

The perception of time

READING

LEVEL
Advanced

NUMBER
C1_2065R_EN

LANGUAGE
English



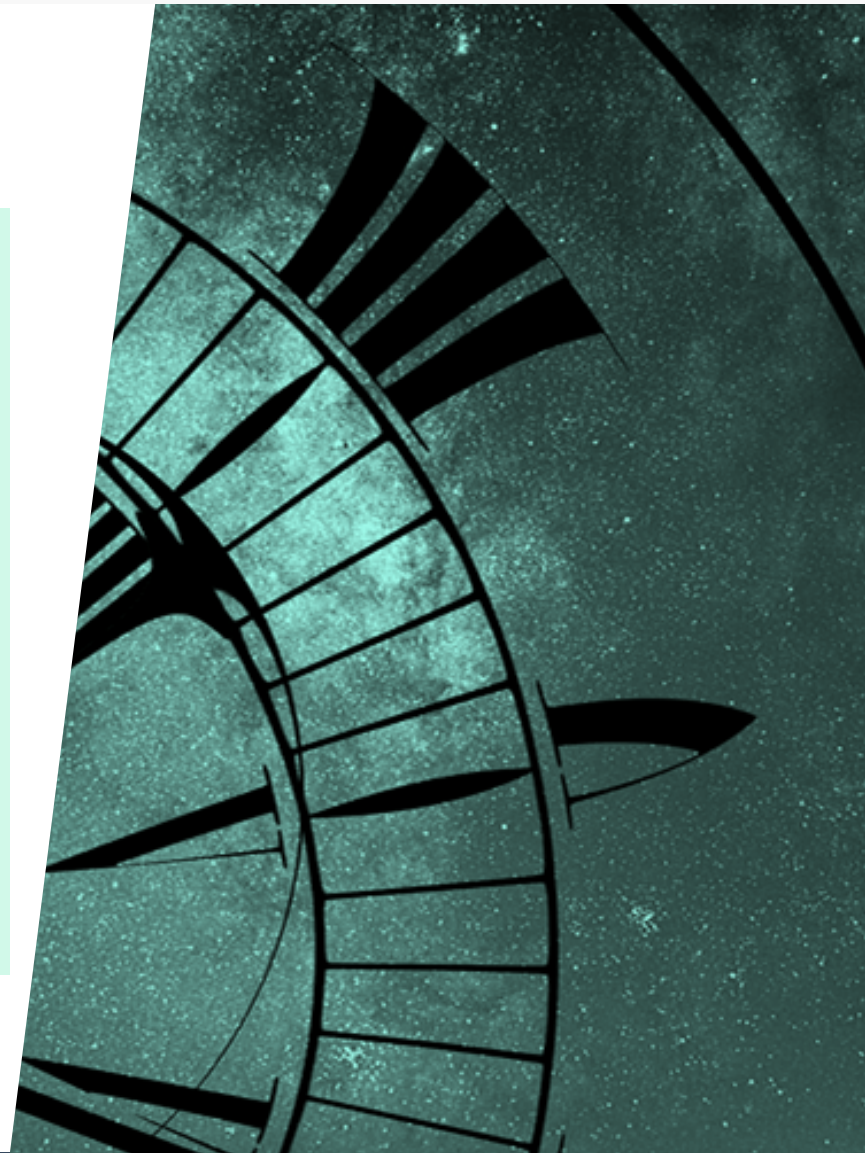
