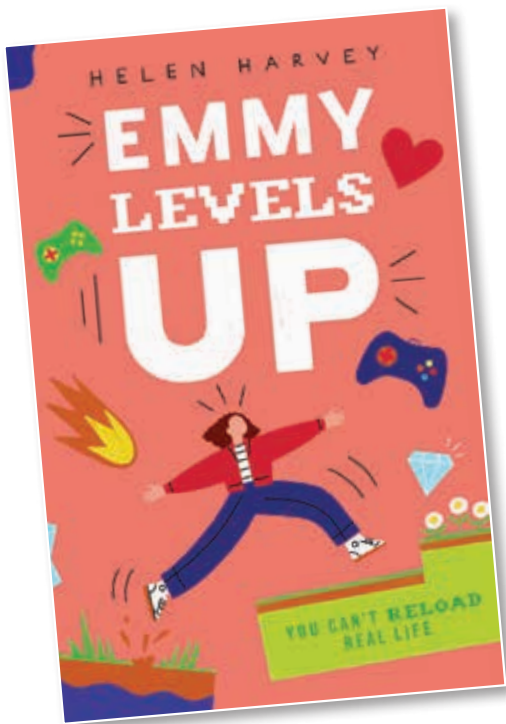


EMMY LEVELS UP



AGE
9+

ABOUT THE BOOK



Emmy is brilliant at the computer game 'Illusory Isles'. Her avatar is a powerful fire elemental with magma claws and flaming breath. When Emmy's gaming video gets a front-page feature, thousands of devoted fans flock to watch her battle the ultimate online baddie, the Mulch Queen herself.

Life at school is the exact opposite. Emmy is friendless and bullied by Vanessa, AKA the Queen of Mean. To Vanessa and her gang, Emmy is a weirdo with bad handwriting, horrible fashion sense, and no dad.

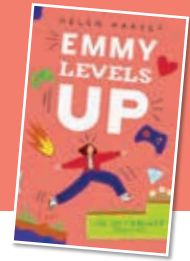
But if Emmy can take on the Mulch Queen online, perhaps she can also find a way to take on Vanessa too? Emmy decides to level up and solve this challenge alone. But then Emmy discovers that Mulch Queens and Mean Queens are much easier to face when you have a little help from new friends . . .

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Helen grew up in a wild and unruly corner of the internet, where she dodged flames, crafted websites, and led a guild of magical wolf-tamers. From a young age she realised that technology gave children superpowers.

Helen completed the Bath Spa MA in Writing for Young People with Distinction and won the United Agents Prize for *Emmy Levels Up*. She lives in Bristol with her gaming partner and two furry writing buddies. She likes adventure games, stormy seas, rock climbing, and cats.





DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY IDEAS

General chat questions about the book

- How did you feel when reading this book? And how did you feel when you finished it?
- Which parts of the story do you remember most?
- Did you skip any parts? Which parts?
- Was there anything that took you by surprise?
- Were there any parts that didn't make sense to you?
- What was the thing you most liked finding out from the book?
- Who was your favourite character?
- Did you stop and start, or did you want to read it all through in one go?
- Has reading the book made you think differently about anything?
- Has it given you ideas for things you would like to have a go at?
- How would you describe the book in three words?

More to think and talk about

Gaming

'My fingers tap on the keyboard and Emmetine bounds up the mountainside with catlike grace. . .' (p1)

- Emmy is completely into playing an online game called 'Illusory Isles.' If you're a gamer too, what are your favourite games at the moment?
- What do you think makes a game interesting and exciting?
- What do you especially like about online gaming? Do you play on your own or with friends?
- What books or videos do you use to help you get to know about a game?
- Do you make up and code your own games?

Wargaming with plastic figures

'It's this table-top game. You create an army of little plastic people and then fight someone else's army.' (p90)

- Emmy's school friend Jude also plays 'Warsorcery', a game with plastic figures, and especially likes painting the models for this game. What games do you know which are like this?

Fantasy versus real life

'Have you ever played Superheroes?'. . . 'Basically you pretend the school is under attack from something evil like dragons or aliens. . . we're superheroes and it's up to us to save the school.' (p149)

Have you played imaginary games like this in your head, and/or with your friends?



You can't reload real life

This is what it says on the front cover of *Emmy Levels Up*.

What do you think this means?

Emmy's favourite game, 'Illusory Isles', like many computer games—such as 'Zelda' and 'Fighting Fantasy'—is about an imaginary world with fantastic adventures, and characters with superpowers.

