

READ THE PASSAGE Look for details in the passage about Diana Nyad and her accomplishments.

Diana Nyad, Marathon Swimmer

Diana Nyad, born in 1949, is one of the world's greatest long-distance swimmers. She started as a speed swimmer, winning races in high school and dreaming of the Olympics. However, Nyad fell ill with heart disease before she could compete in the 1968 Olympic Games and had to spend three months in bed. By the time Nyad was better, she was unable to swim as fast as she had previously.

Nyad then turned from speed swimming to distance swimming. Her first race was 10 miles in the cold waters of Lake Ontario. