Reading 01

**A Pocket Pet: The Sugar Glider**

Are you looking for a pet that is cute, friendly and fun? Then how about getting a sugar glider? Some people say it is the perfect “pocket pet.” This tiny animal will sit on your shoulder, ride in your hair, or sleep in your shirt pocket. So you can carry it with you everywhere.

Sugar gliders come from Indonesia and Australia. Their backs are gray, with a black line from the head to tail. Their stomachs are white. And they have a pouch for their babies, like kangaroos. They are called sugar gliders because they love sweet food and they love to glide through the air. How do they glide? They have a special piece of skin between their front and back legs. When they open their legs, this skin becomes like the wings of an airplane. It lets them glide, or fly, from tree to tree.

Do sugar gliders make good pets? The answer is yes and no. When a sugar glider becomes your friend, it will always come back to you and love you. But sugar gliders need a lot of care and attention. You must spend hours playing with your pet. If you don’t play with it, it will become lonely and sad. It might even die. Sugar gliders are active at night, so you may have a hard time taking care of it.

Reading 02

**Churchill and Fleming**

Around 1885, a boy from London went to the country. He found a beautiful lake there. He liked to play by the lake. One day, while he was playing by the lake, he slipped and fell into the water. “Help, help!” He couldn’t swim and was about to drown. A country boy saw him and jumped into the water. He pulled the city boy out. “You saved my life! Thank you. I’m Winston.” “You're welcome. I’m Alex. Be careful next time.”

Ten years later, Winston and Alex were happy when they met again. The young men talked about the old days. They also talked about the future. Alex said, “I have a dream of becoming a doctor, but medical school is too expensive for me.” Winston wanted to help Alex, so he talked to his father. “Alex saved my life. Please help him go to medical school.” Winston's father was happy to help. A few years later, Alex’s dream came true.

 In 1940, England was at war with Germany. That year, England had a new leader. His name was Winston Churchill. He was a strong leader, but the war lasted a long time, and it made him very tired. One day, he started to cough. At first, doctors thought he had a cold, but his cough did not stop. Many days passed, and he was still coughing. Oh, no! Mr. Churchill had pneumonia, a serious lung disease.

The doctors did everything to help Mr. Churchill, but nothing worked. “What can we do? Let's try a new medicine called penicillin. It is our only hope.” A few days later, Mr. Churchill became well. Penicillin saved his life. Guess who discovered penicillin. It was Dr. Alex Fleming, the country boy.

Reading 03

**The Sweetest Place on Earth**

Everyone has heard of the famous Hershey milk chocolate. But have you heard of the town of Hershey? It was built by a man named Milton Hershey. Here's the story.

Milton Hershey was born on September 13, 1857 in a small town in Pennsylvania. As a child, he worked on his father's farm and went to a small school. After the fifth grade, he left school and began working in a candy shop. In 1900, Hershey found a secret recipe for making milk chocolate. He built a chocolate factory and started to sell milk chocolate bars. Americans loved the taste of Hershey milk chocolate! Soon Hershey became very rich.

However, he did not spend his money for himself. Instead, he built a town for his factory workers. The town was named Hershey, but everybody called it Chocolate Town. Mr. Hershey gave the streets fun names like Chocolate Avenue. He built schools, amusement parks and shops. He also built an orphanage. Although he had no children of his own, he loved children. Over the years, he gave away millions of dollars to help poor people.

Today, three million tourists visit Hershey, Pennsylvania every year. They eat delicious chocolate, visit the chocolate factory, and even enjoy chocolate baths! In this town you can smell fresh chocolate everywhere. Chocolate Town really is the sweetest place on Earth!

Reading 04

**A Badly Built House**

A carpenter was old and tired, so he decided to quit his job. He was not rich, but he thought he was too old to keep building houses. He wanted to live a quiet life with his wife and family. So, the carpenter went to his boss and told him about his decision.

The boss was very sorry to lose this good worker. As a special favor, he asked the carpenter to build just one more house. The carpenter said yes, and quickly began to work. But this time he did not work hard. He did not do his job carefully, either. The carpenter was building his last house, but it was the worst house he ever built. What a sad way to end his career!

