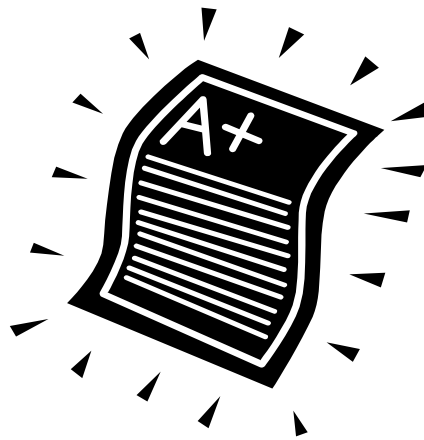


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Date: _____
School: _____
District: _____



*Increasing Achievement for Schools,
Teachers, & Students*

Post Test

Read the following selection. Then answer questions 1 through 14.

A Significantly Beneficial Curse

“Hurry up, Lianna! It’s surely a foregone conclusion that everybody’s angrily awaiting us, and we’ll certainly get a detention if we don’t leave immediately,” Xaviera yelled loudly, her voice echoing through the gloomy silence of the castle.

“What Xaviera means is that we’ve really got to depart the premises,” echoed her friend, Rosemarie, fidgeting impatiently. “Mr. Antonioni detests our being even remotely late, especially where history class field trips are concerned.”

“Patience!” answered Lianna, hurrying toward them from behind the heavily draped entrance to the cavernous room where her companions waited.

“Whatever it is, it’s certainly not nearly important enough to get us in the tremendous amount of trouble as we are probably facing,” Xaviera said. “If you’d only abandon it and come on, we can probably get to the bus before it departs.”

“No way!” Lianna replied heatedly. “It’s some sort of fascinating contraption covered with amazingly unintelligible scribbling.” As she spoke, Lianna held out an engraved piece of apparently ancient, rusting bronze.

“This *is* absolutely weird,” conceded Xaviera, frowning at the metal gleaming dully in the gloomy light. “What do you think it is?”

“I honestly think it came from the gigantic collection of practically **antediluvian** armor downstairs. You know, the paraphernalia we saw when we initially arrived earlier,” Lianna answered, turning the thick slab of metal to reveal an odd series of letters inscribed diagonally across the flipside.

“What could that antiquated scratching possibly signify?” asked Rosemarie.

“It probably translates into, *Made in China*,” replied Xaviera, giggling.

“It most undoubtedly does not!” Lianna replied impatiently, thrusting the jagged metal over her head to take advantage of the watery light streaming from the room’s clerestory windows. “I think it’s possibly inscribed in that mostly indecipherable language, Gaelic, that Mr. Antonioni was lecturing about in class yesterday.”

“Exactly,” agreed Xaviera. “It’s very likely some semblance of a Gaelic curse.”

“Well, this is extremely interesting,” said Rosemarie, who was truly a history buff. “But I’m more fascinated by the fact that we are sightseeing at a cheesy duplicate of an authentic castle constructed only recently by some wealthy geezer who obviously wanted to showcase his extravagance and his money. Just why is that?”

“Because there *are* no authentic castles in existence in Massachusetts, so this is the only one we can actually visit, even if it’s not exactly real,” Xaviera said. “Anyway, Lianna needs to put that thing down immediately, or we are definitely going to be late!”

“Let’s try to interpret the inscription first!” Lianna insisted.

“It looks like hieroglyphics,” Xaviera announced, peering closely at the time-worn engraving. Quickly seizing the object from Lianna, she narrowed her eyes and began studying it very closely.

“I told you it was really important!” Lianna admonished her companions excitedly.

“I’m certainly not referring to the silly inscription,” Xaviera said. “I’m actually considering the significance of this primitive illustration of a skull and crossbones. See? I am envisioning the very real possibility that this is some species of curse.”

