

Trying to understand difficult texts

- What are you going to read about in this text? (Title)
- Is this text going to be about facts or research? (subheading)

Pearly Gems

Would women through history have been so keen on the pearls around their necks if they'd known what was inside? Robert Dunn peels back the layers of this eco-miracle

There is a mystery and preciousness that we attach to pearls, yet despite what some people believe, it has nothing to do with a grain of sand. Pearls, which have long been the treasures of the wealthy, are often the products of dead worms, which remain entombed at the centre of the jewels, minute, translucent and ethereal.

Larval tapeworms drill into the flesh of mussels to use them as intermediate hosts en route to their later hosts, which in most cases are ducks or fish. The mussels' immune systems battle the worms by encircling them in layer after layer of nacre, the same calcium-based material found in the mussels' shells. The invaders suffocate and then rest for eternity encased in these tiny chambers.

- How are pearls made? (introduction and first main paragraph – focus on the words you understand)