Name_____

The Space Shuttle Catastrophe

On February 1, 2003, the space shuttle *Columbia* exploded. The mission was the twenty-eighth trip made by the space shuttle. The crew of seven would die in a fiery explosion as the ship attempted to reenter Earth's atmosphere.

The start of the demise of the shuttle and its crew actually began with the shuttle's liftoff. Within the beginning of the launch, a piece of insulation broke off from the propellant tank. The piece of foam hit the edge of the left wing of the shuttle. This damage to the wing would later prove disastrous.

The wings of the shuttle were protected by heat-resistant tiles. When the foam hit the wing, some of the tiles were dislodged. Without the protection of this equipment, heat and wind would enter the wing during its ascent into the atmosphere. The result would cause the wing to blow apart from the struggling shuttle.

At 8:58, witnesses began seeing the first debris from the shuttle hit the ground. By 9:00 a.m., the shuttle and its crew were gone. The space shuttle program remained grounded until a complete investigation could be done, and the program did not resume until July 2005.

Text Questions

1. Which is most likely the reason the space shuttle exploded?
   a. Bad weather caused lightning strikes that caused a fire on board the *Columbia*.
   b. The space shuttle was blown off course from its original landing site.
   c. The space shuttle missed its original take-off date.
   d. Insulation broke off during liftoff and damaged the left wing.
2. Why was the space shuttle program grounded until 2005?
   a. to determine the cause of the accident
   b. to allow time for the completion of a new space shuttle
   c. to allow time to train new astronauts
   d. to determine which space shuttle and crew would be used for the next mission
3. What is this passage mostly about?
   a. the importance of the space program
   b. the explosion of the space shuttle *Columbia*
   c. the end of the space shuttle program
   d. the history of the United States' space program
4. What was the author's purpose in writing this text?
   a. to persuade
   b. to entertain
   c. to inform
   d. to explain
5. Which would be a good secondary source if someone wanted to know more about one of the astronauts on *Columbia's* last mission?
   a. an autobiography by one of the seven astronauts on the mission
   b. a fiction book about space travel in the future
   c. a biography about one of the seven astronauts on the mission
   d. an almanac about space travel in the United States

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