When the carpenter finally finished the house, his boss came to look at it. Then he gave the key of the house to the carpenter. "This is your house," he said. "It is my gift to you."

The carpenter was shocked! He didn't know he was building the house for himself. Now he would live in a poorly built home for the rest of his life.

Reading 05

**Expressions of Love**

People often say, "Love is the same in any language." Well, maybe the feelings of love are the same everywhere. But the way people say "I love you." is not always the same.

For example, a young man from Africa fell in love with a girl from the U.S. He wanted to marry her. So he said, "Please milk a cow with me forever." Instead of saying yes and kissing the boy, she slapped him! In his country, this expression means, "Please marry me, and we will live together forever." But the girl didn't understand this expression, and she got angry. When the young man explained what it meant, she was surprised. She said, "I'm so sorry for slapping you. Yes, I'll marry you."

People from different countries have their own special ways to say "I love you." In Australia, a young man might say, "You are a thief. You stole my heart." A Chinese man might say, "I want to be your servant." If the young man is from Lithuania, he might say, "You are the only rose for me. Please stick me with your thorns." And a man in the U.S. might say, "Please grow old with me."

Yes, love may feel the same to people around the world. But the expressions of love are very different from country to country.

Reading 06

**McDonald's**

**Who opened the first fast-food restaurant?**

In 1940, Dick and Mac McDonald opened a restaurant in California. The two brothers worked hard and served many kinds of food. But their business was not successful. Soon they had to close the restaurant. However, they didn't give up. The brothers decided to open a new restaurant. They called it "McDonald's Hamburger Restaurant." This time, the brothers served only hamburgers, French fries, and milkshakes. The food was very simple and the service was fast. Many people liked this new fast-food restaurant.

**How did McDonald's become the largest restaurant chain in the world?**

One day, a smart salesman named Raymond Kroc sold eight milkshake machines to the brothers. He wondered, "Why does such a small restaurant need so many machines?" When he visited their restaurant for the first time, he understood. Many people were standing in line to order their food. The brothers used the milkshake machines to serve them quickly. Raymond Kroc liked the brothers' idea, and he wanted to open more McDonald's restaurants. He talked to the brothers, and they agreed. In return, Mr. Kroc promised to pay the brothers some money if the business became successful.

Raymond Kroc opened many McDonald's restaurants in the U.S. and around the world. Today there are more than 30,000 McDonald's chain restaurants in over 100 countries. The two brothers had a great idea. Raymond Kroc helped their idea grow.

Reading 07

**The Octopus: A Truly Great Survivor**

The octopus is a very strange underwater animal. It has a giant head, big eyes, and eight arms. When an octopus swims through the water, it changes the color and shape of its body. Sharks and other fish like to eat it, but an octopus has many ways to escape from its enemies.

For one thing, an octopus can hide itself well. When it feels danger, the octopus usually changes the color of its skin. So its body looks like the ocean rocks and sand. But when an enemy gets too close, the octopus shoots black ink into the water. Then its enemies cannot see it. Its enemies cannot smell it either, because the ink has a very strong smell.

That's not all! An octopus is an excellent fighter, too. It can use its eight arms to hold onto its enemies tightly, and it can bite them with its many small, strong teeth. Also, the body of an octopus is very soft, so it can go into small places. Its enemies cannot follow it.

What does an octopus do if it is caught? Then the octopus can simply lose one of its arms and swim away. Soon a new arm will grow back! Among the many different kinds of underwater animals, the octopus is truly one of the best survivors.

Reading 08

**Father's Gift**

A young man was going to graduate soon from college. For his graduation gift, he wanted a beautiful sports car. He knew his rich father could buy one easily, so he told his father what he wanted.

On the morning of his graduation, his father called him into his room. His father said to him, "I am very proud of you. I love you very much." Then he gave him a gift box. The young man opened the box, but he found only a beautiful Bible, with his name written on it. He got angry, and thought to himself, 'My father is so rich, but he only gave me a Bible!' He threw away the Bible and ran out of the house.

Many years passed. The young man was successful in his business. He had a happy life. But he never went back to see his father. One day he realized that his father was very old. He decided to go to see him sometime. The very next week, however, he received the sad news that his father had passed away. When he arrived at his father's house, he suddenly felt sorry for staying away from his father so long.

