

Avatar

WORKSHEET A

It would be an understatement to say the science-fiction film *Avatar* has been a success. Released in most countries in December 2009, it has already taken more money at the box office than any other film in history.

For writer and director James Cameron, a 56-year-old Canadian, it is the latest of many triumphs: his previous work includes *Titanic* (1997), previously the world's biggest-earning film, and the first two *Terminator* films.

Set in the year 2154, *Avatar* takes place mostly on Pandora, the moon of a planet in the Alpha Centauri star system, about 4.5 light years from Earth. Film critics have generally been impressed by the detail in which Cameron and his team have imagined this alien world, and the cutting-edge visual effects they have used. Cameron actually began to develop the idea for the film in the mid-1990s, but then kept the project on hold because the necessary visual-effects technology did not exist until recently.

At the heart of the story is the desire by humans to exploit a mineral resource (called unobtainium – a joke by Cameron) on Pandora, which spells danger for the 3-metre-tall, blue-skinned human-like aliens, the Na'vi, who live there. The humans, who cannot breathe the atmosphere of Pandora, set up a mining operation on Pandora that employs soldiers for security. Wanting to find out more about Pandora and its inhabitants, scientists develop 'avatars' – Na'vi bodies modified by human DNA, controlled by the minds of the individual humans whose DNA they share – who will be able to go out and explore the strange but beautiful environment, which includes dinosaur-like animals and jungle-covered mountains floating in the sky.

When the avatar of one of the soldiers, Jake Sully, is attacked by animals and separated from the rest of the group, he is rescued by a young female Na'vi, Neytiri. Jake's avatar is accepted into Neytiri's clan and becomes close to Neytiri herself, but meanwhile the military commander wants Jake to get information, through his avatar, that will help the humans remove the Na'vi from their home and get hold of as much unobtainium as possible.

Conflict is inevitable, not only between the Na'vi and the humans but also for Jake personally. Towards which of the two worlds, human or Na'vi, will he feel greater loyalty?

Cinema audiences can expect a lot of action and emotion before eventually, after 162 minutes, the battle between two very different civilizations reaches its end.

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WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

Here are some simple definitions for words that appear in the text on Worksheet A. Find the words they refer to and fill in the gaps.

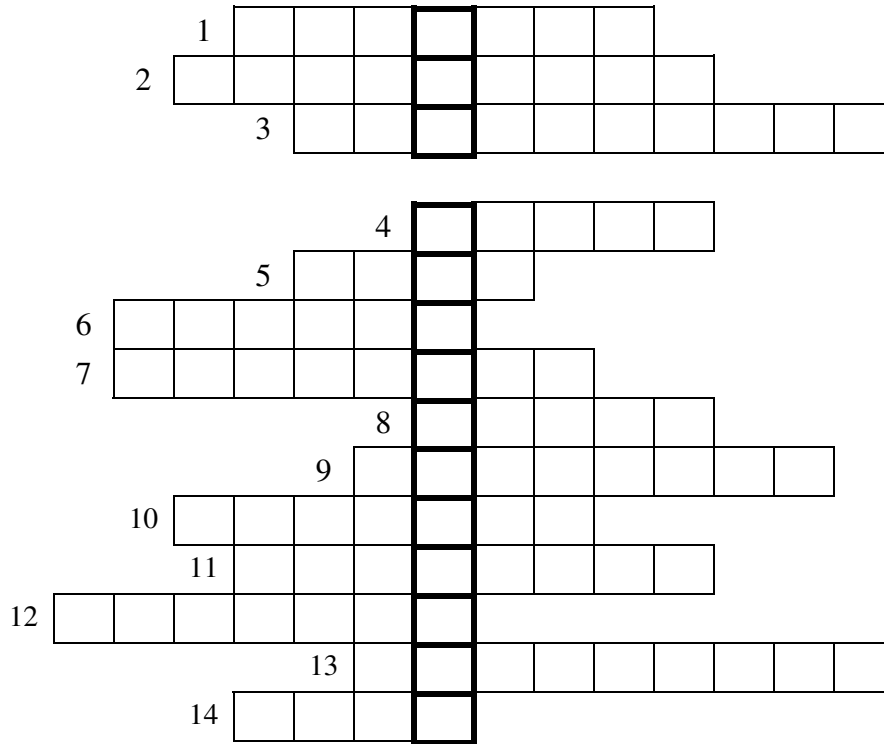
1. To _____ **t** (verb) a natural resource (e.g. oil, trees, water) is to use it in such a way that you gain as much as possible.
2. _____ **t** (noun): a fight, battle or struggle (usually between people or groups, but possibly also inside a person's mind)
3. To _____ **e** (verb) a film, CD, etc, is to make it available for people to watch or buy.
4. _____ **y** (verb): to change something slightly, especially in order to improve it or to make it less extreme
5. _____ **h** (noun): a great victory or success
6. _____ **n** (noun): a large group of families that are related to each other
7. _____ **t** (noun): a statement that makes something seem less good, bad, important, impressive, etc, than it really is
8. _____ **y** (noun): support that you give to somebody or something because of your feelings of duty or love towards them
9. _____ **n** (noun): an action or set of actions that is necessary in order to achieve something
10. _____ **n** (adjective): of or from somewhere in the universe other than Earth
11. An _____ **t** (noun) of somewhere is a person or animal that lives there.
12. _____ **c** (noun): someone whose job is to write or broadcast their opinion of things such as books, films or plays.
13. _____ **n** (verb): to get something you want or need (especially if it is necessary to go through a difficult process)
14. _____ **e** (noun): the place where you buy tickets at a theatre or cinema
15. _____ **e** (adjective) extremely modern and advanced

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 2

Complete the crossword below. If all the words are correct, the name of the Australian actor who plays the soldier Jake Sully in *Avatar* will read from top to bottom.



1. The visual-effects technology used in *Avatar* has not _____ for long.
2. Jake's _____ wants to exploit the unobtainium on Pandora.
3. The _____ of Pandora is different from that on Earth's.
4. James Cameron both _____ and directed the film.
5. Pandora is the _____ of a distant planet.
6. The Na'vi are _____ than humans.
7. Jake is _____ by the Na'vi.
8. The Na'vi are not _____, though in many ways they look similar.
9. Jake is part of a _____ force sent to Pandora from Earth.
10. Until recently, _____ had taken more money at the box office than any other film in history.
11. The alien world in *Avatar* has been _____ in great detail.
12. Technological limitations meant James Cameron couldn't go ahead with the _____ until recently.
13. Each avatar is mentally _____ to the individual human whose DNA they share.
14. Neytiri has blue _____.