



2025 Gulf Shores Middle School Summer Reading Assignment

Mandatory Assignment for ALL Students entering grades 6th-7th-8th.

Choose **one** of the following texts to read, then complete the accompanying questions. You can either print the pages or write/type your answers on a separate sheet of paper. This assignment is due the first week of school.

Option 1: "Fish Cheeks" by Amy Tan (Pages 2-5)

Option 2: "All Summer in a Day" by Ray Bradbury (pages 6-13)

Option 3: "For Teens, A Good Mood depends on Good Sleep" by Meenaskshi Prabhune (pages 14-18)

Option 4: "The Distracted Teenage Brain" by Alison Pearce Stevens (Pages 19-22)

Students are encouraged to...

Pick a longer book or story that grabs your interest and dive in! Reading something you enjoy not only builds your vocabulary and focus, but it also sharpens your thinking. Plus, it's a great way to chill and explore new ideas.



Name: _____

Class: _____

Fish Cheeks

By Amy Tan
1987

Amy Tan is an American writer whose work often provides insight into the experiences of Chinese Americans and family relationships. While her parents emigrated from China, Tan herself was born in Oakland, California.

Skills Focus: *In this lesson, you'll analyze how the author develops the narrator's point of view. In this lesson, you'll practice analyzing how an author develops a narrator's point of view. This means determining what the narrator thinks or believes and examining how the author uses actions, dialogue, and thoughts to develop this point of view. As you read, take notes on the narrator's point of view of her culture.*

- [1] I fell in love with the minister's son the winter I turned fourteen. He was not Chinese, but as white as Mary in the manger. For Christmas I prayed for this blond-haired boy, Robert, and a slim new American nose.

When I found out that my parents had invited the minister's family over for Christmas Eve dinner, I cried. What would Robert think of our shabby Chinese Christmas? What would he think of our noisy Chinese relatives who lacked proper American manners? What terrible disappointment would he feel upon seeing not a roasted turkey and sweet potatoes but Chinese food?



"Untitled" by Jametlene Reskp is licensed under CC0.

On Christmas Eve I saw that my mother had outdone herself in creating a strange menu. She was pulling black veins out of the backs of fleshy prawns. ¹The kitchen was littered with appalling ²mounds of raw food: A slimy rock cod with bulging eyes that pleaded not to be thrown into a pan of hot oil. Tofu, which looked like stacked wedges of rubbery white sponges. A bowl soaking dried fungus back to life. A plate of squid, their backs crisscrossed with knife markings so they resembled bicycle tires.

And then they arrived — the minister's family and all my relatives in a clamor³ of doorbells and crumpled Christmas packages. Robert grunted hello, and I pretended he was not worthy of existence.

- [5] Dinner threw me deeper into despair. My relatives licked the ends of their chopsticks and reached across the table, dipping them into the dozen or so plates of food. Robert and his family waited patiently for platters to be passed to them. My relatives murmured with pleasure when my mother brought out the whole steamed fish. Robert grimaced. Then my father poked his chopsticks just below the fish eye and plucked out the soft meat.

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1. Prawn is a common name for shrimp, used particularly in the United Kingdom and Ireland.
 2. **Appalling** (*adjective*) causing shock, disgust, or alarm
 3. **Clamor** (*noun*) loud and confusing noise

"Amy, your favorite," he said, offering me the tender fish cheek. I wanted to disappear.

At the end of the meal my father leaned back and belched loudly, thanking my mother for her fine cooking. "It's a polite Chinese custom to show you are satisfied," explained my father to our astonished guests. Robert was looking down at his plate with a reddened face. The minister managed to muster up a quiet burp. I was stunned into silence for the rest of the night.

After everyone had gone, my mother said to me, "You want to be the same as American girls on the outside." She handed me an early gift. It was a miniskirt in beige tweed. "But inside you must always be Chinese. You must be proud you are different. Your only shame is to have shame."

And even though I didn't agree with her then, I knew that she understood how much I had suffered during the evening's dinner. It wasn't until many years later — long after I had gotten over my crush on Robert — that I was able to fully appreciate her lesson and the true purpose behind our particular menu. For Christmas Eve that year, she had chosen all my favorite foods.

