

The Island That Grew

PASSAGE · NON-FICTION

SKILLS TRAINED

Working memory

Delayed recall

Inference

HOW TO USE THIS SHEET

About 15 minutes

- 1 Read the passage twice, slowly. Take about four 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.

On a November morning in 1963, fishermen off the south coast of Iceland saw smoke rising from the sea. They thought a boat was burning and sailed towards it to help.

It was not a boat. It was a volcano, erupting underwater.

Ash and rock piled up fast. Within a week an island had pushed its way above the waves, and it kept growing for nearly four years. Scientists named it Surtsey, after a giant from old Icelandic stories.

Then they realised something. Surtsey was brand new. Nothing had ever lived on it. For the first time, people could watch life arrive in a place from the very beginning.

So they made a rule. Almost nobody is allowed to land there.

The first seeds floated in on the sea, and a plant was growing by the following spring. Seabirds arrived and nested, and their droppings made the ground richer. More plants grew. Insects came. Today there are mosses, grasses, flowers and even a few small bushes.

Surtsey is slowly shrinking now. The waves are wearing it away, and one day it will sink back under the sea.

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 Surtsey was made and how life arrived there.

PART B 4 questions

1 What did the fishermen think they were seeing?

2 What is the island called, and where does its name come from?

3 How did the first plants reach the island?

4 Why do you think scientists made a rule that almost nobody may land on Surtsey?

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 • A burning boat.
- ☐ 2 • Surtsey, named after a giant from old Icelandic stories.
- ☐ 3 • Their seeds floated in on the sea.
- ☐ 4 • So that visitors do not accidentally carry seeds, insects or soil onto the island. That would spoil the chance to watch life arrive on its own.

FACTS RECALLED IN PART A

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QUESTIONS CORRECT

— / 4

DATE

THE STRATEGY Chunk and retell

Stop at the end of every paragraph. Look away and say the main idea out loud in one sentence before you carry on. Four short retellings hold far better than one long reread, and the harder it feels at the time, the more of it stays.

WHERE YOU ALREADY DO THIS

Think of a place you know well that has changed over time. What is different now from when you first saw it?

FOR THE PARENT OR TEACHER · This sheet trains recall, not reading speed. Do not prompt during Part A, and do not let them look back. Question 4 asks your child to work something out rather than remember it, so a thoughtful wrong answer there is worth more than a lucky right one — talk it through together afterwards.