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Reverse culture shock

READING

LEVEL
Advanced

NUMBER
C1_2013R_EN

LANGUAGE
English

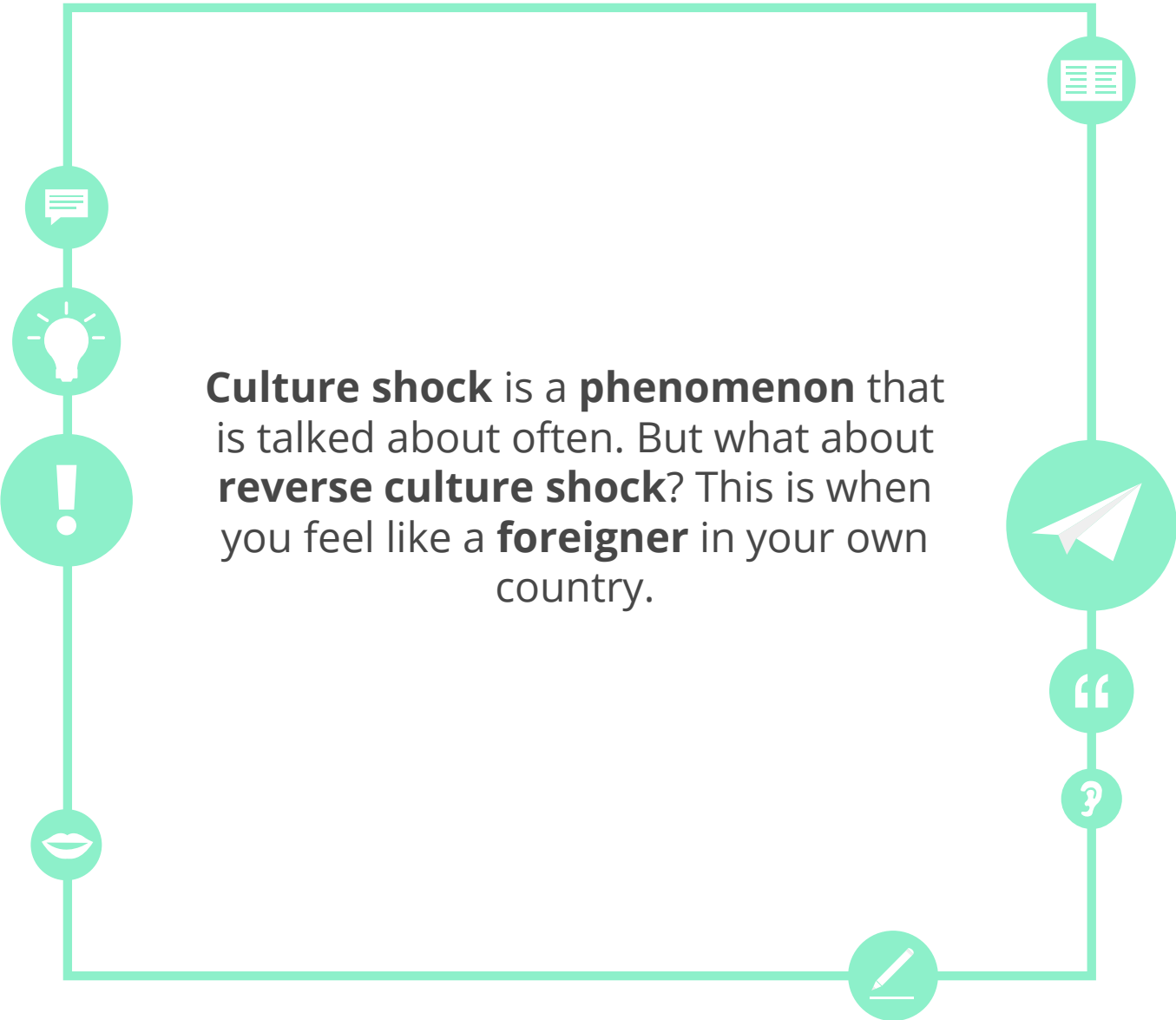




Goals

- Can read and understand a lengthy and complex text about reverse culture shock.
- Can discuss my own experiences of living in a foreign country at length and in detail.



