

Good-Bye to Xochimilco

By ReadWorks

On a Sunday afternoon, the Xochimilco Canals are the place to be. I should know. I grew up just an hour north of these canals in Mexico City. Some people look down on the district of Xochimilco. They think it's too working class, too down at the heels, and too tacky. Those people are missing its charm. I don't want those people at Xochimilco, anyway.

I can remember learning about Venice in elementary school. It blew my mind—a city halfway across the world with canals and gondoliers, just like Xochimilco. Except all of Venice is on the canals. Imagine if the canals of Xochimilco swallowed up Mexico City. Our barges aren't quite gondolas, not as slender or swift, but the people who steer the barges are particularly skilled. The barges, called *trajineras*, are sturdy and festive, painted brightly in yellow, blue, and red. But they're difficult to maneuver, clumsy in the water. On Sunday afternoons, the canals become the site of one enormous game of bumper boats. Most of the boats' passengers are enjoying themselves too much to care, but I've seen even expert skippers break a sweat as they attempt to ram through the crowded waterways.

I know these waterways well. My father and mother made money on the weekends selling roasted corn to boat-goers. In their small rowboat they would pull alongside the *trajineras*, my father steering and my mother cooking the corn over a small gas stove. To this day I can't smell the sweet aroma of corn over a fire without envisioning the dark water and bright boats of Xochimilco. I went along with my parents, but I was never allowed to help sell the corn. Instead I would hop from boat to boat, pretending I was a frog and the boats were my lily pads. From afar I'd see anniversary parties and *quinceañera* celebrations underway and target those boats. People celebrating were typically happy to share a piece of cake or *empanada* with a little boy, especially one with good manners and a nice smile.

My parents would tie up the rowboat at the end of the weekend. They never went to Xochimilco during the week, since there wouldn't be any boat parties taking place then. No parties, no one to buy corn, no money. Me, though—I used to love Xochimilco during the weekdays. In the summers, when school was out, I would steal down to the canals on the metro in the early morning. Fog would cover the river like a sheet and obscure the few other boats that were out. Rowing around, you felt as though the water was yours alone. Stray dogs congregated along the canal banks to bark at passersby, but they were too scared to dive into the water. Brown and gray salamanders danced in the mud. Women who came down from

their houses to the water's edge to plant their gardens would stare, wondering what a nine-year-old boy was doing in a boat alone. I was King of the Canals on those mornings.

Eventually I stopped visiting Xochimilco. Often childhood pleasures and habits fade and are replaced. But Xochimilco was taken from me far more suddenly.

My last morning trip to the canals began like any other. I said good-bye to my parents, who were leaving for their respective offices, and made myself breakfast. I hopped on the metro and headed south. I remember the book I brought with me that day, a thin tome of Pablo Neruda poems that I was meant to read over the summer for my new classes in the fall. I arrived at the canals and untied the boat. It was only 8 a.m., and there really was no one else on the water. The fog drifted across the banks in the way I liked, in a way Neruda might have written about had he been there.

I let myself drift, lying back in the boat to gaze up at the sky. That was when the sounds began. Soft cries. There were birds on the canal, herons and egrets that could sound eerily human. I paused, muscles tensed, to listen more carefully. The cry came again. This time I was sure that they weren't being issued by a bird. I became aware that I was all alone in a remote part of Xochimilco. The solitude that had seemed such a boon a few minutes before was now deeply distressing. The cry came again.

I put down my book, slowly, so that I didn't make a sound, and peered over the edge of the boat. There was something in the bushes, something alive and moving. The noise came again, this time ragged as though the creature making it was having difficulty breathing. I looked more closely and saw the bushes rustle. Two eyes looked out at me, wild and ferocious. There was a long, guttural growl. Now I knew the sounds hadn't been of a human or a bird. They were feline, and the animal sounded large. I caught a gleam of white teeth, and my heart began to race. I pushed my boat off as quickly as possible, trying furiously to get back to land. What could it have been? There weren't jaguars in Mexico City anymore. I arrived at shore and got on the first metro back to the city.

That night at dinner, my mother remarked to my dad, "Did you hear that two of the panthers escaped from the zoo? They're still searching for them." As soon as I heard the words I felt relief. I wasn't crazy. A few days later officials found the panthers; no one was hurt but a few dogs. The panthers had gotten hungry. I knew it was safe to return to the canals, but I somehow couldn't bring myself to go back. Any time I thought about it, I felt the cold sweat on my skin. To this day Neruda's poems, even the ones about desperate heartache, make me think of feral cats.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Where does the narrator of this story spend a good amount of time as a child?

2. What is a main characteristic of Xochimilco, the setting of the story?

3. The narrator used to love spending time alone at the Xochimilco canals. What evidence from the story supports this conclusion?

4. What caused the narrator to stop going to Xochimilco?

5. What is the main idea of this story?

6. Read the sentences and answer the question.

"Eventually I stopped visiting Xochimilco. Often childhood pleasures and habits fade and are replaced. But Xochimilco was taken from me far more suddenly."

Why does the narrator say Xochimilco was "taken" from him?

7. What word or phrase best completes the sentence?

The narrator saw a large animal moving in the bushes by the canal. _____, he stopped going to Xochimilco.

8. What animal was moving in the bushes of one of the canals when the narrator was alone at Xochimilco?

9. How did the narrator feel when he heard the strange cries, saw the wild eyes, and heard the growl from the side of the canal? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.

10. Why won't the narrator return to Xochimilco, even though the canals are safe again? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Avoiding Earthquake Surprises in the Pacific Northwest

This article is provided courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.

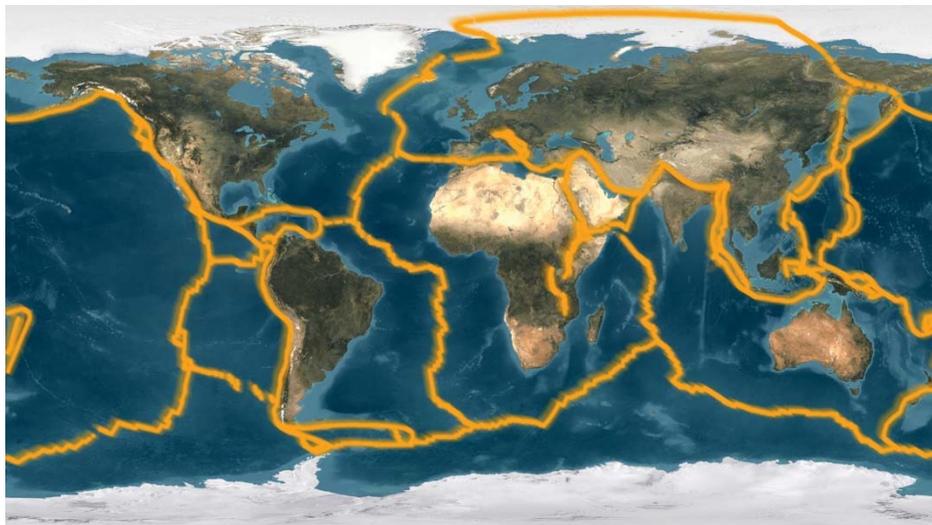
How Vulnerable Is the Pacific Northwest?

Cascadia is a region in the Pacific Northwest. It includes southern British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and northern California. This region is at risk of being hit by earthquakes. Until the mid-1980s, Earth scientists thought that the threat was limited to quakes of magnitude¹ 7 or below.

But more recently, Earth scientists discovered evidence that more intense earthquakes repeatedly struck the region over the past several thousand years. And they are likely to occur again. Earthquakes of magnitude 8 and 9 are considered “great” quakes. An earthquake of magnitude 8 releases about thirty times as much energy as a quake of magnitude 7. A quake of magnitude 9 is another thirty times larger.

Why the Pacific Northwest Is at Risk

Earth’s rigid outer shell is made up of vast rocky pieces called tectonic plates. These plates move as slowly as fingernails grow. They separate, collide, or grind against each other at plate boundaries. Where the plates grind together, pressure builds up and the rocks eventually break. This sends stored-up energy surging through Earth. This energy is what causes earthquakes.



Earth’s surface is broken into massive rocky plates called tectonic plates.

¹ Over the years, seismologists devised various magnitude scales as measures of earthquake size. The “moment magnitude” scale is used today.

Most earthquakes occur along certain plate boundaries called subduction zones. A subduction zone is where a more dense oceanic plate subducts, or sinks below, a continental plate. Decades ago, scientists recognized that a subduction zone runs along the Pacific coast. It lies between southern British Columbia and northern California. It's called the Cascadia subduction zone.