After the funeral, he found an old Bible in his father's room. It was the same Bible that he threw away long ago. With tears, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. As he did, a car key dropped from the back of the Bible. It was the key to the sports car he had wanted so much.

Reading 09

**The Hungry Ghosts Festival**

Many countries around the world have a special day or festival for the dead. For example, the United States has Halloween, and Mexico has the Day of the Dead. But do you know that China has a festival for the dead, too? It's called the Hungry Ghosts Festival.

The Chinese believe that dead people visit our world once a year. The Hungry Ghosts Festival takes place on the 15th night of the seventh lunar month. During the festival, families remember their dead family members. They prepare food for the "hungry ghosts." And they hold special concerts and shows to make the ghosts happy. They also give the ghosts money and gifts, such as televisions, cars and even houses! Of course, these gifts are not real. They are made of paper and burned for the ghosts.

The month of the Hungry Ghosts Festival is not a lucky time for marriage, business or travel in China. In addition, Chinese parents watch their children closely during the month of the festival. They don't let their children stay out late at night, because there might be some unfriendly ghosts around. Also, parents don't let their children go swimming during the festival. They are afraid that an unfriendly ghost may drown their children in the water!

Reading 10

**How to Get Along with your Teachers**

For many students, teachers are scary. They don't believe their teachers are real people. Yet teachers eat pizza and watch movies, just like you do. So there's no reason to be afraid of them! If you try, you can get along well with your teachers. Here's how.

Teachers like students who are on time for class. They notice when you do your homework well. Also they are glad when you listen in class. But there is much more you can do to get along well with your teachers. For example, you can show interest in class. Most teachers really love their subjects. That is why they chose to teach them. You will get along better with your teachers if you show interest in the subjects. Maybe it's not easy for you to talk with your teachers in front of the whole class. Then you should try meeting with them after class. You can talk about your problems and get extra help.

Sometimes you can send a special thank-you note to your teachers. A small gift with a message is especially nice. You can make colorful bookmarks yourself, or pick some flowers from your garden. Any small gift is a wonderful thing for a teacher.

Reading 11

**Achilles' Weakness**

Long ago in Greece, a mother had a very lovely baby. She named him Achilles. The mother wanted to make her baby strong and safe from danger, so she decided to take him to the River Styx. The River Styx was a magic river. Once the water touched someone's body, nothing could hurt it. When she got there, she held her son by the heel and dipped him into the water. The water covered the baby's body, but there was one place that didn't get wet. It was Achilles' heel.

As time passed, Achilles grew up and became a handsome soldier. He was strong and brave, and he won many wars. He was a great hero in the Trojan War, and all the Greek people loved him. Nothing could hurt Achilles, because the water from the River Styx kept him safe. But these happy times did not last. One day an enemy soldier shot an arrow at Achilles. The arrow hit him in the heel and killed him. The heel was the only part of his body the magic water had not touched.

Today people still talk about Achilles' heel. Everybody has one! An Achilles' heel is a person's weak point. If you fight with someone, try to find his or her Achilles' heel. Then you can be sure to win!

Reading 12

**Rat-Man**

Look at the picture. What do you see? Some people might see a rat and others might see a man. That is why the picture is called the "rat-man." Why do people see different things in the same picture? Two scientists named Bugelski and Alampay did a study to answer this question.

First, the scientists divided a bunch of people into two groups. They showed the first group drawings of different animals. They showed the second group drawings of human faces. Then they showed both groups the picture of the "rat-man." They asked everyone what they saw. Their answers were very interesting. The first group said they saw a rat. The second group said that they saw an old man.

Why did this happen? The reason is simple. When one group saw drawings of animals, they expected to see another animal. So they saw a rat. When the other group saw drawings of human faces, they expected to see another one. So they saw an old man's face. In other words, their previous experience affected what they saw next.

Reading 13

**The School Bully**

Dear Ms. Advice,

Jack and I are in the same class. When teachers can't see, he always makes fun of me. And then everyone laughs at me. It really hurts my feelings. But now Jack is bullying me outside the classroom, too. He calls me on my cell phone and says mean things. He even visits my blog and writes bad things about me. Because of him, I don't even want to go to school. What should I do to stop him? I'm scared of the big bully.