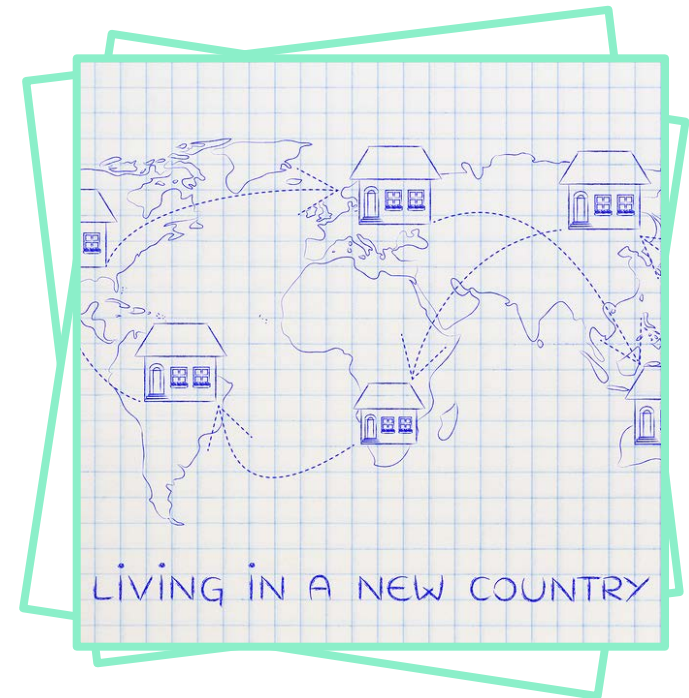


Culture shock is a **phenomenon** that is talked about often. But what about **reverse culture shock**? This is when you feel like a **foreigner** in your own country.



Living abroad

Have you ever **lived, worked** or **studied abroad** for a significant period of time? Would you like to do it in the future?





Discuss with your teacher or classmates

How do you think the cultures in these countries differ from each other?



Japan



England



Brazil



Australia



Getting used to it

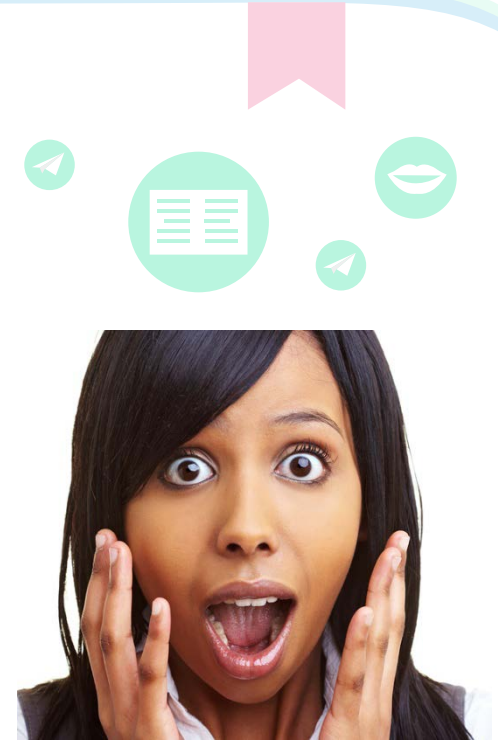
What do you think would be the most difficult thing to get used to in each of the countries on the previous page?





Reverse culture shock

Most of us are familiar with the concept of culture shock: the feeling of **disorientation** we get when we **plunge** ourselves **into** a new environment with habits and customs very different from our own. However, **reverse culture shock** is a more **peculiar phenomenon**. It refers to the feeling of confusion we get when moving back to our own countries after a long period abroad, when the customs and traditions we grew up with suddenly feel foreign to us.

