TASK 1: Before you read

Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. What fears do your friends and family have?
2. What reactions do they have to their fears?

FIGHT or FLIGHT

1 Most people connect fear with negative feelings, but it can actually be very positive as well. Fear is natural and something we are born with. We have always needed it to keep us safe from danger. If we face a dangerous situation, we can find abilities that we often do not know we have.

2 In the past, humans faced danger every day so they learned to respond to it straight away to stay alive. This natural reaction can also be seen in many animals. Take cuttlefish, an animal in the same family as a squid and octopus. These creatures have an amazing ability to change color and shape. They use this to both fight and escape. With the help of their bright colors, they make other fish slower and easier to catch. Their color also helps them to hide in their environment. Another fish, the electric eel, uses its electric shock to catch food and for self-defense, as an action to protect itself from others. Humans might not have such unusual responses but they do still have a fight or flight instinct, which is the body's natural way of keeping us safe by either facing the danger or getting away from it as quickly as possible.

3 Our bodies react in a number of different ways when we are in a dangerous situation. For example, our reactions often become faster, we become stronger and have more energy. Under pressure we become nervous and some simple skills such as putting a key in a door often become worse. However, physical abilities such as running and jumping tend to improve. If an angry dog chases you, you will probably run away from it faster. In a normal situation we often only use 65% of our strength, but studies have shown that this can increase to as much as 85% in more dangerous situations.

4 So how does our body create such a reaction? Fear is a natural reaction in the brain to an external stressful or dangerous

situation and is the body's internal way of trying to stay calm. Hormones are released that cause our heart to beat faster and our breathing to become quicker. This response is known as the fight or flight response and it makes it difficult to remain calm. Instead, you might run away or fight the situation that scared you.

5 In biology, the brain causes the body to release over 30 different hormones, such as adrenaline, a chemical that gives you more energy when frightened, excited, or angry, to help keep us safe. These hormones cause a range of reactions. Some senses such as our eyes change to let more light in. Some of our body relaxes to let more air in. Other parts of the body become tense because of the adrenaline and glucose, a sugar produced in the body. More blood is sent to our muscles and organs, for example, the heart and other parts of the body that do specific jobs to keep us alive. We often feel cold and connect fear with being cold because our bodies are keeping us and our organs safe, instead of keeping us warm. It is also why we feel tired when we recover from a shock. Fear is designed to protect us.

6 Although we might not face as many physical dangers today as we did in the past, fear still helps to keep us safe. It stops us from doing stupid things, like walking out into a busy road or not being careful on a high building. It limits the risks that we are willing to take. However, these limits may also take away some opportunities in our lives. One common fear is a fear of failure. Many people are not willing to take risks because they are too scared of failing. This fear can lead to people not taking good chances. The risk of making a mistake is minimized, but it also means people are less likely to try new things and may achieve less. This desire to avoid failure can make people act differently to when they feel more confident.

7 While fear may make people work slowly, and even limit opportunities in life, it can also make us better at certain things. People who experience fear often are usually better at making decisions as they understand the risk more quickly. If people always only see the positives in things, they may not pay attention to negative information they receive. As a result, this can make them poor decision makers.

8 When we combine anxiety and fear with training, the results can be even more positive. If we are well-trained and prepared, we can react to stressful situations in a normal and calm way. Fear and adrenaline from the fight or flight instinct make you quick to respond to things while training means you know what to do. This is why emergency professionals train for a wide range of situations and can remain calm when most of us would panic. Fear can be used to your advantage as long as you plan ahead and do your research.

TASK 2: Global Reading

Skim each paragraph in the text and identify in which paragraph you could find the information to answer these questions.

1. What is the body naturally trying to do when we feel fear? Para: _____

2. What things can fear stop us doing today? Para: _____

3. Which animal changes color to keep it safe? Para: _____

4. What can fear make us better at? Para: _____

5. What happens to our reactions when we are in danger? Para: _____

6. How can training help us deal with situations many fear? Para: _____

7. How do biology and hormones affect our eyes when we are in danger? Para: _____

TASK 3: Close Reading & Vocabulary

Read the text again and complete the following activities.

Reading Tip: Finding Meaning
While it is often possible to use the context of a paragraph to find the meaning of new words, sometimes unusual words are defined in the text. This is often true if the words are very specific and unlikely to be known, for example with scientific vocabulary. There might be full definitions where the meaning of the word is explained, e.g.
*When an animal is scared, it will try to escape, **get away from something**.*
Or the new words can be defined using examples:
*In an emergency it is important to have a calm reaction, like **speaking softly to someone who is hurt**.*

Find the definitions for the following words in the text:

1. self-defense: _____
2. fight or flight instinct: _____
3. physical abilities: _____
4. adrenaline: _____
5. glucose: _____
6. organs: _____

Discuss the meaning of these words with your partner.

TASK 4: Critical Thinking

Discuss or write your answers to the following questions.

Name: _____ **Student ID:** _ _ _ _ _

1. “Fight or flight” claims that fear can stop us from taking risks. Do you think avoiding risk is a good or bad thing?
2. Do you agree that fear stops people from achieving what they want to? What examples can you think of?

