

Through an Uncurtained Window

Read the following text. A number of words have been left out. In the margin you will find four alternatives for each gap. Choose the best alternative and mark your answer – A, B, C or D.

For years, as a matter of habit, I have drawn the curtains of my bedroom on going to bed, until the other night when I forgot to do so. I shall never draw them again. The experience renewed my childhood interest in astronomy, the most exciting of all branches of science. It is also the most benign: the sky, for all its immensity, implies no ____1____.

There are many elementary things that I still do not understand. How can the earth be hurtling at an immense speed round the sun, and at the same time spin on its axis once every 24 hours without us being in any way aware of this violent ____2____? Why does a comet, after being drawn towards the sun for hundreds of years, circle round it to begin its enormous journey once again, instead of crashing into it?

To me gravity is the most mysterious of natural phenomena. One can understand how one object ____3____ another when in direct contact with it, like the cogs of a clock's mechanism or writing with a pen on a blank page, but how can the motion of a vast body ____4____ the moon, separated from us by 240,000 miles, be governed by the "attraction" of the earth, and vice versa?

- 1 A threat
 B questions
 C surprise
 D good

- 2 A volume
 B distance
 C motion
 D wonder

- 3 A repels
 B affects
 C approaches
 D resembles

- 4 A on
 B in
 C near
 D like

In one of his television series Stephen Hawking said, “The more we see, the less special our place in the Universe seems.” In one ____5____ that is of course true, but in another, the more we see, the more special we become, for if there are equally brilliant scientists on the planets of neighbouring stars, they would have let us know long ago.

Our discovery of our place in the universe has been achieved against all probability. It must have seemed to primitive man that because the sun and the moon appear to be of the same ____6____, they must be the same distance away, and because all heavenly bodies seem to circle round the earth, we must be at the hub.

These simple assumptions have been ____7____ wrong by astounding feats of calculation. To laymen, the discoveries by men like Copernicus, Kepler and Newton are only just ____8____, and the joy of attempting to retrace their steps is enhanced by the presence of their basic tools above us, the night sky seen on a slow ____9____ between garage and house, or through a bedroom’s uncurtained window.

- 5 A word
 B time
 C sense
 D point

- 6 A light
 B size
 C stuff
 D use

- 7 A proved
 B dismissed
 C accepted
 D denied

- 8 A impossible
 B comprehensible
 C comparative
 D legendary

- 9 A way
 B car
 C walk
 D sky