

One Hundred and Twelve

PASSAGE · FICTION

SKILLS TRAINED

Working memory

Delayed recall

Inference

HOW TO USE THIS SHEET

About 18 minutes

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

The sea was the colour of a steel ruler, and Mi-rae had been on the rocks since six with a notebook and a pencil stub. Out beyond the breakers, eleven orange floats sat on the water like a scattered row of buttons. Under each float, somewhere, was a woman.

The divers of Jeju are called *haenyeo*, which means sea women. They work without air tanks. They take down a knife, a net bag, a pair of lead weights and nothing else, and they come up for breath only when their bodies insist on it. The youngest woman in the water that morning was sixty-one. Mi-rae's grandmother was seventy-four.

Mi-rae's job was the tally. Each woman had her own float, each float had its own bag, and at the end of the morning the bags went to the market to be weighed separately. So Mi-rae wrote: whose float, how many abalone, how long the dive. The record settled who was paid what, so a wrong line mattered. She had been doing it for three summers and had never once been allowed in the water.

There was a second way to keep track, and she liked it better. A *haenyeo* makes a sound when she surfaces — a long thin whistle as the old air leaves her, before the new air goes in. Every whistle is different. Her grandmother's was the highest of the eleven, two notes that fell away at the end, and Mi-rae could pick it out of all that noise with her eyes shut.

By nine o'clock she had forty-one lines in the notebook. Dives of fifty seconds, dives of eighty, and in between the floats drifting a few metres and coming back. Then her grandmother's float went still, and no whistle came.

Mi-rae counted. At sixty she stood up. At ninety she put the notebook face down on the rock, which she had never done in three summers, and at one hundred and twelve the water broke beside the float and the two falling notes came with it, thinner than usual.

Her grandmother swam in slowly, rolled onto the shingle and held up a shell the width of a saucer. "Stuck," she said. "Forty years in that crack and it did not want to come." She was laughing, which took a while, because she was also out of breath.

Mi-rae said the number out loud, because she could not help it. One hundred and twelve.

Her grandmother looked at her for a moment, the way she looked at the sky before deciding whether to go out. Then she unhooked the lead weights from her belt and set them on the rock between them.

“Low tide tomorrow is at seven,” she said. “Bring the gloves. Leave the notebook.”

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 Mi-rae's morning on the rocks and what the divers did. Order does not matter. Keep writing until you run out.

PART B 6 questions

1 What four things do the *haenyeo* take down with them, and what do they not take?

2 What was Mi-rae writing in her notebook, and why did it have to be kept float by float?

3 Why could Mi-rae tell that it was her grandmother who had not surfaced?

4 Her grandmother puts the lead weights down on the rock between them. What is she saying without saying it?

5 The passage says the divers surface “only when their bodies insist on it”. What does *insist* mean here, and why is it a good choice?

- 6 The writer spends a whole paragraph on the whistles before anything goes wrong. What does that do for the rest of the story?

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 knife, a net bag and a pair of lead weights — and nothing else. They take no air tank.
- ☐ 2 • Whose float it was, how many abalone were in the bag and how long each dive lasted. Each woman's bag was weighed separately at the market, so the catches could not be mixed up.
- ☐ 3 • Each diver had her own float and her own whistle. Her grandmother's float had gone still, and the high two-note whistle Mi-rae knew best was missing from the others.
- ☐ 4 • That Mi-rae can dive with her the next day. The weights are a diver's gear, so handing them over is an invitation — confirmed by “bring the gloves, leave the notebook”.
- ☐ 5 • Insist means to demand something and not be refused. It suggests the divers stay down past the point of simply wanting air, and only come up when the need becomes impossible to ignore.
- ☐ 6 • It makes the silence mean something. Because we already know the grandmother's whistle is the highest and easy to pick out, its absence is immediately alarming, and the two falling notes at one hundred and twelve are a relief we can hear.

FACTS RECALLED IN PART A

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QUESTIONS CORRECT

— / 6

DATE

THE STRATEGY Explain why, not just what

After each part of a passage, ask yourself why it happened, not only what happened. Why did she put the notebook face down? Why count at all? A fact you have explained is hooked onto something else in your head, and hooked facts are much harder to lose than loose ones.

WHERE YOU ALREADY DO THIS

Think of a rule at home or at school that you actually remember to follow. Do you know the reason behind it — and is that why it stuck?

FOR THE PARENT OR TEACHER · This sheet trains delayed recall, not reading speed. Let your child read the passage once, then cover it completely before Part A — no glancing back, and no prompting, because the struggle to haul a half-remembered fact out of memory is what fixes it there. At this level, reward the reasoning in the inference and purpose answers rather than the exact wording.