

Marta's First-Day Dilemma

by Karen Grimaldos



illustration of an elementary school

Marta Córdova Mendoza sits at a desk in a classroom at her new school, gazing out the window and bouncing her left leg up and down. The first day of school always makes her feel nervous, but this time she's more unsettled than usual. In July, her family moved to a new home, and she doesn't know anyone at this school.

"Good morning, fourth graders, and welcome! I'm Ms. Davis, and we're going to have a wonderful year together," Marta's teacher says in a friendly voice. "Let's start our first day by getting to know each other."

Uh-oh, Marta thinks, I know what's coming next.

"Please introduce yourself by sharing your first and last name, plus something you did this summer."

Marta dreads this activity. It happens on every first day of school, no matter what the grade or who the teacher is—students are always asked to share their last NAME... meaning just one last name, not two!

And Marta Córdova Mendoza definitely has two last names. Because of this, it always takes her twice as long to introduce herself. Every year, Marta is the only student in the classroom with two last names. The silent stares she gets from classmates embarrass her every time.

One by one, Marta's new classmates begin their introductions.

"I'm Dante Jones..." "My name is Kim Soo..."

It seems all the students have really short last names, and, of course, they all have just ONE last name.

Soon, it's Marta's turn to introduce herself. Her heart pounds like a rapidly beating drum as she slowly stands up to speak.

"Um... I'm new here," Marta says. "This summer I went to visit my grandma." She smiles shyly and quickly sits back down, feeling so relieved to be finished with her introduction.

"Thank you," Ms. Davis says gently, "but could you please stand up again and tell us your name?"

Marta, feeling her face getting warm, reluctantly stands back up and says, "My name is Marta Córdova Mendoza."

"Welcome, Marta," says Ms. Davis. "Any questions for our new student?"

"Yes," says a girl named Adea. She turns to Marta and asks, "Do you have two last names?"

Marta is very surprised. No one has ever asked her this question before. She wonders whether Adea is curious or just wants to pick on her. "Yeah," Marta replies hesitantly.

"How come?" asks Adea.

"Marta, would you like to respond to that question?" Ms. Davis asks.

"Um, okay. It's like a family tradition. My parents were born in Perú; it's a country in South America. Kids there usually have two last names-the first one is their father's and the second one is their mother's," Marta explains.

"Oh, that's cool," Adea says with a smile.

"Thanks for sharing your tradition with us, Marta," says Ms. Davis. "Who's next?"

"Hi, uh, I also have two last names. I'm Santos Maldonado Soler..."

Marta doesn't hear the rest of what Santos has to say. She just smiles to herself and thinks, maybe this first day of school won't be so bad after all.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Why is Marta more nervous than usual for her first day at school?

- A. It is her first year in middle school and she will be changing teachers six times in one day.
- B. She didn't get a chance to finish her summer assignment and is worried about her grade.
- C. Her parents packed a lunch that she doesn't like and she doesn't want to get hungry.
- D. Her family has moved to a new home and she doesn't know anyone at the school.

2. How does Marta feel when her teacher asks the students to share their first and last names?

- A. Marta is nervous that the student next to her won't like her.
- B. Marta is distracted and doesn't hear her teacher's instructions.
- C. Marta is excited and shares her name when it isn't her turn.
- D. Marta is worried because she has two last names instead of one.

3.
Read the following sentences from the text.

"Um... I'm new here,' Marta says. 'This summer I went to visit my grandma.' She smiles shyly and quickly sits back down, feeling so relieved to be finished with her introduction.

'Thank you,' Ms. Davis says gently, 'but could you please stand up again and tell us your name?'

Marta, feeling her face getting warm, reluctantly stands back up and says, 'My name is Marta Córdova Mendoza.'"

What conclusion can you draw from this evidence?

- A. Marta did not want other students to ask her grandma's name.
- B. Marta felt stressed and didn't really want to share her full name.
- C. Marta's face got warm because the heater in the classroom turned on.
- D. Marta thought that the other students already knew her name.

4. How does Marta's mood change when she hears her classmate say that he also has two last names?

- A. She smiles and begins to feel more positive about her first day of school.
- B. She gets upset because she wanted to be the only one with two last names.
- C. She becomes worried because he seems nervous about sharing his name too.
- D. She gets excited because she is going to ask him where his parents are from.

5. What is one main theme of this story?

- A. The first day of school is scary for everyone, so remember that you will be okay.
- B. Sharing your differences can make others more comfortable with theirs.
- C. Going to a new school isn't so bad when one of your friends moves with you.
- D. You should follow directions carefully so you can learn something new.

6. Why does the author cut off Santos and write "Marta doesn't hear the rest of what Santos has to say"?

- A. to show that Marta is still worried about her own name and can't focus on anything else
- B. to show how surprised and relieved Marta is that someone else has two last names like her
- C. to show that Marta's classmates started making noise and Marta couldn't hear Santos anymore
- D. to show that Marta got distracted by a cat chasing a bird outside of the classroom window

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Marta explains to Adea that she has two last names _____ her parents are from Perú where it is a tradition to give kids both parents' last names.