How do you think playing these games can help you in the real world? What does Emmy learn from playing them that helps her to deal with things in real life?

Levels

A game level is a section or part of a game, and to complete a level a gamer usually has to meet goals or perform a certain task. Many games have several levels—often, each one is harder than the one before.

Why do you think this book is called *Emmy Levels Up*?

Have a look at how Emmy's story is divided into these sections or levels, and think about what she does in each level.

- Newbie
- Initiated
- Expert
- Level Lost
- Boss

Friendship

*'I bet you're excited to show your friends at school,' says Paul.
But suddenly I'm knotted up.'* (p8)

Why do you think Emmy feels like this when Paul talks about her friends at school?

How do her friendships gradually grow? And how do they help her—both in her game-playing and in real life?

Here are two quotes about friendship. How do they fit with Emmy's experiences?

'You have been my friend. That in itself is a tremendous thing.'

(E. B. White, *Charlotte's Web*)

'It is when we are most lost that we sometimes find our truest friends.'

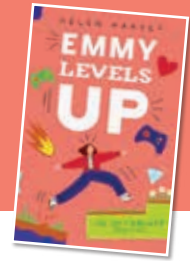
(Brothers Grimm, *Snow White*)

What makes a good friend? What do you think helps to make a friendship work?

Make a list of all the different kinds of friendships you might have—e.g. school, family, older/younger people, on social media.

What special benefits have you gained from your friendships?

Have any of your friendships started in an unusual way?! Or have you become friends with someone whom you didn't like at all when you first met them?



FRIENDS WORDSEARCH



The 16 words in this Wordsearch describe different kinds of friendship.

Look for the words in the squares—up, down, from left to right, and from right to left.

Can you think of more words which mean 'friend'?

Q	W	C	O	M	P	A	N	I	O	N	Z	B	K	X	P
Y	P	L	X	V	N	M	B	C	G	A	S	F	P	A	L
Z	V	A	L	O	X	T	E	P	I	W	Q	X	O	P	A
B	M	S	B	X	V	Q	Z	B	M	B	B	U	D	D	Y
S	F	S	D	E	V	A	M	V	A	X	Z	W	B	G	M
W	X	M	X	T	V	W	Z	F	X	Z	B	K	X	J	A
V	M	A	G	A	V	M	W	X	Z	B	J	C	Z	B	T
P	E	T	A	M	L	U	O	S	Z	K	J	I	W	X	E
J	X	E	K	I	J	H	E	R	F	A	S	K	C	H	J
K	Q	Z	V	T	Z	C	O	M	R	A	D	E	B	G	W
A	W	X	V	N	Q	L	S	Q	I	T	U	D	Z	K	B
L	V	X	Z	I	W	A	D	F	E	Q	W	I	G	J	E
L	P	B	V	J	X	W	Z	X	N	X	G	S	B	G	S
Y	E	T	K	U	Z	L	J	G	D	S	Z	W	J	V	T
W	Q	B	F	F	P	Q	Z	V	X	Q	M	P	V	Z	I
W	J	Z	V	B	M	Q	B	X	W	Z	G	M	A	T	E

- FRIEND
- COMPANION
- ALLY
- BUDDY
- MATE
- CHUM
- CLASSMATE
- COMRADE
- PAL
- SIDEKICK
- PLAYMATE
- AMIGO
- BFF
- SOULMATE
- BESTIE
- INTIMATE



Bullying

"It's not like we beat her up," says Vanessa. "You should have seen the bullying that happened at my old school. That was real bullying." (p153)

What do you think we mean by the word 'bullying'?

'She's pulling the same trick she pulls with me. Questions with no right answers.' (p250)

What are all the ways in which Vanessa bullies Emmy?

'But I don't know how to beat Vanessa' (p156)

Here is some of the advice that Emmy gets from her brother Ryan, her mum, and her headteacher. Who said each of these things, and what happened when she followed their advice?

- *'Like, say stuff back. Show you're not scared.'* (p78)
- *'So, should I punch Vanessa?' 'If it makes her stop.'* (p78)
- *'Why didn't you tell a teacher?'* (p262)
- *'... tell me everything that Vanessa has said or done. I'll write it in a list and then you can show it to Miss Monday.'* (p118)
- *'Next time she does anything, just walk away. . .'* (p119)

What activity does Emmy's teacher set up which makes a really positive difference for Emmy in her friendships?

