

## Christmas Reading Comprehension

### The List Goes (Amazon)...

Deck the halls? More like batten the hatches at my house. We've cleared the hurdles of Halloween, Bonfire Night, Black Friday and Cyber Monday; now the 28 days leading up to Christmas are a frantic scramble to sort the mince pies, plan the roast dinners, buy in the home-made decorations, buy a tree, get an adorable elf costume for the cat, send beautiful and hilarious cards to people we otherwise never speak to, vacuum all the needles shed by the tree, live tweet about how festive we're all feeling - and oh yes - buy the kids' presents.

I'm not going to lie to you, I'm a little bit stressed.

That's why I've resorted to trawling through Amazon's lists of best-selling toys and games for 2018. I mean, sure, my kids have told me what they want, but last time I checked, Pets At Home weren't stocking unicorns, and our garden's just not big enough for a full-size, functioning pirate ship, so... I'm going to have to get a little help from my old pal Dr Internet. Plus, there's an array of godchildren, nephews, nieces and friends' offspring to buy for, and goodness only knows what they're into. I mostly see them at weddings, funerals and last-minute babysitting sessions when there's a 2-for-1 on at Wetherspoons.

So, come on Amazon, don't let me down.

A cursory look at the top ten toys and games is both reassuring and depressing. Reassuring because the first hit - the most popular item on the most popular sales site - is.... Dobble, a £10 card game. In this economic climate, that's a bona fide godsend. And it doesn't even involve a screen, either. Maybe there is hope for the vision of our youth after all. The second result is the Cheater's Edition of Monopoly. I don't really know what this involves per se, but anything that makes Monopoly more interesting has to be a good thing. Of course, most people have been cheating at Monopoly anyway, but it's nice to feel validated in one's life choices.

On the other hand - and this is the depressing bit - the third result is Cards Against Humanity. It's a good job I've been around the block a bit, because if I was more naïve, I might assume that this would be a good present for a child - perhaps my third favourite child, having bought numbers 1 and 2 Dobble and Monopoly respectively. Oh, how wrong I would be. Cards Against Humanity is a VERY adult game. I once played it with my mum and the memories of that night haunt my nightmares. Let's just say that sending Cards Against Humanity to a kid would be like giving a chainsaw to a kitten. It might seem exciting, but it'll probably end in someone pressing charges.

There are TWO MORE versions of Monopoly in the top 10 - Monopoly Junior and Monopoly Fortnite. I get that the classics have a certain kudos, but please, can't we think of some new ideas? Ones that don't involve futile hours and hours of chasing after imaginary money? Most of us do enough of that in real life for it to hold any mystique!

And then there's good old Pop-Up Pirate at number 6. While it's comforting to see the same toys that were around when I was young, I can't condone the amount of plastic that this toy is made from. Everything else has gone organic and carbon-neutral - even my loo roll is recycled - so is it too much to ask for Pop-Up Pirate to make the switch to something that's not going to kill the planet?

Anyway. I should go. The cat's eaten his elf costume; the mince pies are burning; the internet's down and my Christmas cards are glued together. Looks like my nearest and dearest are getting a Monopoly set each and they can be happy about it.

And if not, there's always Boxing Day returns...

### Comprehension Questions

1. Select FOUR true statements from the list below.

A	The writer of the text is busy at this time of year.	
B	The writer of the text is buying a pirate ship.	
C	The writer has mixed feelings about the list of toys and games.	
D	The writer has no children.	
E	There are two versions of Monopoly in the top ten list.	
F	Cards Against Humanity is not suitable for adults.	
G	The top-selling item in the list is a card game.	
H	The writer thinks that Pop-Up Pirate should be more environmentally friendly.	

2. How has the writer used language to interest the reader? Explain your answer fully, using quotations and analysis.

*Need help?* Look for: rhetorical questions; short sentences; opinion stated as fact; listing.

*Want a challenge?* Look for: bathos; irony; litotes.

3. How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

*Need help?* Look for: how the writer introduces the text; when and why the writer uses one-line paragraphs; what the writer links back to at the end of the text.

*Want a challenge?* Look for: how/where the writer varies register and how structure is used in order to manipulate the reader.

### Vocabulary exercises

#### Challenging

Underline and look up any words that you don't already know. Write out the definition in your book.

#### More Challenging

Select FOUR adjectives from the text which you will then write synonyms for. Come up with at least THREE synonyms for each adjective you select.

#### Mega Challenging

Highlight all the abstract nouns in the text. Write at least one synonym for each

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