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**Reading 1 The Water Bear**

The water bear is a very unusual animal, but it is not really a bear. It isn’t really like any other animal. The water bear has eight legs and is too small for us to see—about 0.5 mm long. They usually eat plants, but sometimes they eat other water bears. They are called water bears because they walk like a bear, moving from side to side.

We can find water bears anywhere—from very high places to far down in the sea. They can live happily in very cold places (as cold as -272º C) or in very hot places (as hot as 150º C). They can live without food or water for up to thirty years, and they can also live in the cold of space.

The water bear is so strong because it can make itself dry. Usually, its body is made up of 85% water, but when it is very cold, it can go down to only 3% water. When it is dry, the water bear can go into space for up to ten days and then come back to life. It is the only known animal that does not die after being in space for a few seconds.

**Reading 2 The Amazon Rainforest**

The Amazon in South America is the world’s biggest rainforest. It is about as big as half of China, but it is getting much smaller year by year.

The forests are getting smaller because people in rich countries want to eat meat. Cows are big animals, and they need a lot of land to live on, so people cut down trees in the Amazon. If people want more cows, more trees are cut down. People also cut down the rainforests to get wood.

Cutting down rainforests hurts the earth. First, trees help to clean the air. Second, many plants and animals live in the rainforest, and we can learn a lot from them. Some rainforest plants can be used to make medicine—but not if they are lost.

It is very difficult for the people living there to stop cutting the rainforest because they are often very poor. People must try to make money, so they let businesses buy the land and cut down the trees.

The Amazon rainforest is being cut down very quickly. If people do not stop cutting down trees in rainforests, there will not be any rainforests left by 2050. That will be very bad for the world.

**Reading 3 Elephants**

Elephants are the biggest animals on land. They live in both Africa and Asia, and they can live for about seventy years. Elephants don’t like to be alone. They usually move around with about ten other elephants. They all help to look after baby elephants.

Elephants have very long noses, which they use to put food into their mouths. They have very good hearing, but they cannot see very well because their eyes are on the sides of their heads. That means that elephants must move their body to look at things.

Elephants eat most of the day. They eat a lot of plants, but they do not eat other animals. Elephants also need to drink a lot of water—more than 250 liters every day. That’s about the same as 700 small bottles of water a day!

Elephants are so big that they are not afraid of any other animals. They should be afraid of people because people kill them. People kill elephants to get their long white teeth. They can get a lot of money for them. Because of this, there are not so many elephants now. Maybe one day there will be no elephants left.

**Reading 4 The Venus Flytrap**

Did you know that there are some plants that eat flies? The best known is called the Venus flytrap. It is called a “flytrap” because it traps flies and other living things.

In other ways, Venus flytraps are like other plants. They need sunlight and water, and earth to live in. However, the earth that they live in is poor. Venus flytraps get their food by eating flies. The Venus flytrap has leaves that look like a mouth. These leaves stay open, waiting for a fly to come in. When that happens, the fly moves hairs that are inside. This makes the “mouth” close quickly, and the fly is trapped.

Over the next few days, the plant makes a kind of water that breaks down the fly’s body. The Venus flytrap then drinks this “fly juice.” This fly juice is food for the plant. It only eats the inside of the fly. The outside is too hard to break down and can’t be eaten.

About five to twelve days later, the mouth will open again. What is left of the fly is blown out. Then the Venus flytrap just has to wait for its next delicious food to fly in.

**Reading 5 Kings and Queens of Rock**

Everyone was playing rock music back in the 1950s. There were many well-known singers during that time, but as time goes by, the well known can be forgotten. Few are still known today.

The best-known singer of the 1950s was a man named Elvis Presley. He was so well known that people called him “the King of Rock,” or just “the King” for short. In all the time after Presley’s death in 1977, no other rock singer has been big enough to be called “the King.”

Some other singers are also given names. In the 1980s, the biggest singer of the time was Michael Jackson, but because of Elvis Presley, people didn’t want to call Jackson the King. So Michael Jackson was the Prince of Pop.

Another well-known singer in the 1980s was Madonna. She was called the Queen of Pop. Now, more than one woman has been called the Princess of Pop.

