



About Knowledge ++

It's great to have a good general knowledge but even better when that knowledge includes the little-known and obscure.

Here you will find 500 interesting facts, many to do with Science and the Natural World. Other topics range from Famous People through to the Humanities and Language.

Pupils will find the ideas below both interesting and challenging and they are sure to stimulate lively class discussions.

How to Use Knowledge ++ (suggestion 1)

Present the same printed set of 10 facts to each student, in-class.

After a few minutes of reading/thinking, teacher says the following (or something similar)...

"Who would like to comment on any one of these curiosities? Perhaps you know something else related to this point that you can share with us. Or maybe you can provide us with an explanation (*of the phenomenon*)."

Objective: Opportunity to practise the skills of higher thinking, speaking and listening.

How to Use Knowledge ++ (suggestion 2)

Present the same printed set of 10 facts to each student.

For research at school or at home children find out more about the subject (or object) of a fact of their choice and present their findings in the form of a short talk or half-page written piece of work.

Objective: Opportunity to research a topic of interest and share findings with classmates. (being a 'mini authority' among peers can be a confidence booster).

Knowledge++ Set 1

1 Octopi and squid have three hearts.

2 Unlike most fish, electric eels can swim both backwards and forwards.

3 The world's largest mammal, the blue whale, weighs 50 tonnes at birth.

Fully grown, it weighs around 150 tonnes.

4 Tigers have striped skin, not just striped fur.

5 The bones of a pigeon weigh less than its feathers.

6 The pupil of an octopus' eye is rectangular.

7 Sloths take two weeks to digest their food.

8 Ostriches can run faster than horses.

9 Young beavers stay with their parents for the first two years of their lives before going out on their own.

10 Skunks can accurately spray their smelly fluid as far as three metres.

Knowledge++ Set 2

- 1** The acids in a snake's stomach can digest bones and teeth but not fur or hair.
- 2** The underside of a horse's hoof peels off several times a year, each time followed new growth.
- 3** The fastest bird is the Spine-tailed swift, clocked at speeds of up to 350 kilometres per hour.
- 4** There are more than fifty different kinds of kangaroos.
- 5** The blood of mammals is red, the blood of insects is yellow, and the blood of lobsters is blue.
- 6** At birth a panda is smaller than a mouse and weighs about 700g.
- 7** Greyhound dogs can see better than any other breed of dog.
- 8** The female lion does ninety percent of the hunting.
- 9** A bird sees everything at once in total focus. Whereas the human eye is spherical and must adjust to varying distances, the bird's eye is flat and can take in everything at once in a single glance.
- 10** A blue whale's tongue weighs more than an elephant.

Knowledge++ Set 3

- 1** The world's smallest winged insect, the Tanzanian parasitic wasp, is smaller than the eye of a housefly.
- 2** The chameleon has a tongue that is 1.5 times the length of its body.
- 3** Tuatara lizards have two eyes in the centre of their heads and a third one on top of their heads.
- 4** Beaver teeth are so sharp that Native Americans once used them as knife blades.
- 5** Giant squids have eyes as big as watermelons.
- 6** The biggest members of the cat family are Siberian and Bengal tigers, which can reach 280kg.
- 7** Snakes continue to grow until the day they die.
- 8** There are about 40 different muscles in a bird's wing.
- 9** Elephants can smell water from as far away as five kilometres.
- 10** The platypus can eat its weight in worms every day.

Knowledge++ Set 4

- 1** A chameleon can move its eyes in two directions at the same time.
- 2** Cats sleep up to 18 hours a day, but never quite as deep as humans. Instead, they wake up intermittently to check to see if their environment is still safe.
- 3** An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain.
- 4** Some species of dinosaur were the size of chickens.
- 5** The only insect that can turn its head 360 degrees is the praying mantis.
- 6** To Ancient Egyptians cats were sacred animals.
- 7** Cone snails have a sharp, modified tooth that stabs prey like a harpoon, with venom.
- 8** Sharks can sense a drop of blood from 4 km away.
- 9** Some fish can swim 17 times faster than a champion swimmer.
- 10** The digestive juices of crocodiles have dissolved 15cm steel hooks that they have swallowed.

Knowledge++ Set 5

- 1** The woolly mammoth, extinct since the Ice Age, had tusks more than 4m above the ground.
- 2** Birds do not sleep in their nests.
- 3** A giraffe's blood pressure is two or three times that of a human's.
- 4** The giant Pacific octopus can squeeze its entire body through a hole the size of its beak.
- 5** The mako shark and great white shark are two of the few species of shark that are warm blooded.
- 6** The giant tortoise can live longer in captivity than any other animal.
- 7** Baby robins eat 4 metres of earthworms per day.
- 8** Ostriches stick their heads in the sand to look for water.
- 9** The Kiwi, national bird of New Zealand, can't fly.
- 10** Throughout its life the oyster will change from male to female and back again numerous times.

Knowledge++ Set 6

- 1** A newborn kangaroo is about 3 cm in length.
- 2** Dogs have about 100 different facial expressions, most of them made with the ears.
- 3** The heaviest dog on record is an Old English Mastiff named Zorba, who weighed over 150kg and measured more than 2½ m from nose to tail.
- 4** Giraffes are the only animals born with horns.
- 5** The giant crab of Japan can be as large as 4m across.
- 6** Sharks never stop moving, even when they sleep.
- 7** The most venomous of all snakes, known as the Inland Taipan has enough venom in one bite to kill over 200,000 mice.
- 8** A cat's jaw cannot move sideways.
- 9** Young birds such as ducks, geese, and shore birds are born with their eyes open.
- 10** A large kangaroo can cover more than 10 metres with a single jump.

