

- 1 Look at the pictures. What would you say if you were student B?



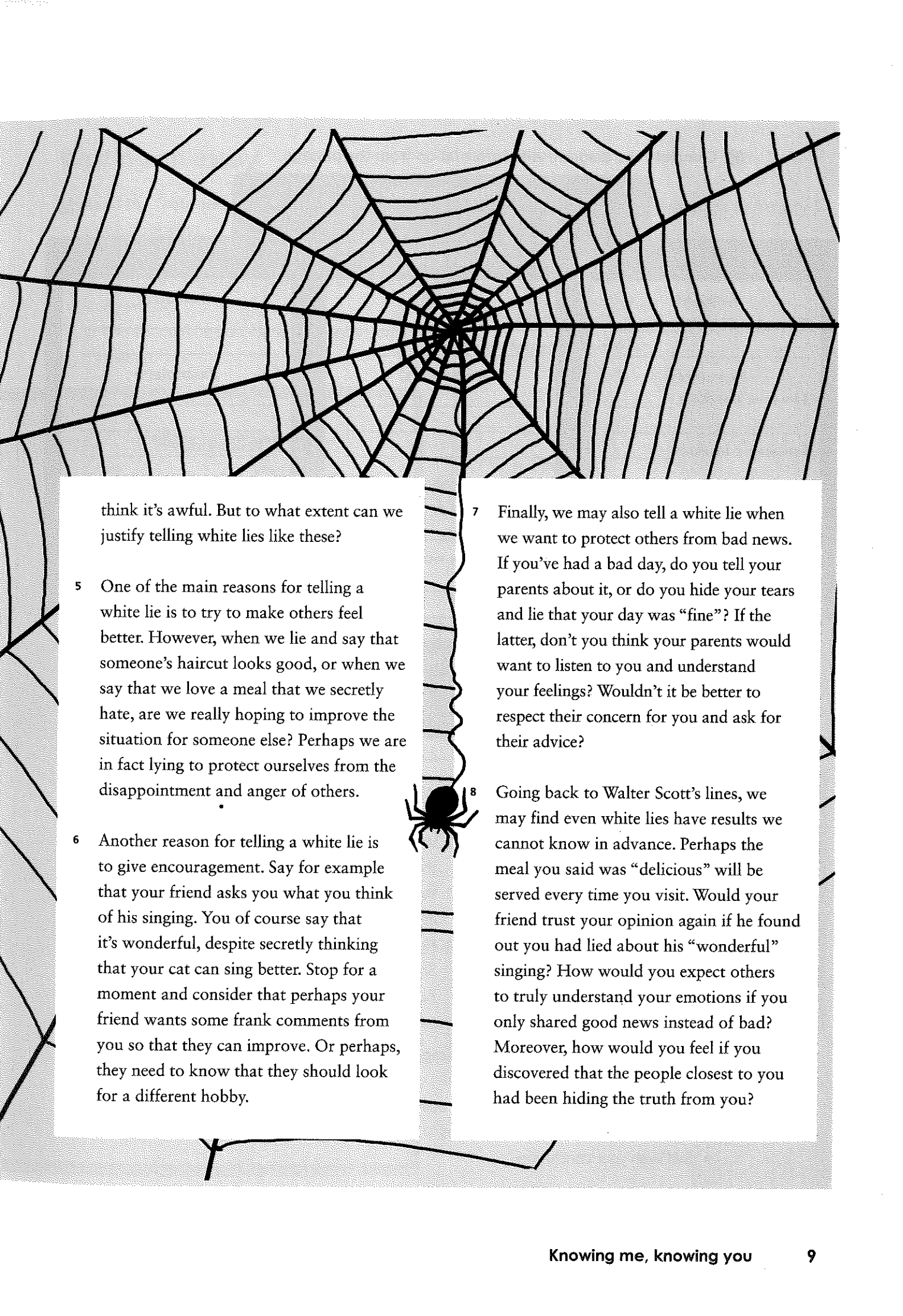
- 2 Read the passage and find out the meaning of "white lies".

## Little White Lies

- 1 Written more than two hundred years ago, these lines by Walter Scott remain one of the most well-known excerpts of Scottish poetry:

*Oh, what a tangled web we weave,  
When first we practise to deceive!*

- 2 We all know that honesty is an important value and that lying is wrong, but who can honestly say that they've never told a lie? Perhaps we comfort ourselves with the knowledge that most of the lies we tell are "white lies": little lies that we tell to protect others from the truth.
- 3 We've all surely had the experience of someone cooking a meal for us that we don't like. The majority of us of course don't tell the truth – we lie and say that the food is "delicious".
- 4 Or if a friend asks us what we think of their new haircut, we say "It's great!", even if we



think it's awful. But to what extent can we justify telling white lies like these?