The two largest earthquakes since 1900 occurred along subduction zones. They were a Chilean earthquake of magnitude 9.5 in 1960, and an Alaskan earthquake of magnitude 9.2 in 1964. During each of these earthquakes, the continental plate lurched 20 meters toward the sea. This movement thinned the plate by stretching its rocks. The thinning lowered the coast enough for tides to drown coastal forests. Today, ghostly tree trunks provide natural clues that the huge earthquakes occurred.

Clues of Ancient Quakes

Earth scientists have found similar, much older remains of flooded forests in Cascadia. They were discovered along bays and river mouths on the coasts of British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and northern California. Scientists also found other evidence of strong earthquakes in the same locations. These include sheets of sand that were deposited by floods from the sea and ground cracks that were filled with quicksand. Scientists concluded that earthquakes of magnitude 8 or larger have struck Cascadia repeatedly in the past several thousand years.

Teams of scientists worked together to determine the exact date and an approximate size for the most recent of these Cascadia earthquakes. First, American scientists discovered clues in some dead trees. The trees recorded sudden lowering of coastal land during this earthquake. Radiocarbon dating showed that they died between 1680 and 1720.

Japanese researchers were paying attention to these discoveries in North America. They knew that if the Cascadia earthquake was big enough, it would have started a tsunami in the Pacific Ocean. And they had been looking for the mysterious source of a tsunami that caused flooding and damage in Japan in January 1700. They proposed that a great Cascadia earthquake occurred in the evening of January 26, 1700. They estimated its size as magnitude 9.

To test this proposed date and size, American scientists returned to some of the earthquake-killed trees in Washington. By measuring thin and thick rings, they assigned dates to individual tree rings. They were able to narrow the time of the earthquake to the months between August 1699 and May 1700. This evidence supported the date proposed by Japanese researchers. The findings combined to give the 1700 Cascadia earthquake a place in history.



Scientists study dead trees in a tidal marsh along the Pacific coast of Washington. They provide evidence that a great earthquake occurred in January 1700.

Northwesterners Respond to the Risk

Earthquakes can't be prevented. However, people can take measures to minimize the damage they cause. In some cases, communities can strengthen structures that already exist. These include dams, bridges, water systems, schools, hospitals, and lifelines (electrical, gas, and water lines). They can also design and build earthquake-resistant structures in the future.

Until 1994, the Uniform Building Code² placed an area of Washington in a zone with the second highest hazard level (out of six). Most of the rest of Oregon and Washington was placed in a zone with a lower hazard level. The 1994 edition of the Uniform Building Code redrew the map for the Pacific Northwest. All parts of Oregon and Washington that are at risk of great earthquakes were upgraded to the higher-level hazard zone.

This revision of the code was an important first step toward meeting the great-earthquake threat in the Pacific Northwest. In the areas upgraded to the second highest level, new buildings are designed to withstand earthquakes fifty percent stronger than under the old code.

² The Uniform Building Code was replaced in 2000 by the International Building Code.

How Safe Are Other Parts of the United States?

People in other earthquake-prone states started asking questions about whether they were adequately prepared for future earthquakes. These states include Massachusetts, New York, South Carolina, Missouri, Indiana, Utah, California and Alaska. Many of the questions cannot be answered satisfactorily until we know more about past earthquakes. Deciphering the geologic past is one of the ways that Earth scientists help to protect people from loss of life and property.

This reading was adapted from a 1995 USGS Fact Sheet, "Averting Surprises in the Pacific Northwest," by Brian F. Atwater, Thomas S. Yelin, Craig S. Weaver, James W. Hendley, II.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Where is Cascadia located?

- A) in Alaska
- B) in Chile
- C) in the Pacific Northwest
- D) in the middle of the Pacific Ocean

2. What is the cause of earthquakes?

- A) the sudden breaking of the earth's rigid outer shell
- B) the stretching and thinning of the rocks that make up a tectonic plate
- C) the very slow movement of tectonic plates that are separating from each other
- D) the energy released when two tectonic plates grind together and then suddenly move

3. What evidence led scientists to conclude that Cascadia had been hit by large earthquakes many times in the past?

- A) the knowledge that the earth's outer shell is made up of tectonic plates
- B) the remains of forests in Cascadia that had died because of flooding
- C) the fact that Alaska had been hit by an earthquake of magnitude 9.2
- D) the revision of the Uniform Building Code in the Pacific Northwest

4. Based on the text, what may have led people to revise the Uniform Building Code in the Pacific Northwest?

- A) the need to prevent large earthquakes from happening in the Pacific Northwest region
- B) the fact that buildings in the Pacific Northwest had recently fallen down during earthquakes
- C) the desire to help scientists learn about buildings in areas that are likely to be hit by earthquakes
- D) the evidence that large earthquakes had struck the Pacific Northwest in the past

5. What is the main idea of this article?

- A) Scientists can tell where large earthquakes have occurred by studying dead forests along coastal land.
- B) Earthquakes can occur along subduction zones, where an oceanic tectonic plate sinks below a continental plate.
- C) Scientists have found evidence that the Pacific Northwest is at risk of being hit by major earthquakes.
- D) Changing the Uniform Building Code in the Pacific Northwest was an important step toward meeting the threat of large earthquakes.

6. Read these sentences from the text.

"Earthquakes can't be prevented. However, people can take **measures** to minimize the damage they cause. In some cases, communities can strengthen existing dams, bridges, water systems, schools, hospitals, and lifelines (electrical, gas, and water lines). They can also design and build earthquake-resistant structures."

What does the word "**measures**" most nearly mean in this sentence?

- A) questions
- B) amounts
- C) actions
- D) lessons

7. Choose the answer that best completes the second sentence below.

Scientists used to think that Cascadia would only be struck by earthquakes of magnitude 7 or below. _____, they found more recent evidence of bigger earthquakes in the region.

- A) Therefore
- B) However
- C) Indeed
- D) For example

8. What did the drowned forests in Cascadia show scientists about the size of past earthquakes in the region?

9. In 1994, the Uniform Building Code was revised to include new requirements for how strong buildings in parts of the Pacific Northwest had to be. How did this change in the Uniform Building Code help people in the Pacific Northwest prepare for future earthquakes?

10. The last paragraph of the article states that it is hard to know whether we are prepared for future earthquakes until we know more about past earthquakes. It says that by studying the earth's past, scientists can help protect people from loss of life and property. How can knowing more about past earthquakes help people better prepare for future earthquakes? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Genetic Basis of Butterflies

By ReadWorks



If you've ever been in a park during the summer, you may have seen butterflies flitting from flower to flower. They are quite beautiful, and like humans, seem to have individual traits. There are orange butterflies with big brown eyes, blue butterflies with black markings on their wings, and white butterflies with small black antennae. According to some butterfly experts, there are approximately 20,000 kinds of butterflies in the world. Each species (or type) of butterfly has its own genetic information that dictates what characteristics it will have and distinguishes it from other butterflies.

Inherited genetic information explains why certain species look different from others. Monarch butterflies, orange butterflies with black markings and white spots on their wings, are most common in Mexico and the United States. Their bright color makes them easily noticeable to predators, but also acts as a warning that they are poisonous if eaten.

How do we know that their bright and beautiful coloring reveals that they are poisonous? Well, what we think of as butterflies are the adult versions of caterpillars. As caterpillars, monarchs feed on milkweed, which contains a toxin that is poisonous to most vertebrates but not to monarch caterpillars. When the caterpillars become adult monarch butterflies, the milkweed in their bodies is poisonous to any predators that might try to eat them.

An unsuspecting predator that did not know the monarch butterfly was poisonous would soon realize its mistake. After tasting the poisonous bug, most predators quickly spit out the monarch and learn not to eat them again. Unlike other butterflies, whose genetic information (and therefore their coloration) helps them blend into their habitats in order to defend themselves from predators, monarch butterflies rely on their bright coloration to keep them safe. An interesting fact: another species of butterfly, the viceroy, mimics the coloration of the monarch in order to keep predators from eating it!

Even though there are many kinds of butterflies that look very different, all butterflies share a certain number of traits, which are also determined by their genetic information. They all have the same life cycle. First a caterpillar hatches from an egg. The caterpillar eats plants and grows bigger. Then it covers itself in a hard case called a chrysalis, and it enters a stage of transformation. During this stage, the insect is called a *pupa*. Inside the chrysalis, the pupa grows the legs, wings, and other parts of an adult butterfly. Once the butterfly is fully developed, the chrysalis splits apart, and the butterfly emerges. All butterflies have four wings—two upper, two lower—that are covered in tiny colored scales. A butterfly's genes determine the color of its scales, and more—they dictate the insect's size and shape as well.