Knowledge++ Set 7

- 1** The word 'koala' is Aboriginal for "no drink".
- 2** The ostrich egg yolk is the biggest single cell in the world.
- 3** The bottle-nosed whale can dive to a depth of 1km in two minutes.
- 4** The pupil of an octopus' eye is rectangular.
- 5** The largest order of mammals, with about 1 700 species, is rodents.
- 6** The bite of a leech is painless due to its own anaesthetic.
- 7** Most varieties of snake can go an entire year without eating a single morsel of food.
- 8** The flying snake of Java and Malaysia is able to flatten itself out like a ribbon and sail like a glider from tree to tree.
- 9** Rats can swim for 800 metres without resting.
- 10** Elephants have been found swimming kilometres from shore in the Indian Ocean.

Knowledge++ Set 8

- 1** The howler monkey is so noisy it can be heard clearly for distances of up to 5km.
- 2** The blue whale can go 6 months without eating.
- 3** Lobsters can move up to 8 metres per second underwater.
- 4** Of the 250 known species of shark in the world, only about 18 are known to be dangerous to man.
- 5** Rhinos are in the same family as horses, and are thought to have inspired the myth of the unicorn.
- 6** The penguin is the only bird that walks upright.
- 7** When two zebras stand side by side they face in opposite directions so they can watch out for predators.
- 8** A typical day for a gorilla is to get up early and eat. It eats until it gets hot, then it will nap. When it gets up from its nap, it resumes eating until the sun goes down.
- 9** A pelican consumes about 1/3 of its body weight in a single meal.
- 10** The leech has 32 brains.

Knowledge++ Set 9

- 1** Gorillas do not know how to swim.
- 2** There are 40 000 muscles and tendons in an elephant's trunk. This makes it very strong and flexible, allowing the elephant to pluck a delicate flower or lift a huge log.
- 3** All elephants walk on tip-toe, because the back portion of their foot is made up of all fat and no bone.
- 4** The Mola Mola, or Ocean Sunfish, lays up to 5 million eggs at one time.
- 5** The Portuguese jellyfish, with tentacles up to 1½ km long, catches anything in its path with lethal stings.
- 6** The African lungfish can live on land for up to 4 years.
- 7** Male birds do most of the singing, mainly to stake out their territory and to invite females over to mate.
- 8** At birth a panda is smaller than a mouse and weighs about 550 grams.
- 9** Rats can tread water for 3 days straight.
- 10** The penguin is the only bird that can swim, but not fly.

Knowledge++ Set 10

- 1** Dolphins sleep at night just below the surface of the water. They frequently rise to the surface for air.
- 2** Chocolate affects a dog's heart and nervous system, and a few hundred grams can kill a small dog.
- 3** The cells which make up the antlers of a moose are the fastest growing animal cells in nature.
- 4** Seagulls are heavy in the front and light in the back. When you see them at the beach on a windy day facing the same direction, they are trying to minimize the wind's resistance by facing into the wind.
- 5** Orcas (killer whales) kill sharks by torpedoing up into the shark's stomach from underneath.
- 6** Of the 8 600 species of birds in the world, over half are found in the Amazon River basin.
- 7** Elephants get by on only two hours of sleep a day.
- 8** The elf owl specializes in catching scorpions, which it swallows whole, pincers and all.
- 9** Bats devour as many as 3 000 bugs per night.
- 10** Lemon sharks grow a new set of teeth every 2 weeks.

Knowledge++ Set 11

- 1** Wolf packs could once be found in all European forests, and in the 1400's wolves roamed the streets of Paris.
- 2** Camels have three eyelids to protect themselves from blowing sand.
- 3** A rat can last longer without water than a camel can.
- 4** All clams start out as males; some become females at some point in their lives.
- 5** There are about 5 000 species of coral known. Only about half of them build reefs.
- 6** Unlike most cats, tigers love the water and can easily swim 5 or 6km.
- 7** A woodchuck breathes 2 100 times an hour, but it only breathes 10 times an hour while it is hibernating.
- 8** A small bird, the roadrunner can run as fast as a human sprinter.
- 9** There are about 950 species of bats.
- 10** Spiders have transparent blood.

Knowledge++ Set 12

- 1** An iguana can stay under water for 28 minutes.
- 2** Moles are able to tunnel through 100m of earth in a day.
- 3** Goldfish lose their colour if they are placed in a body of running water, such as a stream.
- 4** Sharks seem to be the only animals that never get sick. As far as is known, they are immune to every known disease including cancer.
- 5** The cheetah is the only cat in the world that can't retract its claws.
- 6** The giant squid is the largest creature without a backbone. It weighs up to 2.5 tonnes and grows up to 18m.
- 7** The harmless Whale Shark, holds the title of largest fish, growing up to 19m.
- 8** The chameleon has several cell layers beneath its transparent skin. These layers are the source of the chameleon's colour change. Some of the layers contain pigments, while others just reflect light to create new colours.
- 9** Mockingbirds can imitate hundreds of sounds, even a cat meowing.
- 10** Elephants can communicate using sounds that are below the human hearing range.

Knowledge++ Set 13

- 1** Certain frogs can be frozen solid then thawed and continue living.
- 2** Certain kinds of insects can live as long as a year after having their head severed.
- 3** The hummingbird is the only bird that can hover and fly straight up, down, or backward.
- 4** Some spiders have as many as eight eyes.
- 5** The Pacific Giant Octopus grows from the size of a pea to a 70kg behemoth potentially 10m across in only 2 years.
- 6** There are more insects in four square km of rural land than there are humans on the entire earth.
- 7** The common housefly beats its wings about 20 000 times per minute.
- 8** The monarch butterfly's sense of taste is about 12 000 times more sensitive than a human's.
- 9** Certain fireflies emit a light so penetrating that it can pass through flesh and wood.
- 10** The black widow spider can devour as many as twenty 'mates' in a single day.