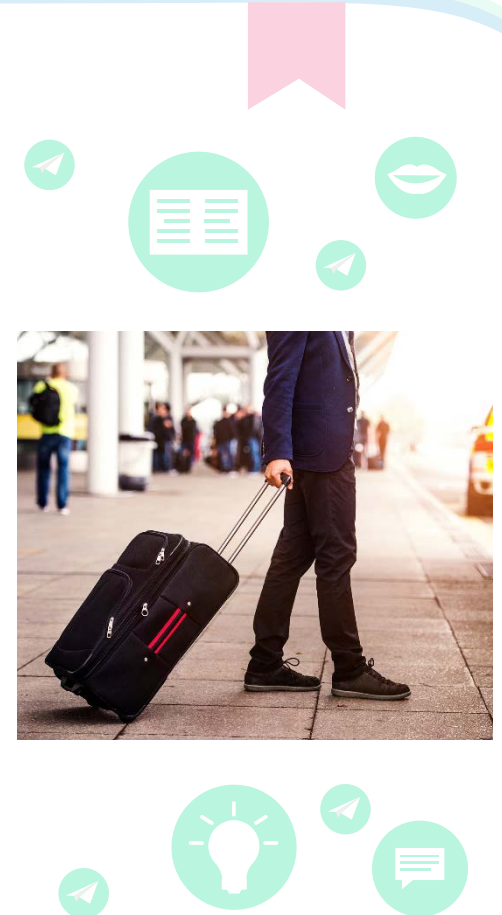




Reverse culture shock

A diverse range of people have reported experiencing reverse culture shock, from students who have been studying abroad to **high-flying** expats that work in multinational companies. It seems that few people who spend any significant period living abroad can escape the feeling of reverse culture shock when returning to their own country.

But how can we feel almost shocked by our own culture? When living abroad, we adapt our behaviour to that of our **host country**, often without even realising that we are doing it. We even learn to think like the locals in our new country, and when we return home we're often shocked by just how much we have changed.





What do these words and phrases from the text mean?

disorientation

to plunge into

peculiar phenomenon

high-flying

host



Brainstorm

Brainstorm different aspects of culture shock with your teacher or classmates. Give specific examples.

The image shows a brainstorming template for culture shock. It features a large water drop shape on the left containing the text "Culture shock". To its right are two smaller water drop shapes labeled "Customs" and "Ideas". The rest of the page is filled with various sizes of empty water drop shapes and small clusters of dots, intended for students to write their own examples. On the right side, there are two circular inset images: the top one shows two hands of different skin tones shaking hands, and the bottom one shows a young woman wearing a red beret and a striped shirt, looking surprised and holding a small card.



Speaking

Answer these questions.



1

Have you ever experienced culture shock or reverse culture shock?

2

Who do you think is most likely to experience reverse culture shock? Business people, students or someone else?

3

How long do you think you need to spend away from your country to experience reverse culture shock?



Reverse culture shock

The feelings people have when re-entering their home country are said to follow a U-shaped curve, which is a similar pattern to how we feel when we move abroad. The initial **elation** at being home **dissipates**, turning into shock and the feeling that you are **out of place** in your own country. This feeling does tend to **wear off** eventually, and most people come out of the other side again. However, the feeling when we are at the bottom of the U-curve can be real despair.





Reverse culture shock



When moving abroad, we are inevitably exposed to different lifestyles, different ways of working and different ways of raising families, and we **absorb** all of this. A UK expat in France quickly picks up kissing on the cheeks as a way of greeting, but doing this at home would be met with **bemusement** at best. An English speaker in many European countries would get used to addressing strangers or those further up the **hierarchy** with formal language - think *Sie* instead of *du* in German for example - but would have to drop this habit at home. And US citizens living in Japan might get used to having a **flawless** public transport system and be horrified to remember that public transport at home **doesn't** quite **measure up**.