Colorful decorations are key to the survival of the monarch butterfly. Vivid colors signal danger to the predators which might otherwise eat the butterfly. Other species of butterfly, with different genes, rely on different survival strategies, and have their own distinctive designs. But no matter the pattern, the blueprints for each of the 20,000 different species' development are written in their genetic codes.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What does genetic information dictate, or control?

- A what characteristics an organism will have
- B where an organism will live and die
- C which predators will eat the organism
- D who the organism's parents were

2. The passage describes the sequence of a butterfly's life. Which of the following shows the life cycle of a butterfly in the correct order?

- A egg, pupa, adult, caterpillar
- B pupa, egg, caterpillar, adult
- C egg, caterpillar, pupa, adult
- D egg, pupa, caterpillar, adult

3. Monarch butterflies are protected by their bright coloration. What evidence from the passage supports this conclusion?

- A Their bright coloration makes monarch butterflies easily noticeable to predators.
- B The monarch's color warns predators that they are poisonous, so they don't get eaten.
- C Unlike other butterflies, monarchs do not blend into their surroundings to protect themselves.
- D If a predator eats a monarch, it can taste the poison and will spit the butterfly out.

4. Butterfly A is blue with black markings. Butterfly B is green with brown spots. What conclusion can you make about these two butterflies?

- A Both butterflies protect themselves by blending into their surroundings.
- B The two butterflies have different life cycles.
- C Both butterflies have the same genetic information.
- D The two butterflies have different genetic information.

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A monarch butterflies
- B viceroy butterflies
- C milkweed toxins
- D caterpillars and pupae

6. Read the following sentences: "Inside the chrysalis, the pupa grows the legs, wings, and other parts of an adult butterfly. Once the butterfly is fully **developed**, the chrysalis splits apart, and the butterfly emerges."

What does the word "**developed**" mean?

- A young and small
- B changed and grown
- C safe and protected
- D soft and vulnerable

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Monarch butterflies are brightly colored; _____, they are highly visible to predators.

- A however
- B for example
- C as a result
- D initially

8. Why are monarch butterflies poisonous?

9. How do predators know that monarch butterflies are poisonous?

10. How does the monarch's coloration help both the butterfly and its predators?

Letters from the Past

by ReadWorks

In the muggy heat of late July in Washington, D.C., it is easy to remember that our nation's capital is built on top of a swamp. The temperature and the humidity battle each other to see which can reach 100 first. Business people suffer through their commutes, red-faced and moist from the heat, dripping with sweat that stubbornly refuses to evaporate. Jamal and Lisa were familiar with the D.C. heat waves. Every summer they came to stay with their grandmother for the month of July. Every summer the heat was miserable. This summer was no exception.

Jamal lay on the screened-in porch, his body draped over a chair. He held a glass of sweet tea to his forehead, trying to absorb some of the cool. It was early afternoon, and his grandmother had lain down for her daily nap. The heat in the middle of the day gave her migraines, and she had learned that sleep was the best escape.

"Jamal! Jamal!" said Lisa, trying to get his attention.

"What?" he asked, irritated at the interruption.

"I'm going to sort out the attic. Want to come?" she asked, unperturbed. Lisa was two years younger than Jamal and was used to being blown off.

"You're crazy," Jamal said. "It's got to be 100 degrees up there, not to mention that it's dusty and full of spiders and who knows what else."

"Grandma said that if we see anything we want up there, we can keep it," said Lisa.

"What makes you think I want any of that old junk?" asked Jamal.

"Suit yourself," said Lisa. She went to the bedroom to change into old clothes that could get covered in sweat, dust, and possibly dead spiders.

Up in the attic, Lisa began to see Jamal's point. The heat in the house rose upwards, only to be trapped in the small attic. Everything was covered in a fine layer of dust, mummified by the passing of time and inattention.

Lisa thought briefly about turning around and heading downstairs, spending the rest of the day lounging on the porch with Jamal. Maybe they would play a game or find a movie on the television. But something pushed her to investigate the attic further. A tingling in her body suggested that in these dusty boxes stacked against the walls something important was waiting for her.

As Lisa began going through the boxes, she realized that no one had touched them for years. The first boxes held memorabilia from her grandparents' youth: old family photographs that had turned yellow around the edges, diplomas from high school and college, even pictures of a pet pig that one of her grandmother's sisters had kept for several years. Lisa came across a picture of a pretty girl with "Maud" written across the bottom. She stared at the photograph. Maud was her grandmother, and it was hard to believe that the wrinkled woman downstairs had been this laughing, vivacious girl.

She sorted through the boxes, labeling them more clearly and throwing out anything that seemed useless. After a couple of hours, Lisa's back ached, and her shirt was drenched.

"Lisa, honey!" she heard her grandmother call. "Come take a break and have some tea."

Lisa went downstairs and took the picture with her. "Grandma, is this really you?"

Her grandmother laughed. "What, you can't believe it? Yes, that's me; that was taken at my homecoming almost sixty years ago."

"You were beautiful, Grandma," said Lisa admiringly.

"You'd be surprised, Lisa," her grandmother responded. "Adults, all of us, were once young and irresponsible like you."

"I don't think Mom was ever like that..." said Lisa. She couldn't imagine her stern, hardworking mother doing anything remotely irresponsible. Her mother held the family together and took care of Lisa and Jamal. But no one would ever call her the life of a party.

"Your mother..." her grandmother's voice trailed off as she carefully chose her words. "When your father died in the service, your mother was still just a girl herself. You were a baby, and Jamal was only two. She had to grow up real fast. She loves you two so much, and that's why she's so strict."

Lisa nodded. She knew her grandmother was right. She just wished that she could see a glimpse of the fun-loving, carefree woman her mother had once been. Lisa finished her tea, thanked her grandmother, and turned to go back upstairs.

"Lisa," her grandmother called, as Lisa climbed the stairs. "There's a box of your parents' things in the corner up there. Maybe it will help you understand better."

Lisa looked through several of the boxes before she found the one her grandmother had mentioned. It was smaller than the others, with "Laura," her mother's name, written on it in cursive. When she opened the box, she found a pack of old letters, tied together with a faded blue ribbon.

Opening the first letter, she skimmed through until she saw the signature: Daryl. These were love letters between her father and her mother. Lisa's father had been in the army when he'd first met her mother, and had written her from every duty station. Lisa read through the letters voraciously. Her mother was witty and charming in the letters, teasing Daryl and citing inside jokes they had. It was a side of her mother that Lisa had never before seen. She was so full of hope, so optimistic about the life that they would have together when he returned.

Lisa took the packet of letters downstairs to the den, where her grandmother was watching TV. She curled up almost in her grandmother's lap, even though she was too old to be doing that anymore. Her grandmother put her arm around Lisa and began to stroke her hair.

"Grandma?" Lisa asked. "Will it be okay with Mom that I read the letters?"

"Oh, honey," said her grandmother. "She was the one who asked me to show them to you."

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Who goes up to the attic in this story?

- A. Lisa
- B. Lisa and Jamal's grandmother
- C. Lisa and Jamal
- D. Jamal

2. How does Lisa's perception, or view, of her mother change in the story?

- A. Lisa sees that her mother used to be even more stern and strict than she is now.
- B. Lisa sees that her mother used to be more easily scared than she is now.
- C. Lisa sees that her mother has not always been as stern and strict as she is now.
- D. Lisa sees that her mother used to be more athletic than she is now.

3. Read these sentences from the text.

Lisa came across a picture of a pretty girl with 'Maud' written across the bottom. She stared at the photograph. Maud was her grandmother, and it was hard to believe that the wrinkled woman downstairs had been this laughing, vivacious girl.

She sorted through the boxes, labeling them more clearly and throwing out anything that seemed useless. After a couple of hours, Lisa's back ached, and her shirt was drenched.

'Lisa, honey!' she heard her grandmother call. 'Come take a break and have some tea.'

Lisa went downstairs and took the picture with her. "Grandma, is this really you?"

Based on this evidence, how does Lisa probably feel when she sees the photograph of her grandmother?

- A. satisfied
- B. surprised
- C. disturbed
- D. lonely

4. The letters Lisa finds in the attic give her "a glimpse of the fun-loving, carefree woman her mother had once been." What evidence from the story supports this statement?

