

• Reading Comprehension 8 Level 7

Directions: Read the passage. Then answer the questions below.

Nepal, a small, mountainous country tucked between India and China, may seem completely foreign to many Americans. Cows walk down busy streets unharmed, 24 different languages are spoken, and people eat two meals of rice and lentils every day. Nepali holidays, many of which are related to the Hindu religion, can seem especially **bizarre** to Americans unfamiliar with the culture. However, if we look beyond how others celebrate to consider the things they are celebrating, we find surprising similarities to our own culture.

The biggest holiday in Nepal is *Dashain*, a ten-day festival for the Hindu goddess Durga that takes place in September or October. According to Hindu beliefs, Durga defeated the evil demons of the world. To thank the goddess, people visit temples in her honor and sacrifice goats or sheep as offerings. Throughout the year, most Nepalis do not eat much meat because it is expensive, but *Dashain* is a time to enjoy meat every day. Children fly colorful, homemade kites during *Dashain*. People also construct enormous bamboo swings on street corners and in parks. Every evening people gather at these swings and take turns swinging. Nepalis say that by swinging, people can relieve the earth of their weight, if only for a few minutes out of the year. *Dashain* is a time for people to eat good food, relax, and enjoy themselves!

Aside from eating and enjoying themselves, during *Dashain* people also receive blessings from their elders. Schools and offices shut down so people can travel to be with their families. Reuniting with family reminds people of the importance of kindness, respect, and forgiveness. People also clean and decorate their homes for *Dashain*. And, like many holidays in the United States, it is a time for shopping. Children and adults alike get new clothes for the occasion. People express appreciation for all that they have, while looking forward to good fortune and peace in the year to come.

During American holidays, people may not sacrifice goats or soar on bamboo swings, but we do often travel to be with family members and take time off work or school to relax. No matter how we celebrate, many people around the world spend their holidays honoring family, reflecting on their blessings, and hoping for good fortune in the future.

Questions

- 1) According to the passage, Hindus believe that the goddess Durga
 - A. sacrifices goats and sheep
 - B. defeated the evil demons of the world
 - C. visits temples
 - D. enjoys meat every day

- 2) Which of the following sentences from the passage best indicates why the author thinks Nepal would seem very foreign to many Americans?
 - A. "Cows walk down busy streets unharmed, 24 different languages are spoken, and people eat two meals of rice and lentils every day."
 - B. "Every evening people gather at these swings and take turns swinging."
 - C. "People also clean and decorate their homes for *Dashain*."
 - D. "During American holidays, people may not sacrifice goats or soar on bamboo swings, but we do often travel to be with family members and take time off work or school to relax."

- 3) As used in paragraph 1, **bizarre** most nearly means
 - A. unbelievable
 - B. unknown
 - C. awkward
 - D. strange

- 4) The colorful kites and bamboo swings are both used as examples of
 - A. ways people relax and enjoy themselves during *Dashain*
 - B. things people honor and reflect on during *Dashain*
 - C. offerings to the goddess Durga
 - D. ways people reunite with family during *Dashain*

- 5) The author suggests that although people in different cultures celebrate holidays differently, one similarity is that many people
 - A. ask for blessings from their elders during holidays
 - B. agree that holidays reveal a lot about a culture
 - C. believe that holidays must be celebrated
 - D. think of holidays as a time to spend with their families

Answers and Explanations

1) **B**

To answer this detail question correctly, we need to find where the author discusses the goddess Durga in the passage. A good way to do this is to scan the topic sentence of each paragraph, since this sentence will likely tell us what information can be found in the rest of that paragraph. The topic sentence of paragraph 2 reads: "The biggest holiday in Nepal is *Dashain*, a ten-day festival for the Hindu goddess Durga that takes place in September or October." This lets us know that the details we are looking for can likely be found in paragraph 2. In paragraph 2, the author writes, "According to Hindu beliefs, Durga defeated the evil demons of the world." This tells us that Hindus believe that the goddess Durga defeated the evil demons of the world. Therefore **(B)** is correct. The passage tells us that Nepali people sacrifice goats and sheep as offerings to the goddess Durga, so she is not the one who sacrifices them. This eliminates **(A)**. The passage tells us that Nepalis visit temples to honor Durga during *Dashain*, but it does not suggest that they believe the goddess Durga visits temples. This means **(C)** is incorrect. The passage tells us that Nepali people enjoy meat every day during *Dashain*, not that they believe the goddess Durga enjoys meat every day. This means **(D)** is incorrect.