What do these words from the text mean?

elation

to dissipate

out of place

to wear off

to absorb

bemusement

hierarchy

flawless

to not measure up



The U-curve

Label this diagram with the feelings of a returning expat. Think of it like a graph: the initial feelings after returning home go on the left and the later feelings go on the right.





Reverse culture shock

Which of the things below do you think would cause the greatest amount of reverse culture shock?

Can you think of any other things? Do you have any personal examples?

kissing as a greeting

formal and informal language

transportation



Your new life

**Do you think it is possible to take any new habits and customs home with you and integrate them into your new life?
Are there any habits from another country that you'd like to integrate into your life?**





Reverse culture shock

Many expats are **critical** when they return home. Having **idealised** their home country while away, they find that it isn't actually all **rosy** back home, and start to criticise the aspects that they believe were done better in their former host country. Expats are often critical not only of **tangible** things, but also **intangible** things, like the focus on materialism in many English-speaking countries.

Those returning home can also feel isolated and disorientated, and can be troubled by **mood swings**. They have changed and so too has their home country. The streets are different, the restaurants they used to go to have changed or disappeared, and their friends have moved on with their lives. People have had babies, got married, got divorced, moved away, and an expat simply can't **slot back in** and **pick up where they left off**.

The **mindset** of an expat changes too. A year of living in Italy will make them **long for** relaxed, drawn out dinners with family and friends, only to be met with disappointment when they realise that no one else in their home country wants to do that.



Reverse culture shock



However, after being back on home soil for a while, we start to **readjust**. **Establishing routines** and **familiarising ourselves** with our own culture again is a process just like adapting to any foreign country, but is one that most returners successfully **accomplish**. It won't be the same as before, but you will feel at home again eventually.



Vocabulary

to idealise

When we **idealise** something, we imagine it as perfect.

rosy

When we think something is **rosy**, we believe there are no problems and everything is well.

tangible

Something **tangible** is something we can touch, like a kiss on the cheek.

intangible

We cannot touch something **intangible**, like the concept of manners.

mood swings

Mood swings are when someone's mood changes from happy to sad or angry in a short space of time.

to slot in

If we **slot in**, it means we fit into a place easily.



Vocabulary

**to pick up
where you left
off**

When you start something again from the same place and in the same way, you **pick up where you left off**.



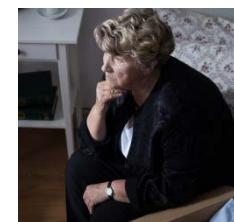
mindset

Your **mindset** is your way of thinking and the ideals that you live by.



to long for

If you **long for** something, you miss it and want it very badly.



to readjust

When we **readjust** to something, we get used to something again and change our behaviour and mindset accordingly.





Fill in the gaps

Fill in the gaps with words from the previous pages.

1. It is often _____ things such as manners and the concept of priorities in life that we miss from other countries.
2. It is impossible to _____ when we return to our country because other people will have changed while we were away.
3. People returning to their country can experience disorientation and _____.
4. We might _____ the country we left, but we do readjust to our old one eventually.





Feelings

Using what you just read, add some more notes to your **U-shaped diagram** on p. 15.



Readjusting

If you moved back to your country after a period abroad, what changes at home do you think it would be hardest to readjust to? Use the examples below to help you think of some changes.



your best friend
having a baby

your favourite
restaurant closing
down



Preparing for reverse culture shock



Do you think companies and universities should **prepare** people for **reverse culture shock** in the same way that they prepare those who are leaving to study abroad or work in a foreign office?

What might such **preparation** look like?



Returning

Think about your own country. You are going to give a short presentation on what a person returning to your country after three years living abroad would need to be aware of.

- Has anything major changed? E.g. new transportation, new laws etc.
- Which customs might they have forgotten about?





Presentation

Give your presentation to your teacher or classmates. Ask them: how would they feel about returning to your country?

