

Why Flamingos Are Pink

PASSAGE · NON-FICTION

SKILLS TRAINED

Working memory

Delayed recall

Comprehension

HOW TO USE THIS SHEET

About 12 minutes

- 1 Read the passage twice, slowly. Take about three minutes.
- 2 Turn to the next page and cover this one. No looking back.
- 3 Write what you remember, then mark it on the last page.

In Kenya there is a shallow lake called Lake Nakuru. From far away the water looks pink. Come closer and you see why. The lake is covered in flamingos, sometimes more than a million of them standing in the shallow water.

A flamingo is not born pink. A baby flamingo is grey.

The colour comes from its food. Flamingos eat tiny shrimp and small plants from the water. These are full of a colour called carotene. It is the same thing that makes carrots orange.

Slowly the colour moves into the flamingo's feathers. The more it eats, the pinker it gets.

A flamingo kept away from that food would turn white again.

Cover the passage before you start.

Looking back turns this into a copying exercise. Getting it slightly wrong from memory is what makes it work.

PART A Tell it back

Write down everything you can remember about how flamingos get their colour.

PART B 4 questions

1 What is the lake called?

2 What colour is a baby flamingo?

3 What is the colour in their food called?

4 What would happen to a flamingo that did not eat that food?

PART C Mark your own work

Now go back to the passage. Tick every answer you got right. You do not need the same words as the answer below — if you wrote the same idea in your own words, it counts.

- ☐ 1 • Lake Nakuru.
- ☐ 2 • Grey.
- ☐ 3 • Carotene — the same thing that makes carrots orange.
- ☐ 4 • It would turn white again.

FACTS RECALLED IN PART A

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QUESTIONS CORRECT

— / 4

DATE

THE STRATEGY Make a picture in your head

Turn the words into something you can see. Picture a grey baby flamingo slowly turning pink, like paint soaking into a cloth. A fact you have pictured is remembered about twice as well as one you have only read.

WHERE YOU ALREADY DO THIS

Think of something you learned at school this week. Can you see a picture of it in your head, or only words?

FOR THE PARENT OR TEACHER · Let your child read the passage alone, but stay nearby. During Part A, do not prompt — the struggle to retrieve a half-remembered fact is exactly what builds the memory. Count the facts they recall and compare that number across several sets rather than worrying about any single score.