- A. "Lisa read through the letters voraciously. Her mother was witty and charming in the letters, teasing Daryl and citing inside jokes they had."
- B. "When she opened the box, she found a pack of old letters, tied together with a faded blue ribbon."
- C. "Lisa took the packet of letters downstairs to the den, where her grandmother was watching TV. She curled up almost in her grandmother's lap, even though she was too old to be doing that anymore."
- D. "Lisa looked through several of the boxes before she found the one her grandmother had mentioned. It was smaller than the others, with 'Laura,' her mother's name, written on it in cursive."

5. What is a theme of this story?

- A. People are more likely to tell the truth when they speak than when they write.
- B. Your first impression about someone is always right.
- C. The best way to learn about the past is to watch movies that were made a long time ago.
- D. Learning about the past can change your understanding of the present.

6. Read these sentences from the text.

I don't think Mom was ever like that...' said Lisa. She couldn't imagine her stern, hardworking mother doing anything remotely irresponsible. Her mother held the family together and took care of Lisa and Jamal. But no one would ever call her the life of a party.

'Your mother...' her grandmother's voice trailed off as she carefully chose her words. 'When your father died in the service, your mother was still just a girl herself. You were a baby, and Jamal was only two. She had to grow up real fast. She loves you two so much, and that's why she's so strict.'

What does Lisa's grandmother probably mean when she says that Lisa's mother "had to grow up real fast"?

- A. She probably means that Lisa's mother had to drop out of college and start working.
- B. She probably means that Lisa's mother had to become carefree and irresponsible very quickly.
- C. She probably means that Lisa's mother had to take on more responsibility than she was able to handle.
- D. She probably means that Lisa's mother had to become responsible and mature very quickly.

7. Read these sentences from the text.

Opening the first letter, she skimmed through until she saw the signature: Daryl. These were love letters between her father and her mother. Lisa's father had been in the army when he'd first met her mother, and had written her from every duty station. Lisa read through the letters voraciously. Her mother was witty and charming in the letters, teasing Daryl and citing inside jokes they had. It was a side of her mother that Lisa had never before seen. She was so full of hope, so optimistic about the life that they would have together when he returned.

Whom does the pronoun "they" refer to in the last sentence?

- A. Lisa and her mother
- B. Lisa's mother and grandmother
- C. Lisa and her father
- D. Lisa's mother and father

8. According to Lisa's grandmother, why is Lisa's mother so strict?

9. What does Lisa learn about her mother from reading her mother's old letters?

Support your answer with evidence from the text.

10. Why might Lisa's mother have asked Lisa's grandmother to show her old letters to Lisa? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Worldwide Loss of Bees a Growing Concern

Alissa Fleck



When we think of bees, we think of pesky, buzzing insects that sting us and ruin outdoor gatherings. We might wonder: how badly can we possibly need bees? The truth is, bees are an incredibly important part of our ecosystem on earth—no matter how annoying they may be to humans. Unfortunately, bees have been disappearing around the world for some time now, and their mass disappearance continues to present new problems around the planet.

According to Reuters news source, scientific researchers have been trying desperately for the past 15 years to understand why honeybees around the world are dying off at frighteningly high rates. Over 1 million bee colonies disappear every year, never to return, Reuters reporters noted in 2012.

Kevin Hackett, the national program leader for the bee and pollination program at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), called the massive honeybee disappearance “the biggest general threat to our food supply.”

How could something so small be so important to us humans? Bees are used to pollinate many crops, for instance a large portion of California’s almond crop, which relies heavily on bee pollination. Bees are also essential for the pollination of apple and citrus fruit crops. Without the pollination by bees, these plants are unable to reproduce and may die off.

The mass deaths of honeybees have been linked to something known as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD)—a mysterious loss of bee colonies with many potential causes—as well as a variety of pesticides, parasites, and diseases, all of which hurt bee populations. Other possible causes include land development and changes in agricultural practices around the world.

There are numerous kinds and species of bees, and honeybees are not the only ones disappearing in large quantities. Bumblebees can be added to the list of pollinators whose

widespread disappearance worries scientists. While the dangers of losing bees, such as the damage to our food supplies, have long been known, researchers are uncovering even more distressing information about the loss of these ecologically crucial insects.

According to researchers who published their findings in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in 2013, the disappearance of bumblebees offers new cause for concern: certain plants are having difficulties reproducing with the loss of their bumblebee pollinators, and are at higher risk for extinction.

Two scientists, who conducted research on the impact of bumblebee loss on plant reproduction, found that when a particular species of bumblebee was removed from the pool of pollinators, other bees did not completely take over the pollinating duties. Instead, with less competition from the bees which had been removed from the pool, the remaining bumblebees flew between many different plants and were less likely to be faithful to one kind of plant.

The researchers noted this experiment had damaging effects. For instance, the larkspur, a purple wildflower, requires pollination from its own species—other larkspurs—to survive. The researchers found with fewer bumblebees, the remaining bees were “less faithful” to a particular plant, meaning the larkspur was unable to survive as it would have before the loss of bumblebees.

This particular study highlights the importance of bees to the continuation of, not just our food supply, but also all biodiversity, as the effects of this study do not end with the larkspur plant alone, but point to a much larger issue. The larkspur is just one example of this issue.

In 2012, the USDA and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a joint statement discussing the issue of bee loss, and the search for a solution to the cycle of problems caused by bees dying off.

The organizations concluded: “No single silver bullet will solve the problems affecting honey bees and other pollinators.”

In terms of solutions, the organizations proposed: “Habitat enhancement...targeted pesticide use, improved colony management techniques and improved disease and pest resistant stocks of bees are collectively needed to improve the health of honey bee colonies.”

“It is imperative that we increase honey bee survival both to make beekeeping profitable,” the statement noted, “but more importantly to meet the demands of U.S. agriculture for pollination and thus ensure of [sic] food security.”

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. What problem does this article mainly discuss?

- A) Bees can sting us.
- B) Bees can ruin outdoor gatherings.
- C) Bees are disappearing around the world.
- D) Bees are annoying to humans.

2. Experts think that pesticides, parasites and diseases, as well as land development and changes in agricultural practices around the world, are some possible causes of bee death.

According to this article, what is the most important effect of this new bee shortage?

- A) Researchers are publishing new findings.
- B) Many crops will be unable to survive without pollination.
- C) Scientists are studying bees.
- D) Gardeners are having a harder time growing larkspurs.

3. In the article, Kevin Hackett, the national program leader for the bee and pollination program at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), calls the massive honeybee disappearance “the biggest general threat to our food supply.”

What evidence from the article supports his claim?

- A) Honeybees are not the only ones disappearing in large quantities.
- B) Bees are used to pollinate many food plants, such as California’s almond crops, apple crops and citrus fruit crops.
- C) The larkspur, a purple wildflower, requires pollination from its own species—other larkspurs—to survive.
- D) Over 1 million bee colonies disappear every year, never to return.

4. Leaders from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), researchers from the National Academy of Sciences, and the USDA and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are all reported to be working hard to understand and solve the problem of the disappearance of honeybees. Based on this evidence, what can be concluded about the organizations trying to solve this problem?

- A) The organizations do not play an important role in keeping humans and the environment safe.
- B) The organizations play an important role in keeping humans and the environment safe.
- C) The organizations are dealing with a problem that is not relevant to their focus.
- D) The organizations are being forced to deal with a problem they do not care about.

5. What is this article mostly about?

- A) threats to bees' health from human development
- B) the origins of the crops we eat
- C) the science of bee pollination
- D) the causes and effects of bee death around the world

6. Read the following paragraphs:

“In 2012, the USDA and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a joint statement discussing the issue of bee loss, and the search for a solution to the cycle of problems caused by bees dying off.

“The organizations concluded: ‘No single **silver bullet** will solve the problems affecting honey bees and other pollinators.’

“In terms of solutions, the organizations proposed: ‘Habitat enhancement...targeted pesticide use, improved colony management techniques and improved disease and pest resistant stocks of bees are collectively needed to improve the health of honey bee colonies.’”

As used in the passage, what does the phrase “**silver bullet**” mean?

- A) a complex solution
- B) an easy solution
- C) a pollinating bee
- D) a dangerous pesticide

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentences below.

Bees are an incredibly important part of our ecosystem on Earth—no matter how annoying they may be to humans. _____, bees have been disappearing around the world for some time now, and their mass disappearance continues to present new problems around the planet.

- A) Instead
- B) First
- C) However
- D) Finally

8. What has the mass deaths of honeybees been linked to?

9. List two reasons why the USDA and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) believe that “it is imperative that we increase honey bee survival.”

