

- › **Goal:** answer questions about abstract topics
- › **Language focus:** giving impressions
- › **Vocabulary:** the senses



Reading

- 1 a **Work in pairs. Take turns to close your eyes and imagine the following scenes in as much detail as possible. Tell your partner what you can see.**
 - 1 An imaginary countryside scene (e.g. a forest).
 - 2 A room you knew well in the past.
 - 3 A friend or family member walking or running.
- b **Discuss your experiences of visualisation.**
 - 1 Did you find the visualisation activities easy or difficult?
 - 2 How clear and detailed were the images in your mind?
 - 3 Did your mental image include smells, tastes, etc?
 - 4 Were you surprised by anything your partner said?
- 2 **Read the article. Which conditions do statements 1–6 below refer to – aphantasia (A), hyperphantasia (H) or both (B)?**
 - 1 Researchers don't know how common it is.
 - 2 People with this condition can't imagine some things.
 - 3 This condition might make reading fiction painful.
 - 4 Most people with this condition assume they're completely normal.
 - 5 The condition can be overcome to some extent with hard mental work.
 - 6 It affects a range of senses (e.g. sight, hearing, smell).
- 3 **Work in pairs. Think back to your experiences in Exercise 1a. Are you more like an aphantasiac or a hyperphantasiac – or somewhere in the middle?**

Aphantasia and hyperphantasia

In 2005, Professor Adam Zeman was approached by a man who claimed to have lost the ability to visualise, as if his mind's eye had gone blind. Dr Zeman was unable to find any similar cases, so he researched it himself. When he published his research in 2010, the reaction from most quarters was fairly **muted**. But a handful of readers were astonished – people who had never been able to visualise since birth, but never realised that they were different from the rest of the population. The revelation that most other people could form genuinely **vibrant** mental images in **rich** detail was truly stunning ... and a little disorienting.

By 2015, Dr Zeman had conducted more research and given the condition a name, 'aphantasia', meaning 'no ability to visualise'. Some aphantasiacs report a vague ability to conjure up a **fleeting** and **fuzzy** image of a person or place they know well, but it requires a great deal of effort. The idea of adding movement, sounds and smells to those images is literally unthinkable.

As aphantasia became more prominent in the media, it was the turn of another group to be stunned. For people with hyperphantasia, or an extreme ability to visualise, there is no distinction between the real, imagined and remembered worlds – all are equally **vivid** in all the senses. They can taste a meal they ate twenty years earlier and feel its textures in their mouth. They can play back a childhood event in their mind's eye – see every tiny detail and smell every **odour** and **aroma**. In fact, they are unable to turn off their mind's eye, so that when they read a novel, for example, they experience the same **crystal-clear** sights, sounds, smells and pains as the protagonists. Like aphantasiacs, most hyperphantasiacs are unaware that they're in any way unusual.

Research into aphantasia and hyperphantasia has barely started, so we can only guess how widespread they are. But there could well be thousands more conditions like them, just waiting to be discovered, if only we would talk a bit more about what it's like to be 'me'. The idea that other people process the world in radically different ways is astonishing, but also rather reassuring. Perhaps it can help us to treat other people (and ourselves) with a bit more respect: 'Not weird, just different ... and that's fine.'

Vocabulary

- 4 **Find words and phrases in bold in the article that mean the following:**
 - 1 almost too quick to notice
 - 2 a pleasant smell
 - 3 an unpleasant smell
 - 4 without clear lines/edges, like an out-of-focus photo
 - 5 clear and (almost) alive
 - 6 not expressed strongly; quiet, as if the sound is 'turned down'
 - 7 strong, powerful
 - 8 colourful, full of energy
 - 9 in perfect focus

- 5 a Work in pairs. Which senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste) do the adjectives in the box refer to? Some words refer to more than one.

blurry crisp faint fluffy hazy indistinct
mellow metallic muffled musty pungent
resonant savoury shrill silky succulent
textured

- b Work in pairs to think of things that the adjectives might describe.

a blurry photograph

- 6 Use some of the words in Exercises 4 and 5 to describe the following:

- the sounds you can hear now in the distance
- the taste and smell of something you ate recently
- your memories from primary school (your desk, your teacher's voice, etc.)

Go to page 169 or your app for more vocabulary and practice.

Language focus

- 7 a 4.6 Listen to two people describing the same experience. How are Jenny and Marge's experiences different? Which person feels more certain about what they have experienced?

- b 4.7 Read the language focus box, then listen to Jenny's experience again. What language does she use to make the description less definite?

Giving impressions

To communicate that our memories or sensations are not completely clear, use phrases like these with nouns:

I see something resembling a tree.

I come to what could almost be a castle.

It's like a doughnut, or that kind of thing.

It might possibly be a cave.

I see what can only be described as a sausage

I can just make out the shape of the whale.

Use *ish* or *y* with adjectives to make them less precise.

It's a kind of blueish greenish colour.

Use modifiers to make adjectives sound less definite.

It's somewhat cold.

It's verging on unbearable.

Also use the adverb *vaguely* with adjectives such as *familiar*, *aware*, *troubling* or *guilty*.

It's vaguely familiar.

With actions, use phrases like these:

Somehow, we cross the bridge.

I don't know how, but we're suddenly on a beach.

- 8 a Work in pairs. Look at the words. How do you think they are pronounced?

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| 1 yellowish | 4 longish |
| 2 blueish | 5 highish |
| 3 lowish | 6 greyish |

- b 4.8 Listen and check. What is the sound before *ish* in each word?

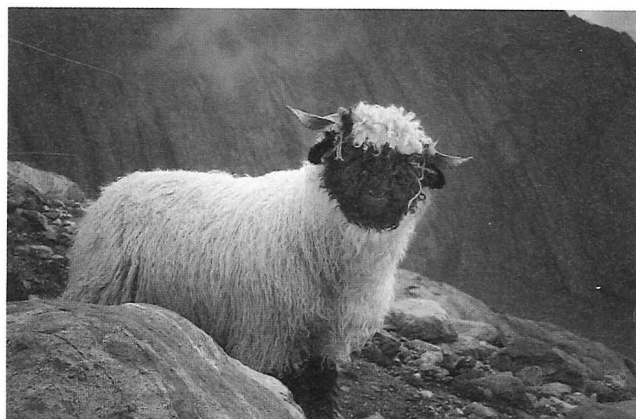
- c Listen again and repeat.

- 9 Add one word to make the sentences correct.

- I see resembling a house.
- I come to could almost be a castle.
- It's like a leopard, or that kind thing.
- I see what can only be described a giant shoe.
- It's sort like a postbox but not exactly.
- I don't know, but somehow we escape.
- In the distance, I can just make the shape of a hill.
- We're verging exhaustion.

- 10 Make the description sound less precise.

We're walking up a mountain, and we see a sheep. We get near to it, and we see it has a yellow mark on its back, a mark from the farm it comes from. We hear a whistle, and the sheep runs off, and we follow it to an old house. There's a man there. He's a farmer.



Go to page 152 or your app for more information and practice.

Speaking

PREPARE

- 11 You are going to do a guided visualisation and check whether you might be an aphantasiac or a hyperphantasiac. Work in pairs. Student A: Turn to page 180. Student B: Turn to page 182. Read the text and add two more questions of your own.

SPEAK

- 12 a Take turns to ask and answer the questions on pages 180 and 182.
- b Do you think your partner might have aphantasia or hyperphantasia? Why/Why not?

Master your
listening
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