- A. because
- B. however
- C. therefore
- D. finally

8. What does the student after Marta say?
9. What experience did Marta have when she shared her two last names at school in the past?
10. Why might Marta feel better after learning that her classmate Santos also has two last names? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

A Grocery Store Miracle

by David Brandyn



pork chops on a barbecue

Benoît Prieur

"Hurry up, son," Shamel's mother said, "because the slower you go, the longer we'll be here."

Shamel forced a smile and grabbed a shopping cart. Buying groceries with his mom was not on his list of fun activities. But his family was having a big barbecue that afternoon and Shamel had agreed to help with the preparation. Really, though, all he wanted to do was eat.

"Instead of standing there, why don't you go to the butcher and pick up some pork chops?" his mother urged. "I know they're your favorite."

"OK, mom," Shamel replied and headed to the meat section. When he got there, though, he did a double take. Standing right at the butcher's counter was none other than his favorite rapper, Smart Guy!

Shamel was in shock. He wanted to introduce himself, but he felt stuck to the ground. And even if he *could* approach his favorite rapper, what would he say to him? Shamel was just another kid who listened to his music. Would Smart Guy even care that Shamel was a fan? Or worse, would he think it was *annoying* if he went up to him?

As Shamel stood there, frozen as the meat in the freezers, Smart Guy ordered the last of the pork chops,

took them from the butcher, and darted off. Just like that, his idol and the coolest person he'd ever seen was gone.

Shamel's mother arrived a minute later, looked him over, and gave him a nudge. "Hmm," she murmured, "it seems there are no more pork chops, and I don't see any in *your* hands."

"S-s-s-Smart Guy took the last ones," Shamel haltingly replied.

"What's that-your favorite rapper? Wow! What was it like to meet him?"

"I didn't meet him. I was too scared to say even one word."

"Oh, that's too bad," his mother said. "I understand that it can be hard to introduce yourself to someone you don't know. I think you just need a little courage."

Shamel's mom took a look around the store... as if she was searching for someone. Then she walked over to a man who turned out to be the store manager.

"Excuse me," she said, "my name is Larissa Adams, and I shop here regularly. I just want to tell you that I love your store! Thanks for all you do."

"Why thank you, Ms. Adams, I truly appreciate that," the manager replied happily before walking away.

"See how easy that was?" Shamel's mom said to him with a wink.

"Mom, that was a grocery store manager," Shamel complained, "but I'm talking about my *favorite rapper*, Smart Guy! I have all his albums and know all the words to all his songs. I've watched his music videos so much that I can act them out frame by frame. He's a huge star and I'm... just a kid. How can I say anything to him?"

"I don't see why not," his mom responded, "because in the end a person is just a person-star, kid, or anything else."

"Well, it doesn't matter now, because he's gone," Shamel said glumly.

Seeing how disappointed he was, Shamel's mom patted her son on the shoulder and said optimistically, "We don't know that he's gone for sure. As we shop, let's keep an eye out for him. Deal?"

Shamel smiled reluctantly and agreed, "Deal."

He and his mom shopped and looked and looked and shopped... but, they didn't see Smart Guy anywhere. In time, they finished their grocery list and needed to go home to cook. Shamel's mother consoled him as they rang up their items and left the store.

On the way to their car, Shamel kept thinking about how he had let his fear stop him. He wondered why he had been so nervous. It was definitely because he was nothing like Smart Guy. He was a star. Shamel was just a kid. But then he thought about what his mom said: "A person is a person...star, kid, or anything

else."

Shamel surveyed the parking lot and noticed lots of conversations going on around him. People of all sorts were talking to one another-no matter who they were or what they looked like. Shamel cracked a smile. *It's true, he thought, there's no law that says that a kid can't talk to a celebrity... or anyone else, for that matter. We're all just people!* Shamel sighed. If only he had thought about that before Smart Guy left the butcher's counter!

Shamel replayed the scene from the butcher's counter in his head as he and his mom placed the grocery bags into the backseat of their car, thinking about all the things he could have said to his idol. Suddenly, a poke from his mom snapped him back to real life.

"Psst! Shamel, look!"

Shamel followed his mother's glance to the parking lot aisle... and there was Smart Guy, behind the wheel of a black car, driving slowly down the way.

It was a grocery store miracle!

Without hesitation, Shamel ran up to the car, waving his hands. Surprised, the rapper stopped and lowered his car window.

"Excuse me, Smart Guy!" Shamel called out. "I'm Shamel-your biggest fan!"

"Aww, thanks for saying that," Smart Guy replied. "The love feels good." Shamel felt like if he grinned any wider, his cheeks would break. "Anyway," Smart Guy said, "have a good one, maybe I'll see you around!" The rapper began to close his car window.

That's when Shamel summoned even more courage and blurted out, "You took the last pork chops!"

The car window stopped moving. Smart Guy broke out in a loud laugh and admitted, "Well, yes, I did. I'm sorry about that, lil' man. Pork chops are my favorite."

Smart Guy's laughter boosted Shamel's confidence, so he added, "Mine, too-especially barbecued pork chops! In fact, my family is having a barbecue later, and you should come!"

"That's nice of you," the rapper replied. "I *do* love barbecue."

Shamel's mom had been watching this scene unfold from behind her son. Now she called out to Smart Guy, "You really *should* come-and bring those pork chops, because we want some, too."