From Ted in Trouble

Dear Ted in Trouble,

I'm glad you wrote to me, because the same thing happened to me once. I can imagine how you feel. I know this bully scares you, but you must take action. First of all, if he calls again, do not answer. And block him on your website. He won't be able to write mean things on it again. If you don't respond to his actions, he may stop bullying you. Next, you can talk to your parents and teachers about the problem. Don't just keep silent. It's not the best way to deal with mean people. Always remember that you are a brave person. Bullies can't tease brave people. Have a strong mind!

From Ms. Advice

Reading 14

**Why Did They Build the Pyramids?**

What comes to mind when you think of Egypt? Pyramids, of course! Most of the pyramids in the world can be found in Egypt. Then, why did the Egyptians build the pyramids? Here is the answer.

Early Egyptians believed that people are like the sun. The sun sets today and rises the next day. In the same way, they believed that a person dies and is born again after death.

The kings of Egypt were called pharaohs and they were like gods to the people. When a pharaoh died, the Egyptians prepared his body as a mummy. They did this because they believed the pharaoh would need his body in the Next World. They also took huge stones and built a pyramid for the dead pharaoh. Then they put the mummy inside the pyramid and closed it. So the pyramid was really a big tomb.

There were many rooms inside the pyramid for the pharaoh's things. The pharaoh's clothes and gold were kept in those rooms. There was even a room for the pharaoh's cat! The walls of the pyramid were painted with beautiful pictures of the pharaoh's life. For example, some pictures showed him fishing, and others showed him enjoying a delicious meal.

The largest and most famous pyramid in Egypt is the Great Pyramid. It was built near the Nile River for Pharaoh Khufu. The Great Pyramid is over 140 meters high and took 20 years to build. Until today, nobody is quite sure how the Egyptians built pyramids. It is still a big mystery.

Reading 15

**A Letter from India**

Dear Mandy,

 Hey, how's everything in New York? I'm in New Delhi now. I am having a great time here in India. The people are so nice and the food is great. You have to come here sometime. You'll love it, too.

Yesterday, I learned something surprising. I went to a restaurant with my new friend, Abu, and we ate some chicken curry with rice. When I looked around, I saw everyone eating with their hands, instead of a knife and fork! Abu explained why the people in India use their hands to eat. Indians usually tear off pieces of bread. And they use the pieces to mix their rice and curry. It's hard to do this with a knife and fork, or even with chopsticks. Also, Indians use banana leaves as plates for their food. So a knife and fork could break the leaf.

Abu also told me to use only my right hand when eating. It's because people in India use their left hand in the bathroom. So they believe that the left hand is dirty. I followed Abu's advice and tried to tear the bread with my right hand only. It was so difficult! Can you imagine eating with only one hand?

Tomorrow, I am going to visit the famous India Gate. I will write to you again with more interesting news and pictures of India.

Your friend,

Paul

Reading 16

**Plants eat Insects?**

In science class, we learn that plants need certain things to grow. They need water, sunlight, and food. Most plants get their food from the soil. But some plants get their food another way. They eat insects!

One special insect-eating plant is the pitcher plant. Pitcher plants look just like water pitchers, and they even have water inside them. Insects like these plants because of their bright colors and sweet smell. When an insect climbs or flies onto a pitcher plant, it is in real trouble. Can you guess why? The inside wall of the plant is very slippery, so the insect easily falls into the water and dies.

Another famous insect-eating plant is the Venus Flytrap. This plant has white flowers in the spring. When insects come to see the flowers, they find a big surprise. The plant's leaves are a trap! There are short, strong hairs along the edges of each leaf. As soon as an insect touches one or two of these sensitive hairs, the two sides of the leaf shut quickly. The insect tries to escape from the plant, but it cannot get out of the closed leaf. So it dies in the trap.

When these plants catch insects, how do they eat them? Most insect-eating plants have a strong juice. It breaks down the insect's body. So the insects make a good meal for these special plants.

Reading 17

  **Leonardo da Vinci**

Leonardo da Vinci was painting a picture for an Italian church. The picture was *The Last Supper.* He painted a large table. He painted the apostles, Jesus’ followers. “Now, I am almost finished. I only have to finish Jesus’ face.”

