Name_____

The *Hindenburg*

In the 1930s, the nation of Germany was well known for its amazing flying machines known as dirigibles. These airships were enormous structures that were somewhat similar in shape to the blimps of today but much larger in size and more opulent in design. Another difference between the flying structures is the German dirigibles were filled with hydrogen, an extremely explosive substance.

The *Hindenburg* was one of the Zepplin Company's best airships. The airship began making flights to the United States in 1936. On May 3, 1937, passengers and crew would board the airship for what would become its final flight.

The flight to New Jersey was in itself unremarkable. Neither the crew nor its passengers reported any major problems during the three-day flight. But on the afternoon of May 6, thunderstorms were near the area where the airship was to land. Since hydrogen is flammable, lightning was always a concern for those flying on the *Hindenburg*. That day the crew managed to get the ship to its landing spot and dropped the ropes to secure the great airship just as tragedy struck.

A giant explosion rocked the airship, and within thirty-two seconds, the airship was lost in flames. Remarkably, sixty-seven of the ninety-seven people who were on board the *Hindenburg* managed to survive by reaching safety on the ground below.

The actual cause of the explosion remains a mystery, but one thing is certain: the explosion of the *Hindenburg* ended the era of the great airships.

Text Questions

1. What did the German dirigibles use as their main source of power?
   a. gasoline
   b. diesel
   c. hydrogen
   d. oxygen

2. Why was lightning a concern for anyone flying on the *Hindenburg*?
   a. The flight of the airship would not be as smooth.
   b. The pilot could not see well during storms with lightning.
   c. Stormy weather often caused motion sickness for many of the passengers on board.
   d. Lightning could cause an electric spark near the highly flammable airship.

3. From reading the text, what can one infer about traveling on the *Hindenburg*?
   a. The passage was very similar to modern-day airplanes.
   b. Passengers stayed on board the airships for several days.
   c. Most people would rather ride a ship from Europe to the Americas.
   d. The crew of the *Hindenburg* were only kind to German passengers.

4. Which country was known for creating and maintaining the flying dirigibles?
   a. Europe
   b. America
   c. Italy
   d. Germany

5. Using information from the text, explain how passengers might have survived the explosion of the *Hindenburg*.

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