It is interesting that no woman has ever been called the Queen of Rock. Maybe in a few years, a woman who is singing now will get that name. She will have to be a very good singer, and then she may be as good as the King.

**Reading 6 Jane Austen**

Jane Austen (1775–1817) is one of the best-known British writers ever. Many of her books are about the loves and lives of upper-class people in the 1800s. Her best-known book was written when Austen was 35 years old. Many people still read her books today—more than twenty million in the last 200 years.

Austen started writing short stories when she was only 12 years old. At first, she did not write long books like the ones she is now known for. At that time, she wrote short stories about people in England. Her family liked reading and talking about books. Austen also liked to be in plays and stories with her family. Doing things together with her book-loving family helped Austen to become a better writer.

Jane Austen’s books are mostly about love and finding the right person to marry. It is interesting, then, that she never married. She once said “yes” to a man who wanted to marry her, but then the next day she said “no” to him. No one knows why Jane Austen changed her “yes” to a “no.” Maybe she really wanted to find the right person—like the people in her books.

**Reading 7 Maya Lin**

In 1981, the city of Washington, D.C., was looking for a way to remember all the Americans who died in the Vietnam War. Soon they had more than one thousand ideas from around the United States. Eight people carefully looked at these ideas and found the best one. It was an idea from a 21-year-old student named Maya Lin.

Before that time, the usual way to remember people in the United States was to make a beautiful piece of art or a garden. That’s what most people wanted this time, too. Lin’s idea was very different. She wanted to make a long black wall like a V. On the wall would be written the names of all the Americans who died in the war. It was a very good idea, but would it be beautiful?

After the wall was built, millions of people came to see its beauty. Today, it is one of the most-loved places in the city, and many people still come to see it.

After finishing school, Lin went to work and made many other interesting works of art. Today, she tries to make people think about the world and how to keep it safe.

**Reading 8 Mo Farah**

Mo Farah is a runner, and he is one of the best runners ever. Farah won the 5,000 meters and the 10,000 meters at the Olympics in 2012 and 2016. He also won both of them at another world event in 2013 and 2015. He was the first person to do this.

Farah is British, but he was not born in the UK. He was born in Somalia and moved there when he was eight years old. He could not speak English, so life was hard. But quickly he started to like life in the UK.

Everyone in the UK calls him “Mo”, but his full name is really Mohamed. He is a Muslim and always prays before and after he runs. As soon as he stops running, he gets down and prays. Farah believes that this has helped him to become a winner.

Farah is very happy when he wins. He is well known for his big smile, but all winners usually smile. Farah is different because when he wins he does his

“Mobot” move. The move is part Mo and part robot and shows how happy he is about winning. People are happy to see this, too.

**Reading** **9 Australia**

Australia is a very unusual place. It is the sixth-largest country in the world, but not many people live there. There are only two people in each km2, the smallest number in all the world.

Because it is so far away from other places, Australia has many strange and unusual animals that only live there, like the kangaroo. Kangaroos are big animals that carry their babies in the front of their bodies. There are several kinds of kangaroos. People think there are about 40 million kangaroos in Australia—that’s around two for each person. Some people think there are now too many kangaroos.

Because Australia is the biggest island in the world, there is a lot of sea life as well. People come from all over the world to see the beautiful fish and the unusual sea life.

The west side of Australia is home to the world’s biggest rock, Mount Augustus. It is millions of years old. Australia also has the second-biggest rock, which is even better known—Uluru. These very big rocks look like they change colors at different times in the day—from brown in the morning to red when the sun is going down.

**Reading 10 The Bermuda Triangle**

The Bermuda Triangle is a real place. It is in the Atlantic Ocean to the east of Florida. There are many stories about ships and airplanes going missing inside this “Triangle of Death.” For many reasons, it was known as a bad and dangerous place.

The three sides of the Triangle go from Florida to Bermuda, from Bermuda to Puerto Rico, and from Puerto Rico back to Florida. In the past 100 years, there have been many stories about ships and airplanes going missing there. Some ships are never seen again, and some come back years later with no people inside. People say that up to fifteen ships go missing in the Triangle every year.