Smart Guy let out another guffaw. "You two are hilarious! And you clearly have great taste, in music *and* in food. How about I come to your barbecue and put these pork chops on the grill? I have a great recipe."

"*Lit!*" Shamel said, unable to find other words. He was so excited, he felt he could jump out of his skin.

Ms. Adams gave Smart Guy their address. The rapper thanked them both and drove off. As they watched

him drive away, Shamel turned to his mom, gave her a big hug, and exclaimed, "Thank you so much, mama! You helped me find the courage to speak to him!"

"I'm proud of you for being brave, son," she said as they got back in their car.

Shamel couldn't stop smiling. "Being able to talk to Smart Guy was so cool. But him coming to our barbecue? That's the cherry on top! Do you think it could really happen?"

"You know, I'm not sure. But if you hadn't found the courage to go speak with him, he definitely wouldn't be coming!" his mom said. "Now, let's get home and start prepping. Wouldn't it be great to get Smart Guy's pork chops on the grill! ?" she added before starting the car.

"Sure would," Shamel said hopefully. "Can we listen to Smart Guy's latest album on the ride home?"

Shamel's mom smiled and put on the music. Shamel leaned back and listened as the beats and rhymes from his favorite rapper filled the car. Eventually, a rhyme of his own came to him:

Smart Guy at the barbecue?

That would be a dream come true!

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Who does Shamel see at the butcher's counter?

- A. his best friend, Marshall
- B. his mom buying pork chops
- C. the grocery store manager
- D. his favorite rapper, Smart Guy

2. How does Shamel react when he first sees Smart Guy?

- A. Shamel begins talking quickly about his favorite album.
- B. Shamel stands silently and doesn't speak to him.
- C. Shamel runs back to his mom to tell her who he saw.
- D. Shamel takes the last pork chops before Smart Guy gets them.

3. At first, Shamel didn't speak to Smart Guy because he felt like he wasn't important enough. What evidence from the text supports this conclusion?

- A. "Shamel surveyed the parking lot and noticed lots of conversations going on around him. People of all sorts were talking to one another-no matter who they were or what they looked like."
- B. "As Shamel stood there, frozen as the meat in the freezers, Smart Guy ordered the last of the pork chops, took them from the butcher, and darted off. Just like that, his idol and the coolest person he'd ever seen was gone."
- C. "He and his mom shopped and looked and looked and shopped... but, they didn't see Smart Guy anywhere. In time, they finished their grocery list and needed to go home to cook."
- D. "...Shamel kept thinking about how he had let his fear stop him. He wondered why he had been so nervous. It was definitely because he was nothing like Smart Guy. He was a star. Shamel was just a kid."

4. Why does Shamel's mom introduce herself to the grocery store manager?

- A. She forgot where the pork chops were located in the store.
- B. She wants to show Shamel how easy it is to talk to a stranger.
- C. She thinks she recognizes the grocery store manager.
- D. She wants Shamel to get a job working at the grocery store.

5. What is one main theme of this story?

- A. Being brave and introducing yourself to people can lead to exciting connections.
- B. Making quick decisions helps people know they can count on you.
- C. Inviting more guests to a party makes it a better experience for everybody.
- D. Listening to rap music when going to the grocery store makes people happier.

6. Read the following sentences from the text.

"Smart Guy's laughter **boosted** Shamel's confidence, so he added, 'Mine, too- especially barbecued pork chops! In fact, my family is having a barbecue later, and you should come!'"

In this excerpt, what does the word "**boosted**" most closely mean?

- A. removed
- B. raised
- C. silenced
- D. shrunk

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

_____ Shamel isn't brave enough to speak to Smart Guy when he first sees him in the grocery store, he gains the courage to compliment the rapper in the parking lot.

- A. Even though
- B. Finally
- C. Such as
- D. Currently

8. How does Smart Guy react when Shamel speaks to him?

9. How do Shamel's thoughts about introducing himself to Smart Guy change after he sees people talking in the parking lot?

10. How does Shamel gain the courage to speak to Smart Guy? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

So, You Think You Can't Dance?

by Tanzania Hughie

Well, that was *bad*, I thought as I pulled off my ballet shoes.

I had just finished my dance class, and it was a disaster. I started on the wrong foot-literally -and couldn't get the steps that other students seemed to do easily. When the class was over, I noticed a few of the other students poking each other and pointing at me. They didn't think I saw them, but I did.

Worst of all was how alone I felt. I sat packing my bag as four of the students walked out-giggling, yelling, practically bouncing out the door. I got the message: I had no friends, no talent, no point.



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Just then, my big sister Julissa arrived. She took one look at me and immediately asked,

"What's wrong, Lakeisha?"

"Nothing," I said quietly.

"Uh huh," Julissa replied. "Looks like a bad 'nothing' to me, ladybug, so tell me what happened."

"Well," I mumbled, "maybe I shouldn't be taking dance classes? It felt like I was the only one who couldn't land their pirouettes today."

Julissa shook her head, sighed, and said, "Let's get out of here." I grabbed my bag, water bottle, and foam roller, and followed her out the door.

A block away, Julissa stopped at our favorite frozen yogurt store and bought me a smoothie. "Listen, sis," she said as we sipped our drinks, "not every day is a great one, and not everything you try is going to work out the way you want. The point is to keep trying. Remember that and you'll be fine."