10. Explain the impact honeybees and humans have on each other. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Brown Onions

by W.M. Akers



There's a song called "Green Onions," by a band from the sixties named Booker T & the MG's. It's a fun little number with an organ and a little guitar. People have been dancing to it for decades. It's instrumental, with no words at all, but that didn't stop Erika's dad from singing along. He played the song every Friday night in the kitchen, singing words of his own invention as he danced in place. "Onions," he'd sing. "I'm gonna cook some onions. Car-me-lized onions, mmm, mmm, mmm, mmm onions."

Erika's dad was not much of a songwriter. He wasn't much of a singer, either, and his dancing left a lot to be desired. Watching him bounce back and forth in front of the stove, singing his weird little song, Erika thought she'd never seen someone who looked more like a *dad*. It was hard to watch, but it wasn't embarrassment that kept Erika out of the kitchen on Friday nights. It was the onions.

Erika hated onions.

Green, yellow, white or red, she thought they were the most disgusting vegetable in the supermarket. If a burger came with onions on it, she fed it to her brother. If someone put onions on her hot dog, she threw it in the trash. If a piece of onion even touched something on her plate, she was finished-not just with what the onion touched, but the whole meal. Crinkly, crispy, and foully bitter, she simply couldn't imagine a worse vegetable. And there was nothing worse than the smell, which made Erika think of a chemical plant explosion.

Erika's father, on the other hand, lived for onions. He put them on everything-salads and sandwiches, toast and eggs. He liked them raw and he liked them fried; he liked them roasted to a crisp. But there was no way of cooking onions that made him happier than the one he sang about every week: caramelized.

Caramelizing means to cook something on very high heat, so that the natural sugars inside turn dark and very sweet. It literally means to turn something into caramel, even though foods that have been caramelized don't taste the same way that caramel does.

"Caramelized onions taste smoky and rich and warm," Erika's dad would tell her. "They're much more than just sweet. Cook them long enough and they turn almost to jelly. You can put them on anything..." he would trail off and get a glassy look in his eye, and Erika could tell he was thinking about onions.

Cook them long enough, and caramelized onions really *do* turn into jelly. As they break down under the heat, they turn dark brown and get very soft. They get sweeter and sweeter, but never lose that funky aftertaste that disgusted Erika and drove her dad wild. He liked to cook his for as long as possible, which was a problem for Erika, because turning onions into jelly takes as long as an hour. No matter how long he cooked them, no matter how soft they got, he always figured they could go a little bit longer. On Fridays he would caramelize a whole bag of onions, enough to last him the whole week, and enough to make the whole house stink for days. It never failed to spoil Erika's weekend.

One Friday, she couldn't stand it anymore. When the first notes of "Green Onions" sounded, and her dad pulled a sack of onions out of the pantry, Erika stood her ground.

"Dad-quit it!"

"You don't like my song?"

"No! I hate your song. But not nearly as much as I hate your onions."

"You hate caramelized onions?" he asked, genuinely perplexed. "But, why?"

Erika wanted to sum up why they made her so angry, why they turned her stomach, why they were ruining her life. She could have ranted for an hour, but she was too angry to talk. All she could say was, "Because they're gross!"

"Have you ever tried them?"

"Well...no."

"Then how do you know they're gross?"

"Because they're brown and gooey, and they smell like old socks."

"I'll make you a deal. You try a cheeseburger with these onions on it, and if they're as bad as you say they are, I'll eat anything you want."

"Anything? Like a jar of paint?"

"It has to be food."

"So I could make you eat a big pile of anchovies with ketchup and sauerkraut?"

"If you hate the onions."

"Deal. Call me when they're ready."

"Ah, ah," said Dad, handing Erika a knife. "You've got to help me make them, too."

"What? !"

"If you watch it happen, I think you won't be so freaked out."

"Fine. How do we start?"

Erika's dad took her through the whole process, step by step. First, they sliced all the onions up, nice and thin. Then they put them into the biggest skillet they had, covered them, and turned the heat to medium-high.

"But, won't they burn?" she asked.

"Eventually. But we're not going to let that happen."

They stirred the onions every few minutes, making sure they didn't burn. When they started to stick to the pan and get kind of brown, her dad pulled out the olive oil.

"This is the cool part," he said. "Tip a little of this into the pan, add some salt, stir them around, and watch how fast they change color."

She tipped a little oil into the pan, added some salt, and stirred the onions around. Within seconds, the slightly brown onions had turned the color of mud.

"Whoa! Are they done?"

"Not hardly."

For the next half hour, they kept stirring every few minutes, and the onions got darker and darker. When they were almost the consistency of glue, Dad turned off the heat. He piled two cheeseburgers with onions and pushed one across to his daughter. She screwed her eyes shut and took a big bite. As she chewed, her face twisted into a grimace. Dad was shocked-she really hated them!

"Oh no," he said. "You look disgusted."

"I am. I don't like what I'm about to say."

"What?"

"Can I have some more onions?"

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What food does Erika hate?

- A. hot dogs
- B. burgers
- C. onions
- D. anchovies

2. How do Erika's feelings about onions change in the story?

- A. At first she hates onions, but then she asks for more on her burger.
- B. At first she loves onions, but then she doesn't like them on her burger.
- C. At first she does not have an opinion about onions, but then she loves them.
- D. Erika's feelings about onions do not change in the story. She always hates them.

3. Erika's father loves to cook caramelized onions. What evidence from the story best supports this conclusion?

- A. He eats cheeseburgers with caramelized onions.
- B. He says that caramelized onions are more than just sweet.
- C. He sings and dances when he cooks caramelized onions.
- D. He tells Erika that she has to help him cook the caramelized onions.

4. Erika states that caramelized onions are gross even though she has never tried them. She says she knows they are gross because "'they're brown and gooey, and they smell like old socks.'" Based on this evidence, what can be concluded about Erika's opinion of caramelized onions?

- A. Erika's opinion of caramelized onions is influenced by her bad experiences with onions.
- B. Erika's opinion of caramelized onions is influenced by her father's opinion.
- C. Erika's opinion of caramelized onions is based on the way they taste.
- D. Erika's opinion of caramelized onions is not based on the way they taste.

5. What is this story mostly about?

- A. Erika tries caramelized onions for the first time.
- B. Erika's dad likes to cook caramelized onions.
- C. Erika throws out hot dogs that have onions on them.
- D. Caramelized onions are Erika's father's favorite food.

6. Read the following sentences:

"Dad-quit it!"

'You don't like my song?'

'No! I hate your song. But not nearly as much as I hate your onions.'

'You hate caramelized onions?' he asked, genuinely **perplexed**. 'But, why?'"

As used in this sentence, what does the word "**perplexed**" most nearly mean?

- A. excited
- B. confused
- C. unhappy
- D. composed

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Erika's father loves onions and puts them on everything. _____, Erika thinks that onions are disgusting.

- A. For instance
- B. In conclusion
- C. Most importantly
- D. On the other hand

8. What does *caramelizing* mean?

9. What deal does Erika make with her father?

10. What does Erika most likely learn from her father at the end of the story? Use evidence from the passage to support your answer.

Reeds and Geese

This text and image are provided courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased with the Hollis Family Foundation Fund and the Henry B. Keep Fund, 2001-86-1

(detail) c. 1925 Ink and color on silk; mounted as a twelve-fold screen Six panels of a twelve-fold screen: 6 feet, 4 inches x 6 feet, 4 inches (193 x 193 cm)
Each end panel: 6 feet, 4 inches x 16 inches (193 x 41 cm) Each inner panel: 6 feet, 4 inches x 12 inches (193 x 30.5 cm) KIM JIN-WOO Korean, 1883-1950

Seven lively geese animate this Korean **screen painting**. The four in flight spread their wings in various ways and angle their necks in different directions. Their orange webbed feet poke out from underneath their gray feathered bodies. Below them lies a grassy shore, a body of water, and long, thin reeds at the water's edge. One goose dives for food, his feet and tail humorously sticking up out of the water.

These six vertical panels represent half of a twelve-panel screen painting, which was painted on silk and mounted on a wooden frame so that it would stand upright on the floor (see CD-ROM for additional images). The **theme** of reeds and geese has a special meaning in Korean culture. The Korean pronunciation of the **Chinese characters** for "reed" and "old man" are the same (*no*), as are the words for "geese" and "comfort" (*ahn*). Therefore, traditional Korean paintings of reeds and geese represent a wish for a peaceful life in a person's later years. Appropriately, the artist who painted this screen, Kim Jin-Woo, included an inscription on the upper left that states that he gave it to an elderly friend as a gift.

