

Reading

3

Class discussion

- When was the last time you were in a crowded place?
- How do you feel when you are in a crowd of people?
- Do you believe that people behave differently when they are in a crowd?

- 1 Reading Part 2** You are going to read an article about crowd behaviour. Seven sentences have been removed from the article. Choose from the sentences (A-H) the one which fits each gap (1-7). There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

Crowd power

At 7:23 a.m. on a Wednesday, the station is full of **commuters**, all sharp elbows and long faces. Generally, people try not to make eye contact with each other. They do not want the **burden** of communicating with strangers. Someone with a wheeled suitcase runs over my foot and gives me an unfriendly look. I smile. I know something they don't know. **1** On the dot of 7:24 a.m. commuters will watch as 300 of their number press play on their iPods and start to dance as if no one is watching. We will be oblivious, we will be united, we will have **lousy** coordination, but with each song we will be shaking off our city loneliness to become 'we'; changing from ordinary isolated commuters into an intentional community.

2 But that doesn't mean it has no point. Our point is communion – a shared experience in a landscape of strangers.

Professor Stephen Reicher, a social psychologist at the University of St Andrews, would **make a distinction** between the crowd at 7:23 a.m. and the one at 7:24 a.m., just as he would between crowds on a train platform and crowds on a football terrace, shoppers in London or worshippers in Mecca. 'The first is a crowd in the physical sense only, where you are jammed, against your will, up against strangers,' he says. 'The second is a crowd in a psychological sense.' **3** Here, **proximity** is actively valued. There is a common purpose and solidarity, whether that is found among the silence of strangers in the aftermath of a bomb attack, or in the encores of an appreciative audience – upstanding and euphoric – as the actors take their curtain calls.

Many of us feel **uneasy** and even frightened in large groups, and crowds generally get a negative press. The dominant, traditional view is one of mindless hooligans. Social psychologist Le Bon maintained that crowds exert an hypnotic influence over their members, one that – through group pressure – can **compel** us to act **irrationally**, or even violently. But social psychologists have since acknowledged that crowds are not necessarily violent. Different crowds have different norms. They are not bad, just as they are not necessarily good. Each has their own

ideology. What happens when we enter a crowd is that we identify with the group, **aspire to** its norms and naturally adopt its behaviours. **4** We do not feel that we have lost ourselves or lost our control, because membership has been freely **elected** and is desirable. There has simply been a **subtle** change in the location of that control – from the individual to the social. The group's social behaviour has become our guide. Behaviour like that can be liberating so long as the group's norms fit with ours, within the outer limits of how we would normally behave.

5 In cases like this, we can have various reactions. We will feel uncomfortable and want to **distance** ourselves. We might experience physical sensations of fear, panic or anxiety. Some will walk calmly away, say this behaviour is undignified and unrepresentative and absent themselves. Others will fight their way out. Others still, will become **contaminated** by the atmosphere and the aggression. At the sales, they find themselves pushing fellow shoppers, behaving in a way that if asked in the cold light of day if it was representative of them, they would **deny** it. But, because of the group's norms, they will later justify their behaviour, saying that it was every woman for herself and there were bargains to be had. In many ways, our response to crowds will always depend not only on our affinity for its membership, but also on how we feel in ourselves. The same crowd on a different day can make us feel invisible, crowded and insecure, or emboldened, comforted and liberated.

6 Crowds offer us a sense of belonging and community. They also give us a clarity of identity and the chance to change things **collectively**. In crowds, insignificant people can become important, powerful, someone of social significance. The classic view is that in a crowd you stop being someone whose history is made by others and start being someone who makes history. **7** To paraphrase cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead, never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that has ever done this.

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| <p>A These are people who – physically and psychologically – we feel an affinity with, so there is none of the repulsion you might feel with commuters on the train.</p> <p>B Even a small party finds us doing this – wearing a certain dress, modifying our conversation to fit with the character of the crowd.</p> <p>C On marches and protests, we become the agents of change rather than subject to change.</p> | <p>D This tragic case is typical of other examples where people have been hurt.</p> <p>E In one minute's time, this crowd will be transformed.</p> <p>F But what about when they don't, such as when we get embroiled in the rage of the January sales?</p> <p>G But there are very real benefits to group participation.</p> <p>H Flashmobbing – where a group of strangers meet at a prearranged location – is a recent trend, has no political overture, no agenda, nor any leaders.</p> |
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Reading comprehension

2 Decide if these statements are true or false. Justify your answers by underlining the relevant parts of the text.

	True	False
1 The writer is nervous about the effect on the crowd of people dancing in the station.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 The dancers are all professional dancers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 The idea of flashmobbing is to bring people closer together.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 According to Professor Reicher, crowds have their own character.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Crowds are generally considered to be a bad thing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 People struggle to maintain their own identity in small social groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 The example of the January sales show that people are irrational when money is involved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Our mood effects our behaviour in a crowd.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 A few determined people can have a great impact.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 Only by protesting in large crowds can social changes be made.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3 Match the words or phrases (1–15), which have been taken from the text, with the definitions or synonyms (a–o).

1 commuter	<input type="checkbox"/>	a keep away or separate from
2 burden	<input type="checkbox"/>	b choose
3 lousy	<input type="checkbox"/>	c want to be like something/someone
4 make a distinction	<input type="checkbox"/>	d closeness to something/someone
5 proximity	<input type="checkbox"/>	e say something is not true
6 uneasy	<input type="checkbox"/>	f someone who travels to work every day
7 compel	<input type="checkbox"/>	g not obvious or easily noticed
8 irrationally	<input type="checkbox"/>	h together as a group
9 aspire to	<input type="checkbox"/>	i in an illogical way
10 elect	<input type="checkbox"/>	j nervous; worried
11 subtle	<input type="checkbox"/>	k very bad; terrible
12 distance	<input type="checkbox"/>	l something that causes hard work or worry
13 contaminated	<input type="checkbox"/>	m make or force
14 deny	<input type="checkbox"/>	n show a difference between things
15 collectively	<input type="checkbox"/>	o affected in a bad way

4 Complete the sentences using the correct form of some of the words or phrases from Exercise 3.

- 1 You should _____ yourself from that group because they are trouble.
- 2 He _____ having taken the money and said he wasn't even in the room.
- 3 The train was full of tired _____ making their way home from work.
- 4 I don't want the _____ of having to take a dog out for a walk every day.
- 5 I've had a _____ day, everything went wrong.
- 6 I feel _____ about lending him the car because he only passed his test three weeks ago.
- 7 He _____ to a career as a great actor, but I don't think he's good enough.
- 8 We haven't changed the house much, we've just made a few _____ improvements.

Writing

2

- 1** **Writing Part 2** You are a journalist. You want to write a report about an incident that happened that morning. Use your notes to write your report. Your report must start with the following words:

At precisely 11 o'clock this morning, young mother, Brenda Jones achieved the impossible to save her child ...

Notes

time of interview: 12:30 p.m.

witness name: George White

- he heard a noise
- fallen tree on car
- mother screamed, mother very small and thin
- lifted big tree off car, saved baby

mother's name: Brenda Jones

- didn't stop to think
- couldn't move tree again afterwards
- doesn't know how she did it

make this a 'miracle story'

- the power of the mind
- a mother's love for her child
- describe state of car afterwards and how big the tree was
- how mother felt during and after the event

Write your report in 120–180 words.