

Main Idea of a Passage *

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I. DIRECTIONS: Read the passages, then write the correct answer in the space before the number.

1. Read the passage.

Supporting Biliteracy

There are many good reasons to learn a second language. A second language can improve your understanding of your native language, open the door to new job opportunities, and help you learn about other cultures. Yet American students are less likely than European students to study foreign languages in school. To address this gap, several states have begun doing more to encourage biliteracy—the ability to read and write in two languages. California, New York, and Illinois are among the states that have passed laws establishing a state "Seal of Biliteracy." A Seal of Biliteracy shows that a student has achieved proficiency in a second language. Supporters of the seals say that they honor the importance of second-language learning. The seals also provide colleges and future employers with evidence of students' abilities.

What is the main idea of the passage?

- A) Although second-language learning is important, students in the United States are less likely than those in Europe to learn a second language.
- B) Fewer American students than European students learn a second language, so some states are promoting the study of foreign languages.

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

3. Read the passage.

Making Towers Bird-Friendly

The lights on tall communication towers warn pilots to avoid the towers when flying at night. Unfortunately, the steady red lights often used on towers have the opposite effect on birds: the bright beams attract and confuse them. Instead of avoiding the lights, the birds fly directly toward them, crashing into the towers or becoming entangled in power lines. Millions of birds have died this way. However, there is a solution. Unlike steady lights, flashing or blinking lights don't attract birds. In response to demands from conservation groups, the Federal Aviation Administration in 2016 began requiring communication towers in the U.S. to use blinking lights instead of steady ones.

What is the main idea of the passage?

- A) Birds are attracted to the steady red lights on communication towers.
- B) To save birds, communication towers have begun using blinking lights.

4. Read the passage.

What's Beneath Your Plane?

As Shane Loeffler, a geology student at the University of Minnesota, was flying home from Europe, he looked down at the landscape and began to wonder what he was flying over. He realized that a plane flight would be a good opportunity for people to learn about the geological features of the earth below them. As a result of this experience, with a grant from the National Science Foundation, he created a free app called Flyover Country. The app provides users with information on natural formations, man-made features like dams, and even where fossils can be found. The features are pinpointed on a map that corresponds to the landscape below the plane.

What is the main idea of the passage?

- A) Shane Loeffler's experience in a plane led him to create an app that would provide information to flyers about the land below them.
- B) Shane Loeffler's plane flight home from Europe led him to think about the geological features of the land below him.

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

6. 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.