Knowledge++ Set 14

- 1** The largest Great White Shark ever caught measured more than 6 metres and weighed around 10 tonnes.
- 2** Bees have five eyes. There are three small eyes on the top of a bee's head and two larger ones in front.
- 3** Crickets hear through their knees.
- 4** Scientists have performed brain surgery on cockroaches.
- 5** The largest Great White Shark ever caught measured more than 6 metres and weighed around 10 tonnes.
- 6** Ants don't sleep.
- 7** Worms can have up to ten hearts.
- 8** Butterflies taste with their hind feet.
- 9** The hummingbird, the loon, the swift, the kingfisher, and the grebe are all birds that cannot walk.
- 10** Moths have no stomach.

Knowledge++ Set 15

- 1** The electric eel can discharge 400 volts of electricity.
- 2** Out of 20 000 species of bees, only 4 make honey.
- 3** A typical Mayfly only lives one day.
- 4** If two flies were left to reproduce without predators or other limitations for one year, the resulting mass of flies would be the size of the Earth.
- 5** The dragonfly has about 30,000 lenses covering the retina of its eye, and thus sees many, many images where we see only one.
- 6** There are more than 6 billion dust mites in a typical bed.
- 7** Scientists discover as many as 10 000 new species of insects every year.
- 8** The male penguin incubates the single egg laid by his mate. He does not eat during this two month period.
- 9** Tarantulas do not use muscles to move their legs. They control the amount of blood pumped into them to extend and retract their legs.
- 10** The venom of a female black widow spider is more potent than that of a rattlesnake.

Knowledge++ Set 16

- 1** The largest animal ever seen alive was a 170-tonne female blue whale.
- 2** Australian termites have been known to build mounds 6 metres high and 30 metres wide.
- 3** Only female mosquitoes bite. Females need the protein from blood to produce their eggs.
- 4** Orchids have the smallest seeds. It takes more than 1.25 million seeds to weigh 1 gram.
- 5** Peanuts are beans.
- 6** Plants that need to attract moths for pollination are generally white or pale yellow, to be better seen when the light is dim. Plants that depend on butterflies, such as the poppy or the hibiscus, have more colourful flowers.
- 7** The blood of mammals is red, the blood of insects is yellow, and the blood of lobsters is blue.
- 8** The largest single flower is the Rafflesia or “corpse flower”. They are about one metre in diameter.
- 9** Plant life in the oceans makes up about 85 percent of all the greenery on the Earth.
- 10** The California redwood trees, coast redwood and giant sequoia, are the tallest and largest living organisms on earth.

Knowledge++ Set 17

- 1** The sex of a horse can be told by its teeth. Most males have 40, females have 36.
- 2** The oldest known living thing in existence is a bristlecone pine tree in the White Mountains of California, dated to be aged 4 600 years old.
- 3** The rose family of plants, in addition to flowers, gives us apples, pears, plums, cherries, almonds, peaches and apricots.
- 4** The world's tallest grass, which has sometimes grown 40m or more, is bamboo.
- 5** Wheat is the world's most widely cultivated plant; it is grown on every continent except Antarctica.
- 6** The squirting cucumber, when brushed by a passer-by, ejects its seeds and a stream of poisonous juice that stings the skin.
- 7** Leonard da Vinci was the first to record that the number of rings in the cross section of a tree trunk revealed its age.
- 8** The Siberian larch accounts for more than 20% of all the world's trees.
- 9** Bamboo can grow a metre in a 24 hour period.
- 10** A plant in central Australia, the candlesticks of the sun, grows a candle-shaped flower once every 7 years.

Knowledge++ Set 18

- 1** Owls have eyeballs that are tubular in shape; because of this, they cannot move their eyes.
- 2** Baby giraffes can be two metres tall at birth.
- 3** The Kiwi, national bird of New Zealand, can't fly. It lives in a hole in the ground, is almost blind, and lays only one egg each year. Despite this, it has survived for more than 70 million years.
- 4** Bananas are actually herbs. Bananas die after fruiting, like all herbs do.
- 5** The panther is really a black leopard.
- 6** Oak trees do not have acorns until they are fifty years old or older.
- 7** Oranges, lemons and watermelons are berries.
- 8** The average adult male ostrich, the world's largest living bird, weighs up to 155 kg.
- 9** Elephant tusks grow throughout an elephant's life and can weigh 100kg.
- 10** Snails produce a colourless, sticky discharge that forms a protective carpet under them as they travel along. The discharge is so effective that they can crawl along the edge of a razor without cutting themselves.

Knowledge++ Set 19

- 1** Babies are born with 300 bones, but by adulthood we have only 206 in our bodies.
- 2** A sneeze can exceed the speed of 160 kph.
- 3** By the time you turn 70, your heart will have beat some two-and-a-half billion times (based on an average of 70 beats per minute).
- 4** Every person has a unique tongue print.
- 5** Every square cm of the human body has an average of 5 million bacteria on it.
- 6** Fingernails grow faster than toenails.
- 7** Fingerprints serve a function –they provide traction for the fingers to grasp things.
- 8** Humans shed and re-grow outer skin cells about every 27 days –almost 1,000 new skins in a lifetime.
- 9** Humans have 46 chromosomes, peas have 14 and crayfish have 200.
- 10** The human body's largest internal organ is the small intestine at an average length of 5 metres.

Knowledge++ Set 20

- 1** The brain requires 25 percent of all oxygen used by the body.
- 2** The human brain is about 85% water.
- 3** Human thigh bones are stronger than concrete.
- 4** The left lung is smaller than the right lung to make room for the heart.
- 5** The largest human organ is the skin.
- 6** The human body has over 600 muscles, 40% of the body's weight.
- 7** The average human body contains enough iron to make a 7cm nail, enough carbon to make 900 pencils and enough fat to produce 7 bars of soap.
- 8** Sumerians (from 5000 BC) thought that the liver made blood and the heart was the centre of thought.
- 9** The human brain stops growing at the age of 18.
- 10** It takes an interaction of 72 different muscles to produce human speech.

