



pour boiling water or tar on their visitors.

To reach the stone, I had to scramble up 160 steps around a circular staircase. The steps were built too narrow so only one attacker could advance up them at a time - a great idea for the ancient lords but a bad one for modern-day tourists, especially when we had to squeeze by folks heading down.

A stone walkway runs around the top of the castle offering a panoramic view of the lush green countryside. I spent a few minutes enjoying the view until I spotted a sign: "Blarney Stone". I headed over and observed the unusual goings-on. One does not just kiss the stone; there is a ritual to follow.

First I emptied my pockets. Then I lay on my back and with a guard holding my feet I bent backward down a shaft - with only a grate separating me from a five-story fall – until I could smack the magic stone. Was it worth all those contortions? I'm now one of a select group of several million or so who have a document certifying their eloquence.

1. When was Blarney Castle built?

- A Four centuries ago.
- B Over 500 years ago.
- C In the 1500's.
- D 1500 years ago.

2. What was the author's complaint about the stairs in the castle?

- A There were too many.
- B They were too old and dangerous.
- C They weren't wide enough.
- D They were too steep.

3. How did the soldiers defend the castle?

- A By pouring hot water or tar on them.
- B By squeezing up the narrow staircase.
- C By throwing sharp pieces of stones.
- D By attracting visitors inside the walls of the castle and battling with them.

Read the text.

Choose one of the variants A, B, C or D.

There is something every visitor to Ireland must do – kiss the Blarney Stone. On my first visit to Ireland last fall, I accomplished this. On the way to Blarney Castle, our guide tried to discourage us from climbing to the top of the five-story castle where the stone is located. However, I was not to be deterred. Entering the 15th century castle, it was obvious that it was built as a fortress, not a tourist attraction. The walls are 18 feet thick at the base, and the battlements at the top allowed the defenders to

4. Which statement is true?

- A The Blarney Stone has magical powers.
- B The castle was designed to attract tourists.
- C The use of the castle has changed over time.
- D The Blarney Stone has been relocated to make it easier to find.

5. How did the author learn to kiss the Blarney Stone?

- A He read the instructions.
- B His tour guide taught him how.
- C He watched other people kiss it.
- D It was obvious. No one had to show him.

6. Which word best describes how the author felt about the visit?

- A Depressed.
- B Enthusiastic.
- C Relaxed.
- D Puzzled.