English International

I

Did you know that there are more than 750 million speakers of English in the world today? This is almost one quarter of the people in the whole world!

II

Here is some more important information. There are more non-native speakers of English in the world than native speakers of English. This means that more people speak English as a second or foreign language than as a first language!

III

Yet, English is a relatively new language. Did you know that when Julius Caesar landed in Britain over two thousand years ago English did not exist? Even at the end of the 16th century, only about six million people spoke English and all of these people lived in Britain itself. The English language was not important to the rest of the world.

IV

Then things changed. Around the year 1600. English speakers began to travel all over the world. They travelled with armies, navies, merchants and explorers. Of course, these people spoke their language wherever they went.

V

Today, about 350 million people speak English as a first language. There are also about 400 million people who speak English although English is not their first language. This is true in places like India, where English is a second language, and Israel, where English is taught as a foreign language.

VI

Most of the world's letters, e-mails, cables and faxes are in English. English is the language of technology from the Silicon Valley in California to Shanghai, China. It is the language of computers everywhere you go. It is the language for business all over Europe, Japan and the Middle East. English is the language of sports, beauty and pop music. English is the language of the Olympic Games and the Miss Universe contest.

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VII

Today English is used worldwide. A Japanese businessman learns English to do business in Brazil. A Russian scientist learns English to do research in Germany. An Arab doctor learns English to work as a doctor in Amsterdam. An Italian pilot learns English to talk to ground control in Spain or Israel. It is said that people anywhere in the world are at a disadvantage if they do not know how to speak English. English is the language of our planet, the first truly global language of all time!

VIII

So, you see, it doesn't matter where you were born or what your accent is. English is your language, too!

Choose the correct answers:

1. English is spoken mostly by ... (lines 1-5)
   a. native speakers.
   b. non-native speakers.
   c. merchants.

2. How many people spoke English at the end of the 16th century? (lines 6-10)
   a. about sixty million
   b. about six million
   c. about sixteen million

3. English spread as a result of ... (lines 11-13)
   a. business and travel.
   b. contests and business.
   c. travel and contests.

4. In India, English is spoken as ... (lines 14-17)
   a. a first language.
   b. a second language.
   c. a foreign language.

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5. In Israel, English is taught as ... (lines 14-17)
   a. a first language.
   b. a second language.
   c. a foreign language.

6. "It" in line 20 refers to ...
   a. technology.
   b. language
   c. English.

7. Businessmen learn English in order ... (lines 24-32)
   a. to do business around the world.
   b. to do business in their country
   c. to do business in England.

8. English is the language of (lines 24-32)
   a. business.
   b. contests.
   c. both a and b.

9. Which word in the first paragraph means "¼": _____

10. Which word in paragraph 7 means "all over the world": _____