

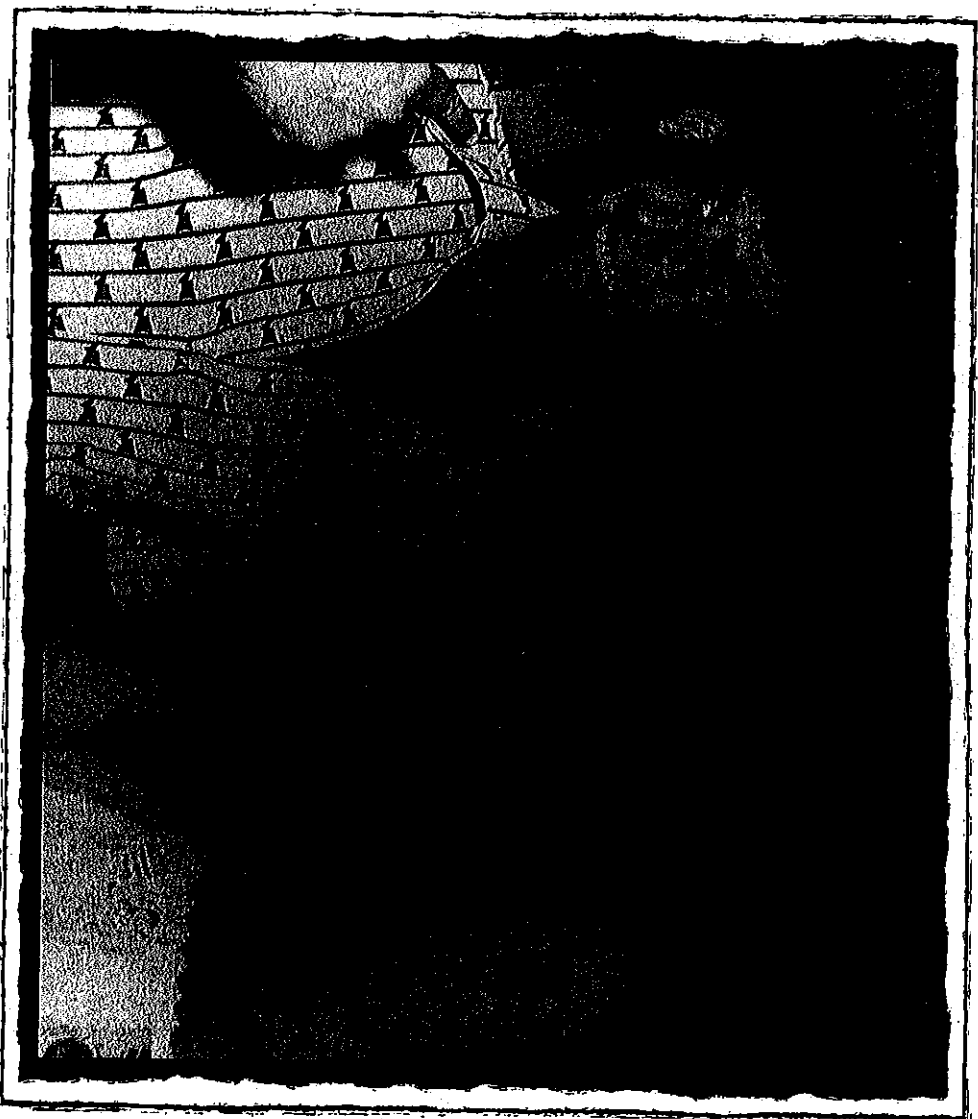
# URI GELLER

## Is He for Real?

**D**oes Uri Geller belong in a book titled *Deceptions*? Geller and his supporters would surely say no. But skeptics, most notably James "The Amazing" Randi, believe Geller absolutely does belong here. Randi, who is a magician himself, claims that what Geller does is no more than the parlor tricks of a magician. Geller disputes that. He says he is not a magician; he is a psychic whose mental powers allow him to do the most extraordinary things.

<sup>2</sup> Uri Geller thinks he may have gotten his powers through an encounter with a UFO. It happened, he says, when he was a small boy. One day he heard a terrific noise. Then he saw a burning ball. The ball emitted a ray which pierced him. From that day on, Geller says, he began to notice that he had some unusual powers. He could make a clock go faster by concentrating hard on it. (He did this in school so the class would end earlier.) Geller could also bend spoons at the dinner table using nothing but the power of his mind.