I rolled my eyes, but Julissa gave me a glare back. "I mean it, La. Maybe ballet is not your thing yet, but dance *is*. I see how you shake and move and groove all the time. There are all kinds of ways to dance, so maybe you just need to find your own style."

We finished our smoothies and headed to the subway. In the open area near the entrance steps, there were a few swing dancers. Julissa nudged me as we passed them. They were jumping and jiving and tapping joyously to a recording of 'Take the A Train' (which was exactly what we were about to do). Their energy was so contagious that a group of people had stopped to watch and snap along. I found myself tip-tip-tapping as I skipped down the stairs after my sister.

The uptown A train roared into the station, and we hopped into a car. We were met by a loud blast of beats. As the train moved, someone shouted "Showtime!," and two teen boys began break dancing and showing off hip hop moves-contorting, climbing, defying gravity. One acrobatic guy flipped over his arm and grabbed the baseball cap off his head. He spun the hat around, looked right at me, and tossed it onto my head.

Without thinking, I quickly pulled that cap off, turned it inside out, and flipped it right back at him. He ducked just in time for the hat to land neatly on his head. A few passengers clapped, and when I looked at Julissa, she had her right eyebrow raised high.

"You have some moves, kid," the dancer exclaimed as I dropped a dollar bill into his cap.

The train lurched to a stop, and we exited just as the conductor was saying, "Stand clear of the closing doors, please." Julissa and I raced up the subway stairs and began our hike home.

We were approaching a schoolyard when I heard a familiar noise- *thwap, thwap, thwap, thwap*- accompanied by excited cheers and giggles. "Double Dutch!" I cried.

Two teams of girls were hard at work, but they made their jump-roping look effortless. "Jump in, jump in!" some called to Julissa and me. I just watched as they went step, skip, crisscross, clap under each leg, and spin, jump.

Suddenly, Julissa pushed me and yelled, "Go, girl!" I joined the jumpers-stepping, skipping, crisscrossing, clapping under each leg, and spinning as the ropes whirled around me. Then I jumped out, laughing and yelling, "Check me out!"

"Well, will you look at her?" said Julissa, wagging a finger at me. I grinned and took another step, did a relevé onto my toes, and swept into a graceful turn, making sure to spot before landing. I glanced over and there was my big sister, her smile as wide as a subway platform.

When we arrived at our apartment building's front door, Julissa threw her arm around my shoulders and said, "Don't you ever forget, ladybug, that everyone has off days. Even the greatest dancers!"

"Guess that's true," I replied. "But *they* aren't lucky enough to have you to help them through!"

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What class is Lakeisha finishing at the beginning of the story?

- A. swing dancing class
- B. ballet class
- C. yoga class
- D. salsa dance class

2. Which character comes to pick Lakeisha up from her dance class?

- A. her mother Juliana
- B. her friend Julie
- C. her brother Julian
- D. her sister Julissa

3. Read these sentences from the text.

"In the open area near the entrance steps, there were a few swing dancers. Julissa nudged me as we passed them. They were jumping and jiving and tapping joyously to a recording of 'Take the A Train' (which was exactly what we were about to do). Their energy was so contagious that a group of people had stopped to watch and snap along. I found myself tip-tip-tapping as I skipped down the stairs after my sister."

What can you conclude about Lakeisha based on this information?

- A. She appreciates the energy of the swing dancers and feels affected by it.
- B. She decides to become a swing dancer.
- C. She does not like the music the swing dancers are using.
- D. She decides that she should leave the city for somewhere quieter.

4. How does Lakeisha respond to the dancing that she sees throughout the city?

- A. She ignores it and is sad about ballet.
- B. She doesn't notice it happening.
- C. She joins in and becomes a part of it.
- D. She gets upset and leaves.

5. What is one major theme of this text?

- A. You should go somewhere to be alone and quiet if you're upset.
- B. You can only get good at something by learning it in school.
- C. You can explore the things you love in your normal daily life.
- D. It can be hard to trust your family to help you out.

6. Read the following sentences from the text.

"They were jumping and jiving and tapping joyously to a recording of 'Take the A Train' (which was exactly what we were about to do). Their energy was so contagious that a group of people had stopped to watch and snap along. I found myself tip-tip-tapping as I skipped down the stairs after my sister."

What does the word **contagious** mean as it's used in this sentence?

- A. slow-moving and serious
- B. only felt by one person at a time
- C. spreading from person to person
- D. angry and scary to look at

7. Choose the word that best completes this sentence.

Lakeisha joined the girls doing Double Dutch _____ her sister gave her a push.

- A. first
- B. later
- C. however
- D. because

8. How does Lakeisha feel after her ballet class?

9. How does Lakeisha's attitude towards dancing change throughout the story? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.

10. How does Julissa help Lakeisha's attitude towards dance change throughout the story?

Up in the Air

by Daniel Scheffler



Kurt closed the door of his mother's car with great excitement. Today was the day he was finally going to be on a plane. For the first time in his life, he was going to actually soar through the skies and see the clouds from all the angles he had imagined since he was little.

"Are you excited my boy?" said Kurt's mother, Val, from the front of the car.