"Fish Cheeks" by Amy Tan from Seventeen Magazine. Copyright © 1987 by Amy Tan and the Sandra Dijkstra Literary Agency. Reprinted with permission, all rights reserved.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. What does the menu description in paragraph 3 reveal about how the narrator views her family's cultural traditions?
 - A. She views them as humorous.
 - B. She views them as disgusting.
 - C. She views them as honorable.
 - D. She views them as annoying.

2. How does the narrator's embarrassed attitude towards her culture affect the way she describes events in the passage?
 - A. She describes the food as foreign and unappealing.
 - B. She focuses on her desire to be more "American."
 - C. She focuses on her crush's reactions to her family.
 - D. She criticizes every little detail of her mother's cooking.

3. Which piece of evidence best reveals the narrator's feelings about her family's behavior during dinner?
 - A. "And then they arrived — the minister's family and all my relatives in a clamor of doorbells and rumpled Christmas packages." (Paragraph 4)
 - B. "Robert and his family waited patiently for platters to be passed to them." (Paragraph 5)
 - C. "I was stunned into silence for the rest of the night." (Paragraph 6)
 - D. "And even though I didn't agree with her then, I knew that she understood how much I had suffered during the evening's dinner." (Paragraph 8)

4. Which word best describes the tone of paragraph 5?
 - A. miserable
 - B. cheerful
 - C. shocked
 - D. proud

5. What does Amy's mother mean when she says, "Your only shame is to have shame"? (Paragraph 7)
 - A. It is wrong for Amy to be embarrassed of her family's traditions.
 - B. It is wrong for Amy to be embarrassed of her love for American food.
 - C. It is wrong for Amy to be embarrassed about having a crush on Robert.
 - D. It is wrong for Amy to be embarrassed about fitting in with her classmates.

- 6. What does paragraph 8 reveal about how the narrator's point of view changed as she got older?
 - A. She realized the minister's son was not as friendly as she thought.
 - B. She learned to love her mother's cooking, which she previously hated.
 - C. She regretted not expressing her real emotions to Robert and his family.
 - D. She learned to appreciate her family and her Chinese American identity.

- 7. What does paragraph 2 reveal about the narrator's point of view? How does the author develop this point of view?

Name: _____

Class: _____

All Summer in a Day

By Ray Bradbury

1954

*Ray Bradbury is an American author best known for science fiction, specifically his classic novel Fahrenheit 451 and short stories which inspired multiple generations of writers and scientists. Bradbury also wrote memoirs, realistic fiction, plays, and screenplays. In this story, Bradbury explores the possible effects of living on another planet. **Purpose for Reading:** To understand how character interactions develop a theme and to build our understanding about how being part of a crowd affects our behavior.*

[1] "Ready?"

"Now?"

"Soon."

"Do the scientists really know? Will it happen today, will it?"



[5] "Look, look; see for yourself!"

["Rain"](#) by Inge Maria is licensed under CC0.

The children pressed to each other like so many roses, so many weeds, intermixed, peering out for a look at the hidden sun.

It rained.

It had been raining for seven years; thousands upon thousands of days compounded¹ and filled from one end to the other with rain, with the drum and gush of water, with the sweet crystal fall of showers and the concussion² of storms so heavy they were tidal waves come over the islands. A thousand forests had been crushed under the rain and grown up a thousand times to be crushed again. And this was the way life was forever on the planet Venus, and this was the schoolroom of the children of the rocket men and women who had come to a raining world to set up civilization and live out their lives.

"It's stopping, it's stopping!"

[10] "Yes, yes!"

Margot stood apart from them, from these children who could never remember a time when there wasn't rain

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1. **Compound** (*verb*) to combine or add together
 2. **Concussion** (*noun*) a violent shock as from a heavy blow

and rain and rain. They were all nine years old, and if there had been a day, seven years ago, when the sun came out for an hour and showed its face to the stunned world, they could not recall. Sometimes, at night, she heard them stir, in remembrance, and she knew they were dreaming and remembering gold or a yellow crayon or a coin large enough to buy the world with. She knew they thought they remembered a warmth, like a blushing in the face, in the body, in the arms and legs and trembling hands. But then they always awoke to the tattering drum, the endless shaking down of clear bead necklaces upon the roof, the walk, the gardens, the forests, and their dreams were gone.