<sup>3</sup> Geller slowly developed his powers as he grew into adulthood. He served in the Israeli army as a paratrooper. Later, he worked as a fashion model. In 1969, he began to show his powers to selected groups of people. Geller bent spoons and



*Linda Cristal holds a spoon that Uri Geller (left) bent using psychokinesis powers.*

made seemingly broken watches run again. He would also ask people to draw something on a piece of paper that he couldn't see. He would then read their minds and tell them what they had drawn. Some people found his act quite impressive. One day, he got his big break. He met Golda Meir, the Prime Minister of Israel. "At a party she did a drawing, and she did it in the toilet, and I read her mind," recalls Geller.

<sup>4</sup> Later, Golda Meir was being interviewed on a national radio program. She was asked what she saw for the future of Israel. The Prime Minister replied, "Don't ask me. Ask Uri Geller." That, Geller acknowledged, was the biggest plug of his life. Soon people from all over were asking him to perform. In 1973, Geller appeared on British TV. He shocked the entire nation by breaking a steel fork just by stroking it. He even willed a broken watch to mend itself.

<sup>5</sup> Uri Geller soon came under severe attack. Critics said that he had no special psychic powers; he was just a gifted magician. Geller fought back. In a series of closely-watched scientific experiments, he impressed many fair-minded people. "I was tested in laboratories all around the world," Geller said later. "No one can explain [the powers], but I was validated."

<sup>6</sup> The most widely-known of these tests was conducted by the Stanford Research Institute. In one experiment, Geller was asked to determine the value of a single die which was placed in a closed metal box and shaken. He got the correct answer eight out of ten times. The odds against that are about a million to one. In another experiment, ten identical cans were arranged in a row. While Geller was out of the room, an object was placed underneath one of the cans. Geller was then asked to select the can which hid the object. He chose the correct can 12 times without error. The odds against that level of accuracy were estimated at one in a trillion.

<sup>7</sup> Scientists Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ conducted the tests. They were impressed, but reluctant to jump to any conclusions. "We do not claim that [Geller] has psychic powers," they wrote. "We draw no sweeping conclusions as to the nature of these phenomena.... All we can say at this point is that further investigation is clearly warranted."

<sup>8</sup> Other research teams have been impressed as well. At the University of London, Geller amazed physicists by making a Geiger counter register 500 times its normal count. At a U.S. Naval weapons center he caused an alloy,

Nihmol, to become deformed. At a university in Japan, before a watchful team of scientists, he erased a computer tape without touching it.



Magician James Randi, who received a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant," insists that Geller is nothing more than a skilled magician.

9 Still, Geller hasn't convinced his opponents. Says James Randi, "Everything that Mr. Geller does in his standard routine is straight out of the book of magic." Fooling people, even very smart people, is the art of a magician. Scientists, for instance, are not usually well versed in magic tricks. They don't understand how a good magician can seemingly defy the laws of nature. So they may not be the best people to run the tests.

10 Bending spoons, for example, is done by misdirection. One way or another, Randi claims, Geller gets people to look elsewhere while he bends the spoon with his fingers. "Broken" watches are often just clogged up. Almost anyone can get them started again by warming and shaking the watch. Keeping it running, Randi says, is a harder trick. But that is never tested during the short time Geller is on stage. "Please understand that I'm not putting him down as a performer," Randi says. "He's skilled, he's creative, but there's no evidence that it's supernatural."

11 Geller hasn't always performed very well. He seems to do best when he sets his

own ground rules. Once he appeared on the *Tonight Show* with *Johnny Carson*, where he was supposed to bend a spoon and to make a watch stop keeping time. But Geller didn't do either of those things. In fact, he didn't even try. Some people hinted that Randi and Carson had switched spoons on him. (Critics contend that Geller likes to use his own spoons which he warms, or softens, before his act.)

12 Geller had his own explanation for his apparent failure. He explained that his power can't be turned on and off like a radio or a television. He admits that sometimes the spoon doesn't bend. "That happens," he says. "I have to be in the mood. It's a power or an energy that I have to trigger."

13 Still, Uri Geller does seem to do some pretty incredible things. In 1996, the London *Sunday Telegraph* reported that a long lost submarine had been found. Eight years earlier, a radio producer had asked Geller about the same submarine. The producer meant it as a joke. But Geller named a spot. It was found just

yards away from where Geller said it was. "I don't know how he did it, or if it was just pure chance," said the producer, "but it was [right on]."

