

# Answers

## Reader's digest CLASSROOM MAY



## RD Classroom May 2016 Intermediate

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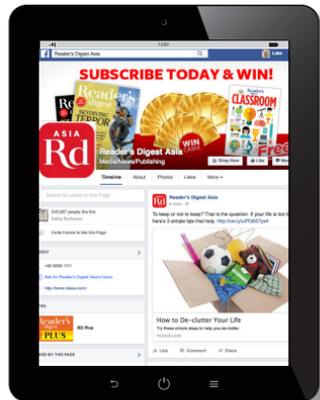
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**ANSWERS FOR 'MEDITATION & ME' (PAGE 54)****1. What technique did the writer of this article try out? What is it and what benefits are it said to offer?**

The writer tried mindfulness meditation. This is a type of meditation that helps participants gain new coping skills for everyday life, such as dealing with negative thoughts and reactions. The benefits are said to include peace of mind; less stress, anxiety and pain; help in dealing with depression, substance abuse and smoking; better job performance; changes in the brain – especially those areas dealing with emotional control, learning and memory.

**2. After seeing the posters, what ultimately inspired the writer to participate in mindfulness meditation?**

Because he wanted to succeed as a freelance writer, the writer had become very rigid with his time and very compulsive and set in his ways. He realised that he spent so much time thinking about the past or worrying about the future that he wasn't taking any time to enjoy the small things in everyday life that should be savoured. He decided that mindfulness meditation might help with this because of its emphasis on 'being in the moment'.

**3. What did the writer begin to realise about himself after he began practising meditation? Did the classes help him? In what way did his life change from doing meditation on a regular basis?**

He realised that much of his daily life was being governed by his thoughts, which were usually negative. The thoughts involved reliving past events or anticipating future ones in a negative way, causing him to worry. From doing regular meditation, the writer learned that it was not the events of his life that were causing him stress, but instead his reaction to them. The classes helped him with this and helped stop his 'knee-jerk responses' to that negative thinking. The writer includes examples of how meditation has positively affected everyday events in his life, such as how he reacts to traffic jams and work commitments. Give a bonus point for answers that include these examples.

**4. How did the writer's feelings towards meditation change throughout the article? Provide examples from the article to support your answer.**

The writer has a negative attitude towards meditation at the start of the article and is very sceptical towards it. This feeling is reflected in sentences such as "Think this 'mindfulness' craze has a strong whiff of weirdness? So did I—at first"; "It had the aura of a fad about it"; and "My Hogwash Detector went off immediately in my head – bells ringing, lights flashing, beep! beep! beep!" As the article progresses, the writer's feelings towards meditation change and he talks very positively towards it by the end of the article. He gives many examples of its positive impact, particularly at the end of the article: "I am less likely to question my ability. I am less apprehensive about the future. I eat much more slowly and therefore I eat less. I am happier and more peaceful." Give a bonus point for any other appropriate examples to support your answer.

**ACTIVITY Have you ever tried to meditate or do know somebody who has? If so, did meditation help you? Are there aspects of your life that meditation could help you cope with better? If you haven't tried meditation before then give it a go! Write down your findings in a couple of paragraphs.**

There are no wrong answers to this question. This activity offers the chance to reflect on the article and on one's own personal experiences. Answers should express an opinion, explain these feelings and, hopefully, recount a meditation experience.

**ANSWERS FOR 'INSTANT ANSWERS: STEM' (PAGE 72)**

**1. What does STEM stand for? Why has it become a focus?**

STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

The article states three main points as to why STEM has become a focus. Give yourself a point for each one you have mentioned.  
1) The focus on STEM was a response to worldwide concerns that governments and corporations hadn't been putting enough effort

into developing this kind of expertise. 2) Too few high school and university students were interested in studying these subjects, as they were seen as 'nerdy'. 3) Jobs were going unfilled and potentially important developments were being missed.

**2. There is a big push to make STEM skills and subjects more appealing to students, but what other groups are governments and companies trying to encourage into STEM fields?**

The article mentions two groups that are not participating fully in the areas of STEM: women and people from a non-European background. Globally less than a third of researchers in STEM areas are female. People of non-European descent are under-represented in the top STEM jobs - both in terms of pay and directorships.

**3. Which leader started the 'Smart Nation Programme'? What does he need more of to make it succeed? What does it involve? Use the Internet, books and articles to research this programme.**

Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong initiated the Smart Nation Programme. He says more science and technology graduates are needed to make his programme succeed.

To complete the answer, students should explain what this programme involves. This may require some additional research. Answers may include the following information: the Smart Nation Program is a national initiative begun in Singapore in 2014 to create a better future for all its citizens through technology-enabled solutions. It aims to rally the collective efforts of people, businesses and government to work together to support better living standards, create more opportunities, and support stronger communities by employing information and communication technologies, networks and big data. It aims to encourage a culture of experimentation and building to come up with innovations that would impact on how people travel, where they live, their daily transactions, and how they support the lifelong needs of citizens. (Quoted from [www.pmo.gov.sg](http://www.pmo.gov.sg))

**4. Are there any negatives to putting a lot of focus on STEM? Find evidence in the article to help answer this question, and express your own opinion.**

Yes, there are negatives. US Professor of Philosophy Douglas MacLean states, "The humanities as a whole seem to be on the defensive, as attention and funding flow to the STEM disciplines." Some people feel the emphasis on STEM is too one-sided and as a result other subjects in the humanities may get overlooked or sidelined, which could have negative effects, such as reduced funding in these areas. To complete the answer an opinion should be expressed and supported by evidence.