All day yesterday they had read in class about the sun. About how like a lemon it was, and how hot. And they had written small stories or essays or poems about it.

I think the sun is a flower

That blooms for just one hour.

That was Margot's poem, read in a quiet voice in the still classroom while the rain was falling outside.

[15] "Aw, you didn't write that!" protested one of the boys.

"I did," said Margot, "I did."

"William!" said the teacher.

But that was yesterday. Now the rain was slackening, and the children were crushed in the great thick windows.

"Where's teacher?"

[20] "She'll be back."

"She'd better hurry; we'll miss it!"

They turned on themselves, like a feverish wheel, all tumbling spokes.

Margot stood alone. She was a very frail girl who looked as if she had been lost in the rain for years and the rain had washed out the blue from her eyes and the red from her mouth and the yellow from her hair. She was an old photograph dusted from an album, whitened away, and if she spoke at all her voice would be a ghost. Now she stood, separate, staring at the rain and the loud wet world beyond the huge glass.

"What're you looking at?" said William.

[25] Margot said nothing.

"Speak when you're spoken to." He gave her a shove. But she did not move; rather she let herself be moved only by him and nothing else. They edged away from her, they would not look at her. She felt them go away. And this was because she would play no games with them in the echoing tunnels of the underground city. If they tagged her and ran, she stood blinking after them and did not follow. When the class sang songs about happiness and life and games her lips barely moved. Only when they sang about the sun and the summer did her lips move as she watched the drenched windows.

And then, of course, the biggest crime of all was that she had come here only five years ago from Earth, and she remembered the sun and the way the sun was and the sky was when she was four in Ohio. And they, they had been on Venus all their lives, and they had been only two years old when last the sun came out and had long since forgotten the color and heat of it and the way it really was. But Margot remembered.

"It's like a penny," she said once, eyes closed.

"No it's not!" the children cried.

[30] "It's like a fire," she said, "in the stove."

"You're lying, you don't remember!" cried the children.

But she remembered and stood quietly apart from all of them and watched the patterning windows. And once, a month ago, she had refused to shower in the school shower rooms, had clutched her hands to her ears and over her head, screaming the water mustn't touch her head. So after that, dimly, dimly, she sensed it, she was different, and they knew her difference and kept away.

There was talk that her father and mother were taking her back to Earth next year; it seemed vital to her that they do so, though it would mean the loss of thousands of dollars to her family. And so, the children hated her for all these reasons of big and little consequence. They hated her pale snow face, her waiting silence, her thinness, and her possible future.

"Get away!" The boy gave her another push. "What're you waiting for?"

[35] Then, for the first time, she turned and looked at him. And what she was waiting for was in her eyes.

"Well, don't wait around here!" cried the boy savagely.³ "You won't see nothing!"

Her lips moved.

"Nothing!" he cried. "It was all a joke, wasn't it?" He turned to the other children. "Nothing's happening today. Is it?"

They all blinked at him and then, understanding, laughed and shook their heads. "Nothing, nothing!"

[40] "Oh, but," Margot whispered, her eyes helpless. "But this is the day, the scientists predict, they say, they know, the sun..."

"All a joke!" said the boy, and seized her roughly. "Hey, everyone, let's put her in a closet before teacher comes!"

"No," said Margot, falling back.

3. **Savagely** (*adverb*) in an animal-like, violent way

They surged about her, caught her up and bore her, protesting, and then pleading, and then crying, back into a tunnel, a room, a closet, where they slammed and locked the door. They stood looking at the door and saw it tremble from her beating and throwing herself against it. They heard her muffled cries. Then, smiling, they turned and went out and back down the tunnel, just as the teacher arrived.

"Ready, children?" She glanced at her watch.

[45] "Yes!" said everyone.

"Are we all here?"

"Yes!"

The rain slackened⁴ still more.

They crowded to the huge door.

[50] The rain stopped.