Knowledge++ Set 21

- 1** The Neanderthal's brain was bigger than ours is.
- 2** The only bone in the human body not connected to another is the hyoid, located at the base of the tongue.
- 3** The only time the human population declined was in the years following 1347, the start of the epidemic of the plague 'Black Death' in Europe.
- 4** There are 72 km of nerves in a human's skin.
- 5** It is not known why people blush.
- 6** Blindness is commonly caused by diabetes.
- 7** The adult human heart weighs about 280g.
- 8** Three-hundred-million cells die in the human body every minute.
- 9** There are 4 main Blood types: A, B, AB and O and each Blood type is either Rh positive or Rh negative.
- 10** Of the 206 bones in the average human adult's body, 106 are in the hands and feet. (54 in the hands and 52 in the feet)

Knowledge++ Set 22

- 1** An average human scalp has 100 000 hairs.
- 2** By age sixty, most people have lost half of their taste buds.
- 3** Humans shed about 600,000 particles of skin every hour – about 1/2 kg a year. By 70 years of age, an average person will have lost 45 kg of skin.
- 4** The storage capacity of human brain exceeds 4 terabytes (*or 4000 gigabytes*)
- 5** A new born baby breathes five times faster than an adult man.
- 6** The lens of the eye continues to grow throughout a person's life.
- 7** Brain surgery is done with the patient still awake -the brain has no nerves, therefore it has no sensation.
- 8** Females have 500 more genes than males, and because of this are protected from things like colour blindness and haemophilia.
- 9** There are 10 trillion living cells in the human body.
- 10** Your jaw muscle is the most powerful muscle in your body.

Knowledge++ Set 23

- 1** It took 20 000 men 22 years to build the Taj Mahal.
- 2** Astronomer, mathematician, clock-maker, surveyor and almanac editor Benjamin Banneker has been called the “first black man of science.”
- 3** Emir Beysari (1233-1293), an Egyptian of great wealth, drank wine from gold and silver cups, yet he never in all his life used the same cup twice.
- 4** Louis XIV had forty personal wigmakers and almost 1 000 wigs.
- 5** Captain Sarret of France made the first parachute jump from an airplane in 1918.
- 6** Tsar Paul 1 banished soldiers to Siberia for marching out of step.
- 7** Walt Disney, Tom Cruise, Thomas Edison and Leonardo da Vinci are, or were, dyslexic.
- 8** When young and impoverished, Pablo Picasso kept warm by burning his own paintings.
- 9** Napoleon was terrified of cats.
- 10** Shirley Temple made \$1 million by the age of 10.

Knowledge++ Set 24

- 1** George Washington died the last hour of the last day of the last week of the last month of the last year of the 18th century.
- 2** Galileo became totally blind just before his death. This is probably because of his constant gazing at the sun through his telescope.
- 3** Leonardo da Vinci could write with one hand and draw with the other at the same time.
- 4** By age 16, Andre the Giant (whose real name was Andre Russimof) was 208cm tall. He had a rare glandular disorder that made his body continue to grow. Even as he died, his body was still growing.
- 5** Mother Teresa, who devoted her life to the poor in India, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.
- 6** The entertainer Nomsy King thought up his stage name after looking at a 'No Smoking' sign.
- 7** More than 100 descendants of Johann Sebastian Bach have been cathedral organists.
- 8** Charles Dickens worked in a shoe polish factory at age 12.
- 9** In their day, marbles were called 'small bowls' and were as popular with adults as with children.
- 10** Alexander the Great was tutored by Aristotle.

Knowledge++ Set 25

- 1** The only nation whose name begins with an “A”, but doesn’t end in an “A” is Afghanistan.
- 2** Attila the Hun was a dwarf.
- 3** Mao Zedong refused to brush his teeth. Instead, he rinsed his mouth with tea and chewed the leaves. Not surprisingly, his teeth were green.
- 4** Mark Twain first learned to ride a bicycle at age 55.
- 5** Spain’s Queen Isabella (1451-1504) rarely bathed.
- 6** Pepin the Short, King of the Franks from 751 to 768 AD, was just 138cm tall.
- 7** Forty six percent of the world’s water is in the Pacific Ocean.
- 8** Antarctica is the only continent that does not have land areas below sea level.
- 9** La Paz, the capital city of Bolivia is the highest capital in the world, at an elevation of some 4 000m.
- 10** Despite a population of over a billion, China has only about 200 family names (surnames).

Knowledge++ Set 26

- 1** The San Blas Indian women of Panama consider giant noses a mark of great beauty. They paint black lines down the centre of their noses to make them appear longer.
- 2** Only five countries in Europe touch only one other: Portugal, Denmark, San Marino, Vatican City and Monaco.
- 3** The world's largest democracy is India.
- 4** The city of Istanbul straddles two separate continents, Europe and Asia.
- 5** The most remote island in the world is Tristan da Cunha, which is above the sub-Antarctic zone.
- 6** There are 3 900 islands in Japan.
- 7** In Calama, a town in the Atacama Desert of Chile, it has never rained.
- 8** Canada has more lakes than the rest of the world combined.
- 9** In Papua New Guinea there are villages within 8km of each other which speak different languages.
- 10** Without any greenhouse effect, Earth would be cold and lifeless with an average temperature of -17° Celsius.