The great artist sat in front of the picture and thought, “How can I describe Jesus’ love and goodness? How can I express his sadness and pain?” He was lost in thought, but he could not come up with a good idea. The painter did nothing for many days. He only stared at his unfinished painting.

The people who worked in the church got angry and told him to hurry. Still, Leonardo had no idea. He had true love and respect for Jesus. A kind or handsome face was not good enough. The face of Jesus should be perfect.

 Months passed. Years went by. For four years, Leonardo only thought about his painting. He became more and more tired. At last, he gave up. “I cannot finish painting Jesus. I cannot describe the goodness and love in his perfect face.”

Today, we can see Jesus’ face in the picture *The Last Supper*. Who painted the face of Jesus? No one knows, but it is probably not as beautiful as Leonardo had hoped.

Reading 18

**Native American Indians**

When white Europeans first landed in America, there were many Native American Indians living there. The Native Indians were kind and friendly. But the Europeans were not looking for friends. They only wanted gold. The white men asked the Native Indians to give them their gold. "We don't have any gold," the Native Indians answered. The white people did not believe them. They thought the Native Indians were hiding a great treasure of gold. So they killed them with their guns.

Hundreds of years later, the Native American Indians were still suffering because of white people. In the early 1800s, many Native American Indians lived in the southeast part of the United States. One group of them was the Cherokee Indians. One day, the U.S. government decided to take their land away from them and give it to white people. And instead, the government prepared a place in Oklahoma for the Indians. It was called "Indian Territory." The Cherokee Indians didn't want to go there. They thought it was not the right thing to do. They didn't understand why they had to leave their native land. Some of the Indians were ready to fight against the government. However, the U.S. army burned their homes and made them leave. Oklahoma was very far away, and the Indians had to travel on foot. It was winter and there was very little food. Many of them died from the cold, hunger and disease.

The Indian Territory does not exist anymore, but many Native American Indians are still living there. Even today, they cry when they think of the sufferings of their people.

Reading 19

**Two Friends in the Snow**

It was a cold winter day. Two friends, Tom and Peter, were hiking in the Rocky Mountains. The sky was dark, and snow was falling hard. The boys tried to find a town, but they soon got lost.

After a while, they heard a strange sound. Where was it coming from? They looked over the side of the mountain and saw a person lying on the ground. The man was hurt and covered with snow. Tom wanted to help the man. "Let's take him with us," he said. But Peter did not like the idea. "If we waste time trying to help him, we will all die," Peter said. "I feel sorry for him, but we should go." Tom looked at the man's sad eyes. "I can't leave this man here to die," he thought. So Tom stayed with the man, while Peter went on alone. Tom put the man on his back and began to walk. The work was hard and Tom started to feel warm. Soon he was covered with sweat! Because of Tom, the man felt warm, too.

At last, Tom saw the lights of a village in the distance. But before he could take another step, he fell over something on the road. Surprisingly, it was Peter's body! He had frozen to death in the cold snow.

Reading 20

**The Moving Stones**

Is it possible for rocks to move by themselves? Of course not! But something strange happens with the rocks in Death Valley, California. Death Valley is a large desert, and it is famous for its moving rocks. Most of the rocks are small, but some of them weigh more than 300kg. Every year, the rocks move and leave long marks on the ground. Sometimes they move 100 or 200 meters! However, nobody has ever seen the rocks moving.

For many years, scientists tried to solve the mystery of Death Valley's moving rocks. They put marks on the rocks. They made maps of the moving rocks, too. At last, they found the answer. The wind makes the rocks move! But how is this possible? In the daytime, Death Valley is one of the hottest places on earth. But it becomes very cold at night, and sometimes there are bad storms. Rain falls, and soon the water on the ground changes to very thin ice. Then strong winds can move the rocks along the ground. Why has no one seen the rocks moving? It's because they only move at night. In the morning, the sun comes up and dries the ground.

Mother Nature has many mysteries like the moving rocks. Thanks to the scientists, this mystery was finally solved. It's a good thing, too. Why? Because some people started to believe that aliens were moving the rocks!

