

## Reading & Understanding Nonfiction

**Directions: COMPLETE THE MARGIN NOTES AND THE POST READING QUESTIONS**

**Margin Notes:**

- Step 1: **Number** the paragraphs
- Step 2: Read and annotate in the margin
  - **Chunk** the paragraphs and **summarize** the main idea.
  - **Ask questions** you have that show what you are **wondering** about as you read.
  - Make notes that differentiate between **fact** and **opinion**.
  - Comment on observations about how the **writer’s strategies** (organization, word choice, perspective, support) and choices affect the article.
  - **Circle key words** and **underline important ideas** and/or concepts.

**LSD: Lysergic Acid Diethylamide**

**What is LSD?**

LSD is one of the most potent, mood-changing chemicals. It is manufactured from lysergic acid, which is found in the ergot fungus that grows on rye and other grains. It is produced in crystal form in illegal laboratories, mainly in the United States. These crystals are converted to a liquid for distribution. It is odorless, colorless, and has a slightly bitter taste. Known as “acid” and by many other names, LSD is sold on the street in small tablets (“microdots”), capsules or gelatin squares (“window panes”). It is sometimes added to absorbent paper. Occasionally it is sold in liquid form. But no matter what form it comes in, LSD leads the user to the same place—a serious disconnection from reality. LSD users call an LSD experience a “trip,” typically lasting 12 hours or so. When things go wrong, which often happens, it is called a “bad trip,” another name for a living hell.

**What are the risks of LSD?**

The effects of LSD are unpredictable. They depend on the amount taken, the person’s mood and personality, and the surroundings in which the drug is used. Normally, the first effects of LSD are experienced 30 to 90 minutes after taking the drug. Often, the pupils become dilated. The body temperature can become higher or lower, while the blood pressure and heart rate either increase or decrease. Sweating or chills are not uncommon. LSD users often experience loss of appetite, sleeplessness, dry mouth and tremors. Visual changes are among the more common effects—the user can become fixated on the intensity of certain colors. Extreme changes in mood, anywhere from a spaced-out “bliss” to intense terror, are also experienced. The worst part is that the LSD user is unable to tell which sensations are created by the drug and which are part of reality.

Some LSD users experience an intense bliss they mistake for “enlightenment.” Not only do they disassociate from their usual activities in life, but they also feel the urge to keep taking more of the drug in order to re-experience the same sensation. Others experience severe,

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions*

*as I read:*

terrifying thoughts and feelings, fear of losing control, fear of insanity and death, and despair while using LSD. Once it starts, there is often no stopping a “bad trip,” which can go on for up to 12 hours. In fact, some people never recover from an acid-induced psychosis.

Taken in a large enough dose, LSD produces delusions and visual hallucinations. The user’s sense of time and self changes. Sizes and shapes of objects become distorted, as do movements, colors and sounds. Even one’s sense of touch and the normal bodily sensations turn into something strange and bizarre. Sensations may seem to “cross over,” giving the user the feeling of hearing colors and seeing sounds. These changes can be frightening and can cause panic. The ability to make sensible judgments and see common dangers is impaired. An LSD user might try to step out a window to get a “closer look” at the ground. He might consider it fun to admire the sunset, blissfully unaware that he is standing in the middle of a busy intersection. Many LSD users experience flashbacks, or a recurrence of the LSD trip, often without warning, long after taking LSD. Bad trips and flashbacks are only part of the risks of LSD use. LSD users may manifest relatively long-lasting psychoses or severe depression. Because LSD accumulates in the body, users develop a tolerance for the drug. In other words, some repeat users have to take it in increasingly higher doses to achieve a “high.” This increases the physical effects and also the risk of a bad trip that could cause psychosis.

### **LSD: A short history**

Albert Hofmann, a chemist working for Sandoz Pharmaceutical, synthesized LSD for the first time in 1938, in Basel, Switzerland, while looking for a blood stimulant. However, its hallucinogenic effects were unknown until 1943 when Hofmann accidentally consumed some LSD. It was later found that an oral dose of as little as 25 micrograms (equal in weight to a few grains of salt) is capable of producing vivid hallucinations. Because of its similarity to a chemical present in the brain and its similarity in effects to certain aspects of psychosis, LSD was used in experiments by psychiatrists through the 1940s, '50s and '60s. While the researchers failed to discover any medical use for the drug, the free samples supplied by Sandoz Pharmaceuticals for the experiments were distributed broadly, leading to wide use of this substance.

LSD was popularized in the 1960s by individuals such as psychologist Timothy Leary, who encouraged American students to “turn on, tune in, and dropout.” This created an entire counterculture of drug abuse and spread the drug from America to the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe. Even today, use of LSD in the United Kingdom is significantly higher than in other parts of the world.

While the '60s counterculture used the drug to escape the problems of society, the Western intelligence community and the military saw it as a potential chemical weapon. In 1951, these organizations began a series of experiments. US researchers noted that LSD “is capable of rendering whole groups of people, including military forces, indifferent to their surroundings and situations, interfering with planning and judgment, and

even creating apprehension, uncontrollable confusion and terror.” Experiments in the possible use of LSD to change the personalities of intelligence targets, and to control whole populations, continued until the United States officially banned the drug in 1967. Use of LSD declined in the 1980s, but picked up again in the 1990s. For a few years after 1998 LSD had become more widely used at dance clubs and all-night raves by older teens and young adults. Use dropped significantly in 2000 or so.

## LSD: Lysergic Acid Diethylamide

### Part 1: TAP

1. Write a one sentence **t**opic summary. (Who, What, When, Where, and Why?) **(1 pt)**

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2. Who is the intended **a**udience? **(1 pt)**

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3. What is the author's **p**urpose? **(1 pt)**

- a. Inform
- b. Persuade
- c. Entertain
- d. Describe

### Part 2: Comprehension Questions

4. Why would an author include a personal testimony, such as the one below, within a nonfiction article? **(2pts)**

*“After taking the acid, I imagined that we had driven headon into an 18wheeler and were killed. I could hear the screeching metal, then a dark and evil quiet. I was terrified at this point, I actually thought we were dead . . . For a year I wouldn’t go into any cemetery because I was terrified I would find my own grave.” — Jenny*

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5. LSD “Street Names” include: Dots, Golden Dragon, Looney Toons, Superman **(2 pts)**  
How are “street names” euphemisms? (*ex: passed away vs. died, croaked, bit the dust*) Why do you think drugs are given “street names”?

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