

# THE ARTICLE

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2107/210713-happy-faces.html>

If you have ever imagined a face in an inanimate object, your brain is engaged in a process called pareidolia. This is the tendency to see a pattern or meaning in something, where actually there is nothing there. Seeing faces in everyday objects is a common experience. Many of us perceive a smiley face in the clouds, in the froth of a cappuccino, or in an object as mundane as an electrical plug socket. Scientists from the University of Sydney in Australia conducted a study to investigate whether our brain processes these illusory faces in the same way it does with real human faces. Their research suggests there are some similarities in how we recognise both human and "false" faces.

In the study, 17 volunteers looked at a series of illusory and human faces. They had to rate the strength of emotional attachment they felt upon seeing each one. The researchers' conclusion was that the same neural circuitry was involved in determining what was or wasn't a real face. Psychologist David Alais said: "We know these objects are not truly faces, yet the perception of a face lingers." He added: "We end up with...a parallel experience that the object is both a compelling face and an object." Mr Alais said the brain sees two things at once, and that we focus more on the image of a face than the fact it is an object. He added: "The first impression of a face does not give way to the second perception of an object."

Sources: <https://www.sciencealert.com/here-s-why-we-tend-to-see-faces-everywhere-we-look>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jul/07/so-happy-to-see-you-our-brains-respond-emotionally-to-faces-we-find-in-inanimate-objects-study-reveals>  
<https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rspb.2021.0966>

# VOCABULARY MATCHING

## Paragraph 1

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 1. inanimate | a. Not real.  |
| 2. engaged   | b. Not alive, especially not in the manner of animals and humans.         |
| 3. tendency  | c. Become aware or conscious of something; come to realize or understand. |
| 4. common    | d. Participated or become involved in.                                    |
| 5. perceive  | e. Happening, found, or done often; prevalent.                            |
| 6. froth     | f. An inclination toward a particular characteristic or type of behavior. |
| 7. illusory  | g. A mass of small bubbles at the top of liquid.                          |

## Paragraph 2

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 8. attachment    | h. Affection, fondness, or sympathy for someone or something.                    |
| 9. neural        | i. A graphical representation of someone or something.                           |
| 10. psychologist | j. Relating to a nerve or the nervous system.                                    |
| 11. lingers      | k. Creating interest, attention, or admiration in a powerfully irresistible way. |
| 12. parallel     | l. Someone who studies or works with the human mind and its functions.           |
| 13. compelling   | m. Stays in a place longer than necessary because of a reluctance to leave.      |
| 14. impression   | n. Occurring or existing at the same time or in a similar way.                   |

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2107/210713-happy-faces.html>

## 1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

1. Pareidolia is the brain seeing images in inanimate objects. **T / F**
2. The article says seeing faces in everyday objects is not so common. **T / F**
3. The article says many of us see smiley faces in coffee froth. **T / F**
4. Scientists say we recognise real and "false" faces in similar ways. **T / F**
5. Researchers conducted their tests on 170 people. **T / F**
6. The brain used a different neural circuitry when looking at false faces. **T / F**
7. A psychologist says we have a parallel experience with false faces. **T / F**
8. The psychologist says the image of a false face lingers in our mind. **T / F**

## 2. SYNONYM MATCH: (The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                       |               |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1. <b>imagined</b>    | a. fake       |
| 2. <b>pattern</b>     | b. look into  |
| 3. <b>common</b>      | c. image      |
| 4. <b>investigate</b> | d. design     |
| 5. <b>illusory</b>    | e. sequence   |
| 6. <b>series</b>      | f. awareness  |
| 7. <b>attachment</b>  | g. visualised |
| 8. <b>perception</b>  | h. stays      |
| 9. <b>lingers</b>     | i. normal     |
| 10. <b>impression</b> | j. affection  |

## 3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. imagined a face in                        | a. on the image          |
| 2. Seeing faces in everyday                  | b. in the same way       |
| 3. an electrical plug                        | c. and human faces       |
| 4. our brain processes these illusory faces  | d. lingers               |
| 5. Their research suggests there             | e. an inanimate object   |
| 6. volunteers looked at a series of illusory | f. socket                |
| 7. rate the strength of emotional            | g. or wasn't a real face |
| 8. determining what was                      | h. are some similarities |
| 9. the perception of a face                  | i. attachment            |
| 10. we focus more                            | j. objects               |



# MULTIPLE CHOICE - QUIZ

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2107/210713-happy-faces.html>

- 1) What does pareidolia mean we have a tendency to see?
  - a) spots
  - b) a pattern in something
  - c) stars
  - d) a tendency
- 2) What does the article say seeing faces in everyday objects is?
  - a) captivating
  - b) amusing
  - c) perceptive
  - d) a common experience
- 3) In which part of a cappuccino do we see smiley faces in?
  - a) the froth
  - b) the milk
  - c) the bottom
  - d) the cup
- 4) What object does the article refer to as being mundane?
  - a) clouds
  - b) coffee froth
  - c) an electrical plug socket
  - d) everyday objects
- 5) What does the research say there are similarities in?
  - a) human and "false" faces
  - b) how we recognise human and "false" faces
  - c) recognition and "false" faces
  - d) perception and human faces
- 6) How many volunteers took part in the study?
  - a) 77
  - b) 70
  - c) 17
  - d) 7
- 7) What did volunteers have to rate the strength of when looking at faces?
  - a) neural circuitry
  - b) glue
  - c) perceptions
  - d) emotional attachment
- 8) What circuitry was the same when the volunteers looked at faces?
  - a) neural circuitry
  - b) electrical circuitry
  - c) amazing circuitry
  - d) difficult circuitry
- 9) What did the researchers say lingers?
  - a) perception of a face
  - b) a smell
  - c) thoughts
  - d) dreams
- 10) How many things did researchers say we see at once?
  - a) three
  - b) two
  - c) many
  - d) countless things

# HAPPY FACES DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

1. What did you think when you read the headline?
2. What images are in your mind when you hear the word 'happy'?
3. Do you see faces in inanimate objects?
4. What do you think when you see faces in things?
5. What do you think of smiley faces?
6. What other things do you see in inanimate objects?
7. What does a smiley face represent?
8. What do you think of this research?
9. How often do you draw happy faces?
10. What makes you happy?

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# HAPPY FACES DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

11. Did you like reading this article? Why/not?
12. What do you think of when you hear the word 'face'?
13. What do you think about what you read?
14. Does looking at a happy face change your mood?
15. Who is the happiest person you know?
16. Why do cartoons and drawings show inanimate things with happy faces?
17. What makes a happy face look happy?
18. Should people always look happy in photographs?
19. What would make you happier?
20. What questions would you like to ask the researchers?