There are many ideas about why the Bermuda Triangle is such a dangerous place. Some say that beings from another world take people from the ships. Others say that there are dangerous unknown animals under the water. Another idea is that the weather there changes very quickly, and bad weather takes the ships.

However, today most people think that stories about the Bermuda Triangle are not true. People like to tell each other unusual stories, and a “Triangle of Death” is a very unusual idea.

**Reading 11 The Taj Mahal**

The Taj Mahal is one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. It was built by an Indian king in 1643 to remember his dead wife, Mumtaz Mahal. The building is big and is all white. It is now very well known all around the world, and about seven million people go to see the Taj Mahal every year. When people see a picture of it, they always think of India.

The Taj Mahal has a very big round top and four high towers around it. There is water and a beautiful garden in front of it. The towers at each side of the building are made so that if a tower falls down, it will fall away from the building and not break it.

There is a well-known story about the Taj Mahal. After the building was finished, the king killed all of the builders who had worked on it. This story says that the king did not want them to ever make another building as beautiful as the Taj Mahal. This story is not true, of course, but the Taj Mahal is still seen as a very beautiful building showing a king’s love for his wife.

**Reading 12 Ice Hotel**

Have you slept on a bed of ice, in a room made of ice, in a building that is also made of ice? Every year, thousands of people do that in ice hotels all around the world, and it costs them a lot of money.

The first ice hotel is called Icehotel. It was made in 1989 in Sweden. The idea for Icehotel came when a Swedish man went to look at things made of ice in the city of Sapporo, Japan. There, he saw many big, beautiful things that people were making out of ice. He had the idea to make an ice building.

Today, there are ice hotels all around the world. In Canada, one ice hotel has 85 rooms, all made of ice. Finland has two hotels, and they must be built again every year. People who go there can eat dinner on ice tables, sit on ice chairs, and sleep on beds of ice. But they have to dress very warmly.

Inside an ice hotel, it is usually -3 to -5º C. That is cold, but it is still warmer than outside of the hotel. Because everyone is dressed warmly, it can be OK.

**Reading 13 Music and Feelings**

Music can change the way we feel about things. It can make us happy or unhappy. Do you smile when some music you like comes on the radio? Is there some music that makes you get up and move? Is there music that makes you want to cry when you hear it? Music can change your feelings.

People who make movies know this. They use music to change people’s feelings. Music that goes from quiet to loud makes people feel excited. Music that is not nice or is difficult to like can make us feel afraid. Think about the kind of music in movies that makes you feel afraid. The music often tells us when something bad is going to happen. Music can also be used in a movie to make you laugh or cry. In movies, music is used in lots of different ways.

Some people use music to go to sleep. The best music for this is slow and quiet. You can see what this kind of music does to people when you hear it live. The next time you go to listen to live music, look around you. During slow, quiet music, some people will be sleeping.

**Reading 14 Cave Paintings**

People have been making art for a very long time. The oldest art that we know about is cave paintings. When people used to live in caves, they would paint on the walls. There are old cave paintings all over the world. No one is sure why people made cave paintings, but we have some ideas.

There are cave paintings in India, Africa, and Asia, but the oldest ones we know of are in caves in Europe. One cave in France has paintings of animals that are around 35,000 years old.

Cave paintings are usually about four different kinds of things. Most have big animals that people ate. Some have other strong animals, like lions. Another thing often found painted on cave walls were people’s hands. The last kind are things that do not look like animals or people. We do not know what they are.

We don’t know why people painted this art. One idea is that they were painted to help people. Maybe they were painted to help sick people or to help find food. Another idea is that the paintings were not made to do things. Maybe they were just art. People just liked to look at the paintings.

**Reading 15 Comic Books**

Comic books are a young kind of art. They started in the early 1900s as short stories in newspapers. Comic stories did not usually end but went on week after week. Early comics were often stories to make people laugh; however, they soon started to tell other kinds of stories, too. Today, many kinds of comic books are read by children and older people.

In the United States, after 1938, there were many superhero stories. The first superhero comic book was called *Action Comics #1*, and it was about a person named Superman. At first, Superman was strong and could go over high buildings, but he was not as strong as he is today. He could not do as much as he can in today’s stories.