"I can't believe today's the day!" said Kurt.

"Believe it!" responded Kurt's older brother Joachim as he lifted his head from his mobile phone for just a second to speak to Kurt.

The car ride felt like forever, but that's because Kurt could not wait to get to the airport and see this adventure through. It felt like they were stuck in traffic for hours and all the cars were moving slowly just to drive Kurt crazy. But actually they arrived at the airport in just a few minutes.

Val parked their car in the underground parking lot and found a steel trolley to load the suitcases and the hatbox she always took with her on a journey. Joachim never helped with anything, so Kurt knew he was the best man for the job. He helped his mother load the trolley neatly and pushed it towards the terminal building proudly.

It was bigger than Kurt thought it would be. It was a massive building filled with hundreds of people looking around and rushing to get to wherever they were going. He immediately felt the rush of energy as he walked towards the check-in desk.

He watched as Val took out their passports and gave them to the friendly lady on the other side of the desk. His mother asked Joachim to help lift the bags onto the scale so that they could get weighed and checked in. But he wasn't listening. Kurt gloated as he lifted the bags and put them on the designated scale. The check-in lady was overly friendly and appreciative of his help. He loved the feeling.

Val was handed some tickets and off they went to security. After what felt like a long wait in line, the security officer asked Kurt to empty his pockets and put his bag through the big X-ray scanner. Kurt had never done this before and felt a little nervous. It was such a big and scary machine that started beeping loudly as the elderly woman in front of him walked through.

Kurt started to feel more confident now as he walked through the machine. Not a beep. He waited for his family to come through security as he grabbed his bag. Suddenly, he saw the plane through the massive glass windows. It was huge! And it looked much bigger than what it looked like in his dreams.

Kurt ran down the ramp towards the gate. After a few minutes, the plane was ready for boarding. Everyone lined up and showed their tickets. Walking on a ramp down towards the plane, Kurt nearly tripped from all the excitement. And then he arrived, he was one foot away from the plane and finally feeling like a grown up who would fly all over the globe.

The air steward took his ticket and showed him down the aisle to his seat. Kurt ran ahead of his mother and brother and immediately sat down in his seat, buckling his seat belt. With his eyes firmly on the wing of the plane, he was waiting for everyone to sit down so that he could feel that weightlessness that everyone talks about at school when a plane takes off.

The plane started to move, and reversed slightly. Moving like a giant metal bird, the plane taxied towards the runway. Kurt clenched his mother's hand. The plane started to speed up, faster than Kurt has ever gone in his life in any car or boat. And then, as if by magic, the plane lifted off the ground. And Kurt knew this would be the first of many adventures that started this way.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is Kurt doing for the first time in his life?
 - A. traveling
 - B. driving
 - C. going on a trip with his mom and brother
 - D. flying on a plane
2. What critical event happens at the end of the story?
 - A. Kurt walks on a ramp towards the plane and nearly trips from all the excitement.
 - B. Kurt goes through security at the airport for the first time.
 - C. The plane lifts off the ground and Kurt experiences flying in a plane for the first time.
 - D. Kurt, Val, and Joachim drive to the airport.
3. What evidence from the text suggests that Kurt may have been looking forward to being on a plane for a while?
 - A. Kurt had dreams about planes.
 - B. Kurt clenches his mother's hand when the plane taxis toward the runway.
 - C. Kurt ran ahead of his mother and brother towards the plane.
 - D. Kurt helped to lift the bags on the designated scale at the check-in desk.
4. Which statement best describes Kurt and Joachim?
 - A. Neither Kurt nor Joachim is excited and eager about the trip.
 - B. Kurt is very eager and respectful. Joachim is distant and not interested.
 - C. Both Kurt and Joachim are very excited about the trip.
 - D. Kurt is not eager and respectful. Joachim is helpful and excited.
5. What is this story mainly about?
 - A. what airports are like
 - B. Kurt's relationship with Joachim
 - C. Kurt's experience on his first plane trip
 - D. how large airplanes are

6. Read the following sentence: "The car ride felt like forever, but that's because Kurt could not wait to get to the airport and **see this adventure through**."

What does the phrase "**see this adventure through**" most nearly mean?

- A. look at the adventure from a distance
 - B. complete the adventure
 - C. look at the adventure through a window
 - D. cancel the adventure
7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.
- _____ the plane taxied towards the runway, Kurt clenched his mother's hand.
- A. Therefore
 - B. However
 - C. So
 - D. As
8. Describe Kurt's experience and how he felt as he went through security.
9. Explain how Kurt reacted when the plane started to move and then lift off the ground.
10. Explain which experience or experiences from the story most likely had the biggest impact on Kurt and his desire to go on more adventures.

Protecting Sea Turtles, Seals, and Birds in Hawaii

This text is provided courtesy of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



a Hawaiian monk seal
iStock

When people travel to a beach, they are often surrounded by hotels, private homes, and tourist attractions.

Elementary and high school students who visit the northern shore of Oahu see something much different. They get to look back in time to see what this island might have looked like hundreds of years ago, before any people lived there.

“We host school groups from third grade through high school,” said Tim Tybuszewski, director of the conservation program for the North Shore Community Land Trust. “They can see what a coastline ecosystem looked like before people lived in the area. We show them important habitat for ground nesting seabirds, as well as native plants and coastal trees.”

