored 7 despotic  
8 vacated 9 temporary 10 abundance 11 numerical or number  
12 preposition 13 noun 14 which is on the island of Sicily

**10 What happens when we become tired?**

1 yes 2 yes 3 no 4 soup 5 work 6 demonstrated 7 fallacy 8 toxins  
9 consume 10 relaxation 11 conjunction 12 hard 13 produced in  
our bodies 14 one