It was as if, in the midst of a film concerning an avalanche, a tornado, a hurricane, a volcanic eruption, something had, first, gone wrong with the sound apparatus, thus muffling and finally cutting off all noise, all of the blasts and repercussions and thunders, and then, second, ripped the film from the projector⁵ and inserted in its place a peaceful tropical slide⁶ which did not move or tremor. The world ground to a standstill. The silence was so immense and unbelievable that you felt your ears had been stuffed or you had lost your hearing altogether. The children put their hands to their ears. They stood apart. The door slid back and the smell of the silent, waiting world came in to them.

The sun came out.

It was the color of flaming bronze and it was very large. And the sky around it was a blazing blue tile color. And the jungle burned with sunlight as the children, released from their spell, rushed out, yelling, into the springtime.

"Now, don't go too far," called the teacher after them. "You've only two hours, you know. You wouldn't want to get caught out!"

[55] But they were running and turning their faces up to the sky and feeling the sun on their cheeks like a warm iron; they were taking off their jackets and letting the sun burn their arms.

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4. **Slacken** (*verb*) to slow down or lessen in intensity
 5. Movies that are recorded on physical film must be shown using a projector, which shines light through the film, allowing the image to be seen on a screen.
 6. A slide is an individual image that can be displayed on a projector, similar to a slide in a PowerPoint presentation.

"Oh, it's better than the sunlamps, isn't it?"

"Much, much better!"

They stopped running and stood in the great jungle that covered Venus, that grew and never stopped growing, tumultuously,⁷ even as you watched it. It was a nest of octopi, clustering up great arms of flesh-like weed, wavering, flowering this brief spring.

It was the color of rubber and ash, this jungle, from the many years without sun. It was the color of stones and white cheeses and ink, and it was the color of the moon.

[60] The children lay out, laughing, on the jungle mattress, and heard it sigh and squeak under them, resilient and alive. They ran among the trees, they slipped and fell, they pushed each other, they played hide-and-seek and tag, but most of all they squinted at the sun until the tears ran down their faces, they put their hands up to that yellowness and that amazing blueness and they breathed of the fresh, fresh air and listened and listened to the silence which suspended them in a blessed sea of no sound and no motion. They looked at everything and savored⁸ everything. Then, wildly, like animals escaped from their caves, they ran and ran in shouting circles.

They ran for an hour and did not stop running.

And then —

In the midst of their running one of the girls wailed.

Everyone stopped.

[65] The girl, standing in the open, held out her hand.

"Oh, look, look," she said trembling.

They came slowly to look at her opened palm. In the center of it, cupped and huge, was a single raindrop.

She began to cry, looking at it.

They glanced quietly at the sky.

[70] "Oh. Oh."

A few cold drops fell on their noses and their cheeks and their mouths. The sun faded behind a stir of mist. A wind blew cool around them. They turned and started to walk back toward the underground house, their hands at their sides, their smiles vanishing away.

7. **Tumultuously** (*adverb*) in a confused, disorganized way

8. **Savor** (*verb*) to enjoy something completely

A boom of thunder startled them and like leaves before a new hurricane, they tumbled upon each other and ran. Lightning struck ten miles away, five miles away, a mile, a half mile. The sky darkened into midnight in a flash.

They stood in the doorway of the underground for a moment until it was raining hard. Then they closed the door and heard the gigantic sound of the rain falling in tons and avalanches, everywhere and forever.

"Will it be seven more years?"

[75] "Yes. Seven."

Then one of them gave a little cry.

"Margot!"

"What?"

"She's still in the closet where we locked her."

[80] "Margot."

They stood as if someone had driven them, like so many stakes, into the floor. They looked at each other and then looked away. They glanced out at the world that was raining now and raining and raining steadily. They could not meet each other's glances. Their faces were solemn⁹ and pale.

They looked at their hands and feet, their faces down.

"Margot."

One of the girls said, "Well...?" No one moved.

[85] "Go on," whispered the girl.

They walked slowly down the hall in the sound of cold rain. They turned through the doorway to the room in the sound of the storm and thunder, lightning on their faces, blue and terrible. They walked over to the closet door slowly and stood by it.

Behind the closet door was only silence.

They unlocked the door, even more slowly, and let Margot out.

9. **Solemn** (*adjective*) serious, without cheer

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. How do the other children regard Margot at the beginning of the story?
 - A. They admire Margot for being so unique.
 - B. They pity Margot for her sun-filled childhood.
 - C. They envy Margot for her unusual experiences.
 - D. They appreciate Margot for teaching them new things.