A Significantly Beneficial Curse

“What?” Lianna shrieked immediately. “Are you insinuating that this is conceivably the international symbol for ‘Poison’ or, even worse, ‘Danger’?”

“That’s precisely the significance I attach to it,” Xaviera replied, nodding her head wisely. “I suggest that you scrutinize this very closely, and give us *your* estimation of its significance.”

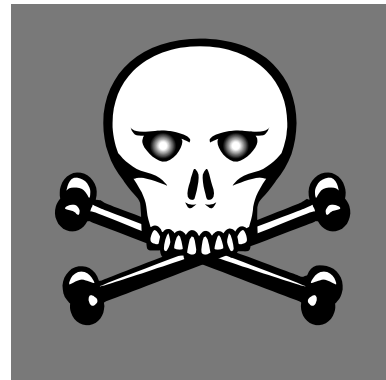
“No way!” Lianna shrieked loudly. “I have a bus to catch!” So saying, she spun quickly around and tore across the room, her flying feet echoing on the flagstone floor.

“What kind of curse could this possibly be, Xaviera?” Rosemarie asked, laughing.

“A significantly beneficial one,” Xaviera said. “After all, it got Lianna on the bus!”

1. What is this passage primarily about?

- A. a curse
- B. a class field trip
- C. a very old castle
- D. four friends



2. Why are the girls late for the bus?

- A. They took too long walking to the castle.
- B. One of them got lost in the castle.
- C. One of them found an interesting object.
- D. The girls were arguing throughout the entire field trip.

3. What happened immediately after Lianna called out “**Patience**”?

- A. Xaviera said they would get into trouble.
- B. Lianna dropped the object.
- C. Mr. Antonioni gave the girls a detention slip for being late.
- D. none of the above

4. How are Xaviera and Rosemarie alike?

- A. They both want to leave.
- B. They both want to see the object.
- C. They both think curses are funny.
- D. Neither of the girls have enjoyed the field trip.

5. What was the outcome of Xaviera’s announcement about the possible curse?

- A. Lianna ran for the bus.
- B. Rosemarie ran for the door.
- C. Xaviera dropped the object.
- D. none of the above



6. You can tell from the story that:
 - A. Xaviera is impatient and unfriendly.
 - B. Rosemarie is a poor student.
 - C. Lianna hates to ride a school bus.
 - D. none of the above

7. What conclusion can you draw from Rosemarie's opinion of the castle?
 - A. She admired its builder.
 - B. She prefers the real thing to a fake.
 - C. She doesn't care about it one way or the other.
 - D. She doesn't like the castle, but she's glad to be away from school for the day.

8. Based on its use in the passage, what does **antediluvian** mean?
 - A. primeval
 - B. antique
 - C. ancient
 - D. all of the above

9. What does the mention of *Made in China* add to the plot?
 - A. It brings the mystery of the Far East into the story.
 - B. It injects humor into the story.
 - C. It allows the author to express a love of traveling.
 - D. none of the above

10. Which detail should be in a summary of this article?
 - A. Everyone has his or her own opinion of field trips.
 - B. Field trips are a waste of time.
 - C. Teachers enjoy field trips.
 - D. none of the above

11. Where would you find the MOST information about curses?
 - A. in a dictionary
 - B. in an encyclopedia
 - C. in a glossary
 - D. none of the above

12. What is the main topic of Xaviera's opening statement?
- A. Everyone has already returned to school.
 - B. Mr. Antonioni is angry with them.
 - C. They are going to be late for the bus.
 - D. They are going to miss the bus.
13. How does Lianna react to the idea that Mr. Antonioni might give them a detention slip?
- A. She is very worried about it.
 - B. She doesn't appear to care.
 - C. She laughs.
 - D. She tries to get Rosemarie to the bus by telling her about a curse.
14. What happened when Lianna insisted they read the inscription?
- A. Xaviera called it hieroglyphics.
 - B. Rosemarie called it a curse.
 - C. Mr. Antonioni said it was nonsense.
 - D. Rosemarie said it was written in the Gaelic language.