Other countries had different comics. In Europe, people read more stories like *Tintin* than stories about superheroes. In Japan, people started reading a lot of comics called “manga.” However, US superheroes like Superman never became well known in other countries until the 2000s.

People still read a lot of comic books today, and many of the stories are often made into movies or are seen on TV, like *The Walking Dead* and *Wonder Woman.*

**Reading 16** **Audiobooks**

An audiobook is a book you listen to. Have you ever listened to one? They are great for people who don’t have time to read a book. They are also good for people who are doing other things, like going on a train, driving a car, or running.

When people think of audiobooks, they usually think of storybooks. However, today there are as many audiobooks as usual books. These days, many people like listening to audiobooks about science, business, art, and other things.

Audiobooks are not new. The first ones were made in the 1930s. They were listened to on old players that were too big to carry, and the sound was not very good. So, people did not listen to audiobooks very much then. On the other hand, today’s audiobooks are often played on small music players or phones. Today, it is much easier to listen to audiobooks, so now they are listened to much more.

In the US, the number of audiobooks bought is going up quickly. They went up by 34% from 2014 to 2015 alone. It is good that more people are listening to books—but does it mean that people are now reading less?

**Reading 17 Computers**

Today, computers are everywhere. They are in our cars, in our houses, and in our hands. They help us talk to each other, they tell us how to get to new places, and they can play music and movies for us. However, not too long ago, computers were very different.

The first computer was made more than seventy years ago. It was called ENIAC. ENIAC was very different from the computers we know today. First, it was as big as a very big room. Second, it was very slow. It took ENIAC all day to do something that your phone’s computer can now do in one second.

As computers became smaller and smaller, they also became faster and faster. By the 1980s, computers were small, fast, and cheap enough. So people started to buy them, but most people didn’t know what to use their computer for.

When the internet was made, it changed everyone’s way of thinking about computers. When computers could talk to each other, people found a lot of ways to use them. Because of that, life has changed for most people around the world. Now we talk, listen, learn, work, shop, watch movies, and play on computers.

**Reading 18 Green Energy**

For a long time, people used wood in fires to stay warm and to make food. Wood is easy to get and use, but wood burns too quickly, and trees grow much too slowly. Other old ways of making energy, like using oil, are not renewable. When we have used all of it, we cannot get more. It is also not clean. Burning wood and oil can also make people and animals sick. When we burn things, we do not help to keep our world clean. We must find other, cleaner ways to get the energy we need.

For many years, people have been looking for newer and better ways to make energy. We call this kind of energy “green” energy. Green energy is clean and renewable. We can make energy from sunlight. We will never run out of the sun. Green energy also comes from water.

Some countries are very good at using renewable energy. In 2016, up to 95% of the energy made in Portugal (not energy used in cars) was renewable. In 2015, more than half of the world’s electricity was green. Many people think that by 2050 all of the world’s energy could be green.

**Reading 19 Reading Faces**

Wouldn’t it be great if we didn’t need to carry money? If we could just smile at a computer to buy things? If we did not have to carry things to show who we are?

Face-reading computers are already a part of life in some places in China. The Chinese company face++ (“face plus plus”) uses face-reading computers to let people send money, call a taxi, and buy train tickets. The police in some cities use face++ computers to look for bad people who are walking around a city.

Over the past few years, computers have become very good at telling who a person is by looking at their face. They are so good that this is now used on some phones to stop other people from using your phone. Soon, face-reading computers will be used in most banks, shops, and train stations.

Not everyone is happy with this. They think that we do not need computers looking at our faces all the time. They say it’s important for people to be left alone. If computers are always looking at us, people can’t relax. Also, who is looking at the computers, and why do they want to know what we are doing?

**Reading 20 Robot Helpers**

Walk into the train station at Tokyo’s Haneda Airport and you will see something unusual. The worker who tells you where to go is a 1.2-meter robot named Pepper. Pepper is one of the first robot helpers in the country. It was made to be used in homes and workplaces to help people.

Many people believe that soon we will all have robots like Pepper in our homes and workplaces. These robot helpers will do many different jobs for us. They will get food ready, clean, open the door, go shopping, and help older people who need looking after. They will make our lives easier and give us more time to do other things.