2) **A**

In paragraph 1, the author writes, "Nepal, a small, mountainous country tucked between India and China, may seem completely foreign to many Americans." In the next sentence, the author offers reasons why Nepal may seem so foreign to many Americans: "Cows walk down busy streets unharmed, 24 different languages are spoken, and people eat two meals of rice and lentils every day." Because this sentence gives three examples of things in Nepal that are likely unfamiliar to many Americans, it best indicates why the author thinks Nepal would seem very foreign to many Americans. Therefore **(A)** is correct. In paragraph 2, the author does say that during *Dashain*, people in Nepal gather at bamboo swings in the evening. However, he or she does not suggest that people swinging is what would make Nepal seem very foreign to Americans. This means **(B)** is incorrect. In paragraph 3, the author does say that people often clean and decorate their homes for *Dashain*. But this is not a custom that would make Nepal seem foreign to Americans, as many people around the world, including Americans, clean and decorate their homes. This makes **(C)** incorrect. In the final paragraph, the author notes that in America people do not soar on bamboo swings or sacrifice goats, but he or she sees similarities in the fact that Nepalis and Americans both take time off work or school to be with family and relax. The author suggests there are some things about holidays in Nepal that would not seem so foreign to many Americans after all, so **(D)** is incorrect.

3) **D**

bizarre (*adjective*): very strange or unusual; odd.

In paragraph 1, the author writes, "Nepali holidays, many of which are related to the Hindu religion, can seem especially bizarre to Americans unfamiliar with the culture." If Americans are unfamiliar with the culture, then we can understand that holidays will seem strange or unusual, because they are not familiar and different from American holidays. This means that *bizarre* most nearly means *strange*. Therefore **(D)** is correct. Americans may not be familiar with Nepali holidays or culture, so some things may appear strange. However, the author does not suggest that the holidays would be so strange that they would seem *unbelievable* to Americans. The holidays may seem different, but not unreal or impossible. This means **(A)** is incorrect. Although the Nepali culture and holidays may be *unknown* to Americans, the author writes that they will *seem* bizarre. This means that the author is discussing how the holidays will appear to Americans, not whether or not Americans know the holidays. This eliminates **(B)**. While sometimes we feel *awkward* around things that seem strange or unfamiliar, this does not mean that the Nepali holidays themselves would seem awkward or uncomfortable to Americans. This means **(C)** is incorrect.

4) **A**

In paragraph 2, the author writes: "Children fly colorful, homemade kites during *Dashain*. People also construct enormous bamboo swings on street corners and in parks. Every evening people gather at these swings and take turns swinging. Nepalis say that by swinging, people can relieve the earth of their weight, if only for a few minutes out of the year." At the end of the paragraph, the author writes, "*Dashain* is a time for people to eat good food, relax, and enjoy themselves!" This tells us that the paragraph was about ways people eat, relax, and enjoy themselves during *Dashain*. Since colorful kites and bamboo swings are not things to eat, we can infer that these are both used as examples of ways that people relax and enjoy themselves. Therefore **(A)** is correct. In the final paragraph, the author writes that "many people around the world spend their holidays honoring family, reflecting on their blessings, and hoping for good fortune in the future." This means that family and blessings are things that people honor and reflect on, not colorful kites and bamboo swings. This makes **(B)** incorrect. In paragraph 2, the author writes, "To thank the goddess, people visit temples in her honor and sacrifice goats or sheep as offerings." He or she does not claim that colorful kites and bamboo swings are offerings to Durga, so **(C)** is incorrect. In paragraph 3, the author writes, "Reuniting with family reminds people of the importance of kindness, respect, and forgiveness." The author does not suggest that colorful kites and bamboo swings are ways to reunite with family. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

5) **D**

In paragraph 1, the author claims, "If we look beyond how others celebrate to consider what things are celebrating, we find surprising similarities to our own culture." This tells us that the author thinks that although why people celebrate may be different in different cultures, how people celebrate is often similar. In paragraph 3, the author writes, "Schools and offices shut down so people can travel to be with their families. Reuniting with family reminds people of the importance of kindness, respect, and forgiveness." From this we can understand that one of the things people celebrate in Nepal is the importance of family. In the final paragraph, the author writes that this is a similarity across cultures: "No matter how we celebrate, many people around the world spend their holidays honoring family, reflecting on their blessings, and hoping for good fortune in the future." This tells us that although people in different cultures celebrate holidays differently, one similarity is that many people think of holidays as a time to spend with their families. Therefore **(D)** is correct. The author tells us that many people in Nepal ask for blessings from their elders during *Dashain*, but he or she does not suggest that this is a similarity across different cultures. This means **(A)** is incorrect. The author does not suggest that many people agree that holidays reveal a lot about a culture. Though this may be true, the author does not discuss what holidays reveal about a culture. This means **(B)** is incorrect. The author does not suggest that many people believe that holidays must be celebrated. This makes **(C)** incorrect.