Six to Eight Black Men by David Sedaris

I. Listen to and read the first part of the humorous essay by Sedaris and choose the correct answer.

I've never been much for guidebooks, so when trying to get my **bearings / earrings** in some strange American city, I normally start by asking the cab driver or hotel clerk some silly question **rewarding / regarding** the latest census figures. I say silly because I don't really care how many people live in Olympia, Washington, or Columbus, Ohio. They're nice **and rough / enough** places, but the numbers mean nothing to me. My second question might have to do with the average annual rainfall, which, again, doesn't tell me anything about the people who have chosen to call this place **hole / home.**

What truly interests me are the local **gum / gun** laws. Can I carry a **concealed / unsealed** weapon, and if so, under what circumstances? What's the **waiting / vetting** period for a tommy gun? Could I buy a Glock 7 if I were recently divorced or **hired / fired** from my job? I've learned from experience it is best to lead into this subject as delicately as possible, especially if you and the local citizen are alone and enclosed in a relatively small area. **Bite / Bide** your time, though, and you can walk away with some excellent stories, I've learned, for example, that the blind can legally hunt in both Texas and Michigan. From an equal-opportunity standpoint, I suppose it's only fair but still I find it more than a little unsettling. In Texas the blind hunters must be accompanied by a **sighted / slighted** companion but in Michigan they're allowed to go it alone. Which **rises / raises** the question: how do they find whatever it is they've just shot? In addition to that, how do they get home? Are the Michigan blind **allowed /aloud** to drive as well? I ask about guns not because I want one of my own but because the answers **very / vary** so widely from state to state. In a country that's become increasingly homogeneous, I'm reassured by these last charming touches of regionalism.

Guns aren't really an **issue / essay** in Europe, so when I'm traveling abroad, my first question usually relates to barnyard animals. "What do your roosters say?" is a good icebreaker, as every country has its own unique interpretation. In Germany, where dogs bark "vow vow," and both the frog and the duck say "quack," the rooster **greets / grits** the **dawn / lawn** with a **hardly / hearty** "kik-a-ricki." Grecian roosters crow "kiri-a- kee,"* and in France they scream "coco-rico," which sounds like an order for one of those horrible premixed cocktails with a pirate on the label. When told that an American rooster says "cock-a-doodle-doo," my **posts / hosts** look at me with disbelief and **piety / pity**.

"When do you open your Christmas **presents / presence**?" is another good question as I think it explains a lot about national character. People who traditionally open gifts on Christmas Eve seem a bit more pious and family oriented than those who wait until Christmas morning. They go to mass, open presents, eat a **late / great** meal, return to church the following morning, and **devote / denote** the rest of the day to eating another big meal. Gifts are generally **deserved / reserved** for children, and the parents tend not to go overboard. It's nothing I'd want for myself, but I suppose it's fine for those who prefer food and family to things of real value.

In France and Germany, gifts are **estranged / exchanged** on Christmas Eve, while in the Netherlands the children open their presents on December 5, in celebration of Saint Nicholas Day. It sounded sort of **quaint / quail** until I spoke to a man named Oscar, who filled me in on a few of the details as we walked from my hotel to the Amsterdam train station.

*although Mr Sedaris is of Greek descent, he got the sound of Greek roosters wrong; it's "kikirikoo" or "kikirikikee"

II. Listen to the second and third part of the essay then drag and drop the presents in the right Saint Nicholas's sack.

	the USA	the Netherlands		the USA	the Netherlands
Name		Sinterklaas	Mode of Transportation		
Body Type			Companions		
Preferred Outfit			Gifts Left In		
Previous Employment			Gifts Opened On		
Marital Status			Reward For Being Nice		
Current Place of Residence			Punishment For Being Naughty		

boat & white horse | December 5th | None | Elves | clogs/ shoes by fireplace | sled pulled by eight flying reindeer | Pope's hat like the Pope's | North Pole | married | very thin

Bishop's cap/ turkey | Six to eight black men | Santa Claus | presents | stocking hung on mantel | (pretend) kicking & beating, stuffing in sack, taking to Spain | Coal instead of gift | Spain | December 25th

obese | presents | red & white suit | single

In our more enlightened times, there has been much criticism towards the racist undertones of the Dutch "Black Pete" tradition. Click here to read about the controversy.