Kim also inscribed a poem and interspersed its **verses** throughout the painting. The poem, which is read from right to left, refers to changing seasons and flying geese. For example, one **couplet** reads, "The sand is bright, the water is blue, the moss and reeds grow long; This is the time when autumn geese get ready to depart."

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to the text, the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese character for geese is the same as the pronunciation of what word?

- A. comfort
- B. reed
- C. old man
- D. special

2. What does the text mainly describe?

- A. artist Kim Jin-Woo's relationship with the elderly friend to whom he gave this painting
- B. the history of Korean screen painting and poetry
- C. the images in the painting, their meaning, and the poem that appears in the painting
- D. similarities and differences between Korean and Chinese pronunciation of characters

3. The poem inscribed on the painting refers to changing seasons. Which line from the poem best supports this statement?

- A. The moss and reeds grow long.
- B. The sand is bright.
- C. The water is blue.
- D. This is the time when autumn geese get ready to depart.

4. Read these sentences from the text.

"Kim also inscribed a poem and interspersed its verses throughout the painting. The poem, which is read from right to left, refers to changing seasons and flying geese. For example, one couplet reads, 'The sand is bright, the water is blue, the moss and reeds grow long; This is the time when autumn geese get ready to depart.'"

Based on this information and the images in the painting, how might the relationship between the poem and the painting best be described?

- A. The poem helps explain the images and setting of the painting.
- B. The poem helps explain the pronunciation of the characters for "reeds" and "geese."
- C. The poem helps explain why the artist gave the painting to a friend.
- D. The poem helps explain the meaning of traditional Korean paintings.

5. What is the main idea of the text?

- A. Geese depart for warmer climates when the seasons change, and reeds bend over with age.
- B. Kim Jin-Woo was a generous artist who often made gifts of his paintings to elderly friends as they grew older.
- C. Poetry was often added to Korean screen paintings to create additional meanings.
- D. Kim Jin-Woo used a combination of word meanings, poetry, and images of nature to express a wish for peace and comfort in old age.

6. Read these sentences from the text.

"Seven lively geese animate this Korean screen painting. The four in flight spread their wings in various ways and angle their necks in different directions. Their orange webbed feet poke out from underneath their gray feathered bodies. Below them lies a grassy shore, a body of water, and long, thin reeds at the water's edge. One goose dives for food, his feet and tail humorously sticking up out of the water."

Why might the author have chosen the words "lively" and "animate" when describing the geese in the painting?

- A. to explain why the artist used six vertical panels
- B. to highlight the sense of movement in the painting
- C. to show how different geese are from old men
- D. to repeat the words from the poem that appear in the painting

7. The Korean pronunciation of the words for "reed" and "old man" are the same. _____, the pronunciation for "geese" and "comfort" is the same.

Support your answer with evidence from the text.

- A. However
- B. For example
- C. Similarly
- D. Therefore

8. According to the text, what do traditional Korean paintings of reeds and geese represent?

Support your answer with evidence from the text.

9. Read these sentences from the text.

"Kim also inscribed a poem and interspersed its verses throughout the painting. The poem, which is read from right to left, refers to changing seasons and flying geese."

Identify a line or phrase from the poem that refers to changing seasons.

10. Explain how the painting gives the sense of changing seasons.

Support your answer with evidence from the text and image.

An Unexpected Trip

by ReadWorks



Sarah wasn't quite sure what was going on. She had been sitting in the back of the car for hours as it rumbled up the highway's six spotless lanes. There were not many other cars. When they turned off the main highway, Sarah wasn't very worried. This was the way to the house her parents had far, far out in the country. She'd been before, for summers. Sometimes she got to bring her friend, Sam. Going to the house by itself did not worry Sarah. The chains rattling around the back seat next to her, though, were a different story.

Sarah's mom and dad had said not to worry and that everything was fine. If everything was fine, though, why had they gotten so upset when the phone had rung last night? This time of month, Sarah usually spent the night with her grandmother, watching old movies and eating popcorn that Grandma made on the stove in a pot (not in the microwave). It was delicious. She couldn't quite make out what her mom had been saying into the phone. Something like, "What do you mean, you can't come, Mom? I need you. No, you don't understand; it has to be tomorrow night!" Later, her mom and dad told her that Grandma wasn't coming, and that she'd have to come on a little car ride with them.

"Can I still have popcorn the way Grandma makes it?" Sarah had asked. Her parents had seemed nervous before, but when she asked this, they'd looked at each other and had a nice, loud laugh, collapsing into a hug.

"We'll see what we can do, ladyface," her dad said, giving her a kiss on the cheek.

Today her parents had woken her up very early in the morning. They'd told her they'd only be gone for a night but let her pack as many toys and movies as she wanted. Sarah was a little confused—normally one night meant two toys and two movies. Her mother was very strict about this, and Sarah had often gotten a stern talking-to when her mother found an extra game or stuffed animal packed in-between her sweaters.

Today, however, there weren't any toy restrictions. There were no restrictions on soda, junk food or TV watching. Her parents didn't seem to be paying much attention to her. They weren't doing much of

anything, actually, except staring out the windows as the flat countryside rolled past.

When they made it to the cottage, it seemed strange. It was fall, and what looked beautiful in the summertime seemed odd and spooky now. The friendly green trees had lost their leaves, and now had sharp-looking branches pointing in every direction. In summer, Sarah loved playing in the little barn-shaped garage. Today Sarah couldn't tell what was hiding in its shadows. She hurried out as soon as the car engine shut off.

True to their word, Sarah's parents made her popcorn as soon as they got to the house in the late afternoon. Her mom put one of her favorite movies on the TV, covered her in a blanket and sat in the kitchen. Her father brought things into the house, and then disappeared into the garage for a long time. She heard banging. She could not imagine what was going on. Eventually, she fell asleep.

When she woke up, the sun was setting. Her mom sat in a chair across the room, looking her in the face. It was not usual for Sarah's mom to be there when she woke up, lovingly looking into her eyes. Tonight she seemed nervous.

"Where's Dad?" Sarah asked, rubbing her eyes.

Her mom looked down, and twisted her fingers together. "Your dad . . . he has some things he has to do. Alone. We'll see him in the morning." Suddenly, she stood up. "Sarah, it's time for bed."

"Mom! It's not even dark out!"

"Sarah."

"And I'm not tired! I just woke up!"

"Don't argue with me!" Sarah's mom yelled. She hardly ever yelled. Sarah was a little scared. Mom let out a deep sigh. "Sarah, honey, we should go to bed. It's been a long day. I'll lie down with you."

They went to her room, and read books together. Sarah was not tired. They talked and read for a long time. Eventually, Sarah's mom fell asleep. Sarah tossed and turned, burrowing her head into her mom or rolling far across the bed. She decided she needed to walk around a bit. Her legs were crampy. Plus, she *had* had an awful lot of soda to drink. She got up to walk to the bathroom.

The bedroom door opened with a long, low creaking sound. All the lights in the house were off. Sarah could only see because of the big full moon shining through the windows. She put her hands on the wall, feeling her way forward, bumping into tables and tripping on shoes. Just as she got near the bathroom, she realized she could hear a sound. It was like a wailing, crying sound. It was like a dog that was hurt, but also somehow . . . different. Mixed in with the howls and yelps were the sounds of the chains rattling. Sarah remembered that sound—the one the chains next to her in the car made every time it hit a bump in the road. What was going on?

She realized the sound was coming from the garage, which connected to the house via a small door. As Sarah crept towards the door, the howling stopped. What was in there? It sounded hurt and afraid. Maybe Sarah could help it?

She eased open the door, which made its own low creak, like a very old ghost waking up in the morning. At first, Sarah saw nothing. Then out of the darkness, a huge shape lunged at her. It was

covered in wild, dark fur. It had a huge snout full of long, sharp teeth that snapped and trailed froth. It made the loudest sound Sarah had ever heard as it came at her. Then at the last minute, she heard the sound of chains, and the animal seemed to snap backwards. Sarah screamed as loud as she could. The thing came at her again and snapped back towards the wall a second time. Then a lot of things happened at once: Sarah heard her mom yell her name. She fell to the floor. Things started to go dark. Just before they did, Sarah noticed something very odd. The thing was wearing a torn up pair of red pants. "Just like my dad's," she thought as she drifted off.