About 25 years ago, people who lived on Oahu, one of the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean, formed the North Shore Community Land Trust. They had the opportunity to stop development along the northern part of the island. They wanted to restore and protect the land near Kahuku Point, known as Kalaeokauna ‘oa in Hawaiian.

Now, more than 600 protected acres contain sand dunes, wildlife, and native plants that are rare on the island. The area also includes about nine miles of public hiking and biking trails

that lead out to the coastline and are available to everyone.

Volunteers, including students, help pull weeds and plant native species that have important “medicinal and ceremonial uses” to native Hawaiians. This means they use the native plants for special occasions and ceremonies. Volunteers also work to remove ironwood trees and other invasive species.

“It is hard work,” Tybuszewski said. “There are lots of weeds to pull.” He gets help each year from a high school or college-age student who wants to learn about conservation practices. The students are paid a salary through a special network of national service programs called AmeriCorps.

“We give them opportunities to learn how other conservation organizations work also,” Tybuszewski said. “We get much-needed help, and they get lots of experience in different areas to know what they want to do next.”

Another task for protecting the land is picking up trash from the beach. Oahu sits just south of the North Pacific gyre, a system of currents in the ocean. Plastic trash is driven by the wind and water and ends up on the beach. “We get crates from Japan, eel traps from Korea and China, spray bottles from Canada and California, for example,” Tybuszewski said. “Single-use plastic is a big problem on beaches all over the world.”

Although there is still much work to do, he is excited about the progress they have made so far. Seabirds, including albatross, are starting to nest in the area for the first time in more than 20 years. The beach also provides nesting areas for threatened Hawaiian hawksbill and green sea turtles, as well as birthing and resting areas for the endangered Hawaiian monk seal.

“Kahuku Point is an identical ecosystem to some of the smaller, uninhabited islands near Oahu,” Tybuszewski said. “Our higher elevation is safer from sea level rise. By creating new nesting habitat for seabirds, we can prevent them from becoming endangered.”

These conservation efforts are supported by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), which specializes in bringing together individuals, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and corporations to restore our nation’s fish, wildlife, plants, and habitats for current and future generations.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is the North Shore Community Land Trust working to do?

- A. restore and protect the land on the north shore of Oahu
- B. remind residents of Oahu to clean up their front yards
- C. reduce food waste from restaurants on the island
- D. eliminate pollution from factories on the island

2. What causes so much trash to wash up on Oahu's beaches?

- A. A nearby airport dumps trash from flights on the beach.
- B. Extra trash from nearby neighborhoods is put on the beaches.
- C. Many tourists come to Oahu and often litter everywhere.
- D. A nearby system of currents drives plastic trash onto the beach.

3. Volunteers on the North Shore are working to restore its native plant habitat.

What evidence from the text supports this conclusion?

- A. "‘It is hard work,’ Tybuszewski said. ‘There are lots of weeds to pull.’"
- B. "Volunteers, including students, help pull weeds and plant native species that have important ‘medicinal and ceremonial uses’ to native Hawaiians."
- C. "Another task for protecting the land is picking up trash from the beach. Oahu sits just south of the North Pacific gyre, a system of currents in the ocean."
- D. "The beach also provides nesting areas for threatened Hawaiian hawksbill and green sea turtles, as well as birthing and resting areas for the endangered Hawaiian monk seal."

4. What is one possible goal of restoring the native habitat in Oahu?

- A. attracting more tourists with the beautiful beaches
- B. reminding residents that they should be swimming once a day
- C. making the island attractive so it can be sold to private businesses
- D. providing more nesting and resting areas for endangered species

5. What is the main idea of this text?

- A. The North Shore Community Land Trust is working with volunteers to protect the North Shore of Oahu and its native plants and animals.
- B. On Oahu's North Shore, there are nine miles of hiking and biking trails that are open for anyone to use.
- C. Oahu is near the North Pacific gyre, which is a system of ocean currents, so trash from all over the world finds its way to Oahu.
- D. The Hawaiian monk seal is an endangered animal, and volunteers are providing spots for the animals to rest and give birth.

Saving Frogs Using DNA

This text is provided courtesy of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



a Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog
Rick Kuyper / U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Have you ever seen a photo of a forest after a fire? The land seems bare without trees, but new life is starting to grow. Trees that are gone left seeds behind, and birds will scatter more. Creatures that lived in and near lakes, rivers, and streams in the forest will still be there, too.

When rangers with the U.S. Forest Service explore a forest after a fire, they have many goals. They want to help the land recover faster. They want to find out what animals still live there. They want to find animals that don't belong, called invasive species. Sometimes, the animals they want to know more about are difficult to see. The endangered Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog is one of them.

Endangered animals are at risk of becoming extinct, which means there would not be any left. The Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog is at risk for several reasons. First, they only live in the mountains in the western United States, and they like to stay within four feet of lakes or streams. Places like these are becoming harder for the frogs to find. Also, diseases are hurting frog populations, and an invasive species, the American bullfrog, is trying to take over their space and food. Then, to make their situation worse, big fires struck two of their most

important forest homes.