What does Emmy learn from joining in with this—and how does it help when Vanessa tries to insist that she is the rightful winner of the story writing competition?

'I think she feels a bit out-of-place, that's all.' (p184)

Why do you think Vanessa bullies Emmy? How do you feel about Vanessa at the end of the story? Have you read other stories in which there is an unpopular character whom you end up feeling sorry for, or who ends up changing for the better?

'Ever since, we've had all these lessons about how it's OK to be different and what to do if we see someone getting picked on. I don't know if it will help but it's a nice break from writing stories every day.' (p274)

Every school has an anti-bullying strategy. Talk about what your school does to prevent bullying—and what you should do if bullying does happen.

Believing in yourself

'I'm no good at anything cool or important.' (p193)

'You needed to win. You needed to realise you're good at something. . .' (p248)

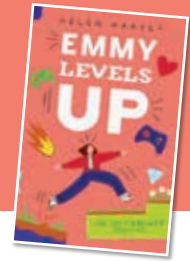
'Perhaps she knows about my real-life superpowers too.' (p280)

Emmy and Jude both seem to lack confidence at the start of this story, but what do they discover are their real-life superpowers?

What are yours?!

If it were possible, what fantastic superpower would you like to have?

Perhaps the power to become invisible? Super-human strength? X-ray vision?



Character fact files

Here's a way of building up a profile and thinking more about the characters in this book.

Collect all that you know about each character, with some examples from the story which back up your description.

Have a go at making fact files for Emmy, her mum, Ryan, Jude, Lila, and Vanessa.

You can get some of the information from the story, and you can also add into the picture of each person, imagining some more about them—e.g. what you think their hopes and dreams might be, or what their favourite book or game could be.

For example, for Emmy: **NAME** – Emmy

PLACE IN THE STORY – Main character

CHARACTER – Imaginative, quick-thinking

FAVOURITE BOOK – *The Island that Didn't Exist* by Joe Wilson

(Look this up, it's a real book and a great adventure story!)

CHARACTER FACT FILE
NAME
PLACE IN THE STORY
CHARACTER
LIKES & DISLIKES
HOPES AND DREAMS
FAVOURITE BOOK



THINGS TO DO



'Or we could make an actual game.' (p126)

Create your own game!

As when you're writing a story, creating a game requires planning.

Set out your ideas in words and/or pictures. You could make a storyboard to show the scenarios and challenges which your characters have to move through.

Or you could get a large sheet of paper and map out your fantasy world and the journeys your characters have to take.

From this you could also make a model.

'Most of my bedroom carpet is taken up with a cardboard model of the Illusory Isles that Mum and Ryan helped me make.' (p47)

Here are the main things you need to think about:

Setting

Where are the adventures in your game going to take place?

Will you have a simple environment, or will your characters journey through different scenarios, as in 'Illusory Isles', with its islands of Shimmer, Shade, and Sheen.

Characters

Who will the players meet in your game? Will there be companions to help with their expertise?

Look at Tia Treekeeper in Emmy's game, who offers healing and shielding spells.

Will you have monsters—like the Mulchbeasts—or fearsome characters like Emmy's main enemy, the Mulch Queen?

Who else might live in your fantasy world? In Emmy's game she meets travelling actors and the People of the Swamp; there's Roghod Humph, Mal Shatterbolt, and other characters in each scenario.

Emmy is a fire elemental.

Who will you be? What will you look like?

What superpowers will you have?

'My gaming superpower is... getting inside the heads of my enemies' (p175)

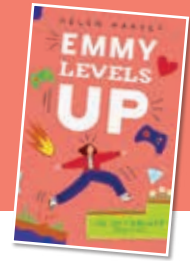
Have a look at pages 276 & 277, where Emmy and her friends describe their powers and strategies.

'My superpower is my skill at beating the baddies' (p277) 'I level up my character and find the best companions. Then, when it's time for the fight, I'm totally prepared.' (p277)

What name will you give yourself?

Emmy is 'Emmentine' and Jude is 'JadeMage'.

Make a drawing of your character and annotate it with the details of your superpowers.



Aim of your game

As your character(s) move through your game, what challenges will they face as they go up each level. What is their ultimate aim?

Emmy has to defeat and destroy the Mulch Queen.

Will your characters have to fight? Are there things they need to collect?

Will they need to build or design things, as Emmy's friend does for the animals in her favourite Animal Hotel game?