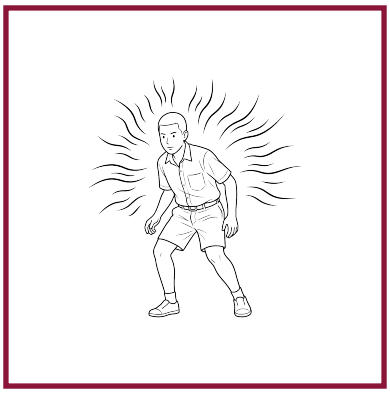
B1 VERSION

FIGHT or FLIGHT

1 Most people think fear is a bad feeling, but it can actually be very positive for us. Fear is natural and we are all born with it. We have always needed it to keep us safe from danger. In a dangerous situation, we can often find extra strength and energy that we usually do not know we have. It is amazing what our body can do when it truly needs to.

2 Long ago, humans faced danger every day, so they learned to act very quickly to stay alive. This natural reaction is also seen in many animals. For example, cuttlefish can change their color and shape. They use this to both fight and hide. By using bright colors, they make other fish move slower and easier to catch. Their color also helps them to hide in their environment. The electric eel uses an electric shock to catch food and for self-defense, which is an action to protect itself from others. Humans do not have such unusual powers, but we still have a "fight or flight" instinct. This is the body's natural way of keeping us safe by either facing the danger or getting away as quickly as possible.

3 Our bodies react in several different ways when we are in danger. Our reactions get faster, we become stronger, and we have more energy. Under pressure, we can become very nervous. This means simple skills, like putting a key in a door, often become much harder. However, physical abilities like running and jumping usually get better. If an angry dog runs after you, you will probably run much faster. Usually, we only use about 65% of our strength, but studies show this can increase to 85% in dangerous situations.



4 How does the body create this reaction? Fear is a natural reaction in the brain to a stressful situation. It is the body's internal way of trying to stay calm. In the brain, hormones are released that make our heart beat faster and our breathing much quicker. This response is known as the "fight or flight" response. It makes it very difficult for a person to remain calm. Instead, your body wants you to run away or fight the thing that scared you.

5 The brain makes the body release over 30 different hormones. One is adrenaline, which is a chemical that gives you more energy when you are scared, excited, or angry. These hormones cause many reactions to keep us safe. Our eyes change to let more light in. Some of the body relaxes to let more air in. Other parts become tense because of the adrenaline and glucose, which is a sugar produced in the body. More blood is sent to our muscles and our organs, like the heart and other parts that do specific jobs to keep us alive. We often feel cold because our bodies are keeping

our organs safe instead of keeping the skin warm. It is also why we feel tired when we recover from a shock. Fear is designed to protect us.

6 We do not face many physical dangers today, but fear still helps keep us safe. It stops us from doing dangerous things, like walking into a busy road or being careless on a high building. It limits the risks we take. However, these limits can also take away opportunities. One common fear is a fear of failure. Many people are not willing to take risks because they are too scared of failing. This can lead to people not taking good chances. The risk of making a mistake is reduced, but it also means people are less likely to try new things and may achieve less. This desire to avoid failure can make people act differently than when they feel confident.

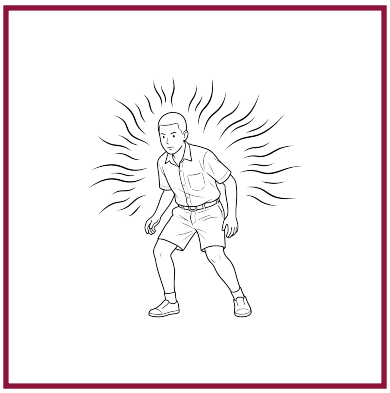
7 While fear may make people work more slowly or limit opportunities, it can also make us better at certain things. People who experience fear often are usually better at making decisions because they understand the risk more quickly. If people only ever see the positives, they might not pay attention to negative information. As a result, this can make them poor at making important choices.

8 When we combine fear with training, the results are very positive. If we are well-trained and prepared, we can react to stressful situations in a calm way. Fear and adrenaline from the instinct make you quick to respond, while training means you know exactly what to do. This is why emergency workers train for many situations and can stay calm when others might panic. Fear can be used to your advantage as long as you plan ahead and do your research.

B2 VERSION

FIGHT *or* FLIGHT

1 While most individuals associate fear with negative emotional states, it can paradoxically serve as a positive force in our lives. Fear is an inherent biological mechanism that we are equipped with from birth, and it has always been indispensable for maintaining our safety in the face of environmental hazards. When we are confronted with a genuinely dangerous situation, we often discover latent physical abilities and reserves of strength that frequently remain unrecognized during our everyday routines.



2 Historically, our ancestors encountered life-threatening dangers on a daily basis, necessitating an immediate physiological response to ensure survival. This evolutionary reaction is pervasive throughout the animal kingdom. Take the cuttlefish, for example, a marine creature in the same family as the squid and octopus. These animals possess an extraordinary ability to alter both their pigmentation and their physical morphology. They utilize this sophisticated adaptation for both offensive hunting and defensive escape. By displaying vibrant colors, they can disorient other fish, making them easier to capture. Conversely, their camouflage allows them to hide seamlessly within their environment. Another aquatic species, the electric eel, utilizes its electric discharge for self-defense—an action intended to protect itself from potential predators. While humans lack such specialized biological weapons, we do possess a "fight or flight" instinct. This is the body's natural mechanism for preserving our safety by either confronting a threat or retreating from it as rapidly as possible.