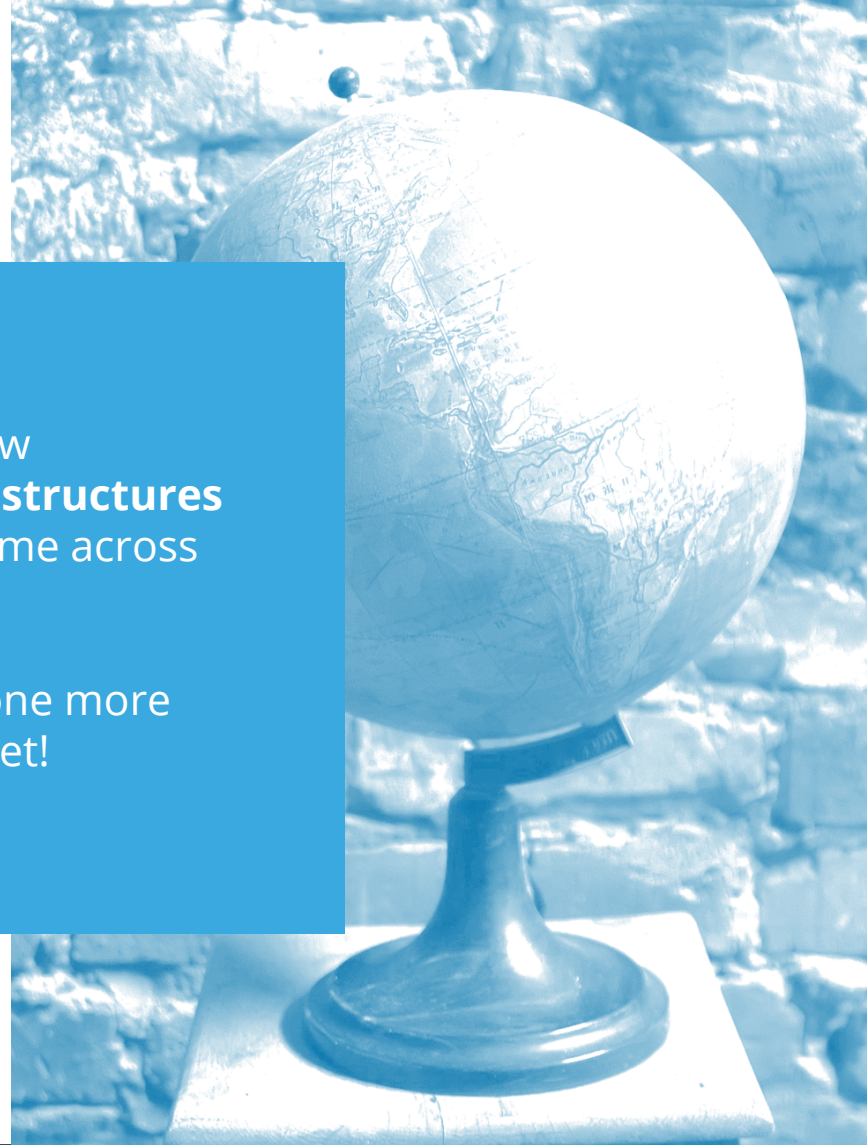




Reflect on this lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

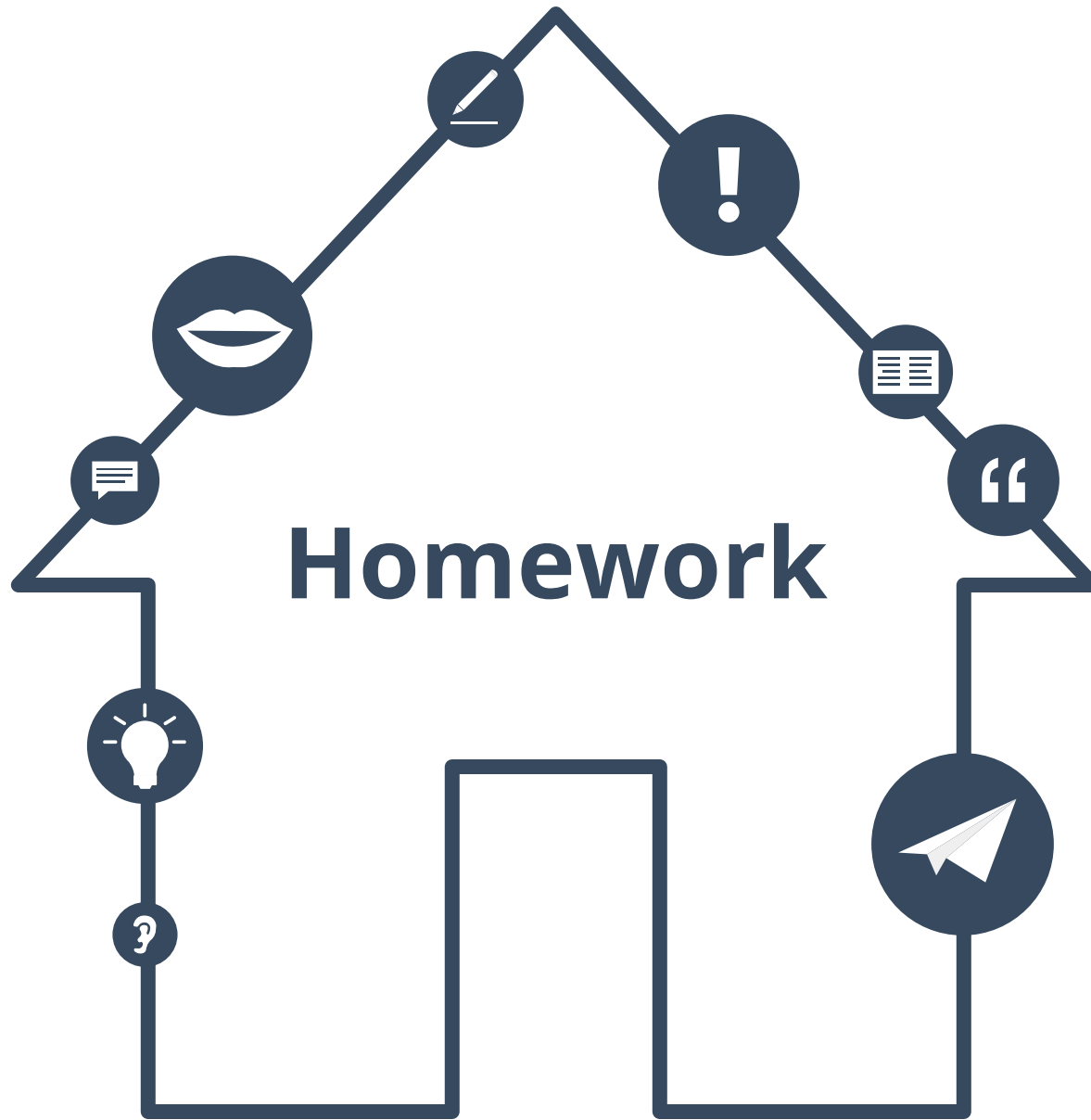
Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





Answer key

Exercise p. 22
1. intangible, 2. pick up where we left off, 3. mood swings, 4. long for





Fill in the gaps with words from the lesson

1. When moving back to your own country, you can get feelings of confusion and _____, as though it were a foreign place.
2. Immediately after returning from abroad, you might have a feeling of _____, but that can quickly _____ into despair.
3. When we return, we might want to _____ into our old lives, but it is often impossible.
4. Your whole _____ changes when you live abroad for a significant period of time.
5. Your attempt to integrate foreign customs into your own country might be met with _____.

dissipate

slot

disorientation

bemusement

elation

mindset



Homework answer key

Exercise p. 32

1. disorientation, 2. elation, dissipate, 3. slot, 4. mindset, 5. bemusement