The next morning, Sarah was in bed. Birds chirped. Sun streamed in the window. Had it all been a dream? Sarah stood up and went into the house. Everything looked normal. She smelled bacon and heard it sizzle and pop in the pan. She made her way to the kitchen where her mom was happily frying up eggs and bacon. The waffle maker was out too, sending steam up towards the ceiling. Her dad sat at the table sipping coffee. When he saw her come into the room, he put down the paper he was reading. He motioned for her to come over.

Sarah hesitated a little, and went over and sat. Her dad looked at her kindly. "Hey, ladyface," he said. "Do you know what a werewolf is?"

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Where do Sarah and her parents go?

- A. a movie theater
- B. a store that has stuffed animals
- C. a house in the country
- D. the house where Sarah's grandmother lives

2. What is the climax of the action in the story?

- A. Sarah's parents make her popcorn.
- B. Sarah falls asleep after her mom puts one of her favorite movies on the TV.
- C. Sarah's parents let her pack as many toys as she wants.
- D. A huge animal leaps at Sarah in the garage.

3. Read the following sentences: "Sarah's mom and dad had said not to worry and that everything was fine. If everything was fine, though, why had they gotten so upset when the phone had rung last night?"

What can be concluded from these sentences?

- A. Something may be wrong, but Sarah's parents do not want to talk about it.
- B. Last night a stranger called Sarah's home to give her mom and dad some good news.
- C. Sarah's mom and dad are cheerful people who never worry about anything.
- D. Sarah's mom and dad are worried about how much it will cost to go on a family trip.

4. How does Sarah feel on the trip she takes with her parents?

- A. confident and happy
- B. confused and scared
- C. angry and upset
- D. eager and hopeful

5. What is this story mainly about?

- A. making popcorn on the stove instead of in the microwave
- B. the car in which Sarah and her parents drive to a house in the country
- C. the special nights that a girl spends with her grandmother
- D. two parents who try to keep a secret from their daughter

6. Read the following sentences: "Going to the house by itself did not worry Sarah. **The chains rattling around the back seat next to her, though, were a different story.**"

What does the author mean by calling the chains in the back seat a different story?

- A. The author means that another story has already been written about the chains in the back seat.
- B. The author means that the chains worried Sarah.
- C. The author means that Sarah worries too much.
- D. The author means that Sarah is used to visiting the house in the country.

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Sarah is spending the night with her parents _____ she usually spends it with her grandmother at this time of the month.

- A. as a result
- B. before
- C. although
- D. such as

8. What happens after Sarah opens the door to the garage?

9. What does Sarah's dad ask her at the end of the story?

10. Why does Sarah's dad ask her whether she knows what a werewolf is? Support your answer with evidence from the story.

The Unknown Hall of Famer

Michael Stahl



New York City is famous for many things: pizza, Broadway shows, skyscrapers, and baseball. The New York Yankees are possibly the best-known sports team in the world. Baseball has been so popular in New York City that there have been four professional major league baseball teams, including the Yankees, that have made their homes in New York City since the beginning of the 20th century.

So many kids in New York have always wanted to play baseball. However, playing baseball can be difficult in such an urban setting if the game is going to look like the real thing. There needs to be a large grass field with a dirt diamond. The players need bases, bats, balls, and gloves to play with. In order to get a game of baseball going without having all of the required items, many New York City boys created their own version of baseball, one that would be played on the hard concrete streets. They would call it “stickball” because it could be played with a simple broomstick handle instead of a large, heavy bat. They’d use small, pink rubber balls instead of expensive hardballs made of leather and twine. Those kids, who were good, would incredibly one day find themselves in an actual Hall of Fame. George “Lolin” Osorio is one of those players.

Osorio’s family moved to Manhattan from his home in Puerto Rico when the ink on World War II peace treaties was still wet. In Puerto Rico, he was given his nickname because, as a very young boy, he was known to chase after a girl named Lola, so neighbors took to calling him the masculine form “Lolin” since the two always seemed to be together. At nine years old in New York City, he did not hesitate to immerse himself in the king of the street games—as long as his homework and chores were done. He and the other kids on his block would take to the streets in t-shirts and cut-off shorts to enjoy the “cheap game.” All they needed was one broomstick, a few rubber balls, and nine or so other guys from another block to prove themselves against.

“We’d play for a little money, five cents a game or a quarter when I was about ten years old,” Osorio says, recalling that if his team won, they’d often use their money to see a movie. Sometimes kids would save their winnings to buy two-dollar Puma sneakers, which were more desired than one-dollar Converse because they were better for running; plus, everyone knew they were twice as expensive.

“But really we played for bragging rights,” Osorio insists. “You were on the team from your block. You played for pride.”

“Lolin was one of the best because he always hit the ball hard on the ground, and was so fast that nobody could throw him out,” remembers Carlos Diaz, the curator of New York City’s Stickball Hall of Fame, of which Osorio is an esteemed member. “He was also very clutch and reliable. He could get a hit just about any time,” Diaz adds.

Osorio and his friends, who were all of Puerto Rican descent, would play stickball for hours; that is, until the Irish cops would show up. Though there were few cars driving through the city streets in those days and the rubber balls with which they played were as harmful to windows as a summer wind, many of the police officers would discover games and immediately order the kids to hand over their makeshift bats.

“I could never understand why they’d break up our stickball games,” Osorio says. “We played to stay out of trouble.”

For a time, Osorio remembers the cops slipping the sticks down into the sewer. But after the officer had moved along and the boys had faked disappointment long enough, one of the smaller kids would climb beneath street level into the muck and come up with the bat, covered in sludge. There was always an open fire hydrant somewhere they’d use to clean off the grime from both the bat and the brave boy.

“Then the cops got smart,” Osorio says. “They started taking our bats, hold them halfway down in the sewer’s grating and snap them in two.”

Still unafraid, Osorio and his block mates continued to play throughout their adolescence, traveling farther away from their neighborhood with each passing year, challenging players in various neighborhoods and having tons of fun.

A frequent teammate of Osorio’s, Alfred Jackson, another Stickball Hall of Fame member, remembers one particularly incredible shot struck by a rival of theirs named Tony Taylor. “He crushed the ball,” Jackson begins. “He hit it so hard that it went off the third-floor siding of a building, came down, bounced off a car, hit the building again. Then it hit a lamppost and ricocheted to one of our outfielders who caught it for an out. The ball was in fair territory the whole time!”

As Osorio's clan got older, more and more money was bet on their games. They can recall games played for upwards of three to five thousand dollars, with the victorious team getting a cut. Some players depended on winnings as a sort of additional income, so some teams felt pressured to win for their players' financial stability. Fans who had their own best interests in mind heckled batters trying hard to focus on a potentially game-changing pitch.

Still, money was not as important as the feelings of self-respect and community, which truly compelled Osorio to go outside and play each and every Sunday, even 24 hours after his wedding. "I got married on a Saturday," Osorio says. "We had a bunch of leftovers from the wedding in the refrigerator. The players' wives always made food for all of us, so I woke up and packed the leftovers to bring to the game," he laughs, adding with a shake of his finger, "My wife wasn't very happy about that."

In the late 1950s and throughout the '60s, Osorio made a living building clock radios—and, briefly, delivering zippers—but always found time to participate in the first organized stickball leagues that were emerging throughout Manhattan and beyond. Though he has continued to play, Osorio and his friends have seen the game nearly completely disappear.

"Not as many guys play anymore," says Carlos Diaz, who has tried for many years to revitalize stickball in New York City. "And most of the young ones that do play are sons and grandsons of the guys who played fifty or sixty years ago." Diaz's efforts include opening a gallery this past winter, giving the Stickball Hall of Fame a more permanent home.

No matter what, Osorio still finds himself out on the streets of New York City every Sunday playing the game he loves, around the guys that he loves, all of whom have respected, and even honored him, for decades.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is stickball?

- A) another name for baseball
- B) a traditional Puerto Rican game
- C) a version of baseball played in New York City
- D) a street game played with a hockey stick

2. What does the author describe in the passage?

- A) Osorio's troubled childhood in Puerto Rico
- B) the rules of stickball
- C) how Osorio got rich by playing stickball
- D) the origins and development of stickball

3. Stickball is a "cheap" game. What evidence from the text supports this statement?

- A) It can be played with minimal equipment.
- B) It can be played on concrete streets.
- C) It can be played for money.
- D) It was only played by poorer children.

4. What can be inferred from the following sentence: "Still, money was not as important as the feelings of self-respect and community, which truly compelled Osorio to go outside and play each and every Sunday, even 24 hours after his wedding."

- A) Money is the main reason Osorio plays stickball.
- B) Osorio really loves playing stickball.
- C) Osorio is not very fond of his wife.
- D) Osorio is not very religious.

