THE PROP ROOM

Sunday, August 11, 2013

ILLUSORY SCENES FADE INTO AND OUT OF VIEW

“Fading illusions play hide-and-seek with your perception”
By: Susana Martinez-Conde and Stephen L. Macnik
Published: The Scientific American; July 31, 2013;
www.scientificamerican.com
Alternatively, just google the title and writers' names.

Level of Difficulty: **

Note to the Student: This is rather a special reading task; its purpose is to entertain you, get you interested in science and distract you from your daily concerns. The level of difficulty is not important. With this in mind, you need to access the text on the internet and use that soft copy as well as the hard copy to do the questions. You need to access every picture the experiments are based on and try them yourself for things to be meaningful. That is what I did and I had such a lot of fun. Enjoy the activity and write in if you have some interesting results.

BEFORE YOU READ

• Look at the picture at the beginning and see if you can spot the leopard. Keep looking to see what happens. Are you ready for more? If the answer is yes, start reading.

QUESTIONS

1. What does “an experiment” in the phrase “this was an experiment I must try” refer to?
2. The reflections the subjects in Caputa’s experiment saw were ............................................
3. How did the subjects feel during this experiment?
4. What change did the writer make in the conditions the second time he tried the mirror experiment?
5. What conclusion can we draw from the writer’s account of his second attempt at the experiment?
6. The process during which illusions appear and fade is called ............................................
7. The reason for the phenomenon described thus far in the article is ............................................and normal perception can be restored with ............................................................
8. How does the writer explain the emergence of strange images during the mirror experiment?
9. The purpose of the experiment conducted at Urbana Champaign was to see if it was possible to experience ............................................................
10. The sun in Monet’s Impression Sunrise looks the way it does due to the fact that......................
11. Read Safran and Landis’ observation concerning Monet’s painting and explain the reason.
12. Why is it difficult to count the yellow spots in the pattern created by vision scientist Kitaoka?
13. What does “they” refer to in the phrase “they vanish immediately”?
14. Read the information concerning Ryota Kanai’s illusion. The explanation for this illusion is similar to that provided for the mirror experiment. True / False / Other: please explain

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15. What does “this effect” in the phrase “Picasso was well aware of this effect” refer to?

**WRITING TASK**

Summarize the phenomenon explained in the text as briefly as possible. Be careful: the summary should include generalizations not specifics!

**ILLUSORY SCENES FADE INTO AND OUT OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

I had such fun reading and preparing questions for this text, trying out each experiment and sharing my excitement with family members, I can’t but feel anyone into science will find it simply irresistible. If the text is to be done in class, access to the internet is an absolute must as the students need to try out each experiment to appreciate what is going on. Enjoy; I did.

1. Starring at your own face in the mirror at the stroke of midnight, calling the Devil’s name to see if the Prince of Darkness will look back at you.
2. Illusions
3. They reported feelings of otherness; some felt strong emotions
4. He turned off the bathroom lights and turned on his cell phone flashlight
5. His efforts were rewarded quickly
6. Troxler fading
7. Neural adaptation; blinks, gaze shifts and microsaccades
8. In the absence of visual information, our brain will fill in the gaps according to our experiences, expectations, best guesses and even hard wired neural mechanisms involved in shape and face perception.
9. Visual fading in entire scenes
10. Monet used pigments of matching luminescence or brightness but different chromatic content or hues to represent the sun and sky; the following sentence will do too
11. Equiluminant objects are somewhat difficult to see, which makes them susceptible to Troxler fading
12. You can see only one spot at a time. The others disappear when you are not looking at them directly.
13. The little insects or the three ladybugs
14. Other: it is partly true. There is also our nervous system’s intrinsic tendency to seek structure and order even when sensory input is fundamentally disorganized.
15. The fact that when viewed directly, the portraits are grotesque but when seen peripherally, the young woman looks exquisite
Hi, my name is Feride Hekimgil. I am an English teacher. I was born into a multicultural, multilingual family and brought up bilingual. I have spent my life surrounded by academics and academia all of which has led me to become one of those fortunate individuals who has not only found her vocation but has had the opportunity to practice it for 35 years at one of the best universities in Turkey. I have felt, for a while, that the time has come for me to share my observations and some of the conclusions I have reached with like minded individuals. I hope you find the papers and material on this blog useful. I HAVE COPYRIGHT OF ALL THE MATERIAL ON THIS BLOG NOTHING CAN BE REPRODUCED FOR THE PURPOSE OF MATERIAL GAIN. THE MATERIAL CAN HOWEVER BE PRINTED FOR CLASSROOM USE WHEN NO MATERIAL GAIN IS INVOLVED. NONE OF THE PAPERS CAN BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR - ME. And by the way, for more of the same, check out my articles in Humanizing Language Teaching Magazine throughout 2011 and 2012.