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https://www.100test.com/kao_ti2020/227/2021_2022__E5_A4_A7_E5_AD_A6_E8_8B_B1_E8_c82_227610.htm TextCan you prove that the earth is round? Go ahead and try! Will you rely on your senses or will you have to draw on the opinions of experts?WHY DO WE BELIEVE THAT THE EARTH IS ROUND?George OrwellSomewhere or other I think it is in the preface to saint Joan Bernard Shaw remarks that we are more gullible and superstitious today than we were in the Middle Ages, and as an example of modern credulity he cites the widespread belief that the earth is round. The average man, says Shaw, can advance not a single reason for thinking that the earth is round. He merely swallows this theory because there is something about it that appeals to the twentieth-century mentality. Now, Shaw is exaggerating, but there is something in what he says, and the question is worth following up, for the sake of the light it throws on modern knowledge. Just why do we believe that the earth is round? I am not speaking of the few thousand astronomers, geographers and so forth who could give ocular proof, or have a theoretical knowledge of the proof, but of the ordinary newspaper-reading citizen, such as you or me. As for the Flat Earth theory, I believe I could refute it. If you stand by the seashore on a clear day, you can see the masts and funnels of invisible ships passing along the horizon. This phenomenon can only be explained by assuming that the earth's surface is curved. But it does not follow that the earth is spherical. Imagine another theory called

the Oval Earth theory, which claims that the earth is shaped like an egg. What can I say against it? Against the Oval Earth man, the first card I can play is the analogy of the sun and moon. The Oval Earth man promptly answers that I don't know, by my own observation, that those bodies are spherical. I only know that they are round, and they may perfectly well be flat discs. I have no answer to that one. Besides, he goes on, what reason have I for thinking that the earth must be the same shape as the sun and moon? I can't answer that one either. My second card is the earth's shadow: When cast on the moon during eclipses, it appears to be the shadow of a round object. But how do I know, demands the Oval Earth man, that eclipses of the moon are caused by the shadow of the earth? The answer is that I don't know, but have taken this piece of information blindly from newspaper articles and science booklets. Defeated in the minor exchanges, I now play my queen of trumps: the opinion of the experts. The Astronomer Royal, who ought to know, tells me that the earth is round. The Oval Earth man covers the queen with his king. Have I tested the Astronomer Royal's statement, and would I even know a way of testing it? Here I bring out my ace. Yes, I do know one test. The astronomers can foretell eclipses, and this suggests that their opinions about the solar system are pretty sound. I am, to my delight, justified in accepting their say-so about the shape of the earth. If the Oval Earth man answers what I believe is true that the ancient Egyptians, who thought the sun goes round the earth, could also predict eclipses, then bang goes my ace. I have only one card left: navigation. People can sail ship round the world, and reach

the places they aim at, by calculations which assume that the earth is spherical. I believe that finishes the Oval Earth man, though even then he may possibly have some kind of counter. It will be seen that my reasons for thinking that the earth is round are rather precarious ones. Yet this is an exceptionally elementary piece of information. On most other questions I should have to fall back on the expert much earlier, and would be less able to test his pronouncements. And much the greater part of our knowledge is at this level. It does not rest on reasoning or on experiment, but on authority. And how can it be otherwise, when the range of knowledge is so vast that the expert himself is an ignoramus as soon as he strays away from his own specialty? Most people, if asked to prove that the earth is round, would not even bother to produce the rather weak arguments I have outlined above. They would start off by saying that "everyone knows" the earth to be round, and if pressed further, would become angry. In a way Shaw is right. This is a credulous age, and the burden of knowledge which we now have to carry is partly responsible.

New Words:
preface n. an introduction to a book or speech 前言, 序
gullible a. easily deceived or cheated esp. into a false belief.
credulous 易受骗的. 轻信的
superstitious a. full of superstition.
believing in superstitions 迷信的
credulity n. a tendency to believe too readily 轻信
cite vt. mention as an example. quote (a passage, book, etc.) 举出. 引出
widespread a. found or distributed over a large area 分布广的. 普遍的
advance vt. put or bring forward. offer 提出
appeal vi. please, attract or interest 投合所好. 有感染力. 有吸引力
mentality n. way of thinking, outlook. mental power or capacity 心

理,思想.脑力exaggeratevt. think, speak or write of as greater than is really so. overstate 夸张.夸大saken. end, purpose 缘故geographer n. a specialist in geographyoculara. of, for, by the eyes. based on what has been seen 眼睛的.凭视觉的theoreticala. of or based on theorycitizenn. 公民.市民refutevt. prove (a statement) to be untrue. prove (a person) to be mistaken 驳斥mastn. a long upright pole of wood or metal for carrying flags or sails on a ship 桅杆funneln. a metal chimney for letting out smoke from a steam engine or steamship (蒸汽机,轮船等的)烟囱invisiblea. that can not be seen horizonn. the line where the sky seems to meet the earth or sea 地平线phenomenon (pl. phenomena)n. 现象curvevt. bend so as to form a line that has no straight part 使成曲线n. a continuously bending line without angles 曲线followvi. result or occur as a consequence, effect, or inference 结果产生.得出sphericala. shaped like a ball 球形的ovaln.& a. (anything which is) egg-shaped 卵形的(东西), 椭圆的(东西)cardn. 纸牌analogyn. comparison of things that have a certain likeness. similarity 类比. 相似promptlyad. quickly and willingly 敏捷地.迅速地prompt a.body n. =celestial body 天体discn. 圆盘castvt. throw or 0drop. cause (light or shadow) to appear (on) 扔,投. 投射eclipsen. the total or partial hiding of one celestial body by another (天文学)食 100Test 下载频道开通, 各类考试题目直接下载。详细请访问 www.100test.com