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THE BAKER'S NIGHT HOURS

THE MIDNIGHT BAKER

The shop opens at seven, but the light in the back room comes on at midnight. The baker works alone. The first thing they touch is the **STARTER**, a living mix of flour and water kept in a tub and fed fresh flour every day. Inside the starter live **YEAST**, tiny **CELLS** that feed on the sugars in flour. The baker feeds the starter, then mixes a bowl of **DOUGH** that will not be bread for another seven hours.

SPELL Spell: **DOUGH**

DOUGH

SPELL Spell: **CELLS**

CELLS

KNOWN What is the name for the living mix of flour and water the baker keeps in a tub and feeds fresh flour every day?

STARTER

KNOWN What is the name of the living thing in that tub whose tiny cells eat the sugars in flour?

YEAST

OPEN What would you expect the back room to smell like at midnight?

Open response - use practitioner judgment

MATH The baker's light comes on at midnight and the shop opens at seven in the morning. How many hours does the baker work before the shop opens?

7

THE DOUGH SETS THE SCHEDULE

Bread rises because of fermentation. The yeast eat sugar and give off gas, and that gas fills the dough with bubbles. Kneading builds GLUTEN, a stretchy web of protein from the flour. Gluten traps the bubbles instead of letting them slip out. Once the LOAVES are shaped, they rest for one last rise called PROOFING. None of it can be hurried. Warm air speeds fermentation up and cool air slows it down, so the dough sets the schedule, not the CLOCK on the wall.

SPELL Spell: LOAVES

LOAVES

SPELL Spell: CLOCK

CLOCK

KNOWN Kneading builds a stretchy web of protein from the flour that traps the bubbles inside the dough. What is that web called?

GLUTEN

KNOWN After the loaves are shaped, they rest for one last rise before baking. What is that last rise called?

PROOFING

OPEN Warm air helps dough rise faster. Where in your home would be a good warm spot for dough to rest?

Open response - use practitioner judgment

BENDING TIME

The dough is not reliable either. A cold night, a new SACK of flour, or a slow starter can shift everything by an hour. So bakers bend time on purpose. Retarding means moving dough into a cold room, where the rising nearly stops and then finishes when the baker wants it to. Wait too long the other way and the gluten stretches until it cannot hold the gas, and the LOAF SINKS flat in the oven. Touch and smell decide, not the hour.

SPELL Spell: SINKS

SINKS

SPELL Spell: LOAF

LOAF

SPELL Spell: SACK

SACK

OPEN A loaf that waited too long sinks flat in the oven. What do you think that flat loaf would taste like?

Open response - use practitioner judgment

WHAT THE CRUMB REMEMBERS

You walk in at seven. The loaf is warm, and you see none of the hours behind it. Night work runs against your circadian rhythm, the body's daily CYCLE of sleeping and waking that light helps set, and BAKERS who sleep in the afternoon rarely fix it. When you tear that warm loaf open, the soft, airy inside is the CRUMB. Every HOLE in it is a bubble the yeast made in the dark, while you were still asleep.

SPELL Spell: HOLE

HOLE

SPELL Spell: BAKERS

BAKERS

KNOWN The body runs on a daily pattern of sleeping and waking that light helps set. What is that daily pattern called?

CYCLE

KNOWN When you tear a warm loaf open, what is the soft, airy inside called?

CRUMB

OPEN The baker finished work as you were waking up. What is something you do that other people never see?

Open response - use practitioner judgment