

Tennis started in France nearly 1000 years ago. The game was originally played in the courtyards of royal palaces, using the walls (like squash) rather than a net. One of the Grand Slam tournaments takes place in Wimbledon every year. *The Tournament* or *The Fortnight*, as the British call the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, is very important to the English.

So here you are, standing in the queue to buy your ticket to watch the matches. Everybody is waiting for their turn to get inside. Nobody is pushing. If you are English, you will have all the necessary things with you: a thermos of tea (of course), a folding chair and (surprise, surprise) an umbrella!

At last you go through the gates, and you discover the atmosphere. People are sitting under their umbrellas enjoying the British weather. The atmosphere is calm and controlled. You feel as if you are in a select private club – and, in fact, you are. The gardens are superb (well, you are in England...). Every year 3,500 geraniums are planted!

What is so special about Wimbledon? Well, it is the oldest tournament in the world, and the last of the big four championships to be played on natural grass. The American, Australian and French Championships are played on cement, artificial grass and clay. All the players must dress only in white. Wimbledon is free from sponsorship, which makes it different from almost all other sporting events. This means that there are no advertising banners around the courts. The people who come to watch the matches, compared to those who watch many other international tournaments, are well disciplined. You can only sometimes hear shouts or whistles when a player prepares to serve. And if any spectator behaves badly, he or she may be asked to leave.

You think that the English are very serious tennis fans. But if you want a good place, you may well find one around 4 p.m. Where has everybody gone? Look in the tents: they are having strawberries and tea. After all, tennis is just one of many traditions, and the English like to continue them all – especially tea!

(Adapted from *I Love English*, 1994)

1. *The Fortnight* is _____
- A. another name for the Grand Slam tournaments.
 - B. the original name for a game similar to squash.
 - C. the name of one of the two Wimbledon tournaments.
 - D. another name for the Wimbledon Championships.

2. To enter Wimbledon you have to _____.
A. wait in a line of people.
B. book the tickets earlier.
C. have your own chair.
D. belong to the club.
3. Which of these sentences is true?
A. Most of the courts at Wimbledon have artificial grass.
B. Only the Wimbledon tournament is played on natural grass.
C. The Wimbledon championships are played on cement or clay.
D. All four Grand Slam Tournaments are played on natural grass.
4. Spectators at Wimbledon _____.
A. never behave badly during a match.
B. leave when a player serves badly.
C. do not often shout during a match.
D. are given special discipline rules.
5. It is easier to find a seat at 4 o'clock because _____.
A. English spectators go to some special tents.
B. it is an English tradition to go home for tea.
C. most of the spectators leave Wimbledon.
D. serious tennis fans come in the morning.
6. The text is mainly about _____.
A. the most popular sports in England.
B. the history of tennis championships.
C. the tennis tournaments at Wimbledon.
D. different English customs and traditions.

Have you heard of *mushers*? They are people who drive dog sledges. Every year, on the first Saturday in March, 60 to 75 teams of mushers from around the world start the *Iditarod*, Alaska's famous sled-dog race. The race goes from Anchorage to the city of Nome.

How did the *Iditarod* start? In 1925, there was a diphtheria epidemic in Nome. Serum was sent from Anchorage to protect Nome's children. But it was very far. The serum was transported by train as far as possible. But then the train lines stopped. There were still 625 miles to cross in a cold, hostile environment. There was only one solution. The first dog team left on January 28th, with temperatures of -45°C! Men and their dogs transported the serum, warming it occasionally. On February 2nd, the serum finally arrived in Nome. Hundreds of children were saved.

The *Iditarod* was started in 1973 to commemorate this. The route is symbolically 1049 miles long: 1000 (a round number) plus 49 (Alaska is the 49th U.S. state). The race starts in Anchorage: a team leaves every two minutes. There are more than twenty checkpoints on the *Iditarod*, some in Eskimo villages. The mushers' dogs are Huskies, Malamutes and Samoyeds. These dogs love to run, to make their masters happy, and their masters want to come first in the race.

The lead dogs are the ones who best obey the mushers' commands. They are generally the mushers' favorites. When the dogs are not running, they live outside, attached on long chains near a dog house. Many mushers raise their own dogs. Others borrow or rent them. A musher knows all his dogs' names and he sometimes has 150 dogs!

The mushers come from England, Germany, Japan, France, Australia and the U.S. They travel across mountains, the frozen Yukon River, forests and ice fields, all in the horrible cold. With temperatures of -55°C, the mushers have to wear warm clothes. They do it for the love of it, but there are many dangers, too: dangers of being lost, getting stuck in the snow, bad weather, and animals that can attack the dogs. The race is difficult. But to the people who do the *Iditarod*, the Alaskan silence is the most beautiful sound in the world. They really enjoy it.

(Adapted from *I Love English*, 1995)

1. The *Iditarod* is a race in which 60-75 _____.
 - A. people from the area take part.
 - B. children from Nome take part.
 - C. organised groups take part.
 - D. types of dogs take part.