Forest rangers tried to count how many Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs were left after the forest fires in the Lassen National Forest and the Eldorado National Forest in California. It was difficult, so they decided to try something new: using environmental DNA, or "eDNA".

Every living thing has DNA, which stands for deoxyribonucleic acid. You have DNA in nearly every cell in your body. Your DNA tells every cell how to grow. It's in your blood, your sweat, and even your tears, and it is unique to every person. It's also unique to every animal.

Scientists have learned how to find eDNA that has been left behind by an animal in the environment. The researchers can remove a small amount of water from a lake or stream, and find out which fish and frogs live there because of the eDNA from those animals. The eDNA may come from a little piece of skin the animal shed, or even from their poop. Scientists use special equipment in a laboratory to find the eDNA in the sample of water. Then, they can tell what animal left the eDNA in the environment.

The forest rangers who are trying to help save the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog will use eDNA information to make a plan. They will learn which streams and lakes have the frog. They will construct a map and protect those areas first. The rangers will also map where the invasive bullfrogs are located so the bullfrogs can be removed.

Plus, the rangers will learn more about other species that live in the water and the way animals recover after a fire. They can share all that information with other conservationists who are making plans to support wildlife after fires happen.

It all begins with those tiny samples of eDNA.

These conservation efforts are supported by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), which specializes in bringing together individuals, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and corporations to restore our nation's fish, wildlife, plants, and habitats for current and future generations.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is one endangered animal species that the U.S. Forest Service wants to learn more about?
 - A. the American bullfrog
 - B. the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog
 - C. the Sierra Nevada raccoon
 - D. the American sparrow
2. Researchers were having trouble counting all the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs after a forest fire. What solution did they use to solve this problem?
 - A. They decided to give up and move on to another area.
 - B. They decided to hire hundreds of forest rangers to count them.
 - C. They decided to count them by using their environmental DNA.
 - D. They decided to drain all the rivers so they could see the frogs.
3. Read these sentences from the text.

“The forest rangers who are trying to help save the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog will use eDNA information to make a plan. They will learn which streams and lakes have the frog. They will construct a map and protect those areas first. The rangers will also map where the invasive bullfrogs are located so the bullfrogs can be removed.”

What can you conclude about the information that researchers get from eDNA based on this information?

- A. It helps them protect invasive species like the American bullfrog.
- B. It is not very reliable, so they have to double-check it all.
- C. It is really interesting to study but not very important overall.
- D. It helps them locate the frog, which will help them protect it.

4. What is one way that the U.S. Forest Service protects the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs?

- A. by removing the invasive bullfrog species that threatens the frog
- B. by telling the frogs that they should leave and find a new home
- C. by building little protected houses for the frogs to live in safely
- D. by leaving the entire habitat alone to work out its own problems

5. What is the main idea of this text?

- A. Every living thing has DNA in its cells because DNA instructs cells on how to grow and develop.
- B. The American bullfrog is an invasive species, and it has been trying to take over the space that the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog needs to live.
- C. When U.S. Forest Rangers explore an area after a forest fire, they are trying to figure out what animals live there and how they can help the land recover quickly.
- D. Researchers are tracking animals like the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog with their eDNA in order to develop a plan to protect endangered animals.

Working Together to Save the Sea Turtles

by ReadWorks



One of Florida's sea turtles, the loggerhead

By skeeze from Pixabay.

Florida has some of the best beaches in the world. Thousands of people visit the state to enjoy the sun and the sand. But these beaches are also home to five species of sea turtles. Female sea turtles come from the ocean and onto these beaches at night. They dig a hole, lay many eggs, and cover their eggs with sand. They use their fins to crawl back across the beach and return to the ocean. A major problem is facing these interesting creatures. Some of these turtle species are in danger of going extinct. So how do Floridians protect these special animals? They work together as a community!

Some volunteers and researchers in Florida take direct action to help the turtles. They look closely at the sand to find the fin marks the mother sea turtles left there. This helps them to locate where the sea turtles laid their eggs. When they've figured out where the eggs were

laid, they mark the area off so that no one disturbs the eggs. They also collect information about the nests and tracks to help people studying sea turtles.

These are not the only Floridians taking action to help protect these creatures. Florida's government has passed laws to save the turtles. One of these laws is "Florida's Marine Turtle Protection Act." This law prohibits anyone from disturbing or destroying marine turtles, nests, or eggs. It also helps make sure that sea turtles' natural habitats are protected.

Another way Floridians work together to save these creatures is through organizations like the Sea Turtle Conservancy. The Sea Turtle Conservancy helps people take steps that will help reduce the threats that put sea turtles in danger. For instance, bright lights on buildings near the beach can negatively impact sea turtles. Baby sea turtles usually hatch on the sandy beach and head to the ocean. When there are bright lights coming from the other side of the shore far from the ocean, the baby turtles get confused. They do not know which way to go. Many of them do not make it to the ocean and die. To help save these turtles, The Sea Turtle Conservancy works with property owners to make lighting in their buildings sea turtle-friendly. They also encourage Florida residents to turn off their lights at night if they live close to a beach.