Read the following selection. Then answer questions 15 through 28.

Piranha

Piranha are meat-eating fish living in South American rivers. Piranha, which grow to a length of six to ten inches, are well known for their ultra-sharp teeth, aggressive behavior, and greedy appetite for meat. There are other kinds of piranha in other rivers around the world, but the flesh-eating type live only in the rivers of the Amazon Forest in South America and the rivers in the South American country of Paraguay. The name piranha (pronounced peer-ahn-ah) comes from several different languages.

Red-bellied piranha, found in the Amazon River, are known as relentless, ravenous hunters. Their reputation for viciousness has circulated far and wide, thanks to terrifying scenes in numerous books, films, and television programs. Although piranha hunt in schools or packs, scientists have recently discovered that these fish do not form the same sort of relationships as do other predators who hunt in a similar manner. This means that, unlike wolves and lions, piranha do not live and hunt with the same fish over a span of time. Rather, they form and re-form schools with many other piranha on a regular basis.

Scientists have also determined that piranha may actually be more motivated to form schools by the need to feel secure than by the desire to hunt for food. When placed together into tanks, piranha appeared stressed when the number of fish in their schools

Piranha

were small. On the other hand, when the schools in which they swam were large, their breathing rate dropped, which was interpreted by the scientists to mean that the piranha found safety and felt more secure in numbers. That may be why piranha always attack in large schools, exhibiting a feeding frenzy that makes the water around them appear to boil and turn red with blood. When a school of piranha attacks, they do so with such ferocity that they are able to strip all the flesh off their victim in minutes. Sometimes, like sharks in a similar frenzy, they even take bites out of each other!

Young piranha, which hatch out of nearly microscopic eggs, are as vicious and dangerous as their parents. They eat tiny shrimp and other **crustaceans**, as well as seeds, fruits, and aquatic plants. When they reach a length of about 1.5 inches, they start to eat the fins and flesh of other fish that swim too near to them. As they mature and grow, they join schools of twenty or so other piranha where they practice and learn to use a number of hunting strategies. The goal of all young piranha is to kill and eat their prey, but most of the time they start eating their victims before they kill them.

By the time piranha become adults, they have learned to eat almost anything, from other fish to sick and weakened animals. Their victims also include people foolish enough or unlucky enough to get in their way. Piranha swimming in a school have the strength to attach themselves to the noses and mouths of any animal, including weak or ill cattle that put their heads down to take a drink from a river where these fish swim. When piranha pull a cow into the water, it can take only minutes for the animal to be devoured by the school.

Although piranha are often made out to be villains, the truth is they are simply carrying out their job in the food chain. As in the case of most predators, piranha perform a useful function in the ongoing system of checks-and-balances that ensure only the strong survive in nature.

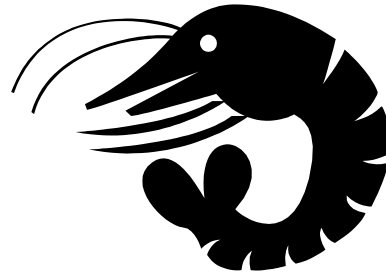
15. What is the first paragraph primarily about?
 - A. where the Amazon River is located
 - B. where meat-eating piranha live
 - C. the origin of the word “piranha”
 - D. none of the above

16. Which detail BEST tells you about the ferocity of the piranha?
 - A. They are more aggressive in large schools.
 - B. They strip the flesh from the bones of their victims in minutes.
 - C. They attack weak and dying animals.
 - D. They can eat both humans and cattle.