In many homes today, there are already floor-cleaning robots and robots that turn lights on. Others have friendly robots to play with children and keep people happy. Some cars now are really becoming just big robots that can drive us around.

Some people do not like the idea of robot helpers. They think that robots will never do as good a job as a person does. Maybe these people will change their way of thinking when they see how helpful robot helpers can be.

**Reading 21 Job Interviews**

A job interview is a meeting between someone who wants a job and one or more people who want a new worker. A good job interview can change your life. Here’s what you can do.

First, be ready. Before the interview, learn everything you can about the job and the company. Read news about it. Learn what they do. If you know the company well, they can see you are interested in the job.

Second, be on time, dress well, and talk nicely. If you are late, the interviewer may think that you will also be late for your job. Also, if you don’t dress the right way or if you do not talk nicely, they may think that you will not be a good worker.

Third, during the interview, don’t say bad things about your old job. Think about some good things you can say. You can say, “The other workers were nice, but now I want to learn new things.”

At the end, after the interview, say, “Thank you.” Send the interviewer a short email. Tell them that it was nice to meet them, and thank them for their time. This can help the interviewer to remember you.

**Reading 22 Starting a Business**

Every year, people start many kinds of new businesses. However, starting a new business is not easy. Some businesses make money, but most new businesses close in the first five years. What makes a good new business?

Often, they do something different. One good new kind of business that makes money is bookstores which are also coffee shops. People go there to buy books, but they can also sit and read with a drink.

You may have a great idea, but starting a new business is hard work. There are many things you need to think about with new businesses. The money coming in can change each month, so you need to be ready for that. Also, it’s hard to know if people will like what you sell. If people want different things, the business must be ready to change.

It isn’t easy to start a new business. Some people like working for themselves and saying when, where, and how they work. Good businesspeople say that if you work hard and think about your business often, you can make a lot of money and be happy doing something that you really like.

**Reading 23 Helping Workers**

All workers have important things they need, like making enough money to live and working in a safe place. The ITUC is one group that helps workers in different countries throughout the world. Every year, they look closely at how companies look after their workers.

The ITUC looks at a country’s rules about how workers can meet each other and talk about their workplace. Worker meetings are an important way for them to talk about money, how long they can work, and how to do their jobs safely. If companies try to stop these meetings, they can get a bad report from the ITUC.

In 2016, the ITUC named the countries with the best workers’ rules. They were all in Europe. The only country outside of Europe to get a good report was Uruguay. Countries with very bad reports were in Africa and the Middle East. In those countries, there are very few rules that help workers.

Groups like the ITUC also try to make the workplace the same for both men and women, and for all groups of people. In some countries today, all the good jobs go to men or to people from one group. This must change.

**Reading 24 Microcredit**

People ask banks for money to do many different things. Maybe they want to buy a house, a car, or to start a new business. For many people in poor places, however, it is difficult to get money. This happens because the banks think that they will not get their money back.

Microcredit is one way to help. Micro- means “small.” Microcredit is like getting money from a bank but is just a few dollars. Microcredit is not for tens of thousands of dollars; it can be just a few hundred dollars. In a poor place, this much money can be enough to start a small business. As the business gets bigger and makes money, the businesswoman or businessman can give back the money little by little.

The idea for microcredit started in Bangladesh in 1983. It quickly became well known. In 2009, about 75 million people around the world had got money through microcredit. El Salvador is another country where microcredit is working well. People there can use the money to buy an animal, to buy something to plant, or to make things.

Microcredit is one way of doing small things that sometimes become big changes in people’s lives.

**Reading 25 Medicines from Plants**

Medicine makes us better when we are sick. From the beginning of time, people saw that some plants could help sick people get better. Eating one kind of plant could help people to sleep better, and having a drink made from another plant could stop them from going to sleep. As time went by, people found more and more plants to help with different kinds of sickness. For thousands of years, these plants were our only medicine.

However, people must be careful when they take medicine from plants. A plant that does good things for the body can also do bad things.

