READING PASSAGE
THE STRANGE TRIUMPH OF 'THE LITTLE PRINCE'

(An adaptation from an article written by Adam Gopnik)

A. Read the reading passage below:

Of all the books written in French over the past century, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's "Le Petit Prince" is surely the best loved in the most tongues. This is very strange, because the book's meanings—its purpose, intent and moral—still seem far from transparent, even seventy-five-plus years after its first appearance. Over time, the suffrage of readers has altered that conclusion, of course: a classic is a classic. But it has altered the conclusion without really changing the point. Therefore, we are no closer to penetrating the central riddle: What is "The Little Prince" *about*?

Everyone knows the basic bones of the story: an aviator, downed in the desert and facing long odds of survival, encounters a strange young person, neither man nor really boy, who, it emerges over time, has travelled from his solitary home on a distant asteroid, where he lives alone with a single rose. The rose has made him so miserable that, in torment, he has taken advantage of a flock of birds to convey him to other planets. He is instructed by a wise if cautious fox, and by a sinister angel of death, the snake.

It took many years for many readers to begin to understand that the book is a *war story*. Not an allegory of war, rather, a fable of it, in which the central emotions of conflict—isolation, fear, and uncertainty—are alleviated only by intimate speech and love. But the "Petit Prince" is a war story in a very literal sense, too—everything about its making has to do not just with the onset of war but with the "strange defeat" of France, with the experience of Vichy and the Occupation. Saint-Exupéry's sense of shame and confusion at the devastation led him to make a fable of abstract ideas set against specific loves.

We know the circumstances of the composition of "The Little Prince" in detail now, courtesy of Stacy Schiff's fine biography, "Saint-Exupéry." The book's desert setting derives from the aviator Saint-Exupéry's 1935 experience of having been lost for almost a week in the Arabian desert, with his memories of loneliness, hallucination, impending death (and enveloping beauty) in the desert realized on the page. What's more, the central love story of the Prince and Rose derives from his stormy love affair with his wife, Consuelo, from whom the rose takes her cough, volatility, imperiousness and sudden swoons. This part of his life was his inspiration, but at the same time, shadowed by the war.

On the other hand, going through the deepest parts of Saint-Exupéry's psyche, he had felt the loss of France not just as a loss of battle but also as a loss of *meaning*. The desert of the strange defeat was more bewildering than the desert of Libya had been; nothing any longer made sense. But as anyone who lived the war experience knew that such a loss of meaning was so traumatic, at the point to head France on the verge of collapse. Therefore, the author, tried to portray his journey of exile condensed in a life-death story just to convince us that our real work is to see the world again, instead of making us unable to blind our own workings.

https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-strange-triumph-of-the-little-prince

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B. Tick the correct response to the statements below.

1. According to Gopnik, not only is 'The Little Prince' a classic, but a story still loved by many worldwide readers.
2. In the main summary of the story, it is the Little Prince who narrates his story in first person.
3. Once the Little Prince is deceived by the birds, it is a snake who starts guiding his journey to discover other planets.
4. The Little Prince is not a story of love deception, but war.
5. Saint- Exupéry amid his hallucinations, used both the Little Prince and the rose to express abstract ideas against certain love case scenarios.
6. Saint- Exupéry tried to highlight Consuelo's volatility, generosity and bravery through the characterization of a red rose.
7. 'The Little Prince' is an example of how to look deep inside our real efforts and life existence, rather than make them invisible.
8. The author also reflects in his story, his psyche of loss of his real personality and deep sadness.

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