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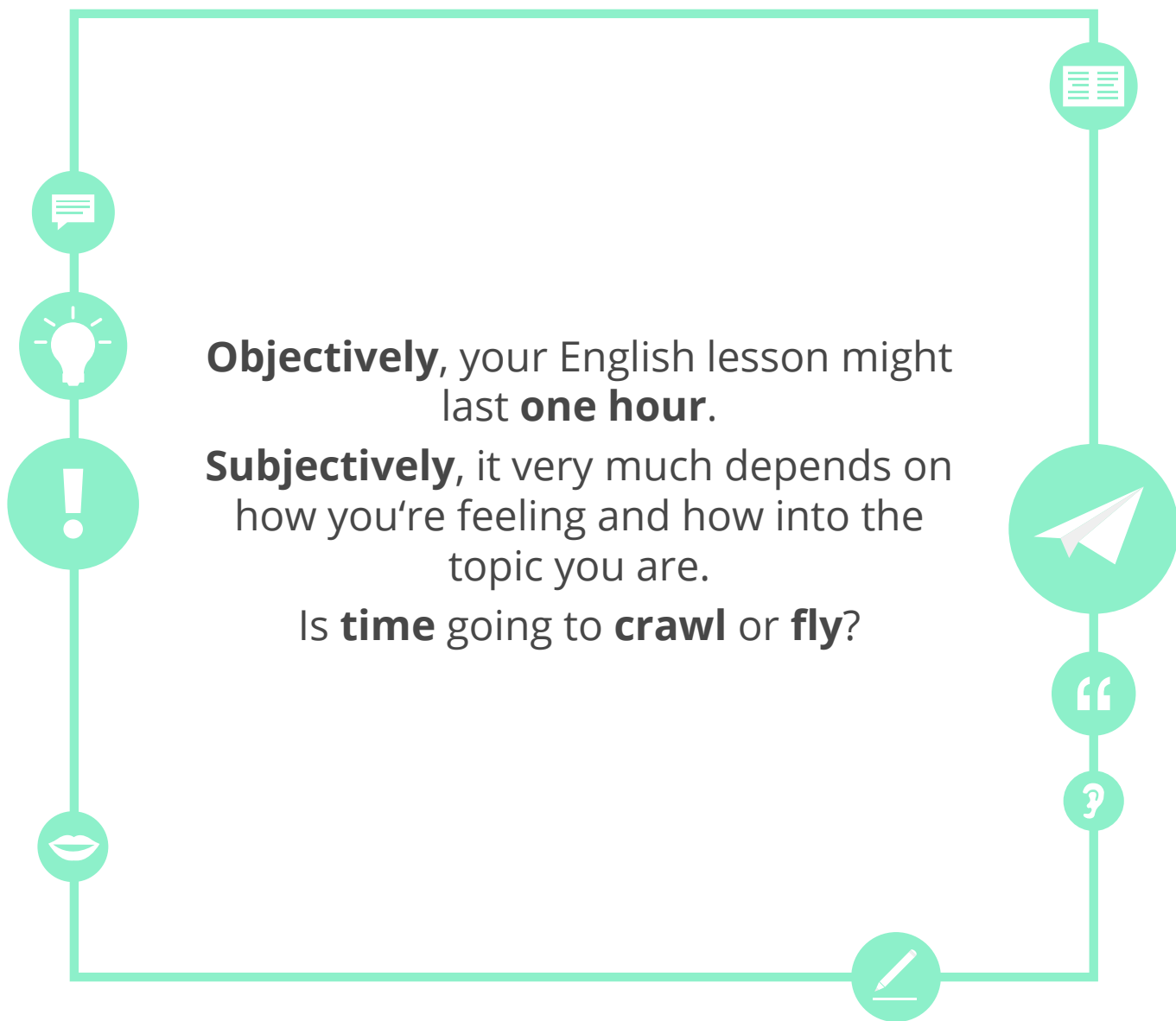