About 200 years ago, our ideas about medicine started to change. Scientists have made many new and better kinds of medicine. They are looked at very carefully, so doctors can know if they are safe. New medicine is not all good, of course. They often cost a lot of money to buy, they can be too strong, and sometimes they can make you sick in a different way.

Because of this, some people still think that medicine from plants is better than other new medicine. The important thing is to always know what you are putting into your body.

**Reading 26 Bodybuilding**

Bodybuilding is one way many people get stronger. The people who do it are called bodybuilders. They like making their bodies bigger, stronger, and better looking by holding, lifting, or pushing weights.

People start bodybuilding to do different things. Some want to become bigger. To do this, they use more weight and lift it a small number of times. Some people want to get stronger. These people usually use less weight but lift it many times. Other people just want to look better. They do this in different ways.

Bodybuilders must be careful about what they eat. Foods like fish and meat help them to get bigger, so most bodybuilders eat a lot of these foods. They also drink a lot of water and do not eat foods which are bad for them.

Like many things we do, bodybuilding can be a bad thing if done too much. For some people, becoming bigger and stronger can be all they think about. These people sometimes push their bodies much too hard or take medicine that might also hurt them. If you want to try bodybuilding, you should talk to a doctor or a trainer first.

**Reading 27 The Emergency Room**

The emergency room of a hospital can be an interesting place, where lots of things happen. People who are brought into the emergency room are too sick to get to the hospital alone. Doctors go around all day and night to help the people who need their help.

Many doctors and nurses say that the emergency room is a hard place to work. There are so many people, and things happen so fast. Workers must work quickly all the time. In most hospitals, the emergency room is open 24 hours a day. Doctors and nurses who work at night must sleep during the day. Often, they sleep for only one or two hours at a time.

Emergency room doctors and nurses can have a hard life. Often, they don’t have enough time with their families, and they may get sick more often than other workers. However, maybe the most difficult thing about their work is that some people die. Sometimes they work very hard and try to help a very sick person, but that person dies. Sometimes the person who dies is a young child. This can be a very difficult thing for doctors and nurses to see again and again.

**Reading 28 Bird Flu**

Bird flu is a sickness in birds. However, people can get this bird sickness, too. People can get bird flu if they touch a bird that carries the sickness. Once a person has this flu, they will get very sick and may die.

However, not many people have died from the bird flu. That’s because, for now, people can’t get this flu from other people. They can only get it from birds. Still, doctors think that bird flu could become a big problem.

Doctors think that bird flu could change into a sickness that can go from person to person. If that happened, things would be very difficult. Because the bird flu can kill, if it went easily from one person to another, many people all around the world would die.

What can we do to stop this from happening? Doctors are trying to find medicine that will stop bird flu. If doctors can make this kind of medicine, and if most people around the world take it, then bird flu will not be a problem. But for now, we must watch bird flu very carefully. We must also work hard to find a medicine to stop it.

**Reading 29 Going into Space**

Many children think about going into space. A few may do it but only after they train hard for many years. Most of us will never go into space. Or will we?

Today, there are some companies trying to build rockets for anyone to go into space. These companies believe that lots of people want to go into space to see what it is like. They think that, soon, going into space will be a usual thing to do.

These companies are not thinking about only sending people into space. They also want to make money by carrying things from one place to another. Carrying things on ships and trains can take a lot of time. By spaceship, things can be moved much faster. Also, things must always be carried to and from space stations. Space companies also want to make money by carrying these things. When things are used a lot, they become much cheaper to make and use.

When spaceships become used more often, they will cost less money to use. Who knows? Someday soon, it may cost about the same to go into space as it does now to go around the world.

**Reading 30 Exoplanets**

Books and movies about going into space are often about unusual and interesting new planets. But are there really planets going around other suns? In the last few years, scientists have answered that question. We have found thousands of planets around other suns.

We call these planets “exoplanets” (exo- means “outside”) because they are outside the planets around our sun. As of 2017, scientists have found more than 3,000 exoplanets. Because they are so far away, we can’t see them using our eyes. Scientists must think of other ways to know if they are there. If a star’s energy goes down and back up again, it can be because a planet moved in front of it.

