

Reading skills practice: Superpowers for a super life? – exercises

We asked four people what they thought life would really be like if humans had certain superpowers.

Preparation

Match the vocabulary with the correct definition and write a–h next to the numbers 1–8.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1..... to envisage | a. to fall a long way |
| 2..... to ignite | b. to reach a great height |
| 3..... to patrol | c. to have a mental picture of something, to imagine |
| 4..... to deplete | d. to set alight or start burning |
| 5..... to soar | e. to have (an idea, belief, etc.) persistently in mind |
| 6..... to plunge | f. to prevent something from causing a problem |
| 7..... to harbour (an idea, belief, etc.) | g. to check an area for trouble or danger |
| 8..... to keep something at bay | h. to reduce in size or amount |



A If we boasted the superhuman ability to fly, we would no longer need to worry about plunging from balconies or tumbling out of trees. It would also have a significant impact on urban architecture as buildings could soar with no need for lifts, except when transporting heavy loads. In addition to the potential change in city landscapes, dwellings on the sides of steep cliffs and hills would become more accessible, which could affect property prices. On the question of immortality, an obvious drawback would be the strain on the Earth's resources due to intense overpopulation. It's difficult to envisage how food and housing would stand up to such a challenge.

B It would be great if we all possessed superhuman speed like Marvel hero Quicksilver, because we'd be able to stay in bed until the last possible moment without running the risk of being late for school or work. However, the sceptics among us put forward the idea that moving at such speed would ignite our shoes and leave a blaze which would disintegrate everything trailing behind us. This is aside from being blinded by bugs, birds or dirt that happen to get in our path. One superpower I'm not convinced by is immortality. Human existence would become relentlessly monotonous and tedious – a real-life Groundhog Day. Furthermore, any once-in-a-lifetime experiences would completely lose their value. I must admit, I'm intrigued to know to what extent our perception of time would change. As it is, time appears to pass more quickly as we age, but what would happen if we lived for eternity?

C There are obvious pluses to humans being able to fly, such as a huge reduction in traffic congestion and pollution, not to mention more affordable travel expenses. Needless to say, it would not be without its complications. With the entire population racing around above the ground, some degree of air traffic control would be required to keep chaos at bay. However, we would be at even greater risk if we were able to run at superspeed. Not only would we destroy everything in our path but direct collisions with objects or other people would undoubtedly be fatal. Looking on the bright side, perhaps with so many of us being obliterated on impact, overpopulation from immortality wouldn't be so likely.

D In my view, being able to fly would pose a security threat at both national and international level. Border protection would become a major concern and countries would constantly need to patrol their airspace. It would be more difficult to protect individual properties too, which could increase the risk of burglary and personal safety. Air traffic control would be inevitable in towns and cities to bring some order to the skies. With regard to immortality, there is no question it would deplete the planet of its resources and the prospect of living in increasingly overcrowded conditions is far from appealing for most. My superpower of choice would be the ability to move at superhuman speed. With the necessary face and head protection to keep us intact, tardy arrivals would become a thing of the past.

1. Check your understanding: multiple selection

Choose all the texts that mention each superpower. Tick (✓) all the correct answers.

1. Which texts mention the ability to fly?

.....	A
.....	B
.....	C
.....	D

2. Which texts mention the ability to move at superhuman speed?

.....	A
.....	B
.....	C
.....	D

3. Which texts mention immortality?

.....	A
.....	B
.....	C
.....	D

2. Check your understanding: multiple choice

Read the questions and choose the correct expert (A–D). Each expert may be chosen more than once.

1. Which writer does not share B's optimism about superhuman speed?

a. A

b. B

c. C

d. D

2. Which writer makes reference to two examples of superpowers in fiction?

a. A

b. B

c. C

d. D

7. a plus
a. an advantage b. a disadvantage c. a misunderstanding
8. traffic congestion
a. high-speed traffic b. flowing traffic c. heavy, slow traffic
9. affordable
a. free b. not expensive c. expensive
10. appealing
a. desirable b. shocking c. undesirable
11. intact
a. awake b. not damaged c. informed
12. tardy
a. early b. on time c. late

Discussion

If you could choose one superpower, which would you like to have? Why?
What would life be like?