Knowledge++ Set 27

- 1** The forest of the Canadian Lake District is so dense that during winter the snow stays on top of the trees and the forest floor stays bare.
- 2** In May 1948, Mt. Ruapehu and Mt. Ngauruhoe, both in New Zealand, erupted simultaneously.
- 3** Mongolia is the largest landlocked country.
- 4** The national anthem of the Netherlands, “Het Wilhelmus,” is an ‘acrostichon.’ The first letters of each of the fifteen verses represent the name “Willem Van Nassov.”
- 5** There are more Irish in New York City than in Dublin, Ireland; more Italians in New York City than in Rome, Italy; and more Jews in New York City than in Tel Aviv, Israel.
- 6** The first people to arrive on Iceland were Irish explorers, in 795 A.D.
- 7** South Africa produces two-thirds of the world’s gold.
- 8** The US cities of Los Angeles and San Francisco become 6cm closer together each year because they are on opposite sides of the San Andreas fault.
- 9** The royal house of Saudi Arabia has close to 10 000 princes and princesses.
- 10** The smallest island with country status is Pitcairn at just 4.53 sq km.

Knowledge++ Set 28

- 1** The volume of water in the Amazon River is greater than the next eight largest rivers in the world combined.
- 2** Europe is the only continent without a desert.
- 3** If global warming forecasts are true, the island country of Tuvalu might cease to exist within 100 years.
- 4** A hamlet is a village without a church and a town is not a city until it has a cathedral.
- 5** French was the official language of England for over 600 years.
- 6** As of December 31, 2000, the number of climbers summiting Mt Everest was 1 314, and the number of deaths on the mountain was 167.
- 7** Damascus, Syria, was flourishing two thousand years before Rome was founded in 753 BC, making it the oldest continuously inhabited city in existence.
- 8** About one-tenth of the earth's surface is permanently covered with ice.
- 9** In 1771 the kingdom of Poland was larger in area than any other European country except Russia and had a bigger population than any other European country except France.
- 10** More water flows over Niagara Falls every year than over any other waterfall on earth.

Knowledge++ Set 29

1 The Arctic Ocean is the world's smallest ocean. It is mostly covered by solid ice, ice floes, and icebergs.

2 The first city to reach a population of 1 million people was Rome, Italy in 133 BC. Today, there are over 300 cities in the world that boast a population in excess of 1 million.

3 The Great Lakes of North America are the largest group of freshwater lakes in the world; they contain 27 quadrillion litres of fresh water, 1/5 of the world's fresh surface water.

4 The largest desert in the world is the Sahara.

5 The only continent without snakes is Antarctica.

6 The original name of Los Angeles was El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de los Angeles del rio Porciuncula, translating into: *The Village of our Lady the Queen of the Angels of the Porciuncula River.*

7 The Pantheon is the largest building from ancient Rome that survives intact.

8 The world's smallest independent country is the Vatican, with a population of about 1 000.

9 The Vatican's Swiss Guard still wear a uniform designed by Michelangelo in the early 16th century.

10 The San Diego Zoo has the largest collection of animals in the world.

Knowledge++ Set 30

- 1** Hawaii's Mount Waialeale is the wettest place in the world – it rains about 90% of the time, about 1 200 mm per annum.
- 2** The Aztec Indians of Mexico believed turquoise would protect them from physical harm, and so warriors used these green and blue stones to decorate their battle shields.
- 3** More than 5 000 years ago the Chinese discovered how to make silk from silkworm cocoons.
- 4** England's first great industry was wool. Its export had become the nation's largest source of income by the late Middle Ages.
- 5** The custom of exchanging presents at Christmas originated with the Romans.
- 6** While performing her duties as queen, Cleopatra sometimes wore a fake beard.
- 7** New Zealand was the first place in the world to allow women to vote.
- 8** The 16th century astronomer Tycho Brahe lost his nose in a duel with one of his students over a mathematical computation. He wore a silver replacement nose for the rest of his life.
- 9** After being forced to state in public that the earth does not rotate, Galileo is said to have muttered under his breath, "But it does move."
- 10** Egypt's Hatshepsut was the first female pharaoh.

Knowledge++ Set 31

- 1** The Aztec Indians in Central America used animal blood mixed with cement as a mortar for their buildings, many of which still remain standing today.
- 2** Until the 19th century, solid blocks of tea were used as money in Siberia.
- 3** Houses were first numbered in Paris in 1463. In Britain, numbering did not appear until 1708, on a street in London's Whitechapel area.
- 4** In ancient Greece, courtesans wore sandals with nails studded into the sole so that their footprints would leave the message "Follow me".
- 5** In 1974 there were 90 tornadoes in the USA in one day.
- 6** The first Eskimo Bible was printed in Copenhagen in 1744.
- 7** The pharaohs of ancient Egypt wore garments made with thin threads of beaten gold. Some fabrics had up to 200 gold threads per one centimetre of cloth.
- 8** In the late 1700s, fashionable women of Paris never went out in stormy weather without a lightning rod attached to their hats.
- 9** The ancient Etruscans painted women white and men red in the wall paintings they used to decorate tombs.
- 10** Marco Polo was born on the Croatian island of Korcula.

Knowledge++ Set 32

- 1** King Tutankhamen's tomb contained 4 coffins, one of which was made from over 1 tonne of gold.
- 2** In the 15th century, scholars in China compiled a set of encyclopaedias that contained 11 095 volumes.
- 3** Slaves under the last emperors of China wore pigtails so they could be picked out quickly.
- 4** It is estimated that a few years after Columbus discovered America, the Spaniards killed off 1.5 million Indians.
- 5** China was the first country to introduce paper money (in 812), but it wasn't until 1661 that a bank (Banco-Sedlar of Sweden) issued banknotes.
- 6** Spartacus led the revolt of the Roman slaves and gladiators in 73 A.D.
- 7** At the height of its power, in 400 BC, the Greek city of Sparta had 25 000 citizens and 500 000 slaves.
- 8** In 1801, 20 percent of the people in the U.S. were slaves.
- 9** Acupuncture was first used as a medical treatment in 2700 BC by Chinese emperor Shen-Nung.
- 10** Armoured knights raised their visors to identify themselves when they rode past their king. This custom has become the modern military salute.

