

### **Starting up**

- In noisy public places such as cafes, are you able to a) read books or b) work? Talk about your experiences.
- Read through the whole article. Then do the exercise below.

### **Reading 1**

Read the article again to find the information a-j. (Two of the items are not mentioned.)

- a) a café
- b) the building in which it is situated
- c) the building's informal name
- d) the street on which it is situated
- e) when it was originally built
- f) two events that caused it to be rebuilt
- g) the dates of these events
- h) the first architect to rebuild it
- i) the second architect to rebuild it
- j) the name of the building that houses the Financial Times
- k) the area of London where it is situated

## Creative summer: working in a café

It is easy to feel uninspired by the monotony of working every day at the same desk. Having struggled with motivation for an article that I had been working on for over a week, I decided to spend an afternoon in a café — to see if working in a new place and surrounding myself with different people would make me more creative. Research has found that moderate levels of “ambient noise” — around 70 decibels, or about the level of conversation in a café — improves performance on creative tasks. Emboldened by this promise of a productive afternoon, I left my desk and found a table in The Wren, only a minute’s walk from the Financial Times.

Even for an independent coffee shop, The Wren boasts an unusual location. Nestled inside St Nicholas Cole Abbey on Queen Victoria Street, customers sip their coffee at tables located inside the nave. Although “St Nick’s” is thought to have been built in the 12th century, the building that exists today is a reconstruction — originally rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren after the Great Fire of London, it was again severely damaged in the Blitz and reopened in 1962. The beamed ceiling and airy space was certainly a change from the modern, industrial surroundings of my desk in Bracken House. With research suggesting that low ceilings prompt feelings of confinement, while high ceilings can encourage concepts of freedom and so stimulate creative thinking, it seemed a good location for a fruitful afternoon’s work.

The Wren is located in the City of London and so it was no surprise that the tables around me were busy with business meetings and catch-ups over coffee. Unfortunately, this provided the perfect distraction from my work, and I succumbed to the temptation of eavesdropping on the conversations happening around me. Heading towards the end of August, for the most part this meant the usual remarks on the capriciousness of British weather and an exchange of holiday pleasantries. But when a chat escalated into an impassioned lovers’ quarrel at the table next to me it became challenging to focus on my laptop screen. Their back-and-forth gave me plenty to ponder, but unfortunately no creative thoughts.

When the couple eventually departed, I could settle back into work. And although there was an animated business meeting being conducted in French, my rudimentary language skills meant that I could not elicit anything interesting enough to distract me from the task in hand. When I returned to the office a few hours later I had managed to get some work done, although a lot less than I had intended. But, had working in a café increased my creativity? While the constant chatter and opportunity to eavesdrop offered more distraction than I had anticipated, the change of environment left me feeling refreshed. Surrounding myself with the conversations of strangers in the café had meant that I could let my mind wander. And by allowing myself to get distracted I had taken the pressure off — which meant that when I did return to my work the creative inertia had gone.



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## Vocabulary – related forms

Find a) words and expressions used in the article, as well as b) the additional related forms that are referred to below.

### Paragraph 1

- 1 a) An adjectival form with a negative prefix, relating to b) a noun often associated with creativity.
- 2 a) A noun relating to willingness to do something, and b) its related adjectival form.
- 3 a) An adjective describing noise, and b) a noun that is also used to talk about the atmosphere of a place where people are gathered.
- 4 a) An adjectival form with a prefix meaning 'cause something to happen', and b) an adjective that means 'courageous'.

### Paragraph 2

- 5 a) A verb that could be replaced by 'has', with little change of meaning, and b) a noun used to talk about people praising themselves.
- 6 a) A prefix used three times in this paragraph, and b) the three related infinitive verb forms
- 7 a) A form used as a noun that cannot be used in the singular, and b) its related adjectival form.
- 8 a) A noun that can also be used to talk about imprisonment, and b) its related verb.