17. What do young piranha start out eating?
 - A. their parents
 - B. seeds and fruits
 - C. the flesh of other fish
 - D. their siblings

Piranha

18. How are sharks like piranha?
A. They bite each other in a feeding frenzy.
B. They live in the Amazon River.
C. They are very large fish.
D. none of the above
19. What causes stress among piranha?
A. swimming near sharks
B. swimming in large schools
C. swimming in small schools
D. not enough protein in their diets
20. What can you tell about South America from this passage?
A. Some of its rivers can be dangerous.
B. It is home to dangerous animals.
C. It is a country of many contrasts.
D. South America is a dangerous place in which to live.
21. What can you conclude about scientific studies from this passage?
A. They are always right.
B. They are always wrong.
C. A lot of money is underwritten for scientific studies.
D. none of the above
22. In the passage, shrimp are described as **crustaceans**. Which would be another example of a **crustacean**?
A. a lobster
B. a barnacle
C. a crab
D. all of the above
23. Which is more important to the author?
A. entertaining the reader
B. scaring the reader
C. educating the reader
D. both A and C



A Shrimp

Piranha

24. What is the BEST summary of this passage?
- A. A trip to the Amazon can be educational.
 - B. There are many types of fish in the world.
 - C. Predators are decorous.
 - D. none of the above
25. Where would you look for a map of Paraguay?
- A. in an index
 - B. in an atlas
 - C. in a thesaurus
 - D. in an American History textbook
26. How are young piranha like adult piranha?
- A. They enjoy scaring their victims.
 - B. They swim far out in the ocean.
 - C. They often eat parts of their victims before they kill them.
 - D. They are very large in size.
27. What happens to piranha when they feel calm?
- A. They attack less often.
 - B. Their heart rate drops.
 - C. Their breathing rate drops.
 - D. They are less aggressive.
28. What can you infer about predators from this passage?
- A. They should all be killed.
 - B. They are necessary to the food chain.
 - C. They belong in zoos.
 - D. They become innoxious.



Read the following selection. Then answer questions 29 through 44.

Costa Rica

On Christopher Columbus' fourth and final trip to the New World, his ships made the first European landfall in Central America. This was the area that would come to be known as Costa Rica. Today, most Costa Ricans, unlike most of their neighbors in Central and South America, are descendants of Europeans. This means they are not related to the natives who lived in the area when the Spanish explorers arrived. The native population has shrunk over the years and now is less than one percent of the country's total population.

The Spanish, who ruled the country for more than 300 years, originally thought it was an area of great riches and hoped to find gold and silver there. As a result, they named the country accordingly. The English translation of the Spanish name Costa Rica is "rich coast." Later, after they determined there were no such riches, the Spanish turned to farming, as did many of the native Costa Ricans. Today, Costa Rica exports coffee and bananas, but is also widely known for its **ecotourism**.

Containing plant, animal, and insect species from both North and South America, Costa Rica offers a rare opportunity for ecotourists to observe a truly unique environment, from smoking volcanoes to magnificent beaches and the country's so-called "cloud forests." These are forests in which the trees are shrouded in mist nearly all of the time. Because sunlight seldom reaches the forest floor, it is usually dark and damp, and it abounds with insects, spiders, and small frogs.

Costa Rica also contains over 400 species of birds. There are more species of butterflies in Costa Rica than can be found in all of Africa. One entomologist recorded finding more than 950 species of beetles on a single tree. In addition, there are pumas, jaguars, and ocelots. One particularly interesting animal, also the world's slowest animal, is found in Costa Rica, too; this is the sloth. Because they cannot walk, sloths usually hang upside down in trees.

On the few occasions during which they do come down from trees, sloths use their claws to pull themselves along the ground at an average speed of 6 to 8 feet per minute, making them easy prey for jaguars and other predators. They are somewhat quicker in the trees, although they are still slow, but their greatest protection comes from their brownish-colored coat which, during the rainy season, grows a green alga and helps them to blend into the leaves.

The human citizens of Costa Rica come from many other places. For instance, about three percent of the population comes from Jamaica, and another ten percent are refugees from the **oppressive** Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, South America. The Jamaicans are an English-speaking minority among Costa Ricans, whose primary language is Spanish. The foremost religion of Costa Rica is Catholicism, which is recognized as the official religion of the country.