Spells and devices

What will help your characters in their challenges?

'She finds rare items – a fleetfoot necklace, a scarf of persuasion. . .' (p206)

In 'Illusory Isles', when Emmy and Jude are fighting the mulch maggots they use the Tonic of Might and a Sphere of Protection.

Sound effects and music

'...a website where you can make your own game music. . .we mess around with bleeps and buzzes.'

(p129) See what you can find on the internet to help you create sound effects or add music to your game.

The name of the game!

Last but absolutely not least—what will you call your game?!

Have a debate! Gaming vs reading books!

'Anyone who plays Illusory Isles has masses of imagination' (p146)

Which do you think is a more useful and creative thing to do—gaming or reading? Or does each activity give you something special?

Have a go at having a **debate about gaming versus reading** with your friends, or in your school class or reading group, and make a case for each side.

You'll need to have:

- A **proposal** or proposition, e.g. 'Gaming is as useful and creative as reading books'
- A **proposer** to make a speech with arguments to support this proposal
- An **opposer** to make a speech giving the arguments against this idea
- Someone to second the proposer, adding to their argument
- Someone to second the opposer, with more arguments against
- The rest of the group **asking questions**, to make sure everyone understands both points of view
- A **vote**—for and against the proposal

Remember that a good debate is not an argument: it's looking at an issue or an idea from various points of view, and it means thinking carefully about the argument you make and listening carefully to the opposing arguments, so that you can make a suitable response.



Tips for debating

- Research your facts thoroughly—for both sides of the argument
- Make some notes to prepare your speech, but just refer to them, don't read them out like an essay
- Make your points clearly, with persuasive arguments
- Be confident in your speech and body language
- Listen carefully to the opposing arguments
- Don't make it personal or lose your temper and shout
- Be prepared to change your mind—you might realise they're right, and being honest about this will get others thinking carefully

You could also try some debate role play, **swapping over so that you get to express both sides**, and see if this changes or strengthens your original opinion.

Write...

...a review of your favourite game or book

Tell people all about the game or book that you most enjoy!

Write a paragraph describing what it's about and why you like it.

Keep your review simple. There's no need to go into too much detail, but make sure you include

- The essential information: Title, author/creator, publisher/manufacture
- A brief description of the game, or of the book's content
- Your thoughts and feelings about it—and why you recommend it

...your own story about 'The Spell of Happiness'

When Emmy's school runs a competition asking people to write a story, she enters her friend Jude's story, which is called 'The Spell of Happiness', about an enchanter, an elemental, and a spell.

Have a go at writing your own 'Spell of Happiness' story—it could be fantasy, or maybe you'd like to write something with a real-life setting?

...a blog about your favourite activity

'...if you're a budding writer or you've got something to geek out about, come along.' (p278)

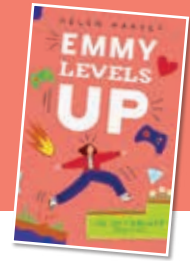
What do you love doing? Gaming? Reading? Sport? music? Getting to know about wildlife? What are you passionate about?

Write a **blog** about it to get more people sharing your passion!

A blog is usually an online diary or journal, sharing information and written in a conversational style.

Here are some tips for what your blog would need:

- A headline that readers can't resist
- An introduction that gets people's attention and makes them want to know more
- Information and advice that's easy to understand and can't be ignored
- And at the end something challenging and inspiring to get people really involved!



A words challenge!

Do you know what all these words mean? You'll find them all in *Emmy Levels Up*, but their meanings have all been mixed up.

Can you match each word with its right meaning?

Word	Meaning
1. mulch (p6)	A. Extremely clean or new
2. pristine (p6)	C. Someone who prepared medicines for people
3. Illusory (p8)	B. Gloomy, like a tomb, rather frightening
4. elemental (p22)	D. Twisted out of shape
5. sinister (p56)	E. Decaying leaves, wood, or compost
6. contorted (p57)	F. A spirit that can do magic: Emmy's character is one of these
7. sepulchral (p57)	G. Evil-seeming, threatening
8. apothecary (p97)	H. Unreal: you wonder if it's really there



Decorate a trainer

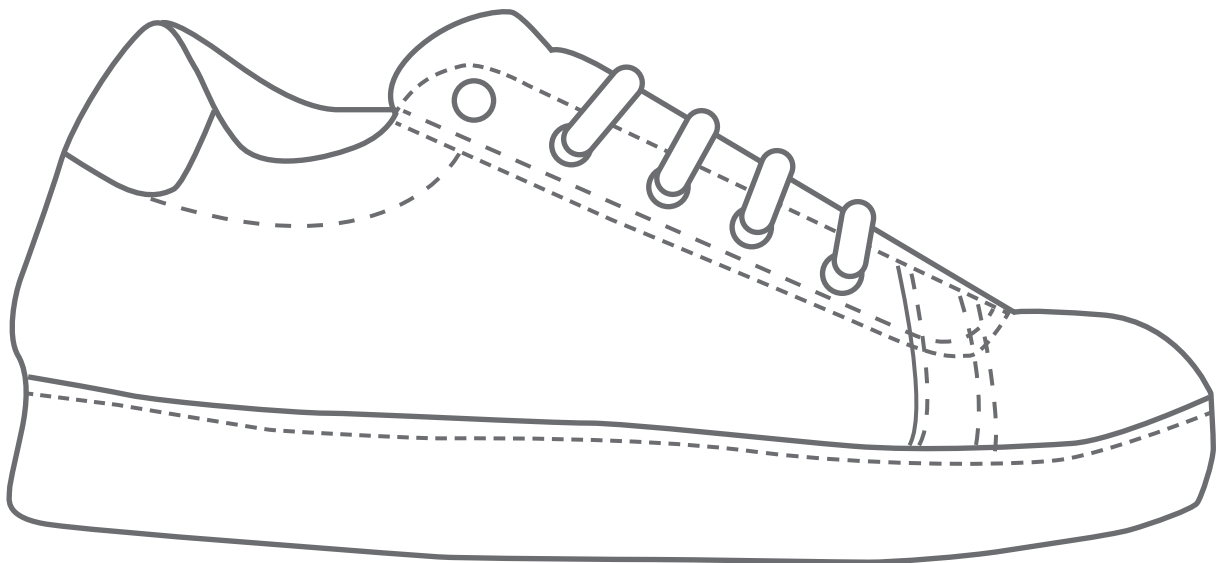
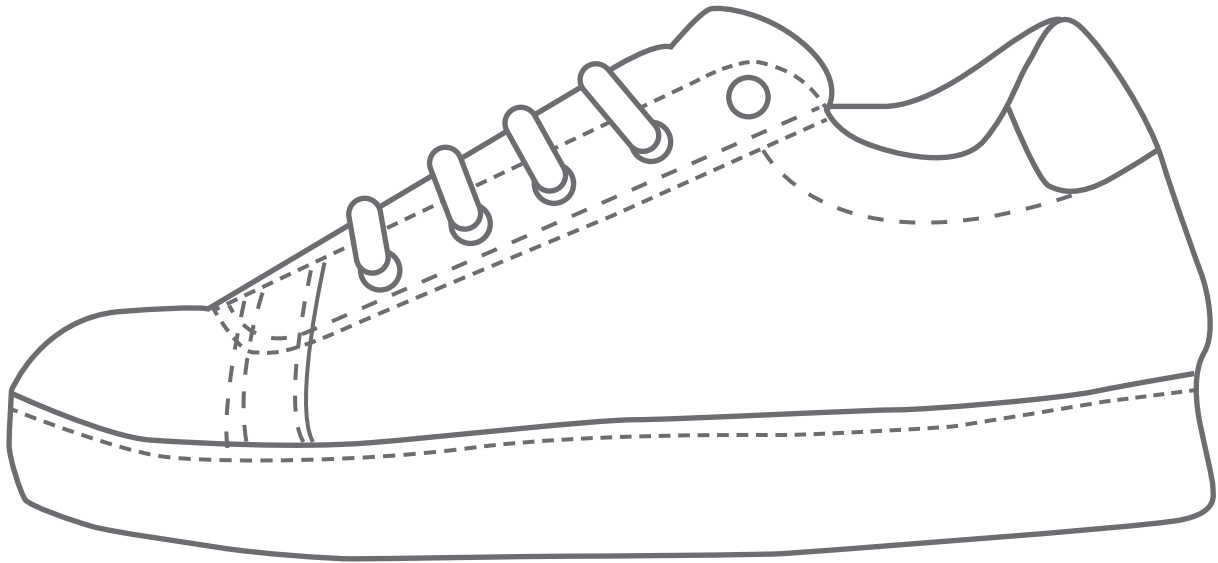
What would magic speedy trainers look like? (p182)

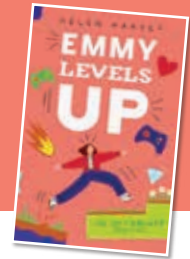
Emmy's mum fixes her ruined trainers with ribbons and gem stones, drawing flames along the sides of the shoes.