2. What does the phrase "like escaped animals from their caves" imply about the sun's impact on the children? (Paragraph 60)
 - A. The sun makes the children violent.
 - B. The sun makes the children feel free.
 - C. The sun turns the children against each other.
 - D. The sun causes the children to understand Margot.

3. Why does the author describe the color of the landscape in paragraph 59?
 - A. to illustrate the way sun is harming Venus's natural wonders
 - B. to illustrate the natural beauty that the rain creates on Venus \
 - C. to illustrate that the children were right to hide Margot from the sun
 - D. to illustrate how the sun revealed the truth of life on Venus to the children

4. What does the author's use of figurative language in paragraph 23 reveal about Margot?
 - A. Margot has become angry and violent from the lack of sun on Venus.
 - B. Margot has gained confidence and strength from her new home on Venus.
 - C. Margot has lost strength and energy because of the constant rain on Venus.
 - D. Margot has learned to overcome challenges and disappointments because of her life on Venus.

5. Which statement best expresses a theme of "All Summer in a Day"?
 - A. Following the crowd can lead to cruel actions that one will later regret.
 - B. Following the crowd can give people the courage to try new things.
 - C. Following the crowd can make people afraid to be independent.
 - D. Following the crowd can result in damage to the environment.

6. How does the author use character change, the resolution, or literary devices to reveal theme in "All Summer in a Day"?

Name: _____

Class: _____

For Teens, A Good Mood Depends on Good Sleep

Sleeping less than eight hours — or more than 10 — makes teenagers feel worse the next day

By Meenaskshi Prabhune
2017

How many hours of sleep do you get a night? Likely not as much as Andrew Fuligni finds teenagers should get in his new study. In this informational text, Meenaskshi Prabhune discusses how many hours of sleep teenagers should get each night to be at their best the next day. As you read, take notes on why teenagers may not be getting enough sleep.

- [1] For families with teenagers, school nights may fall into a familiar pattern. Parents urge their kids to go to bed early. But teens would rather stay up late. Maybe they have homework or want to spend time with friends. Or maybe it's just hard to fall asleep. But a new study confirms that adolescents¹ need eight to 10 hours of sleep at night to feel their best the next day.



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As kids reach adolescence, they often face increasing workloads and responsibilities. But they are not yet adults. Their bodies and brains are still changing. As a result, "Their sleep needs are like that of a developing child," says Rafael Pelayo. He is a sleep doctor at the Stanford Center for Sleep Sciences and Medicine in California. He was not involved in the new study.

"Adolescence is sometimes referred to as the 'perfect storm' of problems of sleep," says Pelayo. On the one hand, teens need regular sleep to be mentally and physically healthy. But their internal clocks² shift during this period. Their bodies want to stay awake later at night and sleep later in the morning. School still starts early, though. As a result, Pelayo estimates that 80 to 90 percent of teens do not get enough sleep.

That missed sleep has consequences.³ Sleep-deprived kids are more prone⁴ to mental and physical illnesses. Sleepy drivers face a heightened risk of car accidents — the top cause of teenage death. But too much sleep can have its own problems, such as leaving teens with a sour mood upon waking.

1. **Adolescent (noun)** a young person in the process of developing from a child into an adult
2. a system in the body that controls when a person sleeps, eats, and performs other necessary functions
3. **Consequence (noun)** something that happens as a result of an action or set of conditions
4. **Prone (verb)** more likely to suffer from something

Sleep affects mood

- [5] Andrew Fuligni studies the mental health of adolescents at the University of California, Los Angeles. He wanted to understand which sleep habits help teens feel and perform their best. To find out, his team surveyed 419 students. Each was between the ages of 13 and 19. Every day for two weeks, these volunteers recorded when they fell asleep and woke up. They also rated their moods and feelings the next day, such as their happiness, anxiety and pain.

Most students reported good moods after a night of eight to 10 hours of sleep. "Too much sleep and too little sleep are both extremes," says Pelayo. And both were linked with problems.

Within that eight-to-10-hour range, older kids seemed to need the least sleep. "A 17- or 18-year-old does not need as much sleep as a 14-year-old in order to function on a daily basis," Fuligni found. But, he adds, "They still need a sizeable amount of sleep."