14 Who's right—Geller or Randi? Uri Geller has sued James Randi for libel and lost. Yet the larger issue is still open. Just how powerful is the human mind? Scientists are only now beginning to investigate that question. 🌀

Anyone who's been tired while reading has surely also encountered this device. It's a miracle, the words per minute, syllable per second, per your average speed of sound per minute. Enter your reading speed on the graph, compare it to

**Reading Time Lesson 8**

Minutes Seconds

**A Finding the Main Idea**

One statement below expresses the main idea of the article. One statement is too general, or too broad. The other statement explains only part of the article; it is too narrow. Label the statements using the following key:

M—Main Idea      B—Too Broad      N—Too Narrow

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Uri Geller is known around the world for his incredible, almost supernatural powers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Uri Geller can do amazing tricks with his mind such as bending spoons and erasing computer files.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Although psychic Uri Geller seems to have amazing mental abilities, many critics refuse to believe in him.

\_\_\_\_\_ Score 15 points for a correct M answer.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Score 5 points for each correct B or N answer.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ **Total Score: Finding the Main Idea**

**B Recalling Facts**

How well do you remember the facts in the article? Put an X in the box next to the answer that correctly completes each statement about the article.

- 1. Uri Geller traces his amazing powers back to the day when he
  - a. was pierced by a ray from a burning ball.
  - b. was struck by lightning.
  - c. joined the Israeli army.
- 2. According to the article, Geller's psychic powers have been tested by
  - a. the FBI.
  - b. the Stanford Research Institute.
  - c. the government of Israel.
- 3. In an experiment at a U.S. weapons center, Geller
  - a. deformed an alloy using his mind only.
  - b. read the minds of the testers.
  - c. started a stopped watch.
- 4. One of Geller's most vocal critics is
  - a. scientist Harold Puthoff.
  - b. Prime Minister Golda Meir.
  - c. magician James Randi.
- 5. Critics believe that anyone can restart a stopped watch by
  - a. warming and shaking it.
  - b. concentrating on it.
  - c. placing it in an airtight, metal container.

Score 5 points for each correct answer.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total Score: Recalling Facts**

**C Making Inferences**

When you combine your own experience and information from a text to draw a conclusion that is not directly stated in that text, you are making an inference. Below are five statements that may or may not be inferences based on information in the article. Label the statements using the following key:

C—Correct Inference      F—Faulty Inference

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Only Americans are willing to take the time to test Uri Geller's amazing abilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Uri Geller believes that there is life in places in the universe other than Earth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Uri Geller's main goal in life is to help others by using his amazing powers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. At one time, Uri Geller was famous in many countries.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. If critics are correct when they say that Geller is a good magician, it follows that he cannot have unusual mental powers.

Score 5 points for each correct answer.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total Score: Making Inferences**

**D Using Words Precisely**

Each numbered sentence below contains an underlined word or phrase from the article. Following the sentence are three definitions. One definition is closest to the meaning of the underlined word. One definition is opposite or nearly opposite. Label those two definitions using the following key. Do not label the remaining definition.

C—Closest      O—Opposite or Nearly Opposite

1. But skeptics, most notably James "The Amazing" Randi, believe Geller absolutely does belong here.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a. trusting people
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. people who doubt
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. entertainers
2. Geller disputes that.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a. agrees with
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. tries
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. argues against
3. "No one can explain [the powers], but I was validated."
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a. frightened
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. found to be authentic
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. uncovered as false
4. They were impressed, but reluctant to jump to any conclusions.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a. unwilling
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. eager
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. proud

5. Critics contend that Geller likes to use his own spoons which he warms, or softens, before his act.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. predict  
 \_\_\_\_\_ b. deny  
 \_\_\_\_\_ c. maintain

\_\_\_\_\_ Score 3 points for each correct C answer.

\_\_\_\_\_ Score 2 points for each correct O answer.

\_\_\_\_\_ Total Score: Using Words Precisely

## Author's Approach

Put an X in the box next to the correct answer.

- What does the author mean by the statement "One day, he got his big break"?
  - One day, Geller broke the news of his amazing abilities to his friends and family.
  - One day, Geller broke one of his bones.
  - One day, an incident happened that made Geller famous.
- The main purpose of the first paragraph is to
  - introduce the reader to both Geller and his critics
  - entertain the reader with stories about Geller.
  - persuade readers to believe in Geller.
- Which of the following statements from the article best describes Geller's response to his critics?
  - "Geller slowly developed his powers as he grew into adulthood."
  - "Geller fought back. In a series of closely-watched scientific experiments, he impressed many fair-minded people."
  - "...he was supposed to bend a spoon and to make a watch stop keeping time. But Geller didn't do either of those things."

Enter the four total scores in the spaces below, and add them together to find your Reading Comprehension Score. Then record your score on the graph on page 135.

Score	Question Type	Lesson 8
_____	Finding the Main Idea	_____
_____	Recalling Facts	_____
_____	Making Inferences	_____
_____	Using Words Precisely	_____
_____	Reading Comprehension Score	_____