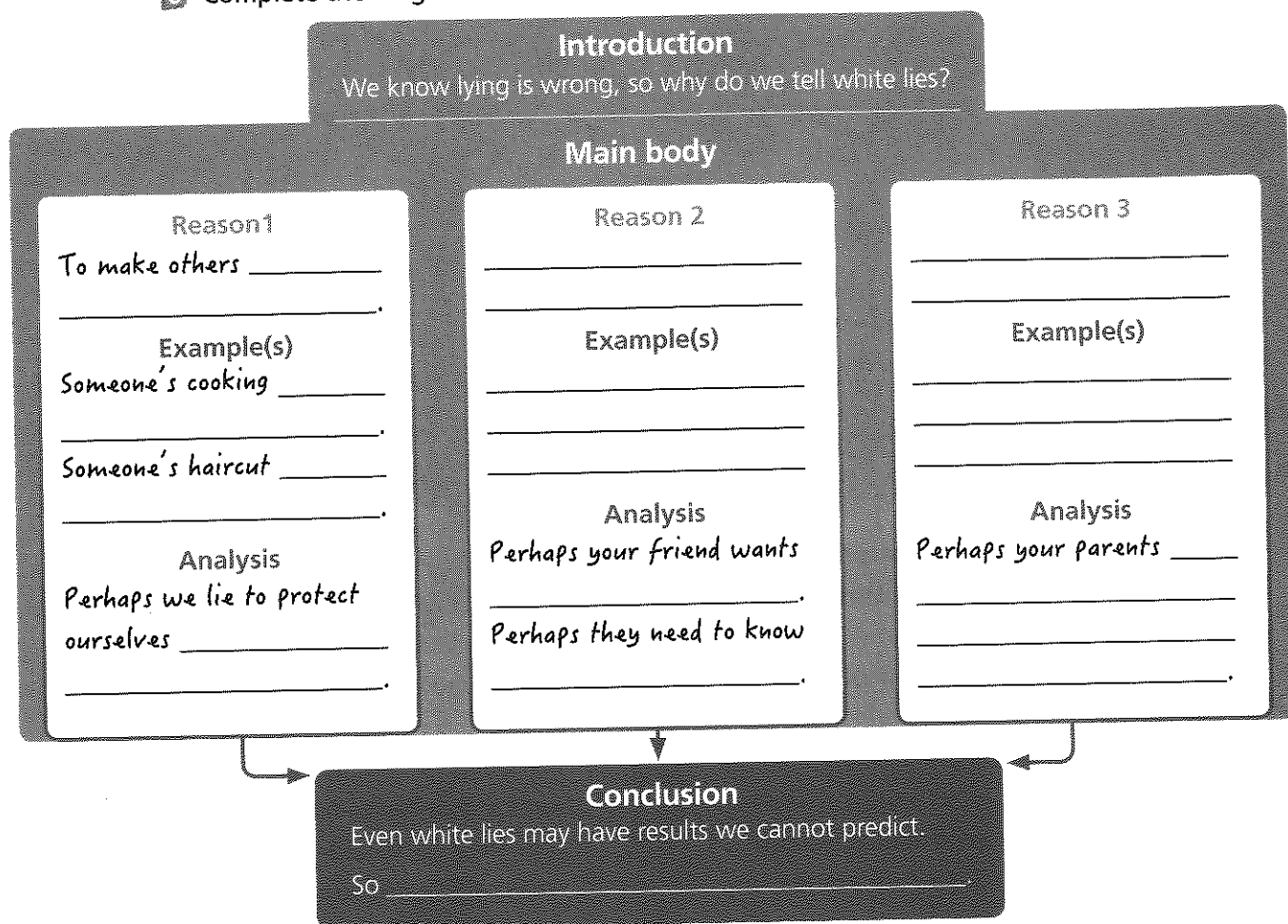
5 One of the main reasons for telling a white lie is to try to make others feel better. However, when we lie and say that someone's haircut looks good, or when we say that we love a meal that we secretly hate, are we really hoping to improve the situation for someone else? Perhaps we are in fact lying to protect ourselves from the disappointment and anger of others.

6 Another reason for telling a white lie is to give encouragement. Say for example that your friend asks you what you think of his singing. You of course say that it's wonderful, despite secretly thinking that your cat can sing better. Stop for a moment and consider that perhaps your friend wants some frank comments from you so that they can improve. Or perhaps, they need to know that they should look for a different hobby.

7 Finally, we may also tell a white lie when we want to protect others from bad news. If you've had a bad day, do you tell your parents about it, or do you hide your tears and lie that your day was "fine"? If the latter, don't you think your parents would want to listen to you and understand your feelings? Wouldn't it be better to respect their concern for you and ask for their advice?

8 Going back to Walter Scott's lines, we may find even white lies have results we cannot know in advance. Perhaps the meal you said was "delicious" will be served every time you visit. Would your friend trust your opinion again if he found out you had lied about his "wonderful" singing? How would you expect others to truly understand your emotions if you only shared good news instead of bad? Moreover, how would you feel if you discovered that the people closest to you had been hiding the truth from you?

- 3 Complete the diagram with information from the passage.



#### □ Learning to learn

An essay usually consists of three parts: introduction, main body and conclusion. Start with an introduction that contains the aims and an overview of the essay. The main body of an essay is a series of paragraphs that explore and develop your argument. The conclusion contains a summary of your ideas – do not introduce any new material here! End your essay by linking your conclusion back to the essay title.

#### Think & Share

- 1 What does the "web" in the poem represent?
- 2 What would you do in the situations described in the passage?
- 3 What do you think is the difference between a lie and a white lie?
- 4 How would you feel if you were told a white lie? Share your experience with the class if this has happened to you.

- 4 Work in groups. Give a talk on the importance of honesty following the steps below.

- Explain what honesty is.
- Give reasons for the importance of being honest.
- Support your reasons with examples.
- End with your conclusion.