3 Our bodies undergo a complex series of reactions when we find ourselves in a hazardous situation. Primarily, our reaction times accelerate, while our physical strength and energy levels noticeably surge. However, under acute pressure, we can become exceedingly nervous, which often causes fine motor skills—such as inserting a key into a lock—to deteriorate. In contrast, gross physical abilities, such as running and jumping, tend to improve remarkably under stress. If pursued by an aggressive dog, one will likely sprint away with significantly greater speed than usual. Under standard conditions, we typically utilize only 65% of our potential strength; however, studies have demonstrated that this can escalate to 85% during critical emergencies.

4 What is the biological mechanism that governs this intense physical reaction? Fear is essentially a neurological response within the brain to perceived external stressors, representing the body's internal effort to maintain a state of homeostatic equilibri-

um. During this process, a cascade of hormones is released, precipitating a rapid increase in heart rate and accelerated respiration. This physiological shift is universally recognized as the “fight or flight” response, and it makes it exceedingly difficult for an individual to remain composed. Instead, the body is instinctively primed to either flee from the source of the fear or engage with the stressful situation directly.

5 Biologically, the brain coordinates the release of over 30 distinct hormones, most notable among these being adrenaline—a biochemical catalyst that provides a surge of energy when an individual is frightened or provoked. These hormones trigger a diverse array of systemic reactions designed to ensure our survival. Specifically, certain senses are sharpened; for instance, the pupils dilate to permit a greater influx of light, thereby improving visual perception. Simultaneously, respiratory passages relax to maximize oxygen intake. Other muscle groups become tense due to the influx of adrenaline and glucose—a sugar synthesized by the body for energy. Blood flow is prioritized and redirected toward the skeletal muscles and vital organs, such as the heart, which perform specialized functions to keep us alive. We often experience a sensation of coldness when terrified because our bodies are prioritizing the protection of internal organs over the maintenance of surface temperature. Furthermore, the exhaustion felt after a shock is a direct result of this massive energy expenditure. Ultimately, fear is a sophisticated system evolved specifically for our protection.

6 Although the physical hazards of the modern world have diminished compared to our ancestral history, fear remains an essential component of personal safety. It serves as a psychological deterrent that prevents us from engaging in reckless behavior, such as stepping into congested traffic or neglecting safety protocols on a high building. It effectively moderates the level of risk we are prepared to undertake. Nevertheless, these self-imposed constraints can inadvertently obstruct valuable life opportunities. A pervasive fear of failure, for example, often deters individuals from pursuing calculated risks or exploring unfamiliar territory. Consequently, this risk aversion can lead to people missing significant chances for growth. The overriding desire to avoid making a mistake is minimized, but it also implies that people are less likely to innovate and may ultimately achieve less. This urge to avoid failure can fundamentally alter one’s behavioral patterns compared to when one is operating with confidence.

7 While an excess of caution may impede overall productivity and limit one’s personal horizons, fear can also function as a catalyst for improved performance. Individuals who frequently navigate fearful situations often develop superior decision-making skills, as they are conditioned to evaluate risk with greater accuracy. Conversely, those who adopt an exclusively optimistic outlook may inadvertently disregard critical negative indicators or warnings. As a consequence, this can make them surprisingly poor decision makers when faced with complex or high-stakes choices.

8 When anticipatory anxiety and fear are integrated with rigorous training, the outcomes can be profoundly constructive. If we are comprehensive in our preparation, we can navigate high-stress environments with methodical composure. While the adrenaline produced by the fight or flight instinct ensures a rapid physical response, professional training provides the requisite cognitive framework to act effectively. This synergy is precisely why emergency

professionals undergo extensive simulation; it allows them to maintain professional equilibrium in situations where the untrained would inevitably succumb to panic. Ultimately, fear can be utilized to your advantage, provided that you plan ahead and conduct thorough research.

ANSWER KEY

Answer Key

Task 2: Global Reading

1. Para 4 (trying to stay calm)
2. Para 6 (stops us from doing stupid things / taking risks)
3. Para 2 (cuttlefish)
4. Para 7 (making decisions / understanding risk)
5. Para 3 (become faster, stronger, more energy)
6. Para 8 (react in a normal and calm way)
7. Para 5 (change to let more light in)

Task 3: Close Reading & Vocabulary

1. self-defense: an action to protect itself from others (Para 2)
2. fight or flight instinct: the body's natural way of keeping us safe by either facing the danger or getting away from it as quickly as possible (Para 2)
3. physical abilities: such as running and jumping (Para 3)
4. adrenaline: a chemical that gives you more energy when frightened, excited, or angry (Para 5)
5. glucose: a sugar produced in the body (Para 5)
6. organs: parts of the body that do specific jobs to keep us alive (Para 5)