5. What is this passage mainly about?

- A) the street game stickball and one of its best players
- B) the way New York City kids can adapt to difficult situations
- C) reasons why baseball is so popular in New York City
- D) how the Stickball Hall of Fame was built

6. Read the following sentence: "Osorio's family moved to Manhattan from his home in Puerto Rico when the **ink on World War II peace treaties was still wet.**"

Why does the author note that the "**ink on World War II peace treaties was still wet**" when Osorio's family moved to Manhattan?

- A) to show that Osorio's family moved a long time after World War II ended
- B) to show that Osorio's family moved right before World War II ended
- C) to show that Osorio's family moved right after World War II ended
- D) to show that Osorio's family moved a long time before World War II ended

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Police officers would break up games of stickball _____ Osorio and his friends were not causing any trouble.

- A) therefore
- B) even though
- C) primarily
- D) specifically

8. Why did children in New York City create their own version of baseball?

9. Why did Osorio play stickball as a child, and why does he continue to play as an adult?

10. How did stickball provide its players with a sense of community? Use information from the text to support your answer.

Across The Lake

W.M. Akers



“What’s do you think’s over there?” asked Bart.

“What do you mean?” said Patsy.

“On the other side of the lake. What do you think is over there?”

Patsy and Bart were sister and brother—twelve and eight years old. They were on vacation, but Patsy was bored out of her mind. Ever since Bart was born, their family had been coming to Lake Wenatchee, a crystal blue sheet which stretched as far as the eye could see. Ever since Bart was born, they had stayed in the same cabin, a musty old wreck just steps from where the water met the gritty beach. And ever since Patsy was 10, she had hated coming here.

The mosquitoes got bigger every year. By now they were larger, it seemed, than her fist. The humidity got worse, and the rain became more constant. If this is what people

meant by climate change, she thought, she was opposed to it. She spent most of the day reading in bed, stretched out on the scratchy blanket on the rock-hard mattress, wishing she was at home with her friends doing normal summer stuff: going to the mall, watching movies, eating popsicles in the park. She wished she was anywhere but Lake Wenatchee.

But there was nowhere else Bart wanted to be. He didn't mind the humidity, he found the constant rain soothing, and thought the giant mosquitoes were the most amazing animals he had ever seen. He didn't have time for reading on a scratchy blanket because he was in love with the lake. As soon as dawn broke, he was on its shore—building gritty sand castles from the gritty sand. He imitated the birds, trying to get their attention. He crept up on geckos, hoping they would want to play. He threw rocks in the water doing everything he could to entertain the fish. Bart loved nature—even if the towering mosquito bites that dotted his arms and legs were proof that nature didn't love him back.

“I bet the other side of the lake is even better than this side,” he said.

Trying to act interested, Patsy said, “What makes you say that?”

“It's tough to believe, I know, because this side is so unbelievably super perfect.

There are birds and lizards and mosquitoes and fish. But something in my gut tells me that it's even better over there.”

The summer before, Patsy and her mother had driven to the other side of the lake to buy shampoo at the drugstore. The other side of the lake was nothing too exciting: strip malls and gas stations, with a shopping mall in the middle. But before she told Bart the truth, she wanted to know what he was imagining. It would be more fun to burst his bubble that way.

“Describe it to me,” she said. “Tell me everything that’s on the other side of the lake.”

“Fish, obviously. But much bigger ones, I bet. The kind we saw at the natural history museum last year—like the super-underwater kind that have the little lamp hanging in front of their eyes. I bet there’s a whole bunch of those. And birds, too—obviously—but great big huge ones. Not just seagulls and stuff—falcons, hawks, and snowy owls.”

“And bald eagles, too, I bet.”

“Tons of them.”

“Do you know what they call a group of eagles?”

“I don’t know...a flock?”

“A convocation.”

“No way.”

“It’s true! I learned it in science class last year.”

“So if I went to the other side of the lake, I’d see a convocation of eagles?”

“And I bet that’s not all you’d see. What else?”

“Uh...I don’t know.” Bart tossed a rock into the lake and watched the ripples drift slowly to the dock. He was appearing to lose interest.

“Come on, Bart! Let your imagination run wild. Anything in the world could be over there. So what do you want to see?”

“Well, uh...an ice cream store.”

“What *kind* of ice cream store? The best one in the world?”

“Definitely.”

“What makes it the best one in the world?”

“Well, uh—all the ice cream costs 25 cents. And if you ask for a free sample, they give you a whole scoop. And they have all kinds of crazy flavors, like butternut peanut butter walnut, and triple chocolate marshmallow fluff surprise.”

“Triple chocolate marshmallow fluff surprise? What’s the surprise?”

“More marshmallow.”

Patsy felt her stomach give a rumble. “Huh. That actually sounds really good.”

“Of course. And next to the ice cream store is a roller coaster park.”

“And all the roller coasters are free?”

“Yep. And each one has a double loop-the-loop.”

“You’d better ride that before you go to the ice cream store, not after.”

“Good point.” Bart trailed off again, distracted by a snail. Patsy found herself strangely impatient. She wanted to know what else was on the other side of the lake.

“Is there anything that I will like?”

“You like ice cream.”

“Yeah, but what else?”

“Uh, I don’t know. I guess there’s probably a movie theater and stuff.”

“But I can see movies at home. What’s over there that’s special?”

“There’s a clothing store where they give you five free outfits, just for coming in the door. And all the clothes fit you perfectly, and the sales ladies are never mean to us, just because we’re kids.”

“Oh man, that sounds great.”

“Yeah! And...” Bart tried to remember what else his sister liked. “There’s a place where you can get free notebooks for school!”

“Really?”

“The really expensive kind, with the heavy paper and colorful covers and stuff. And you can have all the fancy pens you want!”

“That does sound nice...”

“Wait a minute! Didn’t you and Mom go over there last year? To buy shampoo or something?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, what was it like?”

Patsy remembered the strip malls and gas stations—a lake of concrete, where the humidity was unbearable and the mosquitoes, somehow, even bigger—and she looked at her brother’s hopeful, dreaming face.

“It was exactly like what you said,” she said. “Free ice cream and roller coasters and everything. Exactly like that.”

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. How does Patsy feel about Lake Wenatchee?

- A She loves it.
- B She hates it.
- C She enjoys it.
- D She's scared of it.

2. How does Patsy change in the story?

- A At first she wants to go home, but then she doesn't want to leave.
- B At first she wants to stay at the lake, but then she wants to leave.
- C At first she wants to upset her brother, but then she changes her mind.
- D At first she lies to her brother, but then she tells him the truth.

3. Bart has unrealistic ideas about what the other side of the lake is like. What evidence from the passage best supports this conclusion?

- A Bart thinks that the other side of the lake is even better than this side.
- B Bart loves the lake, and is up playing on the shore at the crack of dawn every day.
- C Bart imitates the birds, creeps up on geckos, and throws rocks for the fish.
- D Bart thinks the other side of the lake has snowy owls and a roller coaster park.

4. Read the following sentences: "The mosquitoes got bigger every year. By now they were larger, it seemed, than her fist." Based on this information, what can you conclude about Patsy?

- A Patsy thinks the negative aspects of the lake are not as bad as they actually are.
- B Patsy thinks the negative aspects of the lake are worse than they actually are.
- C Patsy is interested in animals, insects, and nature.
- D Patsy is scared that the mosquitoes will get bigger.

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A Patsy tells Bart that the other side of the lake is not exciting.
- B Bart enjoys being on vacation at Lake Wenatchee.
- C Patsy wishes she were at home with her friends.
- D Bart imagines what is on the other side of the lake.

6. Read the following sentences: “‘But something in my gut tells me that it’s even better over there.’ ... The other side of the lake was nothing too exciting: strip malls and gas stations, with a shopping mall in the middle. But before she told Bart the truth, she wanted to know what he was imagining. It would be more fun to **burst his bubble** that way.”

As used in this sentence, what does the phrase “**burst his bubble**” mean?

- A lie to him
- B make something up
- C destroy his fantasy
- D tell the truth

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Bart thinks that the other side of the lake is exciting and magical, _____ Patsy knows that it is really unexciting.

- A but
- B so
- C for example
- D after

8. Where has Patsy’s family gone on vacation since Bart was born?

9. Describe what Bart says is on the other side of the lake when Patsy asks, "Is there anything that I will like?"

10. Explain why Patsy may have decided not to burst her brother's bubble and tell him about the reality of the other side of the lake at the end of the story. Use evidence from the story to support your answer.