**ACTIVITY "Our modern world runs on STEM." What does Karen Andrews mean by this? Give examples to support your answer. You may research the topic more to help with understanding and to make your answer as full as possible. Do you agree with her? Do you think STEM is a positive direction to point students towards? Is it something you would be interested in?**

Answers should demonstrate that students have understood the article and thought about whether they agree with it or not. Ideally, full answers should demonstrate some independent research and should cite examples to support arguments. Personal experiences and opinions can be included to further support answers.

Answers in agreement could refer to the developments made by society through technological and scientific breakthroughs, such as the invention of electrical power, television, radio and the telephone in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, followed by computer technology, email, mobile phones, social media, life-saving medical treatments, etc., which have changed our daily lives immensely. These everyday advancements are STEM products and to continue with these breakthroughs, STEM skills will need to be encouraged and nurtured in younger generations.

Answers that disagree could point out that STEM developments on their own don't exist in a vacuum that is separate from the rest of the human world and that to succeed they need an

understanding of the complex issues and social contexts in which communities and societies exist. Students who disagree could argue that it is people with a background in the humanities who are qualified to have these insights, and that without their input holistic and fully informed solutions to world problems are not possible. To quote Paul Smith from the *Guardian* newspaper in an article from March 2014, “technologically sound, engineering-based projects are failing because they don’t take sufficient account of the cultural context. These projects lack the human perspective that recognises that no global issue, developmental problem or socio-economic challenge can be fully understood, let alone resolved, without real evidence of how the local community and the rest of humanity are experiencing it.”

## **ANSWERS FOR ‘HAVANA AT 96’ (PAGE 74)**

**1. Where is Havana, Cuba? Use a map to help you locate it. What is Havana like? You may need to do independent research to help you answer.**

Students should base their answers on the article and on independent research. Havana is the capital of Cuba, which is officially known as the Republic of Cuba. Cuba is a large island located in the northern Caribbean. In the article Havana is described as brightly coloured, clean and with a vintage 1950s feel to it. It is a former colony of Spain, and Spanish influences are very evident, particularly in its architecture. Credit cards are not accepted and the internet is not readily available. Extra points to be given for the use of pictures from the article to support descriptions and for conducting one’s own research.

**2. “It makes me happy to see young people having fun like the old days,” says Francine. What does Francine mean by this and why does she say it? You may need to do some research into Cuba’s history to answer this question.**

As Cuba is lacking in the technological advancements of other countries, such as the US, young people and children don’t have the same access to more modern entertainment devices, such as computers, tablets and the Internet. Therefore, children are more

likely to be seen playing in the streets with more old-fashioned toys, such as the hula-hoop and ball Francine sees children playing with. These are scenes rarely seen in our modern cities and it reminds Francine of the fun she had as a child in the old days.

**3. Why does Francine feel she is witnessing a “historic moment” in Cuba? You may need to do some research to answer this question.**

The article mentions that the US severed relations with Cuba in 1961 after the Cuban Revolution, in which Fidel Castro came to power and made Cuba a Socialist state. The US Government also imposed a travel ban on US citizens visiting Cuba. The two nations restored diplomatic relations on July 20, 2015. With relations between the US and Cuba thawing for the first time in more than fifty years, Francine knows she is witnessing a historic moment, particularly as she would have witnessed the Cuban Revolution, and its effects, in her lifetime.

Answers may give a more in-depth explanation based on further research. Examples as to what the US and Cuban leaders are doing to help restore relations may be provided, such as President Obama's recent visit to Cuba. Such examples should be rewarded a bonus point.

**4. Why is the author of the article always amazed by the observations Francine makes?**

Francine suffers from macular degeneration, a disease that causes gradual vision loss. Knowing that Francine's vision is limited, the writer is always amazed when Francine makes observations that most people wouldn't notice, including the writer herself.

**5. The people mentioned in the story seem to react to Francine in a certain way. How? Why do you think this happens?**

When people discover Francine's age they react positively towards her - with surprise, kindness, compliments and an attitude of respect. This is most likely due to Francine's positive

attitude and approach to life and the activities she participates in, despite her age and health problems. There are many examples in the article to show this. Give a bonus point for any mentioned in the answer, such as receiving a kiss from the tour guide and impressing the staff at a restaurant by climbing three flights of stairs.

**ACTIVITY Francine seemed to enjoy her trip and had fun exploring Havana. Imagine you are Francine writing about the trip – what would you tell people? Write a diary entry or a postcard telling others about your trip. What is Havana like? Do you like it there? What did you see and what are the people like? Feel free to do some of your own research to answer this question. Share your writing with someone else who has read the article.**

This activity offers the chance to get creative and imaginative, using the article and any research that has been done to help. Answers should include a description of Havana, and should also mention the activities Francine carried out while she was in Cuba, and her possible thoughts and feelings. Students should attempt to capture Francine's personality, and her health problems could be mentioned, such as the fact that despite her poor eyesight, she still manages to make detailed observations of Havana.