Signals at Lunch

Trace how sensory information shapes everyday decisions.

SS24.P.7a "Explain the role of sensory systems in human behavior."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three sensory cues, circle the actions they help explain, and write matching numbers beside each cue and action to show how sensory input shapes behavior.

A Busy Cafeteria

1. At lunch, Maya enters a crowded school cafeteria. The smell of baked bread reaches receptors in her nose, which send signals toward her brain. She was not thinking about food before, but the smell draws her attention to the serving counter and makes her feel hungry. Nearby, a classmate with a nut allergy reads an ingredient label before choosing a snack. Light reflected from the printed words reaches receptors in the eyes. The brain uses that information to guide a decision: the classmate leaves the snack on the shelf because its label lists peanuts.

2. Maya hears a worker call her name over the clatter of trays. Sound waves reach her ears, and the signal helps her locate the worker and walk toward the counter. When the room gets louder, she has to focus on the voice to separate it from other sounds. She picks up a metal tray, then feels sudden heat through the skin on her fingers. Touch receptors signal the heat, and she quickly puts the tray down. This quick movement protects her hand, even though she has not measured the tray's temperature.

3. At a table, Maya tastes a spoonful of soup. Taste receptors on her tongue respond to chemicals dissolved in the soup, while its smell also shapes what she experiences as flavor. The soup seems too salty to her, so she drinks water and chooses not to add more salt. Her friend likes the same soup and keeps eating it. Their different reactions show that sensory information does not force everyone to behave in one fixed way. Attention, past experience, and personal preferences can shape how a person interprets a signal and what that person does next.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the smell of bread affect Maya's behavior when she enters the cafeteria?

2. How does the classmate use sight to make a decision about the snack?

3. Why does Maya need to focus on the worker's voice, and what does hearing it help her do?

4. How does sensing heat change Maya's action with the tray?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In four sentences, describe a person in a setting outside the cafeteria. Explain how two different sensory systems detect specific cues and shape the person's actions, and show how attention or past experience affects one action.

Signals at Lunch

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three sensory cues, circle the actions they help explain, and write matching numbers beside each cue and action to show how sensory input shapes behavior. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the smell of bread affect Maya's behavior when she enters the cafeteria?	**Receptors in Maya's nose detect the smell, which draws her attention to the serving counter and makes her feel hungry.**
2	How does the classmate use sight to make a decision about the snack?	**The classmate sees that the ingredient label lists peanuts and leaves the snack on the shelf.**
3	Why does Maya need to focus on the worker's voice, and what does hearing it help her do?	**The room's noise makes the voice harder to separate from other sounds. Hearing it helps Maya locate the worker and walk toward the counter.**
4	How does sensing heat change Maya's action with the tray?	**Touch receptors in her fingers signal the heat, so Maya quickly puts down the tray to protect her hand.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At a snowy bus stop, Eli sees a patch of ice on the sidewalk and steps onto a cleared path. When he hears a bicycle bell behind him, he steps aside to make room. He slipped on ice last winter, so that memory makes him pay close attention to the sidewalk. His eyes and ears provide information, while his experience also guides how he responds.

Accept explanations that accurately connect a detected cue to an action described in the passage. For Part 3, look for two distinct sensory systems, a cue and action for each, and a clear role for attention or past experience.