

The Girl Who Drew the Stars

PASSAGE · 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.

Naran lived with her family in a round white tent on the Mongolian grassland. There were no streetlights for a hundred miles. On clear nights the sky was so full of stars that it looked crowded.

Naran could not sleep. She had no paper, so she drew the stars with a stick in the dust outside the tent — the bright ones pressed deep, the faint ones barely scratched.

Every morning the wind rubbed her drawing away. Every night she started again.

Her grandmother watched this for a whole summer without saying anything. Then one evening she brought out an old leather case and opened it. Inside were sheets of paper, soft and yellow at the edges.

“These were my father's,” she said. “He counted horses on them. You may count stars.”

Naran worked all winter. She learned that some stars moved across the sky and others did not. She learned that one group swung round like a bucket on a rope.

Years later, in a city far away, a teacher asked her how she had first learned the sky.

Naran thought about the dust and the stick. “I drew it,” she said. “Badly, for about a thousand nights.”

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 Naran learned the night sky.

PART B 4 questions

1 Where did Naran live?

2 What did Naran use to draw the stars before she had paper?

3 What had her grandmother's father used the paper for?

4 Naran says she drew the sky “badly, for about a thousand nights”. What is she telling the teacher about how she learned?

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 • In a round white tent on the Mongolian grassland.
- ☐ 2 • A stick, drawing in the dust outside the tent.
- ☐ 3 • Counting horses.
- ☐ 4 • That she learned by practising over and over, not by being good at it straight away. The repeating and the effort are what taught her.

FACTS RECALLED IN PART A

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QUESTIONS CORRECT

— / 4

DATE

THE STRATEGY Make a film of it

Turn the words into pictures you can actually see — the stick in the dust, the old leather case, the yellow paper. A sentence you have pictured is remembered roughly twice as well as a sentence you have only read, because you store it twice: once as words and once as an image.

WHERE YOU ALREADY DO THIS

Think of something you can do now that you were bad at to begin with. How many times did you have to try?

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.