Knowledge++ Set 33

- 1** Everyone in the Middle Ages believed -as Aristotle had- that the heart was the seat of intelligence.
- 2** The ancient Egyptians slept on pillows made of stone.
- 3** The Black Death reduced the population of Europe by one third in the period from 1347 to 1351.
- 4** The shortest war on record was fought between Zanzibar and England in 1896. Zanzibar surrendered after 38 minutes.
- 5** The Titanic was the first ship to use the SOS signal. It was adopted as the international signal for distress in 1912, and the Titanic struck the iceberg in April of that year.
- 6** The total number of Americans killed in the Civil War is greater than the combined total of Americans killed in all other wars.
- 7** The parachute was invented by Leonardo da Vinci in 1515.
- 8** The windmill originated in Iran in AD 644. It was used to grind grain.
- 9** The shoelace was invented in England in 1790. Until then shoes were fastened with buckles.
- 10** In 1835 Henry Burden developed the first machine for manufacturing horseshoes.

Knowledge++ Set 34

- 1** During one four-year period, Thomas Edison obtained 300 patents, or one every five days.
- 2** You could milk about six cows per hour by hand, but with modern machinery, you can milk up to 100 cows per hour.
- 3** A diamond will not dissolve in acid. The only thing that can destroy it is intense heat.
- 4** A lump of pure gold the size of a matchbox can be flattened into a sheet the size of a tennis court.
- 5** Absolutely pure gold is so soft that it can be molded with the hands.
- 6** The largest ever gold nugget found weighed 78kg.
- 7** The only rock that floats in water is pumice.
- 8** The most abundant metal in the Earth's crust is aluminium.
- 9** The Chinese were using aluminium to make things as early as 300 AD. Western civilization didn't rediscover aluminium until 1827.
- 10** Diamond is the hardest naturally occurring substance.

Knowledge++ Set 35

- 1** Sound travels 15 times faster through steel than through the air.
- 2** A kilogram of gold can be stretched into a wire 75km long.
- 3** Time slows down near a black hole; inside it stops completely.
- 4** Natural gas has no odour. The smell is added artificially so that leaks can be detected.
- 5** In the 1600's, thermometers were filled with brandy instead of mercury.
- 6** Rain contains vitamin B12.
- 7** A day on the planet Mercury is twice as long as its year. Mercury rotates very slowly but revolves around the sun in slightly less than 88 days.
- 8** A cosmic year is the amount of time it takes the sun to revolve around the centre of the Milky Way, about 225 million years.
- 9** Stalagmites and stalactites are mineral deposits in caves; stalagmites grow upward and stalactites grow downward.
- 10** The air we breathe is 78% nitrogen, 21.5% oxygen and 0.5% other gases.

Knowledge++ Set 36

- 1** A full moon always rises at sunset.
- 2** The hardness of ice is similar to that of concrete.
- 3** If the world were tilted one degree more either way, the planet would not be habitable because the area around the equator would be too hot and the poles would be too cold.
- 4** The opposite of a “vacuum” is a “plenum.”
- 5** Clouds fly higher during the day than the night.
- 6** The earth is Terra; the sun is Sol. This is where we get the words “extraterrestrial” and “solar”.
- 7** Earth’s atmosphere is, proportionally, thinner than the skin of an apple.
- 8** The planet Venus has the longest day.
- 9** Because of the salt content of the Dead Sea, it is difficult to dive below its surface.
- 10** Carolyn Shoemaker has discovered 32 comets and approximately 800 asteroids.

Knowledge++ Set 37

- 1** If you stand in the bottom of a well, you would be able to see the stars even in the daytime.
- 2** Bacteria, the tiniest free-living cells, are so small that a single drop of liquid contains as many as 50 million of them.
- 3** At any given time, there are 1 800 thunderstorms in progress over the earth's atmosphere.
- 4** Because of the rotation of the earth, an object can be thrown farther if it is thrown west.
- 5** The fastest moon in our solar system circles Jupiter once every seven hours, travelling at 11 000 kph.
- 6** The planet Saturn has a density lower than water. If there was a bathtub large enough to hold it, Saturn would float.
- 7** Out of all the senses, smell is most closely linked to memory.
- 8** Mercury is the only metal that is liquid at room temperature.
- 9** A temperature of 70 million degrees Celsius was generated at Princeton University, USA, in 1978. This was during a fusionism experiment and is the highest human-made temperature ever.
- 10** Travelling at the speed of 300 000 km per second, light take 6 hours to travel from Pluto to the earth.

Knowledge++ Set 38

- 1** Blood is 6 times thicker than water.
- 2** A car travelling at a constant speed of 100 kph would take about 45 million years to reach the nearest star (other than our sun), Proxima Centauri.
- 3** To an observer standing on Pluto, the sun would appear no brighter than Venus appears in our evening sky.
- 4** Dissolved salt makes up 3.5% of the oceans.
- 5** Glaciers store about 75% of the world's freshwater.
- 6** The pressure at the centre of the Earth is 4 000 tonnes per square cm.
- 7** Each day tonnes of meteoric dust settles on Earth.
- 8** About 500 meteorites hit the Earth each year. The largest known meteorite was found at Grootfontein in Namibia, south-west Africa, in 1920. It is 2.75 m long and 2.43 m wide.
- 9** According to experts, large caves tend to “breathe”; they inhale and exhale great quantities of air when the barometric pressure on the surface changes, and air rushes in or out.
- 10** There are ten trillion trillion atoms in one kg of iron.

