

Name: _____ Class: _____ ()

Tuesday English News Report: Broadcast Date: 17th Jan, 2017

ANSWER KEY

'Alexa sort your life out': when Amazon Echo goes rogue

A Texan schoolgirl accidentally ordered a doll's house using the gadget. Then, when local news reported the story, it **triggered** viewers' own devices. But accidental shopping isn't its only **quirk**.

Amazon Echo is apparently always ready, always listening and always getting smarter. So goes the **spiel** about the **sleek**, black, voice-controlled speaker, Amazon's bestselling product over Christmas, with millions now sold worldwide. The problem is that when you have Alexa, the intelligent assistant that powers Amazon Echo, entering millions of homes to do the shopping, answer questions, play music, report the weather and control the thermostat, there are bound to be glitches.

And so to Dallas, Texas, where a six-year-old girl made the mistake of asking Alexa: "Can you play dollhouse with me and get me a dollhouse?" Alexa **promptly complied** by ordering a \$170 (£140) KidKraft doll's house and, for reasons known only to the virtual assistant, four pounds of sugar cookies. The snafu **snowballed** when a San Diego TV station reported the story, using the "wake word" Alexa, which is the Amazon Echo equivalent of saying Candyman five times into the mirror. Several viewers called the station to complain that their own Alexa had woken up and ordered more doll's houses in what turned into a thoroughly 21st-century comedy of consumer errors. And a **bonanza** day for KidKraft.

** to start or originate from*

Many of Amazon Echo's gaffes ***stem** from misunderstandings arising from an intelligent assistant who never sleeps (and an owner who hasn't pin-protected their device). Last March, NPR ran a story on Amazon Echo's ***capacity to extend** the power of the internet into people's homes. Again, Alexa took its power too literally and hijacked listeners' thermostats. Another owner reported how their child's demand for a game called Digger Digger was misheard as a request for porn.

** the ability to make longer or greater*

On Twitter, Amazon Echo owners continue to share items that unexpectedly end up on shopping lists, whether **sneakily** added by children or simply because Alexa misheard or picked up random background noise. One owner uploaded a video in which their Amazon Echo read back a shopping list that included "hunk of poo, girlfriend, [and] Dove soap". Another included "150,000 bottles of shampoo" and "sled dogs".

Behind all this lies the more serious question of privacy: what happens to the data collected by voice-activated devices such as Amazon Echo and Google Home, and who is able to access it? Most recently, US police investigating the case of an Arkansas man, James Bates, charged with murder, obtained ***a warrant** to receive data from his Amazon Echo. Although Amazon refused to share information sent by the Echo to its servers, the police said a detective was able to extract data from the device itself.

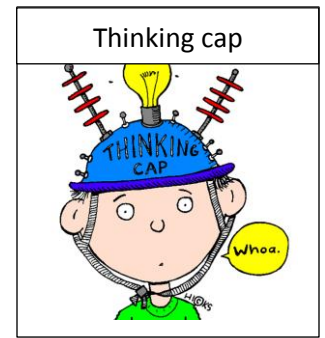
** a document issued by a legal or government official authorizing the police or another body to make an arrest, search premises, or carry out some other action relating to the administration of justice:*

The case not only puts Alexa in the futuristic position of being a potential key witness to a murder, it also raises concerns about the impact of letting a sophisticated virtual assistant – a market estimated to be worth \$3.6bn by 2020 – into our homes. As Megan Neitzel, the mother of the girl who wished for a doll's house, put it: "I feel like whispering in the kitchen ... I [now] tell my kids Alexa is a very good listener."

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/shortcuts/2017/jan/09/alexa-amazon-echo-goes-rogue-accidental-shopping-dolls-house>

Questions to think about:

- How can gadgets like Amazon Echo change our lives? For the better or for the worse? Would you like to own one? Why, or why not?
- The article mentioned the issue of privacy. What are your views on this issue? The problem of privacy also concerns the use of social media sites. What are the dangers?



1. I: Vocabulary and understanding meaning

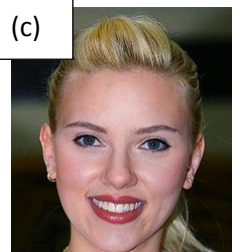
Match the meaning and/or synonym to the words which have been highlighted in bold in the article.

Column A: Word from text	Letter	Column B: Meaning or synonym
1. go(es) rogue	F	A: a strange/peculiar aspect or behaviour
2. trigger (ed) (v)	H	B: a situation which creates a sudden increase in wealth, good fortune, or profit
3. quirk (n)	A	C: immediately
4. spiel (n)	I	D: increase rapidly/quickly in size, intensity or importance
5. sleek (adj)	J	E: furtively, slyly, to do something behind someone's back, in a hidden way so that no one knows
6. promptly (adv)	C	F: to cease to follow orders; to act on one's own, usually against expectation or instruction. To pursue one's own interests.
7. comply (ied) (v)	G	G: follow an act or command/to do as instructed
8. snowball (ed) (v)	D	H: cause or start off something
9. bonanza (n)	B	I: a long story
10. sneakily (adv)	E	J: having an elegant, streamlined shape or design

II: Usage of vocabulary: Fill in the missing words of the sentences below using the vocabulary (1-10) from column A. Make sure your answers are grammatically correct.

- The student gave a long **spiel** about why he couldn't do his homework, but his teacher didn't believe him.
- All companies need to **comply** with certain government regulations. If they do not, they may be forced to shut down.
- The earthquake **triggered** a tsunami. It started out at sea.
- The new notebook computer looked so **sleek**, so shiny and hi-tech.
- What a **bonanza**! You really have done well. You sold so much during the exhibition and made so much money.
- Mr Bean makes people laugh because of his character **quirks**. Sometimes he seems so strange, and he does not behave like normal people.
- Please reply **promptly**, otherwise you may miss out on the chance if you are too late.
- The spy (a) **went rogue** and disappeared. He defected to the enemy (b) **sneakily**. Not even his closest friend knew what he was doing.
- The problem **snowballed**, it just got worse and worse.

(c)



Challenges of the week:

PRIZES TO BE WON

- What recent film title has one of the key words from this week's news article?
- Which 3 words in the article have the same meaning as the word mistakes or problems? (paragraphs 2,3 & 4)
- Which film (of about 2 years ago) centred on the story of a man falling in love with an intelligent computer operating system called Samantha (voice by Scarlett Johansson)? The name of the film has 3 letters.