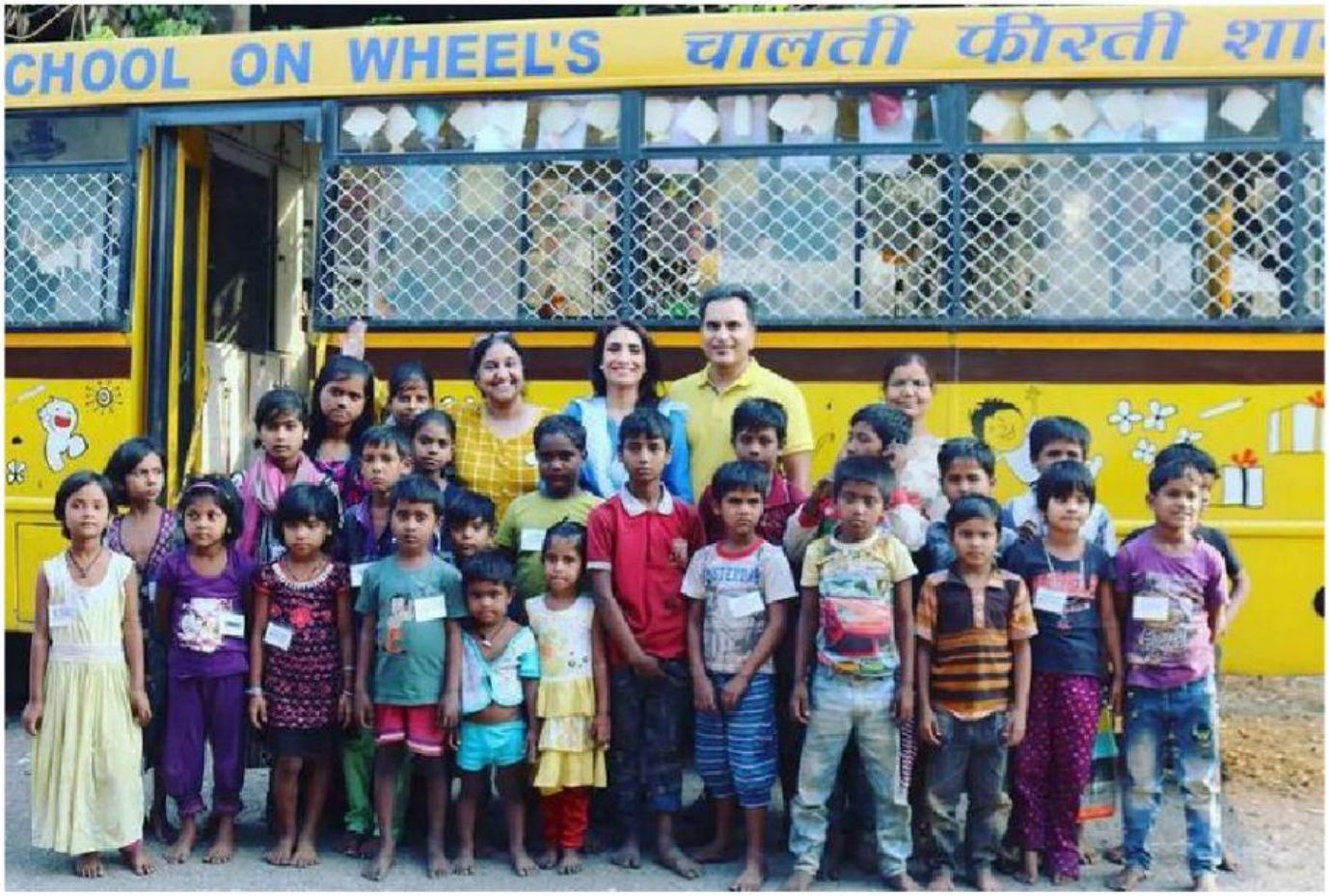
Extra Training

Reading Task 8531

Read the article. For questions 1-6, choose the correct answer.



A Ticket for a Better Life

As I departed from my hotel in central Mumbai, the glowing sun lit up the beautiful architecture of India's richest city. I marvelled at the majestic Gateway of India and world-renowned Taj Mahal Palace Hotel. Here and there, people bustled around, ready to start their day.

But my time in Mumbai would not be spent in this vibrant and affluent city. Instead, I was headed for one of the largest slums on Earth. Entering the slum was like stepping into a war zone. Endless rows of crumbling shacks were crammed together amidst piles of rubbish and debris. Here, the sweltering sun only served to intensify the stench of raw sewage and to add hardship to already difficult lives. I sighed in dismay as I watched children working on the streets. But fortunately, there was a ray of hope. A bright yellow school bus rumbled through the busy streets and parked itself beside a row of grubby, splintered shelters.

Immediately, a group of barefoot children rushed and pushed aboard, chatting excitedly. However, the children on this bus were not going anywhere. While other buses were busy transporting people, this one took its passengers on a different kind of journey. It brought education to disadvantaged children.

So, ***this is where I come in***. I'd signed up for a programme called School on Wheels, which aims to improve literacy in impoverished areas. Although I had volunteered in many disadvantaged schools around India, teaching on a bus was a first for me! My new classroom was no larger than a hallway, but adequately equipped with a blackboard and educational materials. I warmly greeted my new students who had perched themselves on wooden

LIVEWORKSHEETS

benches on either side of the bus.

"My name is Mina Kapoor," I informed the wide-eyed faces before me, "I'm going to teach you how to read and write."

I referred to an alphabet poster which another volunteer had tacked to the wall and slowly began to introduce the symbols to the children. As I did so, they each attempted to copy down the letters onto slates on their laps. However, as the lesson progressed, they became increasingly distracted. Without any previous schooling, these children simply didn't know how to sit still. But rather than enforcing discipline, I just took a deep breath and began to sing. The first time I did this, the children listened and watched in awe. But by the end of my six-month stint, the class would join in! To my pride, they had also learnt the basics of Hindu and English, and were now ready to enter a public school.

On my last day, I felt incredibly emotional. Although our time together was limited, I felt I had truly got to know my students, and sincerely hoped that I had made a difference in their lives. Would they go on to enrol in school? And more importantly, would they stay there and graduate?

A quarter of the children who participate in the School on Wheels programme progress into the public school system. I looked at my class. Of my 24 students, I realised that only eight might receive a life-changing education. I knew I should have been glad, but I couldn't but feel that I could do so much more. As I pondered this, one of my students approached me with a shiny black pebble. She placed it in my hands with a warm smile.

"Thank you, teacher," she whispered.



1. What was the writer's first impression of Mumbai?

1. An overwhelmingly crowded city.
2. An evidently wealthy area.
3. A place with stunning architecture.
4. A poor and dirty slum.

2. What is the cause of the writer's distress as she enters the slum?

1. The blazing heat of the sun.
2. The smell of waste.
3. The children watching her.
4. The poor housing conditions.

3. How does the writer describe the attitude of the children?

1. impulsive
2. apprehensive
3. enthusiastic
4. impatient

4. The writer uses the phrase *"this is where I come in"* (para 4) to describe

1. her purpose for being in the slum.
2. the moment she entered the bus.
3. the location at which she embarked.
4. her relationship with the children.

5. What did the writer find unusual about her new teaching environment?

1. It offered no seating for the children.
2. It was an unconventional classroom.
3. It lacked space for the students.
4. It had substandard teaching equipment.

6. How does the writer reflect upon her experience?

1. She didn't feel appreciated.
2. She was filled with sadness.
3. She thought it was a life-changing experience.
4. She wished that she could achieve more.

LIVEWORKSHEETS