Knowledge++ Set 39

- 1** In South Africa, termites are often roasted and eaten by the handful, like popcorn.
- 2** The only food that does not spoil is honey.
- 3** Rice is the main food for half of the people of the world.
- 4** Flamingo tongues were a common delicacy at Roman feasts.
- 5** There are more than 7 000 varieties of apples grown in the world.
- 6** Carrots were first grown as a medicine not a food. The Ancient Greeks called carrots “karoto”.
- 7** A sphygmomanometer measures blood pressure.
- 8** If the sun stopped shining suddenly, it would take eight minutes for people on earth to be aware of the fact.
- 9** During a severe windstorm or rainstorm the Empire State Building in New York City may sway more than a metre to either side.
- 10** The three primary colours are red, yellow and blue; the three secondary colours are green, orange and purple.

Knowledge++ Set 40

- 1** A typical lightning bolt is 5 to 10 cm wide and 3 km long.
- 2** More than 99.9% of all the animal species that have ever lived on earth were extinct before the coming of humans.
- 3** On dry, windy days, pollen can travel up to 800 kilometres.
- 4** Seventy percent of house dust is made up of dead skin flakes.
- 5** The average iceberg weighs 20 000 000 tonnes.
- 6** It would take more than 150 years to drive a car to the sun.
- 7** If the Earth was smooth, the ocean would cover the entire surface to a depth of 4 000 metres.
- 8** The Earth experiences 50 000 earthquakes a year.
- 9** A car operates at maximum economy, petrol-wise, at speeds between 40 and 55 kilometres per hour.
- 10** Jupiter's moon Ganymede is the largest moon in the Solar System, and is larger than the planets Mercury and Pluto.

Knowledge++ Set 41

- 1** Olympus Mons on Mars is the largest volcano in our solar system.
- 2** On February 7, 1969 a meteorite weighing over 1 tonne fell in Chihuahua, Mexico.
- 3** The first human-made object to circle the earth was Sputnik I, launched in 1957.
- 4** The International Space Station weighs about 500 tonnes and is the same size as a football field.
- 5** The three most recently discovered planets were Uranus in 1781, Neptune in 1846, and Pluto in 1930.
- 6** Uranus is the only planet that rotates on its side.
- 7** The average depth of the oceans is 4 km. The deepest point lies in the Mariana Trench, 10.9 km down. As a comparison, Mount Everest is only 8.8 km high.
- 8** Clans of long ago that wanted to get rid of their unwanted people without killing them used to burn their houses down – hence the expression “to get fired.”
- 9** The initials for morning and evening are based on Latin words— ante meridiem and post meridiem. “Ante,” means “before” and “post” means “after.” “Meridiem” means “noon.”
- 10** A horologist measures time.

Knowledge++ Set 42

- 1** There are roughly 6 500 spoken languages in the world today. However, about 2 000 of those languages have fewer than 1 000 speakers. The most widely spoken language in the world is Mandarin Chinese. There are 885 000 000 people in China who speak that language.
- 2** A “Blue Moon” is the 2nd full moon in a calendar month.
- 3** No word in the English language rhymes with month, orange, silver or purple.
- 4** “Rhythms” is the longest English word without the normal vowels, a, e, i, o, or u.
- 5** The “O” when used as a prefix in Irish surnames means “descendant of.”
- 6** The study of insects is called entomology; the study of word origins is called etymology.
- 7** The word “set” has the highest number of separate definitions in the English Language (192 definitions according to the Oxford English Dictionary).
- 8** The word “karate” means “empty hand.”
- 9** The word ‘news’ did not come about because it was the plural of ‘new.’ It came from the first letters of the words North, East, West and South. This was because information was being gathered from all different directions.
- 10** OK stands for oll korrekt, a misspelling of all correct.

Knowledge++ Set 43

1 Basketball was invented in 1891 by James Naismith. He set out to invent a game to occupy students between the football and baseball seasons.

2 Until 1967 it wasn't illegal for Olympic athletes to use drugs to enhance their performance during competition.

3 Michael Sangster, who played in the 1960s, had tennis' fastest serve, once clocked at 240 kph.

4 Since 1896, the beginning of the modern Olympics, only Greece and Australia have participated in every Games.

5 The five Olympic rings represent the continents.

6 The heaviest sumo wrestler ever recorded weighed in at 245 kg.

7 Because of heavy traffic congestion, Julius Caesar banned all wheeled vehicles from Rome during daylight hours.

8 In 4000 BC Egypt, men and women wore glitter eye shadow made from the crushed shells of beetles.

9 The first personal computer, the Apple II, went on sale in 1977.

10 The first toothbrush with bristles was developed in China in 1498. Bristles were taken from hogs at first, and later from horses.

Knowledge++ Set 44

- 1** Laser stands for “light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation.” Developed 1950s – 1960s.
- 2** Insulin was discovered in 1922 by Sir Frederick Banting and Dr. Charles Best.
- 3** Penicillin was first produced in a laboratory in 1946.
- 4** A person with hexadactylism has six fingers or six toes on one or both hands and feet.
- 5** About 10% of the world’s population is left-handed.
- 6** Midgets and dwarfs almost always have normal-sized children, even if both parents are midgets or dwarfs.
- 7** The average person walks the equivalent of twice around the world in a lifetime.
- 8** The vocabulary of the average adult consists of 5 000 to 6 000 words.
- 9** You share your birthday with at least nine million other people around the world.
- 10** The number 4 is the only number that has the same number of letters in its name as its meaning.