The team published its findings August 18 in the *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*.

Even among kids the same age, everyone needed a slightly different amount of sleep to feel good. One reason could be health issues that differ among them. For instance, in the new study, kids with anxiety and depression seemed to need more sleep to function well.

- [10] Sleep is a lot like appetite, Pelayo says. Just as people eat different amounts of food daily, sleep patterns between healthy people also may differ.

Choosing snoozing

Biologically,⁵ kids' bodies shift toward a later schedule during the teenage years. "They become more like night owls and less like early risers," says Fuligni. But despite the change in their internal body clocks, school start times and other schedules don't change.

"We have set up a system that's very difficult for many teenagers and some kids who might be at risk of mental and behavioral health problems," he concludes.

One way to help teens get enough sleep is to have school start later. Some school districts have already done this. They've found that the later times let kids sleep more. They also have seen fewer car accidents, higher test scores and better graduation rates. Because of this, California lawmakers are trying to change school start times in their state. If they succeed, California middle and high schools could start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

But until schools change their start times, teenagers have to help themselves. Pelayo suggests teens sleep for 10 hours each night for a week or two. This will help them figure out how much sleep they need to feel their best.

5. related to the science of the body

[15] Sleeping more on weekends to make up for missing sleep during the week isn't a good idea, though. Fuligni warns that getting different amounts of sleep each night can be bad for mental health.

Pelayo agrees. "The amount of sleep you get on weekdays and weekends should be the same," he says. We don't starve ourselves of food on weekdays and gorge on weekends, he points out. We shouldn't do that with sleep either.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which statement best expresses the central idea of the text?
 - A. Older teenagers function better during the day if they are allowed to take several short naps.
 - B. Adults require 8-10 hours of sleep a night to remain healthy, while teenagers require even more sleep.
 - C. Depending on their age and personal needs, teenagers require about 8-10 hours of sleep a night to stay healthy.
 - D. When teenagers fall asleep, their unique biology prevents them from staying asleep for the recommended 8-10 hours.

2. Which quotation best provides a reason why teenagers struggle to get enough sleep?
 - A. "Sleep-deprived kids are more prone to mental and physical illnesses." (Paragraph 4)
 - B. "'A 17- or 18-year-old does not need as much sleep as a 14-year-old in order to function on a daily basis,' Fuligni found." (Paragraph 7)
 - C. "despite the change in their internal body clocks, school start times and other schedules don't change." (Paragraph 11)
 - D. "Sleeping more on weekends to make up for missing sleep during the week isn't a good idea, though." (Paragraph 15)

3. How does paragraph 13 contribute to the development of ideas in the text?
 - A. It shows how easy it is for schools to allow teenagers to sleep longer.
 - B. It emphasizes the positive outcomes of starting school later for teenagers.
 - C. It points out how uncommon it is for teenagers to go to school later in the U.S.
 - D. It explains why many states are hesitant to start school at a later time.

4. What is the author's main purpose in the text?
 - A. to argue that all schools should start later in the day
 - B. to warn teens about the dangers of staying up late
 - C. to compare the sleep patterns of teens and adults
 - D. to explore what the right amount of sleep is for teenagers

5. What is the relationship between teenagers' internal clocks and school schedules? Use evidence from the text in your answer.

Name: _____

Class: _____

The Distracted Teenage Brain

Scientists discover that teens are easily distracted by behaviors that were once — but are no longer — rewarding

By Alison Pearce Stevens
2014

When most people think of distraction, they think of loud music or television, but in 2014 psychologist Zachary Roper conducted a study that offered a different definition of distraction. The results show why young adults may seem impulsive and easily distracted.

- [1] Teens have a reputation for making some not-so-smart decisions. Researchers have blamed those poor decisions on the immaturity of a teen's prefrontal cortex. That is the part of the brain involved in making plans and decisions. But scientists now find the answer may be simpler: the allure¹ of rewards. Rewards, even small ones, entice teens more than they do adults.



"Brains" by yuan2003 is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.

