

Reading

1 Read the text and choose the correct answers.

Get the message?

Your mobile phone vibrates in your pocket. 'Need to see you,' reads the screen. Nothing new, considering that texting is currently the most common form of long-distance communication. But how were messages conveyed in the past?

One of the first methods was the smoke signal. This practice was used by Chinese soldiers guarding the Great Wall to warn of the enemy's approach. The Greeks devised a whole alphabet of smoke signals for sending messages. But it was Native Americans who made the system mobile by carrying small bunches of dried grasses around with them. These could be lit quickly from any place at any time.

Moving on to messages transmitted by sound, an early technique was the drum. Drums are still used today in the rainforests of Africa, Papua New Guinea and Central and South America for broadcasting news. The instrument is made from a hollow log and this is hit with a stick. On receiving the message, each village passes it on to the next, which means that news can travel at up to 150 km an hour.

Another instrument traditionally used for long-distance communication is the alphorn. These four-metre long wooden horns were common in most mountainous regions of Europe and their deep rich sound could be heard over 6 km away. Farmers would use them to send messages across the valley as well as to call in their cows. Today, the alphorn is a form of entertainment, and Switzerland alone has around 4,000 players.

In some parts of the world, humans are able to convey messages over long distances without using instruments. On La Gomera, one of the Canary Islands, people use Silbo, or the 'whistling language' to communicate across the valleys. The language involves the use of the tongue, lips and hands to make sounds, which can travel up to 5 km. To ensure its continuation, Silbo is currently a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools on the island.

A look at long-distance communication would not be complete without mentioning the art of yodelling. This is a form of singing, in which the voice changes pitch very quickly, making it easily heard over long distances. It is believed that the technique was developed in the Swiss Alps, but it is also found in other places such as Central Africa. At one time, yodelling was popular in theatres and music halls, but this is no longer so.

1 What was most remarkable about the Greeks' system of smoke signals?

- A It could communicate words.
- B It could be used instantly.
- C It could distract the enemy.
- D It could stop wars from breaking out.

2 What is the advantage of communicating by drum?

- A The length of the message.
- B The simplicity of the instrument.
- C The speed of the transmission.
- D The volume of the sound.

3 Which of the statements about the alphorn is FALSE?

- A An alphorn is the approximate length of two tall people.
- B Alphorns could be found in one particular continent.
- C Farmers used them just for communication.
- D The art of playing the alphorn is still alive today.

4 How do the people of La Gomera make the sounds of Silbo?

- A With an instrument.
- B With their mouths and their hands.
- C With their mouths only.

D With their tongues only.

5 What would be an accurate definition of 'yodelling'?

A Moving frequently between high and low notes.

B Shouting in a loud voice.

C Singing a recognisable tune in harmony.

D Using music with a really strong beat.

2 Read the extracts from articles written by travel writers. Match the extracts with each sentence. There is one extract that matches two sentences.

1 ____

Elizabeth seemed like an ordinary person – just another old lady sitting on the deck of a cruise ship. I wouldn't have started talking to her if I hadn't noticed that everyone on the ship knew her name: from the captain to the cleaners. Elizabeth told me that she'd moved into a cabin on the cruise ship nine years earlier, and had never left. Elizabeth pays £4,000 a month to stay on the ship – about the same as a hotel room on land. But the ship has great food and entertainment, and Elizabeth sees the world!

2 ____

It was 3 a.m., and I just wanted to sleep. But the people cleaning the departure lounge had other ideas.

'You can't stay here. You have to move!'

I wanted to say, 'Look, if a hurricane hadn't hit Cuba, they wouldn't have cancelled my flight – and I wouldn't be trying to sleep on your floor. Does it look like I'm having fun?'

But, of course, I just picked up my things, walking back to the all-night airport café. It was my third cup of coffee that night, and I wasn't feeling very good. 'If anyone else tells me to move,' I thought, 'I'll scream!'

3 ____

I was sitting on a flight to São Paulo, enjoying a film, when someone cried, 'Look! The engine's caught fire!' Moments later, the captain made an announcement.

'Ladies and gentlemen, both our engines have stopped. We're trying to start them, so please stay calm.'

Calm – we were falling out of the sky! People began to scream. The cabin crew rushed around. I cried! Then suddenly, the left engine came back to life.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' the captain announced, sounding happier this time, 'we're going to land in Senegal, West Africa. I hear it's nice at this time of year.'

4 ____

On our first day in New York, we went for a walk through Central Park, sitting on a bench to eat hotdogs. Then we left the park, planning to go to the Empire State Building. We were walking down Fifth Avenue, enjoying the sunny weather, when my Mum suddenly cried, 'Oh no. I've left our bag in the park.'

'My camera is in that bag!' Megan said. 'It wouldn't have happened if you'd been more careful,' Dad said. But I just said, 'Let's stop blaming Mum and go back to the park.' And luckily someone had found our bag and hidden it behind the bench, thinking we might come back for it.

In this article, the writer

E tells his/her family to do something.

F has to wait a long time in an uncomfortable place.

G visits a different country because of a problem.

H becomes angry that he / she has to do something.

I gives reasons why a person chooses to stay somewhere.