What do you think 'magic speedy trainers' might look like?

Create your own design on this trainer!

What colours and decorations would you use?





MORE TO READ

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	ISBN
Stories about gaming			
Malorie Blackman	<i>Dangerous Reality</i>	Corgi	978-0552551670
Nick Eliopoulos	<i>Minecraft Woodsworld Chronicles (fiction tie-in series)</i>	Egmont	978-1405293808
Charlie Higson	<i>Monstroso</i>	Puffin	978-0141328454
Terry Pratchett	<i>Only You Can Save Mankind</i>	Corgi	978-0552576796
Janet & Jake Tashjian	<i>My Life as a Gamer</i>	Square Fish	978-1250143686
Diana Wynne Jones	<i>The Homeward Bounders</i>	HarperCollins	978-0006755258
For inspiration . . .			
Ursula K. Le Guin	<i>A Wizard of Earthsea</i>	Puffin	978-0141354910
Fiction about bullying			
Emma Fischel	<i>Walls</i>	Oxford Children's Books	978-0192763822
Patrick Ness	<i>A Monster Calls</i>	Walker Books	978-1406361803
R J Palacio	<i>Wonder</i>	Corgi	978-0552565974
Nicky Singer	<i>Feather Boy</i>	HarperCollins	978-0007332007
Kim Slater	<i>A Seven-Letter word</i>	Macmillan	978-1529009200
Jacqueline Wilson	<i>The Butterfly Club</i>	Corgi	978-0552569934
Zack Zombie	<i>Diary of a Minecraft Zombie: Bullies and Buddies</i>	Zack Zombie	978-1943330386
Non-fiction—gaming			
Leonardo Coppola	<i>Legend of Zelda Activity Book for Kids</i>	Independent	979-8570609440
Megan Miller	<i>Minecraft Architect: The Builder's Idea Book</i>	Sky Pony Press	978-1510737648
Computer coding and programs			
Max Wainewright	<i>Code Your Own Games! 20 Games to Create with Scratch</i>	Sterling	978-1454943136



SOME GAMES LINKS



Among Us	https://innersloth.com/gameAmongUs.php
Fortnite	https://www.epicgames.com/fortnite/en-US/home
Geometry Dash	https://geometrydash.io/
Minecraft	https://www.minecraft.net/en-us/
Roblox	https://www.roblox.com/
Steam	https://store.steampowered.com/
Warhammer	https://www.games-workshop.com/en-GB/Warhammer-40-000

FRIENDS Wordsearch Answer

Q	W	C	O	M	P	A	N	I	O	N	Z	B	K	X	P
Y	P	L	X	V	N	M	B	C	G	A	S	F	P	A	L
Z	V	A	L	O	X	T	E	P	I	W	Q	X	O	P	A
B	M	S	B	X	V	Q	Z	B	M	B	B	U	D	D	Y
S	F	S	D	E	V	A	M	V	A	X	Z	W	B	G	M
W	X	M	X	T	V	W	Z	F	X	Z	B	K	X	J	A
V	M	A	G	A	V	M	W	X	Z	B	J	C	Z	B	T
P	E	T	A	M	L	U	O	S	Z	K	J	I	W	X	E
J	X	E	K	I	J	H	E	R	F	A	S	K	C	H	J
K	Q	Z	V	T	Z	C	O	M	R	A	D	E	B	G	W
A	W	X	V	N	Q	L	S	Q	I	T	U	D	Z	K	B
L	V	X	Z	I	W	A	D	F	E	Q	W	I	G	J	E
L	P	B	V	J	X	W	Z	X	N	X	G	S	B	G	S
Y	E	T	K	U	Z	L	J	G	D	S	Z	W	J	V	T
W	Q	B	F	F	P	Q	Z	V	X	Q	M	P	V	Z	I
W	J	Z	V	B	M	Q	B	X	W	Z	G	M	A	T	E

A Words Challenge

Answers

- 1 = E
- 2 = A
- 3 = H
- 4 = F
- 5 = G
- 6 = D
- 7 = B
- 8 = C