One of the most interesting questions about exoplanets is if life can grow on them. They can’t be too hot or too cold, and there must be water for living things to use and grow.

Some of the exoplanets that have been found are as big as the Earth. Some are warm and have water. However, they are too far away. The nearest exoplanet would take thousands of years to get to using the kinds of spaceships we have today.

**Reading 31 Space Mining**

People have been mining the Earth for thousands of years. Many of the things we use every day come from mines. Now, some people think that we should start mining in space.

Many companies are getting ready for space mining. One idea is to go to a field of large space rocks between Mars and Jupiter. These space rocks may have a lot of useful things inside them.

On Earth, mining is already very difficult, and many people die in mines. In space, mining will be many times more difficult. First, you must find the right space rock. Space is so big that just looking for a good place to mine will take a lot of time and money.

Next, we need to go there without being killed, and then bring the things we want back to Earth. One way could be to push a large space rock closer to the Earth. That way it will be easier to mine. However, we would have to be very careful—what if the rock hits the Earth? Millions of people could die.

One thing we know: the company that finds an answer to these questions will make a lot of money.

**Reading 32 Space Elevators**

Elevators help people move up and down in large buildings, but some people believe that we can build an elevator all the way up into space. It sounds like a very unusual idea, but many scientists think it can be done. They say it would be good to have a space elevator because we could go up and down without using spaceships. So, it would not cost a lot of money.

What would a space elevator look like? The idea is to put a long cable from the Earth up to something far away in space. Elevator “cars” would then go up and down the cable to a kind of space station near the other end. The same cars could go up and down many times.

Making an elevator will not be easy. What will be at the end of the cable? One idea is to push a large space rock into place. Another idea is to bring together old spaceships and other things that are already up around the Earth.

However, the biggest job may be making a cable for the space elevator. This cable must be very strong— much stronger than any cable we can make today.

**Reading 33 Computers in School**

Many schools today use computers. Teachers may ask students to work together or alone at a computer. Students may be asked to get things from the internet, or to listen, write, or take tests on the computers.

In music classes, computers are used to write music, play it, and then store it on students’ phones. Students can watch musicians and learn from them, and they can play music along with students in other countries.

In another class, computers are used to look at things in space and inside our bodies. They can look at very, very small things that we usually can’t see. Today, it is easy to make pictures of things on a computer which look like real things. We can look at all kinds of living things and learn how they live.

We use computers to see what cities looked like thousands of years ago. We can use them to look at photos of old books and walk around museums anywhere in the world.

These days, schools use computers with students at younger and younger ages. Most children today have already used computers before they get to school. Computers are a great way to help learning, both at school and at home.

**Reading 34 Bullying**

Bullying happens when someone older, bigger, or stronger uses their power over someone younger or smaller.

Bullying can happen to anyone at any age. It happens a lot with young people but can happen to older people too. Bullying happens in different ways. One kind of bullying happens when a person tries to push someone around by pulling hair, throwing things, or hitting them. Another kind of bullying uses only words—calling someone bad names. Bullying can also happen through the internet—by sending bad texts or by putting someone’s photo or video on the internet.

A bully may use one or all of these ways to hurt someone. That’s what happened to one Scottish teenager. In 2016, her “friends” asked her to walk home from school with them. They walked to a place where they were alone. Then they hit her while calling her names and making a video. Later, they put the video on the internet to hurt her more.

Some people say that bullying usually happens and that children need to learn to be stronger. They say that children need to learn to hit back. Is that really what we want to teach our children?

**Reading 35 Dying Languages**

There are many languages around the world that are only spoken. That is, they have never been written down. In some places, these languages are spoken by only a few old people. Often their children and grandchildren can’t speak the language or don’t want to learn it.

People who speak these languages cannot read or write it because there is no way to write the words. All the things that people know have been passed from person to person for hundreds or thousands of years. Now, without books to keep the language in, we may lose these languages forever.

You may not know that around half of the languages in the world today are not written down. About eight out of ten languages in Africa are this way. Australia is another place that has many unwritten languages. One of these languages has only about fifteen speakers left.

As speakers of these languages die, some of the languages die with them. Soon, they may be lost to the world forever. However, it is not all bad news. Some people are trying to write and record these languages so that something of them will be left after there are no more speakers.

