

# The Ig Nobels

ANSWERS ON PAGE 45

## 1 Pre-reading

You are going to read an article about some unusual scientific research. Look at the words below. What do you think the research is about?

bra gas mask beer bottles

tequila diamonds

pregnant women

cows names

Icelandic banks

## 2 Reading I

Read the article once to compare your ideas from the Pre-reading activity.

## 3 Reading II

Read the article again and complete the sentences.

- Javier Morales won the \_\_\_\_\_ prize.
- He used a pressure vessel to make \_\_\_\_\_.
- Elena Bodnar won the \_\_\_\_\_ health prize.
- Katherine Whitcome wanted to know why \_\_\_\_\_ women didn't topple over.
- Catherine Douglas and Peter Rowlinson were awarded the \_\_\_\_\_ medicine prize.
- The peace prize went to \_\_\_\_\_ Bollinger.

## 4 Language focus

### Past tenses

Look at this extract from the article, "The chemistry prize went to Javier Morales..." The writer has used the past tense of the verb "to go" ("went"). Transform the following sentences from the Present Simple to the Past Simple.

- She wins the prize.
- They like the game.
- The judges choose the winner.
- They do some research.
- We don't know the answer.

## 5 Discussion

- Which piece of research is the most/least useful? Why?
- Have you heard about any unusual scientific research? What was it?

Awards for unusual scientific research.



A **bra** that can be used as a gas mask. Smashing beer bottles over people's heads. How to turn tequila into diamonds. These are just some of the themes for this year's **Ig Nobel\*** prizes – the most bizarre scientific award ceremony in the world. And the winners are...



The chemistry prize went to Javier Morales from the National University of Mexico for his **research** into how to make diamonds from tequila. He used a **pressure vessel** to do this.

The public health prize was awarded to Elena Bodnar of Illinois, for **patenting** a bra that can be converted into a pair of gas masks. "It was inspired by the Chernobyl nuclear accident," said Bodnar, who is originally from the Ukraine.



The physics prize was awarded to Katherine Whitcome at the University of Cincinnati and colleagues. They looked into the question of why **pregnant** women don't **topple over**.

The veterinary medicine prize was awarded to Catherine Douglas and Peter Rowlinson of Newcastle University's school of agriculture. Their research showed that giving cows names such as Daisy increases their **milk yield**. "It's the **highlight of** my career," said Douglas. "The work **amused** the public, but it also addressed a serious issue about the **welfare** of animals."



The peace prize went to Stephan Bolliger and his colleagues from the University of Bern in Switzerland. They did experiments to discover whether it's more painful to hit someone on the head with a full beer bottle or an empty one. "Empty beer bottles are **sturdier** than full ones," the researchers reported.

And the economics prize went to the directors, executives and auditors of four Icelandic banks (Kaupthing bank, Landsbanki, Glitnir bank and Central Bank of Iceland) for demonstrating that **tiny** banks can be rapidly transformed into **huge** banks, and vice versa."

It's nice to think that this fascinating research is getting the attention it deserves! ✨



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## Ig Nobels

The Ig Nobels are awards for unusual scientific research. The name of the competition (The Ig Nobels) forms an expression that sounds like the English word "ignoble", which is basically the opposite of "noble" (a "noble person" has excellent qualities of character, including honesty, generosity and selflessness).



## GLOSSARY

- a bra** *n*  
a piece of clothing women wear under their shirts/T-shirts, etc.
- research** *n*  
scientific investigation
- a pressure vessel** *n*  
a metal container (usually cylindrical) that can be put under great amounts of pressure
- to patent** *vb*  
to formally register an invention as yours
- pregnant** *adj*  
if a woman is "pregnant", she has a child in her
- to topple over** *phr vb*  
to fall (often because the top part is too heavy)
- a milk yield** *n*  
a cow's "milk yield" is the amount of milk it produces
- the highlight of something** *exp*  
the most important part of something
- to amuse** *vb*  
to make laugh
- welfare** *n*  
health, happiness and well-being
- sturdy** *adj*  
strong; not easily broken
- tiny** *adj*  
very small
- huge** *adj*  
very big