**Reading Section - Colour Psychology**

**So, what is it?**

Colour Psychology is a new field of science which asserts that colours can have a deep impact on our behaviour, perceptions and humour. For instance, red is the colour of blood, which makes us think of life and death, but it is also the colour that is associated with power and aggression.

Advocates of colour psychology maintain that wearing red can influence your hormones, physiology and performance in sports. But how exactly can our perception of colours make us perform better?

**Red - The colour of champions**

In 2004 psychologists at the university of Durham carried out research on the boxing, tae kwon do and wrestling matches of the 2004 Olympics, sports where competitors were randomly assigned either blue or red outfits. They noticed that fighters wearing red won significantly more matches.

It seems that wearing red not only improves athletic performance, but it also makes things more valuable. Brett Gorvy, the chairman at world famous auction house Christie's, has declared it as “the most lucrative colour”, as paintings in red sell at a much higher price than others.

In other experiments, scientists found that the colour red makes people more desirable. Women and men who wore red outfits were voted more attractive than when wearing different shades. Fashion experts recommend wearing red ties to project authority at work and waitresses get bigger tips from men when they wear red.

The reason why we may be captivated by this colour is that red skin indicates health and fitness and those characteristics may be transferred unto us from the clothes we wear. In the primate world, red skin is a sign of dominance and strength and the redder the face, the stronger the opponent.

**And what about the other colours?**

Though red probably has the most interesting effect on people, the other colours also have an unusual influence. When patients were given placebos, they discovered that warm-coloured pills worked better as stimulants and cool-coloured pills worked better as depressants.

And let's not forget about the colour pink, which is being used in some prisons in Switzerland to make inmates less aggressive (prisoners calm down in about 15 minutes according to the prison officials).

Interestingly, in England, after painting London's Blackfriar Bridge green, suicides decreased by 34%.

Whilst over in the United States, green is associated with money and is believed to encourage consumer spending, but blue-green is linked to mould and is therefore not recommended as a colour for restaurants.

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| physiology | Replaying a video or audio clip |
| asserts | A furry fungus that grows on food |
| playbacks | A branch of biology which studies how living organism function |
| perception | Attract and hold the attention of somebody |
| enhances | Awareness of something |
| captivated | A drug that raises the level of nervous activity |
| placebos | Medicine that has no therapeutic effect and is used in drug trials |
| stimulants | State a fact or a belief confidently |
| depressants | A drug that reduces nervous activity |
| mould | Improve the quality of something |

**Reading Comprehension Questions**

1. Did some of the colour psychology experiments take place in a field?
2. Why did the psychologists specifically study wrestling, boxing and tae kwon do?
3. Why did athletes perform better when wearing red?
4. What distracted football players?
5. Why do scientists think we are more attractive when we wear red?
6. Prisoner become angry when placed in pink cells. True or false?
7. Some shades of green can disgust potential customers. True or false?

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| **Underline the words from the article.** | **Then match the word to its synonym** |  |
| Advocates | prisoners |  |
| Humour | profitable |  |
| Penalty | mood |  |
| Rate | bonus |  |
| Tip | supporters |  |
| Lucrative | assess |  |
| Inmates | punishment |  |

**/** After reading the article and thinking about the uniform colours of some sports' teams, do you think red is a winning shade?

1. Do you think people are more attractive in red?
2. Why do you think the colour of the medication had an effect on the patients?
3. How would you feel if you had to spend a night in a prison that looked like a young girl's bedroom?
4. Did you ever walk into a room and feel affected by it? Describe where you were and what it looked like.
5. Do you think we all see the same colours?
6. Do you know anyone who is colour blind? How do you think they feel?
7. People who have a particularly heightened sensitivity to colour are called tetrachromats. Someone with this condition would see a pebble pathway with many shades and colours, whereas most people would only see dull greys. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being so sensitive to colour.
8. Most people choose blue as their favourite colour. Do you agree? Think of some things that are blue across the world.
9. In your country what colour is worn at a funeral?
10. Do the colours in your flag have any symbolic meaning?
11. Describe the most and least relaxing room in your home/work/school. Do you think it has to do with the colours?
12. Would you buy a large appliance, computer or car without being able to choose the colour?
13. Do you think you will remember the results of these experiments in the future? In which scenario?

**Idioms and Expressions**

Put the correct colour into the gap and then match it to the definition.

Then put the colour idioms and expressions into the gaps in the correct form.

* Someone from an aristocratic or royal family.
* To give someone permission to proceed with something.
* To extort money from someone by threatening him/her.
* Put someone's name on a list if he/she breaks the rules.
* Feel sad and depressed.
* To be in debt.
* To be extremely angry.
* Jealousy.
* To cover up the faults of something.
* Cowardly.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_mail
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_list
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ blood
4. Feel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. See \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Give the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ light
7. In the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_wash something
9. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ belly
10. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ -eyed monster

**Gap Fill**

1. He has a gambling problem and now he is seriously \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. When I got back from travelling the world I felt a little \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
3. If you don't repay the money, the credit card companies will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ you.
4. My colleague is such a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. She's always complaining at work about the conditions, but at the monthly meetings she never says anything.
5. They were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Jim for years because he was having an affair and didn't want his wife to find out. They got thousands out of him.
6. The politicians are trying to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the recent corruption scandal.
7. We were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to finish the project when the new funding came in.
8. When she told me she had spent the rent money, I just \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
9. All the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ were invited to the Kate and William's wedding.
10. Beware of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when you see your ex at the party!

**ESL/EFL Speaking – Mingling Activity**

Hand out this survey to your students. They should mingle around the room and take down their colleagues' responses. Discuss the results at the end.

1. What colour do you associate with intelligence?
2. What colour do you associate with nausea?
3. What colour do you associate with happiness?
4. What colour do you associate with wealth?
5. What colour do you associate with goodness?
6. What colour do you associate with powerfulness?
7. What colour do you associate with style?
8. What colour do you associate with death?
9. What colour do you associate with poverty?
10. What colour do you associate with luck?
11. What colour do you associate with attractiveness?
12. What colour do you associate with family?