And, perhaps surprisingly, teens tend to continue doing things they once found rewarding, even after the actual payoff is long gone. Both findings come from a new study by researchers at the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

Psychologist Zachary Roper and his team worked with two groups of volunteers: 13- to 16-year olds and 20- to 35-year-old adults. Each volunteer had to play a game of sorts. During a training phase, a computer displayed six circles, each a different color. The players had to find the red or green circle. These targets had either a horizontal or vertical line inside. The remaining circles had lines at other angles. When the participant found the correct target, they had to press one of two keys on a keyboard. One key would report they had found the vertical line. The other reported finding a horizontal line.

When a volunteer hit the right key, the screen flashed the amount of the reward they had earned. For some volunteers, green circles provided a large (10-cent) reward and red circles provided a small (2-cent) reward. For other volunteers, the amounts were reversed, with red circles worth more. All other colors had no reward.

- [5] By the end of this training, volunteers had learned the value of each color. But they weren't aware that they had, notes Iowa's Jatin Vaidya. When the scientists asked the players about the value of red versus green circles, both teens and adults had no awareness that a circle's color had any effect on how much they had earned during any given trial.

1. **Allure** (*noun*) attraction, appeal

After this training ended, it was time to begin testing in earnest.² The scientists informed the volunteers they had a new target. Each had to report the orientation³ of the line inside a blue diamond. Again, groups of six symbols appeared on a computer screen. Only one was a diamond. The other five were still circles. In some trials, one of those circles was red or green. In other trials, there were no red or green circles.

The recruits were told to answer as quickly as possible. And for this phase of the experiment, no additional money would be earned.

The researchers now measured how long it took people to find the diamond and record their answers.

When no red or green circles were among the onscreen options, both adults and teens responded quickly. But when a red or green circle showed up, both groups initially took a bit longer. Adults, though, quickly stopped paying attention to the colored circles. Their response times sped up.

[10] Teens reacted differently. They took longer to respond whenever a red or green circle showed up. Their response times never sped up. Their attention still was drawn to the previously valued circles — even though the shapes no longer brought any reward. Clearly, the red and green circles were distracting teens from their objective.

Roper's team reported the findings September 10 in *Psychological Science*.

"The study demonstrates that the attention of adolescents⁴ is especially drawn to rewarding information," says Brian Anderson. A psychologist at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md., he was not involved with the study. These data may help explain why teens engage in risky behavior, he says.

Some behaviors, such as texting or using social media, trigger the brain's reward system. Once the teenage brain has linked a behavior to that reward, it continues to seek the reward again and again. That's why teens are likely to opt for the reward of social media when they should be studying. Or why they respond to texts while driving.

How can someone overcome their brain's attempts to distract? Vaidya suggests physically removing distractions whenever possible. Shut down the phone when driving or disconnect from Wi-Fi while doing homework. When distractions are not readily available, it will be easier to focus attention on the things that matter most. Like arriving home safely.

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2. The phrase "in earnest" means that someone is sincere or passionate in their convictions.
 3. direction, as in vertical or horizontal
 4. An adolescent is a young person who is in the transitional stage from a child into an adult.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following statements best expresses the central idea of the article?
 - A. Teenagers' brains are more easily distracted because they use social media and text while driving more often than adults.
 - B. Teenagers are more likely than adults to take risks for money based on a study in Iowa City.
 - C. Teenagers are more prone to distraction because they are more attracted to or focused on potential rewards.
 - D. Teenagers often do not realize why they want rewards because their brains are still developing.

2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "For some volunteers, green circles provided a large (10-cent) reward and red circles provided a small (2-cent) reward." (Paragraph 4)
 - B. "The study demonstrates that the attention of adolescents is especially drawn to rewarding information" (Paragraph 12)
 - C. "These data may help explain why teens engage in risky behavior, he says." (Paragraph 12)
 - D. "When distractions are not readily available, it will be easier to focus attention on the things that matter most." (Paragraph 14)

3. PART A: What does the word "entice" mean as used in paragraph 1?
 - A. to discourage
 - B. to inspire
 - C. to challenge
 - D. to attract

4. PART B: Which of the following phrases from paragraph 1 best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "not-so-smart decisions"
 - B. "allure of rewards"
 - C. "even small ones"
 - D. "more than they do adults"

5. Analyze the claim the author makes about distracted teenage behaviors and evaluate whether the evidence used to support this claim is sufficient.