Goals

- Can read and understand a complex text about the perception of time.
- Can discuss objective time versus subjective time and use various idioms related to time.







Idioms connected to time

to kill time

**to turn back
time**

crunch time

big-time

Time's up!

**to have time on
one's hands**

**to stand the
test of time**

**to be ahead of
one's time**

**to be stuck in a
time warp**

**in next to no
time**

**to make up for
lost time**





Idioms connected to time



This is so boring, I need something to do to **kill time**.

I did something really embarrassing - I wish I could **turn back time**.



It's **crunch time** – let's see what you're made of.

Ok, **time's up**, pencils down.





Idioms connected to time



This place is **stuck in a time warp** – nothing's changed since the 1970s.

My grandfather was **ahead of his time** with his experiments.



These jeans have really **stood the test of time**. They've never gone out of fashion.

I haven't seen Jenny for months so we need to **make up for lost time**.





Time idioms

Talk about someone who was ahead of their time.

Has there ever been a moment when you wished you could turn back time?

Have you ever been to a place that was stuck in a time warp?

What do you do when you have time on your hands?



Writing

Choose four of the idioms from this lesson and write sentences that include them.

stand the test of time

in next to no time



A blank sheet of lined paper with a spiral binding on the left side, intended for writing sentences.



The perception of time

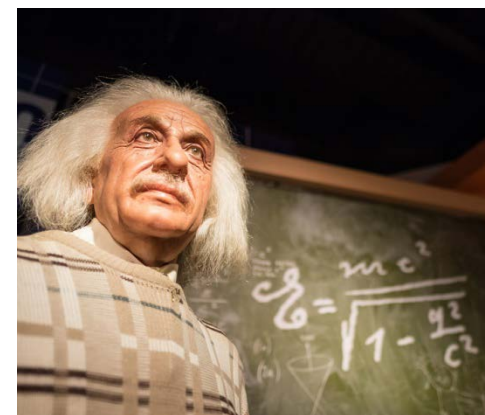
Defining time has always been tricky. Without **reverting to** other concepts connected to **duration** or passing, it is almost impossible to say what time is. Even physicists, who study time, find it very difficult to define it, even though most people agree that time is a basic concept and does not rely on anything else for its definition.

Time is characterised by a **linear progression** from past to present to future. We remember the past but we do not know the future. The clock ticks forward at the same rate no matter what we do or where we are. The future moves into the place of the present, and the present in turn becomes the past, **distorted** by memory. The way we measure such time is through clocks, in hours, minutes and seconds, and on a bigger scale, on calendars and in diaries. In modern times, we use computers to measure time. This type of time is **independent of** any person and its **perception** cannot change.



The perception of time

In contrast to this, there is the idea that time is **relative**, that its passing depends upon who is measuring it. Closely connected to this is Einstein's Theory of Relativity, which **posits** that extreme acceleration or approaching a black hole changes how quickly time passes. According to this theory, we can speed time up, slow it down or even make it go backwards.





Vocabulary

Do you know what these words from the text mean?



linear
progression

distorted

relative

posit



Changing time

**What do you think of the idea
that we can speed up or slow
down time?**





Objective time

How can we prove that objective time really exists beyond human creations such as watches, clocks and computers?





Time

Look at this famous quote by Augustine of Hippo. Do you agree with him?

//

If nobody asks me, I know what time is,
but when I try to define it I don't know it
anymore.

//





The perception of time

Subjective time, rather than the objective time that we have been discussing, depends **wholly** on the person who is experiencing it. The **perceived** duration of something is only measured by the person to whom the event is happening, not by independent clocks and watches. We all know the feeling of thinking that time has begun to **crawl** or has even **come to a standstill**, such as when we are waiting for a bus or taking a long flight. Boredom seems to slow the **passage of time**. In contrast, when we are having a great time and enjoying ourselves **immensely, time flies**.





The perception of time



Furthermore, the way that we look at our past and future is very subjective. Our memories of the past are never accurate and we **attach greater importance** to some while blocking out others. The past **fades** rapidly, and though we are aware that it is gone, we are also aware that it continues to affect us every day. Our future is equally **misty**; we all imagine our own futures, with hopes and dreams attached. We project our lives forward in time. It may seem as though we live in both the past and the future constantly, but what about the now? Lots of people say that we should try to live in the present moment and appreciate only the **fleeting** here and now.



Vocabulary

All of these phrases were used in the text in connection. Can you explain what each one means?

time crawls

time comes to a
standstill

time flies

a fleeting
moment



About you

When in your life have you felt that time was flying? What about when time was crawling or had come to a standstill?





Fading and misty

Why can we not say that the
future fades but we can say
that the **past is misty**?





Now

How long is *now*? Discuss the different possible interpretations of *now* with your teacher or classmates.





Now

Scientists have defined the ***now*** as lasting for **2 - 3 seconds**.

It is the **time window** in which our brain processes and fuses what is happening in the **present moment**.

What do think about this?
Are you surprised by how long it is?



Is time objective or subjective?

Now talk to your teacher or classmates about whether time is objective or subjective. Can you agree on this? And can you agree on a definition of time?





The perception of time

As we have said, for humans, sometimes a few years can seem to fly by. It is an **oft-repeated** saying of parenthood that nights with a crying baby feel like forever, but that the child will be going to school **in the blink of an eye**. Humans can expect to live for around 80 years, but many creatures have much shorter **life spans**. How does this affect their perception of time?