Reading 21

**Dangerous Internet Dating**

Sarah, a 14-year-old girl, came to know a boy through the Internet. He said he was 16 years old. And he looked handsome in his picture. They talked to each other every day by instant messenger. Sarah thought the boy was perfect, and told him everything about herself. After a few weeks, Sarah decided to meet him in real life. But when she saw him, she was shocked. The "perfect boy" was actually a 35-year-old man!

Today many teenagers make new friends on the Internet. However, in cyberspace, people can easily hide their real thoughts. So, they often lie about themselves on the Internet. Some people even use the Internet to do bad things. Therefore, if you talk to strangers online and then meet them in real life, be careful! It can be very dangerous. Some teenagers get hurt, lost, or even killed after they go out to see their "online friends."

To stay safe when you use the Internet, you need to remember a few things. First, never give your name, address, or phone number to strangers online. Second, if you decide to see your online friends in real life, let your parents know first. And then, meet in a public place. During the meeting, have your family or friends around. Remember these rules, and the Internet will be a safe and fun place for you.

Reading 22

**Staying Healthy with Vitamin C**

In the 1600s, British sailors were afraid to go on their ships. After several weeks at sea, many of them got a strange disease. The disease made the sailors' skin turn yellow and brown. Blood came out of their nose and mouth, and their teeth fell out, too. The disease was called scurvy, and it killed thousands of sailors. No one knew how to stop the disease. Then, some sailors noticed that scurvy only happened when they didn't eat fresh fruits or vegetables. Their health returned as soon as they ate some. Soon people all over the world heard the sailors' story.

We now understand why we need to eat a lot of fruits and vegetables. They have vitamin C, and this vitamin helps the body fight diseases. But it only stays in our bodies a short time and then disappears, so we need more vitamin C every day. You might ask, "Why don't our bodies just make vitamin C for us?" In fact, most animals make vitamin C inside their bodies, but humans and monkeys cannot do this.

The best way to get vitamin C is to eat fruits and vegetables every day. Oranges, lemons, and strawberries have the most vitamin C. Vegetables like potatoes, cabbages, and broccoli have lots of vitamin C, too.

Reading 23

**The Amazing Chameleon**

There are many kinds of lizards in the world. One of the most amazing lizards is the chameleon. Why is a chameleon so amazing? Its body has everything that a best hunter needs.

First of all, a chameleon can change the color of its skin. It turns green when it sits on a green leaf. And it turns red when it sits on a red leaf. A chameleon only needs three seconds to change color, so it is very hard for other animals to notice it. Another amazing thing is its long tongue. How long is it? A chameleon's tongue is longer than its whole body. Besides, a chameleon can shoot out its tongue faster than our eyes can see. Finally, a chameleon's eyes are very amazing. Each eye moves by itself, so a chameleon can see in two directions at the same time.

Because of these amazing things, a chameleon is very good at catching insects. It sits on a tree quietly and waits for an insect to come by. When an insect comes near, the chameleon uses its quick, long tongue to catch it. Before the insect knows what has happened, it becomes the chameleon's meal.

Reading 24

**The Happiest Country in the World**

Which country is the happiest in the world? Is it a warm, beautiful island, like Fiji? Or is it a big and powerful country, like America? No! The answer is Denmark. Maybe you'll think it's strange. Denmark is not the richest or the most powerful country in the world. Its weather is cold and often rainy. Then, what makes Denmark so special?

First of all, people in Denmark don't have to worry about their basic living. They know that they'll always have food to eat, and a place to live. Everyone gets free education. If they become sick, the hospital always takes care of them for free. Plus, the country pays money for many kinds of social activities. So anyone in Denmark can enjoy their hobbies with their friends and neighbors.

Of course, all of this is possible because Danish people pay very high taxes. Denmark is famous for the highest taxes in the world. Its people have to spend almost 70% of their income on taxes. But they don't mind, because their country gives them almost everything they need.

Thanks to the country's wonderful system, Danish people can make the best choices for themselves. They don't choose their jobs because of money. They do what they really love, and this makes them happy. And more importantly, people in Denmark understand the key to happiness: Do your best, but don't try to win everything. They are not very sad even when the result isn't the best.