### Paragraph 3

- 9 a) A noun form to talk about secretly listening to something and b) someone who does this.
- 10 a) A noun with a suffix that is used to form many nouns, and b) another noun that means almost the same thing, without the suffix.
- 11 a) An adjectival form used to describe heated arguments, and b) a noun meaning 'strong love or liking'.
- 12 a) An expression meaning 'lively conversation' and b) one of its components that can be used after 'and so'.

### Paragraph 4

- 13 a) A phrasal verb meaning 'return to something after being disturbed' and b) another phrasal verb, with one fewer words, used to talk about doing this for the first time.
- 14 a) A verb form that could also be used in the context of music, and b) someone who directs an orchestra.
- 15 a) A noun that looks like it could refer to a person, but in fact refers to an activity, and b) a verb meaning 'informally converse'.
- 16 a) A noun to talk about inactivity, and b) an adjective that can refer not only to someone in this state, but also to a gas that does not explode when you try to light it with a match etc.

## Grammar – participle clauses

1 Look at the sentences from the article and answer the questions about them below.

- 1 Having struggled with motivation for an article I had been working on for over a week, I decided to spend an afternoon in a café.
- 2 With research suggesting that low ceilings prompt feelings of confinement, it seemed a good location for a fruitful afternoon's work.
- 3 Nestled inside St Nicholas Cole Abbey on Queen Victoria Street, customers sip their coffee at tables located inside the nave.
- 4 Heading towards the end of August, for the most part this meant the usual remarks on the capriciousness of British weather and an exchange of holiday pleasantries.

- a) Which use *-ing* participles?
- b) Which use *-ed* participles?
- c) Which *-ed* participle form could be replaced by an active participle form with no change in meaning?
- d) Which perfect participle form could be replaced by a present participle form with no change in meaning?

2 Rewrite the sentences above using non-participle forms, as in this example.

- 1 *I'd struggled with motivation for an article I had been working on for over a week, so I decided to spend an afternoon in a café.*

## Reading 2

Was the outcome of the writer's experiment positive or negative? Identify the sentence that backs up your answer.

## Further discussion / Group work

- 1 Compare and contrast working or studying in cafes, and working or studying at home. What are the upsides and downsides of each? Give reasons.
- 2 Talk about the ideal environment for the work you do, or for studying, giving reasons. Talk about light, ambient noise, furniture, refreshments and so on.

## ANSWER KEY

## Reading 1

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| a) The Wren                            | g) not mentioned        |
| b) St Nicholas Cole Abbey              | h) Sir Christopher Wren |
| c) St Nick's                           | i) not mentioned        |
| d) Queen Victoria Street               | j) Bracken House        |
| e) 12th century                        | k) City of London       |
| f) the Great Fire of London, the Blitz |                         |

## Vocabulary

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 a) uninspired, b) inspiration           | 9 a) eavesdropping, b) eavesdropper    |
| 2 a) motivation, b) motivated             | 10 a) capriciousness, b) caprice       |
| 3 a) ambient, b) ambience                 | 11 a) impassioned, b) passion          |
| 4 a) embolden, b) bold                    | 12 a) back and forth, b) forth         |
| 5 a) boasts, b) boast                     | 13 a) settle back into, b) settle into |
| 6 a) re-, b) rebuild, reconstruct, reopen | 14 a) conducted, b) conductor          |
| 7 a) surroundings, b) surrounding         | 15 a) chatter, b) chat                 |
| 8 a) confinement, b) confine              | 16 a) inertia, b) inert                |

## Grammar

- 1 a) 1, 2, 4  
b) 3  
c) In 3, 'nestled' could be replaced by 'nestling'  
d) In 1, 'having struggled' could be replaced by 'struggling'
- 2 2 Research suggests that low ceilings prompt feelings of confinement, so it seemed a good location for a fruitful afternoon's work.  
3 It nestles inside St Nicholas Cole Abbey on Queen Victoria Street, and customers sip their coffee at tables located inside the nave.  
4 We were headed towards the end of August, and for the most part this meant the usual remarks on the capriciousness of British weather and an exchange of holiday pleasantries.

## Reading 2

Positive – 'And by allowing myself to get distracted I had taken the pressure off – which meant that when I did return to my work the creative inertia had gone.'

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