The perception of time



The idea of time passing is often represented on TV and in film. There are several ways that this is presented on screen. To **illustrate** that time is passing quickly, a **time lapse** sequence is often **employed**. This could involve showing different times of day or seasons in the same location, showing the hands of a clock moving forwards, or a fast-forwarded **montage** of the sky, with a sunset or clouds moving. Slow motion is also used to play with time: through slowing down an action or event, it can create tension, it can build emotion, and it can help in an action sequence to add more detail which we would miss if it were played in real time.



Speaking

Answer these questions with your classmates.



1

What kind of things seem to happen in the blink of an eye?

2

What is the average life span of a cat?

3

Do you like montage or time lapse sequences in films?



Look at the varying life spans of the creatures below

**How do you think
longer or shorter life
spans affect our
perception of time?**

Humans: up to
80 years

Flies: 1 day

Bowhead
whales: up to
200 years



TV and film

Do you think TV shows and films are good at showing the passing of time? Are there any great examples you can think of?



time lapse

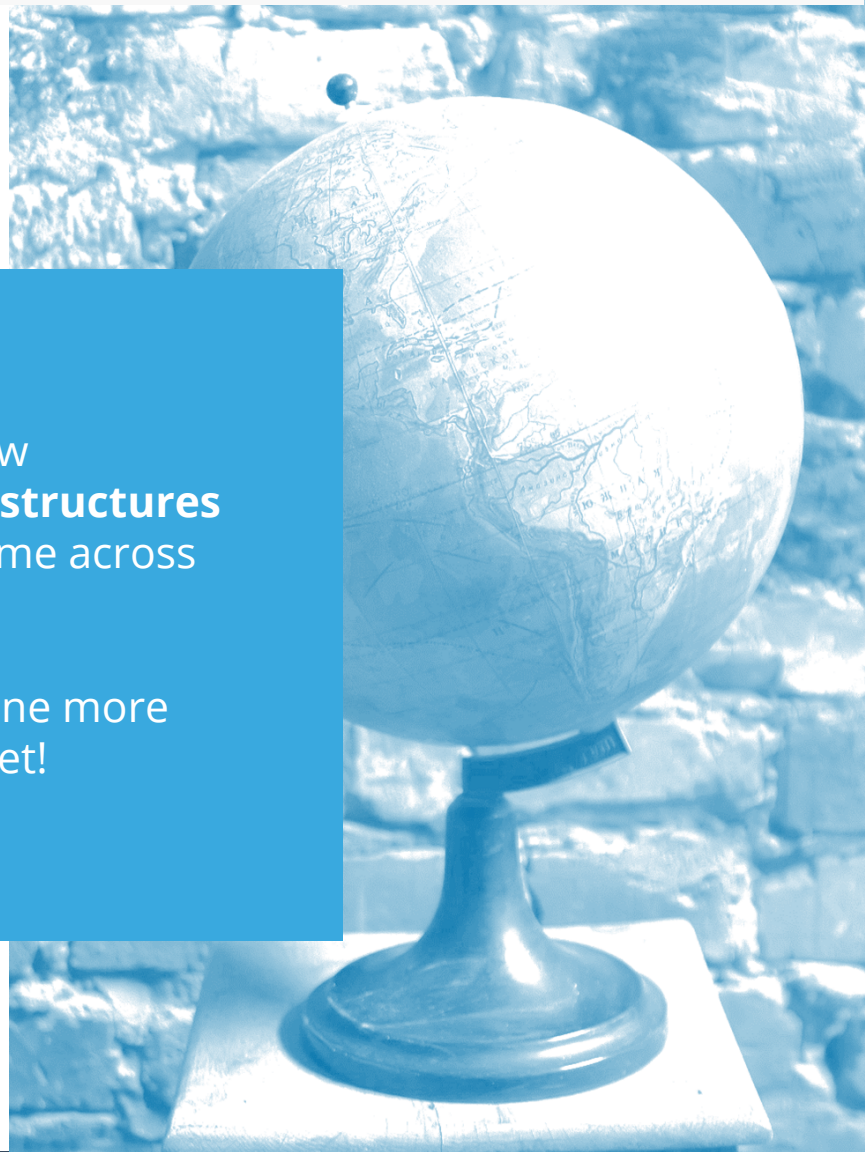
slow motion

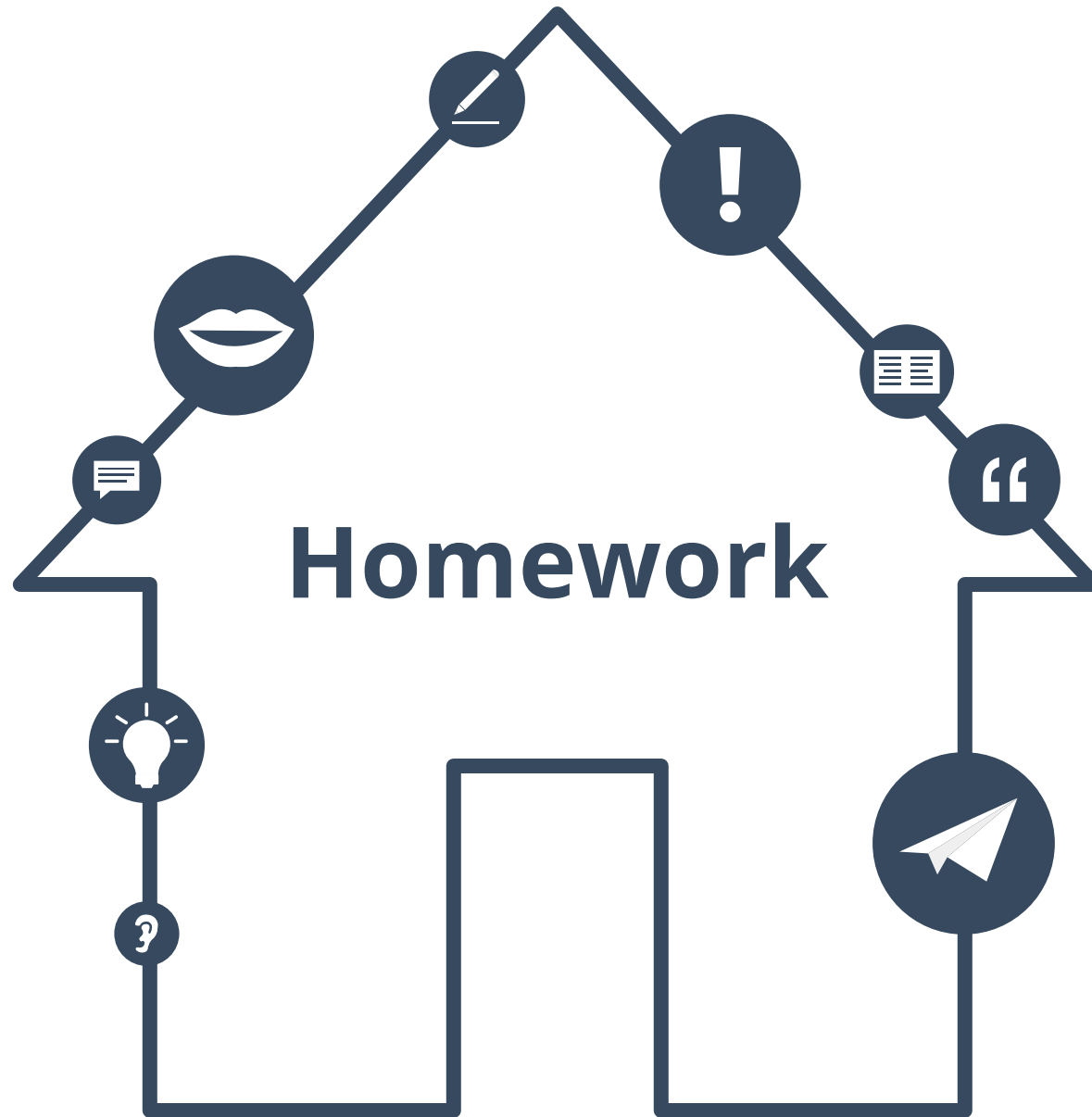


Reflect on this lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!







Complete the sentences

Complete the sentences with your own ideas.

1. We measure time by...
2. Einstein's Theory of Relativity says that...
3. Shorter life spans affect the perception of time because...
4. Showing the passing of time in films is...



Writing

Thinking back to p. 23 of the lesson, write down your conclusions about the objectivity or subjectivity of time. Then write your definition of time.

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