Every Floridian can do their part to protect sea turtles and their environment. Sometimes, turtles mistake plastic bags for jellyfish. They eat this trash and die. Florida residents can volunteer for beach clean-ups and make sure to pick up their own litter. They can also vote for state leaders who want to protect the sea turtles' habitats. Every individual in the community has the power to make a difference!

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What major problem is facing some of Florida's sea turtle species?

- A. a lack of food to eat
- B. a lack of water to drink
- C. not enough turtles to mate with
- D. the danger of going extinct

2. What is one solution Floridians are trying in order to help protect sea turtles?

- A. Volunteers and researchers are marking where sea turtle nests are to keep them safe and collecting information about them.
- B. Volunteers and researchers are building homes for sea turtles on abandoned beaches so they can live safely.
- C. Researchers are coming up with new sea turtle projects so they can get more money towards conservation efforts.
- D. Volunteers are protesting companies that don't work to help protect sea turtles from extinction.

3. Read the following sentences from the passage.

"Florida's government has passed laws to save the turtles. One of these laws is "Florida's Marine Turtle Protection Act." This law prohibits anyone from disturbing or destroying marine turtles, nests or eggs. It also helps make sure that sea turtles' natural habitats are protected."

What can you conclude about Florida's government based on this information?

- A. Florida's government used to have several laws that protected sea turtles, but recently they've gotten rid of most of them.
- B. Florida's government does not think that sea turtles are important, but they do think that other sea animals and marine life are important.
- C. Florida's government thinks that protecting sea turtles and sea turtle habitats from harm is an important goal.
- D. Florida's government thinks that sea turtles are important animals, but it doesn't think that laws should be passed protecting them.

4. How might using sea-turtle friendly lighting, or turning off your lights on the beach, help sea turtles?

- A. Baby sea turtles will find their way to your house where you can feed them and give them water.
- B. Turning off your lights will make it easier for baby sea turtles to learn how to swim without reflection on the water.
- C. Turning off your lights will make it easier for volunteers to find baby sea turtles before they get to the ocean.
- D. Baby sea turtles won't get confused after hatching and will be able to make it to the ocean.

5. What is the main idea of this passage?

- A. The "Florida Marine Turtle Protection Act" is one law that the Florida government has passed to try to protect sea turtles.
- B. Through a combination of individual actions, laws, and conservation organizations, people in Florida are working to protect sea turtles and their habitats.
- C. Sea turtles sometimes mistake plastic bags for jellyfish and try to eat them, so one way that Floridians can help save sea turtles is by cleaning up plastic bags.
- D. Florida has some of the best beaches in the world, and people come from all over to enjoy these beaches and their wildlife.

Mountain Animals

This text is adapted from an original work of the Core Knowledge Foundation.



The mountain lion, or puma, is found in certain parts of the Rocky Mountains.

Many different animals live in the mountains. The mountain lion is the largest wild cat in North America. The mountain lion is also known as the puma, panther, cougar, or catamount. Once the mountain lion roamed all over North America. As more and more people moved into the lowlands and built towns and cities, the mountain lion was driven away. Unable to survive in the lowlands, the lions were forced to mostly live in the mountains.

Guanacos (/gwah*nah*koez/) live in the Andes of South America. Guanacos are related to llamas (/lah*muz/). Guanacos are very shy. As they graze, one member of the herd stands guard on higher ground. If they are in danger, the guard gives a signal. The herd then runs away.

The ibex has lived in the Alps for a long time. Its image appears in cave drawings made thousands of years ago. Its horns can grow as long as three feet (0.9 meters). Its horns are so long, it can scratch an itch on its rump with the tip of a horn!



The mountain-dwelling ibex sports some of the most magnificent horns of any animal.

Mountain animals come in many sizes and shapes. The tiny wolf spider lives in the mountains of North America. The much bigger giant panda makes its home in the mountains of China. Many birds, such as eagles and condors, fly through the air above mountains all around the world.

Some mountain animals are probably myth. Local people in the Himalayas tell stories of a huge apelike creature called the Yeti (/yet*ee/). No one has been able to prove that the Yeti is real.



The Yeti is a creature of myth. This is what people say it looks like.

Lizard King (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is the largest wild cat in North America?

- A. the mountain lion
- B. the tiger
- C. the lion
- D. the bobcat

2. What caused the mountain lion to mostly live in the mountains?

- A. More plants were growing in the mountains.
- B. More people were moving to the mountains.
- C. There were more people living in the lowlands.
- D. They got too warm in the lowlands.

3. Read the following sentences from the text.

"As [guanacos] graze, one member of the herd stands guard on higher ground. If they are in danger, the guard gives a signal. The herd then runs away."

What can you conclude about guanacos based on this information?

- A. They are usually independent animals.
- B. They survive by working together as a herd.
- C. They survive by fighting predators.
- D. They are not very happy animals.

4. How does this text describe the kinds of animals that live in the mountains?

- A. as coming in all shapes and sizes
- B. as all being a type of bird
- C. as being very shy and hard to find
- D. as being myths

5. What is the main idea of this text?

- A. Many different types of animals live in the mountains, including ibexes, guanacos, ibexes, and more.
- B. Ibexes have long horns that curl backwards from their heads.
- C. The most powerful kind of mountain animal is the mountain lion, which lives in North America.
- D. Guanacos are always in groups because that's how they stay safe in their mountain habitats.