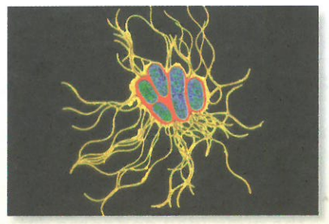
Note: *Before you begin to read the text, answer Question 1 on the opposite page.*

Diseases

We live in a world filled with microbes–microscopic organisms such as viruses, bacteria and fungi. A spoonful of dirt contains billions of them. From your head to your toes, inside and out, you are home to trillions more of them. Most are harmless, and many are good–they help us digest our food, for example. However, some can make us sick. We call these bad ones germs.

Lurking Germs

Germs enter our bodies through our noses, mouths or other openings. They may also enter through a cut in our skin. A single sneeze can propel millions of germs into the air. Hands that cover a cough deposit germs on desks, doorknobs and computer keyboards.



Salmonella is a bacterium that can give you food poisoning or deadly typhoid fever.

Diseases spread in many ways. We can become ill from germs in food that hasn't been handled or cooked properly. Water can be contaminated with germs–such as protozoa–especially in poor countries without sanitation facilities.

If germs surround us, why aren't we always sick? Most of the time, our bodies fight off germs. At times when you haven't been getting enough sleep or eating right, your resistance–your ability to fight off illness–decreases. Then it becomes easier for germs to mount a sneak attack.

Trichophyton rubrum, or ringworm, is a fungus that lives on–and eats–your skin.

Germs Target Children

Children, especially young children, get sick more often than adults. One reason is that they don't keep their hands as clean as adults do. Also, their bodies have not yet mastered the art of recognising and fending off germs. The human immune system has the job of fighting germs. As we grow older, this system improves in its ability to quickly recognise and fight infection. This helps us to build immunity against many of the germs that made us sick as children.

This protozoan, Entamoeba histolytica, is found in foul water and the human gut. It causes stomach-aches and diarrhoea.

Focus: ***Predicting - Making Predictions About Texts***

Always look at the headings, subheadings and pictures before you read a text. Draw on you knowledge about the topic and experience of texts on the same topic to predict what the text will be about.

1 *Scan the text's headings, subheadings and pictures. What do you think this text will be about? Why?*

Literal Questions

2 *Name three types of microbes mentioned in the first paragraph.*

3 *How do germs enter our bodies?*

4 *What can a single sneeze do?*

5 *List two ways diseases can be spread.*

a

b

6 *What decreases our resistance to germs?*

7 *What is the job of the human immune system?*

Focus: ***Monitoring - Re-reading and Reading On***

If you come to a new word that you do not know, re-read the sentence it is in. If that doesn't work, keep reading. Information that comes after the word may give you a clue as to what it means.

8 *Write what you think the following words mean. Use the text to help you.*

a	microscopic	
b	propel	
c	contaminated	
d	sanitation	

9 *Use the word **contaminated** in a sentence of your own.*

Inference Questions

10 *Which word in the last paragraph could be replaced with the words **fending off**?*

11 *Why do some countries not have sanitation facilities?*

12 *Do all microbes make us sick? Explain.*