2. The serum to protect the children got to Nome _____.
 - A. by two means of transport.
 - B. with the help of dogs only.
 - C. by passenger train only.
 - D. by medical inland post.
3. The *Iditarod* teams leave _____.
 - A. all at the same time.
 - B. one after another.
 - C. two per minute.
 - D. two at a time.
4. The mushers _____.
 - A. rarely know their dogs' names.
 - B. do not need to have their own dogs.
 - C. always borrow their dogs.
 - D. always have their own dogs.
5. The people who take part in the *Iditarod* like _____.
 - A. dealing with difficulties.
 - B. the changing weather.
 - C. the peace and quiet.
 - D. being in danger.
6. Which of these is the best title for the text?
 - A. *Saving the Children of Nome*
 - B. *Alaskan Hunting Expedition*
 - C. *Lost in the Snow*
 - D. *On Their Way to Win*



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Ever since a Polish Jew invented Esperanto in 1887 in the hopes of fostering a cross-cultural community, cynics have mocked it as an idealistic cult for linguistic weirdos. Yet for such an ambitious and unlikely idea it has earned its share of notoriety. Iraq's only Esperanto teacher was expelled during the regime. And billionaire benefactor George Soros owes his prosperity to the idea: he defected from Communist Hungary at the 1946 World Esperanto Congress in Switzerland.

To hear a growing number of enthusiasts tell it, the language's most glorious days may actually lie ahead. Though **numbers** are hard to come by – and those available are hard to believe (the Universal Esperanto Society – UES – estimates 8 million speakers) – the language may be spreading in developing nations in Africa, Asia and South America.

"Because of the Internet, we have seen a vast improvement in the levels of competent speakers in places like China and Brazil," says Humphrey Tonkin, the former president of the Universal Esperanto Association.

Meanwhile, a small community of diehards has been lobbying to make it the official language of the European Union. Indeed, Esperanto seems perfect for a modern age, when global barriers are being torn down by free trade, immigration and the Internet.

The renewed enthusiasm for the language was on display in Gothenburg, Sweden, at the 88th annual World Esperanto Congress. Some 1,800 members of the Universal Esperanto Association – from places as varied as Japan, Israel, Nepal and Brazil – conversed in what sounds like a mixture of overenunciated Italian and softly spoken Polish. Organizers say attendance outstripped last year's meeting by almost 20 percent. Meanwhile, the number of Esperanto home pages has jumped from 330 in 1998 to 788 in 2003.

So what's the big appeal? Unlike that other global language, Esperanto puts everyone on a level playing field; native English speakers make up only 10 percent of the world population, but they expect everybody else to be as articulate as they are. "Throughout Asia, for example, people are conscious of the language problem because they all speak different languages," says John Wells, professor of phonetics at University College London. "Some are questioning whether they have to use English as their language for wider communication or whether there is some other possible solution."

The majority of Esperanto speakers still live in Europe, where the language was invented by Ludovic Zamenhof, under the pseudonym Doktoro Esperanto (meaning "one who hopes"). Back in his time, people were drawn to Esperanto because it is five times easier to learn than English and ten times simpler than Russian.

Nowadays, European Esperanto speakers tend to be older throwbacks of the cold-war era – though, as sources report, students in Poland and Hungary can still earn PhD's in the language. Many believe the popularity of the language in the developing world is being fueled by growing resentment of English as the language of global commerce and political rhetoric. "Bush and Blair have become Esperanto's best friends," jokes Probal Dasgupta, professor of linguistics at India's University of Hyderabad. "Globalization has put a wind in our sails, making it possible for people to have interest in Esperanto as not only a language, but a social idea." Similar hopes have been voiced from the moment Zamenhof first came up with his egalitarian lingo. But in today's rapidly shrinking world, the timing couldn't be better.

(Abridged from *Newsweek*, August 2003)

1. In the first paragraph, the writer mentions _____.
 - A. two people who survived thanks to Esperanto.
 - B. the name of the man who invented Esperanto.
 - C. the year when Esperanto gained popularity.
 - D. the idea that lay behind Esperanto.
2. From the first paragraph, we can infer that George Soros _____.
 - A. was one of the participants at the 1946 World Esperanto Congress in Switzerland.
 - B. became very rich thanks to Esperanto.
 - C. didn't approve of the idea of using Esperanto as a substitute for his native language.
 - D. left the Hungarian Communist party so that he would be free to use Esperanto.
3. The word "**numbers**", in paragraph two, refers to _____.
 - A. Esperanto users all over the world.
 - B. members of the Esperanto Society.
 - C. Internet users who learn Esperanto.
 - D. speakers of Esperanto in Asia.
4. What do you learn about the 88th World Esperanto Congress?
 - A. The people present in Gothenburg practised a variety of languages.
 - B. The participants were encouraged to set up new Esperanto websites.
 - C. The number of its participants exceeded the number present the year before.
 - D. The participants had an opportunity to see different displays organized there.
5. Which of these facts is not mentioned as an advantage that Esperanto has over English?
 - A. Nobody is privileged to be a native speaker of Esperanto.
 - B. Esperanto is not as hard to learn as the English language.
 - C. English is much more difficult to pronounce than Esperanto.
 - D. More and more people reject English as a global language.
6. In the last paragraph, the author of the article _____.
 - A. explains why Esperanto is spoken mainly by the older generation of Europeans.
 - B. expresses his belief that it is very good time for Esperanto to become widely used.
 - C. analyses the efforts made by some politicians, aimed at popularising Esperanto.
 - D. gives reasons why Esperanto should be treated only as a means of communication.