

# Interpreting Information in a New Context

Have you ever wondered what qualities a good inventor needs to have? I'd say quirky thinking would be the best way to describe the kind of thinking that leads to inventions, which are really ways of seeing new combinations based upon what is known. Using your interpreting information in a new context strategy (**cut and paste**), read the following passage from the December 10, 2001 issue of *Science World*:



We're not talking bad breath from onions. "That you can blame on food," says Dr. Richard Price, spokesperson for the American Dental Association. As for *halitosis*—mouth odor—the culprit is bacteria.

Even with good dental hygiene like regular brushing and flossing, the healthy mouth teems with bacteria. Most bad-breath makers are *anaerobic*, or live without air. "They live in 'gag-city,' at the back of the tongue," says Price. "They live off whatever they find, like dead skin cells from the mouth and mucus from postnasal drip"—caused by allergies or colds.

"Bacteria love mucus!" Price says. "They eat it and grow." The byproduct: *volatile sulfur compounds* (stinky gases) that cause halitosis. Dry mouth also encourages bacterial growth, because the microbes stay put and congregate. "Think 'dragon breath' when you wake up in the morning," Price says.

To beat bad breath, brush, floss, and guzzle water. The wetter the mouth, the better to scatter bacteria. Breath mints or mouthwash just mask one odor with another. And don't forget to visit the dentist—cavities make good hiding places for bacteria.

"Brushing the tongue, especially toward the back, will remove some bacteria," says Price. "But for a big clean-up, use a tongue scraper." They're available at drugstores.

1. The main idea of this article is...
  - a. only what you eat causes bad breath.
  - b. mouths are filthy places.
  - c. you have a gang in your mouth.
  - d. you can do a lot to stop your own bad breath.
2. In this passage, the word *halitosis* means...
  - a. culprit.
  - b. postnasal drip.
  - c. mucus.
  - d. bad breath.
3. You could compare bacteria eating mucus and growing to...
  - a. a mosquito eating human blood.
  - b. a dog biting fleas.
  - c. flies on manure.
  - d. bees feeding on pollen.
4. Think about the tongue scraper in the last paragraph. What utensil could have led up to this "invention"?
  - a. a table knife
  - b. a plastic pot scraper
  - c. a nail file
  - d. a putty knife

Interpreting information in a new context is making connections...seeing old things in a new light. Use the **cut and paste strategy**—cut something from a known situation and paste it into a new situation...

The expressions "dragon breath" or "dog breath" are examples of interpreting information in a new context...transferring what you know about breath to different species.

Can you think up any new inventions based upon this article?