Name: _____ Date: _____

Why Do We Need Sleep?

Year 6 reading comprehension · Information text · 12 marks · About 30 minutes

A third of our lives

On average, people spend about a third of their lives asleep. To many young people, this can seem like a waste of time. Scientists, however, have discovered that sleep is one of the most important things we do. For hundreds of years, nobody really knew why people slept at all, and many people believed it was simply a way of switching the body off. Modern research has shown that this is not true. Although our bodies seem to be resting, our brains and our cells are working hard.

What happens while we sleep

Sleep happens in cycles of light sleep, deep sleep and dreaming. During deep sleep, the body repairs itself and releases chemicals that help children to grow. Meanwhile, the brain sorts through the day's experiences. It stores the important memories and clears away the details that are not needed. This is one reason why a good night's sleep can make it easier to remember what you learned at school.

What happens when we do not sleep enough

Without enough sleep, people find it harder to concentrate and to remember things. They are more likely to feel grumpy or anxious, and they are more likely to catch colds because their bodies are less able to fight germs. Children of primary-school age need roughly nine to eleven hours of sleep each night, although every child is a little different. Teenagers need slightly fewer hours, and adults need seven or more.

Helping yourself to sleep well

Experts recommend that people keep to a regular bedtime, even at weekends. A bedroom should be cool, quiet and dark. It also helps to avoid screens for an hour before bed, because the bright light can trick the brain into thinking it is still daytime. Reading a book or listening to calm music is a better way to wind down. Over time, these small habits can make falling asleep quicker and easier, and they can help you to wake up feeling refreshed and ready for the day ahead.

1. About how much of their lives do people spend asleep? (1 mark)

2. How many hours of sleep do children of primary-school age need? (1 mark)

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3. Find and copy one word from the second section that means “keeps”. (1 mark)

4. Copy one phrase, in quotation marks, that shows scientists changed their minds about sleep being a waste of time. (1 mark)

5. According to the text, why can a good night’s sleep help you remember what you learned at school? (2 marks)

6. The writer says that “our bodies seem to be resting” but that our brains and cells are “working hard”. What point is the writer making? (2 marks)

7. Why does the writer recommend avoiding screens for an hour before bed? (1 mark)

8. Write two or three sentences to sum up why sleep matters and how to get enough of it. (3 marks)

Writing task: Write a short persuasive letter to a friend who stays up too late, explaining why they should go to bed earlier.

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