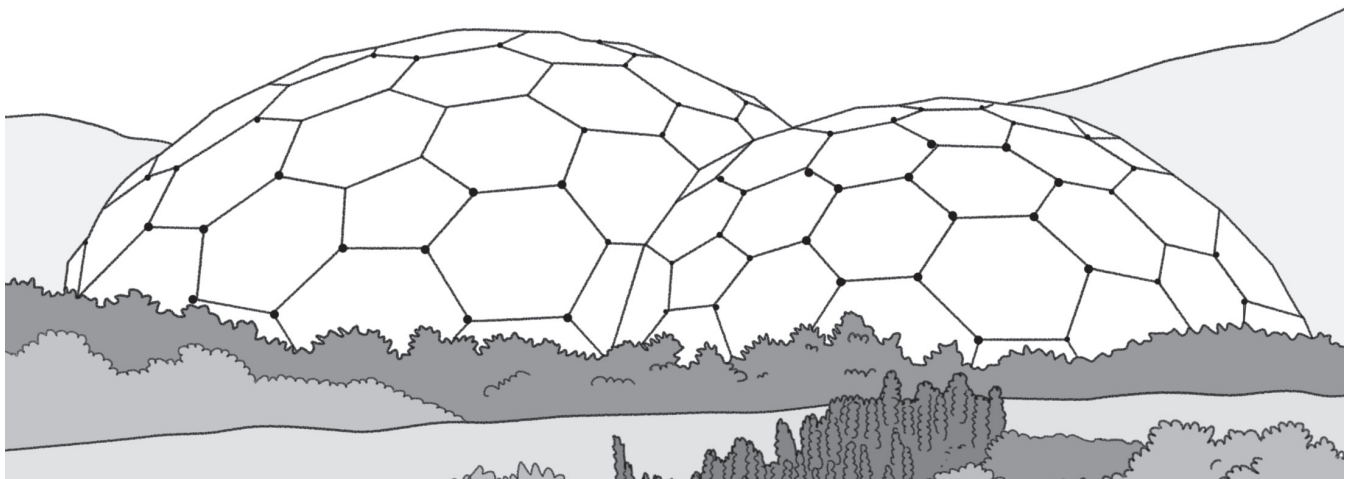


The Dome



“I’ve got some news!” Dad called, as he emerged from the transport tube and stepped into the silver-walled entry zone of our home capsule. “The leadership group says it’s our turn to go on holiday,” he announced happily.

“What? A real holiday?” Mum asked hopefully. “Outside the Dome?”

Dad frowned at her. “No, Jan,” he said firmly. “You know we can’t leave the Dome. The pollution outside is too dangerous.”

Then he brightened up again, shouting, “We’re all going on a virtual holiday to the seaside!” He twirled Mum and Tine around the polished white floor of the living zone. Quickly, he started to update the touch screen of the family control panel.

“What year would you like?” he asked.

“2017,” Mum answered with a distant look in her eyes. I knew that she was remembering her childhood in the days before the Dome. Finally Dad entered the most important piece of data, our return date. We would be setting off on our holiday in the morning!

The following day we docked our hoverboards inside the steel and glass departure hall of the Virtual Holiday Centre in the city hub. The digital timepiece on the wall read Day 60040 08:30. An envoy in a red jumpsuit greeted us cheerily and gave Dad a wafer-thin piece of perspex.

“Welcome, this is your key. Enjoy your holiday!” she said, guiding us through a heavy door in the wall behind her.

We entered a large, brightly lit room. Arranged in rows were sleek black travel pods. Dad checked the number on the key and led us to a family pod. We

clambered inside and my stomach fluttered with excitement. The pod rocked gently and I closed my eyes. A gentle wind now blew and I could taste salt on the air. We had arrived in 2017.

We had the best holiday ever! My sister and I played a game called cricket that Dad remembered from his childhood. In the day we built sandcastles on the beach and swam in the clear, cool sea. In the evening, we walked along a cliff-top path and ate juicy peaches, sweet ice-creams and sticky candyfloss. On the morning that we were due to return home, Mum sighed and said wistfully, "I wish we could stay here forever."

Dad frowned at her in warning, and said, "It's not real, Jan, you know that."

"But maybe it could be," she replied.

"Don't talk like that! They know where we are. The Dome keeps us safe: the pollution outside would poison us all and we'd be outcasts! Is that the life you want for our children? We're going home!" raged Dad. He started decoding the perspex key. A hologram of the travel pod appeared from it. The air in the room around us started to cool and the light dimmed.

"Living under surveillance, never feeling a breeze on our faces or hearing birds sing – is that the life you want for our children?" pleaded Mum. "How do you know they are telling us the truth? Maybe it would be safe enough now for us to live outside the Dome. Others have done it and I want to do it too. We've got to try."

The hologram started to flicker and crackle as we stood looking at each other for what felt like hours. The light dancing in the air around us flashed one last time and then everything faded to black.

We were back. Dad handed the key to the same envoy whose expression this time was grave. She led us to a small, glass holding pod where we were to stay until the leadership group arrived.

"What will you say?" I whispered nervously.

"That the pod malfunctioned. That it was a mistake. That we have to go back to get them."

"But ..." I began.

"Enough," snapped Dad. "That is what we will say, whatever they ask us."

I looked out at the digital timepiece in the departure hall. The glowing blue figures read Day 60040, 09:05. I nodded, and wondered if I would ever see my mother and sister again.

Name: Class: Date:

1 What news does Dad have at the beginning of the story?
.....

2 How does Mum feel about going on holiday?
.....

3 How did the family travel to the departure hall of the Virtual Holiday Centre?
.....

4 What impressions do you get of life in the Dome? Give **three** points.
.....
.....
.....

5 Why did Mum choose to go on holiday to 2017?
.....

6 “Dad frowned at her in warning, and said, ‘It’s not real, Jan, you know that.’”
Why do you think Dad said that the holiday wasn’t real?
.....

- 7** Mum and Dad have different views on living in the Dome. Write down **three** pieces of information that Mum gives about life in the Dome.

Dad's view of life in the Dome	Mum's view of life in the Dome
The Dome keeps them safe.	
There is no pollution.	
They are looked after.	

- 8** At the end of the story, the digital timepiece in the departure hall shows that 35 minutes have passed since the family left for their holiday. What evidence is there that they were away longer than this?

.....

- 9** Where do you think Mum and the sister are at the end of the story?

.....

- 10** What do you think Dad's plan is at the end of the story?

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