

READING COMPREHENSION

Main Idea (Part 1)

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Trim. #: _____
LIST #: _____ - _____

I. DIRECTIONS: Read the passages and write the letter of the best option next to the number.

1. _____ Read the passage.

Blooms in Death Valley

In March 2016, Death Valley National Park in California experienced a rare occurrence: thousands of yellow wildflowers covered the region in a "super bloom." Why was this unusual? Death Valley is the hottest and driest place in North America. The area's average yearly precipitation is just two inches, making it a challenging place for flowers to grow. However, in October 2015, the valley had received more than three inches of rain in some areas. As a result of the unusually wet season, wildflower seeds that had been lying dormant underground suddenly began to grow, producing an abundance of golden blooms.

What is the main idea of the passage?

- A) Because of an unusual amount of rain, thousands of wildflowers grew in Death Valley in 2016.
- B) Because of the hot, dry conditions in Death Valley, it is difficult for flowers to grow there.

2. _____ Read the passage.

African Wild Dogs: Ultimate Predators?

Many books, papers, and television shows have created an image of the African wild dog as the ultimate predator. According to these sources, the dogs' coordinated teamwork and their unusual endurance help them catch about eighty percent of their prey. A 2012 study tested that notion. Researchers fit a pack of wild dogs with special collars that recorded the dogs' positions and speeds. The data that the collars recorded allowed the researchers to learn what the dogs did when they weren't being observed. The results provided a surprising contrast with the dogs' fierce reputation. The dogs never used teamwork in their hunts; they chased their prey over short distances as opposed to long runs; and instead of eighty percent, they brought down only about sixteen percent of their prey.

What is the main idea of the passage?

- A) African wild dogs have a reputation as fierce hunters who work in teams, but new data suggests otherwise.
- B) A study shows that African wild dogs catch about sixteen percent of their prey and do not use teamwork in hunting.

3. _____ Read the passage.

Saving the Rhinos

Poachers in Africa are killing large numbers of rhinos for their horns. Rhinoceros horns, valued for use in traditional medicines in Vietnam and China, can fetch as much as thirty-six thousand dollars a pound. Officials have tried to protect the rhinos: they have created fenced areas for the animals, patrolled their habitats, and even tried removing their horns. Despite these efforts, the number of rhinos in Africa has been dwindling. One creative solution to the poaching problem is to remove the rhinos from Africa altogether. Ray Dearlove, the founder of the Australian Rhino Project, came up with a plan to relocate eighty rhinos to a safari park outside Adelaide, Australia, where a breeding herd can be established.

What is the main idea of the passage?

- A) Officials have tried to protect African rhinos from poachers by guarding their habitats and removing their horns, but their efforts have been largely unsuccessful.
- B) Because other attempts to protect African rhinos from poachers have failed, the Australian Rhino Project is relocating the rhinos to Australia.

4. _____ Read the passage.

To Stand or Not to Stand?

In 2016, Vallecito Elementary School in San Rafael, California, became the first U.S. school to replace all of its ordinary desks with raised desks that students stand at. Speaking to a reporter from *TIME for Kids* magazine, one student at the school gave the standing desks high praise. "You feel happier, you're less tired, and you're more active," she said. According to several studies, children working at standing desks burn more calories and are more focused on tasks. However, some teachers and parents are opposed to the change. They are concerned that standing for long periods of time could cause fatigue, strain on the legs and feet, or posture problems. In addition, standing desks are more expensive than seated desks. Only time will tell whether standing desks will prove to be the next big trend or a failed experiment.

What is the main idea of the passage?

- A) Studies have shown that standing desks help students focus on their schoolwork while being more active.
- B) Some people say that standing desks promote good study habits, but others are wary about the new desks.

5. _____ Read the passage.

The Importance of Japan's Cherry Blossoms

In the northeastern United States, autumn is particularly colorful. Leaves change from green to red and orange, and many Americans take scenic fall foliage trips. In Japan, a similar phenomenon takes place in the spring. Cherry trees erupt in a shower of pink, and the entire country celebrates the arrival of *sakura*, or cherry blossoms. Though autumn leaves are admired in the United States, they are seen as just a pretty seasonal display. In Japan, on the other hand, cherry blossoms have much greater significance; the flowers are deeply rooted in Japan's culture and philosophy. Since as far back as the eighth century, *sakura* have symbolized change and beauty, new beginnings, and the circle of life. The blossoms have been celebrated in Japanese paintings, poems, and tea ceremonies for centuries.

What is the main idea of the passage?

- A) Japan's spring cherry blossoms often serve as symbols of change or new beginnings in works of Japanese art or literature.
- B) Americans appreciate the colorful leaves of fall, but the Japanese view the cherry blossoms of spring as part of their culture.