**Reading 36 Fears**

Some people are so afraid of everyday things that it can make their life very difficult. There are many kinds of fears, and some of them are unusual. Some people have a fear of flying. Just thinking about flying can make them afraid. Where do fears come from?

Some fears are learned. Just like all the other things that we learn, there are different ways to learn a fear. If a child is hurt by a dog, he or she could always have a fear of dogs. This fear can last a long time and can stop the child from doing usual things like walking outside.

Another way people learn fear is from other people. Children often have the same fears as their mother or father. They learn to be afraid of things that their mother or father is afraid of. They may be afraid of spiders because their mother always cried when she saw a spider.

Fears can be unlearned, too. The way to do this is by facing your fear, little by little. If you have a fear of flying, try to get used to being in airplanes. Think of being happy when flying. In time, your fear will go away.

**Reading 37 Life After Death**

Where do we go when we die? Are we still around but without bodies? Do we go into a new body and live again? Or do we just end? People have been asking these questions for thousands of years.

Most religions tell us that we will be somewhere after we die. They also tell us how our next life will be. Most religions tell us that good people will have a happy life after death and that bad people will not. Christians believe that all good people will go to a happy place called heaven and the bad people will go to an unhappy place called hell.

A long time ago in Egypt, people believed that a person’s real body went to the next world. This is why they kept dead bodies carefully. The Egyptians also believed that the dead could take things with them to the next life. This is why the dead people were put in rooms with delicious food and useful things.

The idea of life after death can make us ask interesting questions. Are people young or old in heaven? If everyone is the same age as when they died, heaven must be full of old people!

**Reading 38 Buddhism**

Buddhism is the religion of more than 350 million people. It started in India, but today there are Buddhists all around the world. They believe that the key to happiness is to try to see the world as it really is. They follow the life of the Buddha, who was the first person to truly know the world.

The Buddha taught that we all want things: we want money, we want a bigger house, and we want better and more beautiful friends. However, this wanting makes life difficult. When we want things, we cannot be happy. And when we get these things, we cannot stay happy for long. We will always want more and more. So, the Buddha said, the only way to be happy is to stop wanting things.

One way to stop wanting things is by understanding our thoughts. This can be done by sitting quietly for a long time. Buddhists believe that anyone can “wake up” this way, just like the Buddha did. Only when we “wake up” will we truly understand ourselves and our place in the world. Then we will see the world, not through the things that we want, but as it really is.

**Reading 39 Judaism**

Judaism is one of the oldest religions in the world. It started over 3,500 years ago in the Middle East. The number of Jews in the world is not large (about 15 to 17 million), but their religion has been very important.

Jews believe that God spoke to a man named Moses and gave him ten rules about how to live a good life. These rules tell people not to kill, take other people’s things, or believe in other gods. These rules were not easy to follow, but they were very easy for them to understand. Because of this, they helped the Jews live together during bad times.

There are many important things which come from Judaism, but maybe the most important is their idea that there is only one god. Thousands of years ago, that idea was new and very different from what other groups of people believed. Believing in only one god makes it easier for people to agree about how the world was made and what rules to follow. This idea may be what helped the Jews and other one-god religions to stay strong and to last longer than other religions from a long time ago.

**Reading 40 Paganism**

Paganism is not really one religion. The word was first used by Christians as a name for all other people who did not believe in their god. However, today the word is used by many different groups of people who believe in what we may call “natural” religions. Pagans believe that everything has a spirit, as do all living and nonliving things.

Pagans may pray to tree, rock, and animal spirits. They may think of the sun as a god, and on some days, pray to it. In England, Stonehenge is one very well-known place where groups of Pagans often go. On some nights, they go there dressed in white, light fires, put flowers in their hair, and sing together.

Paganism has not always had many followers. People who believed in other religions often thought Pagans were unusual and keeping to old ways. However, Paganism has become better and better known in the last 100 years. No one knows why Paganism is growing so quickly. Some people think it is because Pagans believe in taking care of the world and keeping the earth clean. Others believe it is because Paganism gives women an important place next to men.