

Name: _____

Date: _____

Period: _____

Weekly Reading HW

HW Wk _____

Directions: Read and annotate the passage below. Then answer the questions.

The Science of ‘Paying It Forward’

One morning in December of 2012, at the drive-through window of a Tim Horton’s coffee shop in Canada, a customer paid for her order and then picked up the tab for the stranger in the car behind her. Then that customer paid the bill for the following customer — and so on, for the next 226 customers, in a three-hour sequence of spontaneous generosity. It turns out that such “pay it forward” chains are not unheard-of at restaurant drive-throughs. Last year, a Chick-fil-A in Houston experienced a 67-car chain.

Why do these things happen? One possibility is that generosity among strangers can be contagious. According to this theory, if you receive or observe an act of help, you become more likely to help others, even if your own action won’t be directly reciprocated. Rather than repay someone for helping, you “pay it forward.”

In recent years, scientists have conducted experiments demonstrating that the effect of a single act of kindness can in fact ripple through a social network, setting off chains of generosity that reach far beyond the original act. But whether it is enough to merely witness a generous act, rather than actually benefit from one, has been an open question. In a recent experiment, we studied both possibilities.

For our study, we recruited participants to participate in the Invitation Game. They were informed that they could participate in the game and earn a base payment and a bonus, but only if they received an invitation. Those who received invitations had the opportunity to create one additional anonymous invitation for a stranger if he gave back the bonus and earned only the base payment. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four situations: receiving help (they got an anonymous donated invitation created by another participant); observing help (they witnessed other participants anonymously donating invitations); receiving and observing help; and neither.

What did we find out? The bad news was that the willingness to help suffered from “the bystander effect”: When participants observed a high level of helping, they did not themselves help because they felt that their help was no longer needed. The good news was that receiving help reliably increased the likelihood of being generous toward a stranger, and that those who benefited from generosity were also less susceptible to the bystander effect. Our research suggests that the next time you stop to help a stranger, you may be potentially helping many others downstream.

1. (RST.9-10.2) It can reasonably be inferred that the author of the passage is:
 - a. A person who has been the recipient of help from a stranger
 - b. The researcher who conducted the experiment
 - c. A participant in the experiment that was conducted
 - d. An observer of the “pay it forward” phenomenon

2. (RST.9-10.4) As it is used in the passage, the word *reciprocated* means:
 - a. Awarded
 - b. Returned
 - c. Experienced
 - d. Contacted

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3. (RST.9-10.1) Which of the following is an example of the “pay it forward” phenomenon?
- a. A person leaves a large tip for his server in response to good service.
 - b. A person holds the door for another person, who then holds the door for the next person.
 - c. A person offers another person a loan, expecting to be repaid in the future.
 - d. A person donates to his favorite charity once a year.
4. (RST.9-10.1) Which of the following is NOT one of the results of the study?
- a. When people observed that many others had already been helped, they did not help.
 - b. When people received help, there was a greater chance they helped someone else.
 - c. When people observed others getting help, they joined in and helped them.
 - d. When people received help, they continued to help others, despite how many had already been helped.
5. (RST.9-10.1) What was the purpose of the experiment conducted by the researchers?

6. (RST.9-10.1) In your own words, explain “the bystander effect.”

Adapted from the article, “The Science of ‘Paying it Forward’” by Milena Tsvetkova and Michael Macy for The New York Times, on March 14, 2014.