Knowledge++ Set 45

- 1** Ancient Roman statues were made with detachable heads, so that one head could be removed and replaced by another.
- 2** If a person counted at the rate of 100 numbers a minute and kept counting for eight hours a day, five days a week, it would take a little over 4 weeks to count to one million and just over 80 years to reach a billion.
- 3** The numbers on opposite sides of a die always add to 7.
- 4** In the Greek alphabet “X” is the first letter for the word Christ, “Xristos.” Xmas means “Christ’s mass.”
- 5** There are six words in the English language with the letter combination “uu.” Muumuu, vacuum, continuum, duumvirate, duumvir and residuum.
- 6** Telephone is derived from two Greek words, tele + phone, meaning far off voice or sound. (tele=far off + phone=voice or sound).
- 7** The difference between a “millennium” and a “chiliad”? None. Both words mean “a period of one thousand years”, the former from Latin, the later from Greek.
- 8** “Almost” is the longest word in the English language with all the letters in alphabetical order.
- 9** A “clue” originally meant a ball of thread. This is why one is said to “unravel” the clues of a mystery.
- 10** ‘Fortnight’ is a contraction of ‘fourteen nights’.

Knowledge++ Set 46

- 1** The word “puppy” comes from the French poupee, meaning “doll.”
- 2** The stress in Hungarian words always falls on the first syllable.
- 3** German is considered the sister language of English.
- 4** “E” is the most frequently used letter in the English alphabet, “Q” is the least.
- 5** The abbreviation e.g. stands for “Exempli gratia”, or “For example.”
- 6** Xenophobia is the fear of strangers or foreigners.
- 7** Graffito is the little-used singular of the much used plural word graffiti.
- 8** The English word pyjamas has its origin in the Persian language. It is a combination of the Persian words pa (leg) and jamah (garment).
- 9** “I am” is the shortest complete sentence in the English language.
- 10** The English-language alphabet originally had only 24 letters. One missing letter was J, which was the last letter to be added to the alphabet. The other latecomer to the alphabet was U.

Knowledge++ Set 47

1. Henry Waterman, of New York, invented the elevator (lift) in 1850. He intended it to transport barrels of flour.
2. The first words that Thomas Edison spoke into the phonograph were, “Mary had a little lamb.”
3. Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in the 1450’s, and the first book to ever be printed was the Bible. It was, however, in Latin rather than English.
4. In 1916, Jones Wister of Philadelphia, USA, invented a rifle for shooting around corners. It had a curved barrel and periscopic sights.
5. Scissors were invented by Leonardo Da Vinci.
6. A device invented as a primitive steam engine by the Greek engineer Hero, about the time of the birth of Christ, is used today as a rotating lawn sprinkler.
7. The Chinese invented spectacles. Marco Polo reported seeing many pairs worn by the Chinese as early as 1275. This was 500 years before lens grinding became an art in the West.
8. It has been determined that less than one patented invention in a hundred makes any money for the inventor.
9. Because Napoleon believed that armies marched on their stomachs, he offered a prize in 1795 for a practical way of preserving food. The prize was won by a French inventor, Nicholas Appert. What he devised was canning. It was the beginning of the canned food industry of today.
10. The hypodermic needle was invented in 1853. It was initially used for giving injections of morphine as a painkiller. Physicians mistakenly believed that morphine would not be addictive if it by-passed the digestive tract.

Knowledge++ Set 48

1. Ostriches are often not taken seriously. They can run faster than horses, and the males can roar like lions.
2. Sloths take two weeks to digest their food.
3. Sharks and rays are the only animals known to man that don't get cancer. Scientists believe this has something to do with the fact that they don't have bones, but cartilage.
4. Young beavers stay with their parents for the first two years of their lives before going out on their own.
5. Skunks can accurately spray their smelly fluid as far as three metres.
6. The platypus can store as many as six hundred worms in the pouches of its cheeks.
7. Human birth control pills work on gorillas.
8. Cats sleep up to eighteen hours a day, but never quite as deep as humans. Instead, they fall asleep quickly and wake up intermittently to check to see if their environment is still safe.
9. Cats often rub up against people and furniture to lay their scent and mark their territory. They do it this way, as opposed to the way dogs do it, because they have scent glands in their faces.
10. The odds of seeing three albino deer at once are one in seventy-nine billion, yet one man in Wisconsin, USA, took a picture of three albino deer in the woods.

Knowledge++ Set 49

- 1** The biggest members of the cat family are Siberian and Bengal tigers, which can reach 280kg.
- 2** The average bird needs to fly at slightly below 18kph to remain aloft in flight.
- 3** The adult male ostrich, the world's largest living bird, weighs up to 155kg.
- 4** The world's fastest reptile is the spiny-tailed iguana of Costa Rica. It can run at almost 35kph.
- 5** Minnows have teeth in their throat.
- 6** There are 1 600 known species of starfish.
- 7** The Bateleur eagle of Africa hunts over a territory of around 600 square kilometres a day.
- 8** Penguins can jump almost 2 metres in the air.
- 9** An elephant's trunk is used for touching, grasping, sucking, spraying, smelling, and striking.
- 10** The bones of a pigeon weigh less than its feathers.

Knowledge++ Set 50

- 1** If a starfish is cut into pieces each piece will grow into a completely new starfish.
- 2** An albatross can sleep while it flies.
- 3** A horse eats seven times its own weight each year.
- 4** A woodpecker can peck twenty times a second.
- 5** An adult lion's roar can be heard up to 8km away.
- 6** A camel can lose up to 30 percent of its body weight in perspiration and continue to cross the desert.
- 7** The flying gurnard, a fish, swims in water, walks on land, and flies through the air.
- 8** Certain frogs can be frozen solid then thawed and continue living.
- 9** The flying gurnard, a fish, swims in water, walks on land, and flies through the air.
- 10** The venom of a king cobra could kill 150 people.