The country has one of the lowest birthrates and highest standards of health and literacy. In addition, with its presidential elections in 1890, Costa Rica became the first country in Central America to hold truly democratic elections. The country boasts four major public universities. Among these is the University of Costa Rica, considered to be the most important university in Central America. The country values education highly.

Costa Rica

This attitude is reflected in the fact that elementary schooling is both mandatory and free for all citizens. In addition, all secondary education is free.

29. What would be another good title for this passage?

- A. Costa Rica, a Land of Riches
- B. Costa Rica, a Typical European Country
- C. Costa Rica, an Interesting Place to Visit
- D. Home of the Sloth



Costa Rica

30. Who rules Costa Rica today?

- A. the Spanish
- B. the natives
- C. the Jamaicans
- D. none of the above

31. What happened after the Spanish found no gold or silver?

- A. They mined for precious gems.
- B. They became farmers.
- C. They became fishermen.
- D. They became tourism entrepreneurs.

32. Compared to other countries in the region, Costa Rica has what?

- A. a higher birthrate
- B. a higher level of democracy
- C. a higher standard of health and literacy
- D. all of the above

33. Why do sloths hang in trees?

- A. They are hiding from jaguars.
- B. They cannot walk.
- C. They are afraid of the tourists.
- D. They eat the leaves on the tree.

34. What can you infer about the importance of education in Costa Rica?

- A. It is highly esteemed.
- B. The government is against it.
- C. It is difficult to get an education there.
- D. none of the above

Costa Rica

35. What can you conclude about a vacation in Costa Rica?
- A. There would be a lot for you to see.
 - B. The jaguars might attack you.
 - C. You would have to speak Mexican.
 - D. all of the above
36. From its use in this passage, what is the meaning of **ecotourism**?
- A. visiting theme park attractions
 - B. visiting nature attractions
 - C. visiting large cities
 - D. visiting foreign countries
37. The purpose of the first paragraph is to:
- A. explain who first landed in Costa Rica
 - B. explain from whom Costa Ricans are descended
 - C. explain where Columbus went on his last voyage
 - D. explain where Columbus went on his first voyage
38. The best summary of the third paragraph is:
- A. Costa Rica has too many bugs.
 - B. Costa Rica's cloud forests house many insects.
 - C. Costa Rica has too many active volcanoes.
 - D. Scientists value Costa Rica.
39. Where would be the BEST place to find information on cloud forests?
- A. in an index
 - B. on the Internet
 - C. in an almanac
 - D. in a chemistry textbook
40. What conclusion can you draw about the native population of Costa Rica?
- A. They are mostly professionals.
 - B. They outnumber the descendants of Columbus.
 - C. They are nearly extinct.
 - D. They speak fluent English.

Costa Rica

41. The passage mentions “refugees from the **oppressive** Sandinista regime.” What does **oppressive** mean?
- A. affable
 - B. despotic
 - C. benevolent
 - D. all of the above
42. What is the author’s purpose for writing this passage?
- A. to encourage people to visit Costa Rica
 - B. to poke fun at the Costa Rican natives
 - C. to educate people about Costa Rica
 - D. to describe animals that can only be seen by visiting Costa Rica
43. What is the BEST summary of this passage?
- A. Costa Rica lags behind other countries in the region.
 - B. Costa Rica is a democratic, forward-thinking nation.
 - C. Costa Rica needs to upgrade its educational standards.
 - D. Most Costa Ricans are college graduates.
44. Where would be the BEST place to look for a picture of a sloth?
- A. in a tourist guide book to South America
 - B. in a copy of a book entitled The Great Marsupials of South America
 - C. in an essay on cruelty to animals in Central America
 - D. none of the above



A Significantly Beneficial Curse – 10.8
Piranha – 10.8
Costa Rica – 11.0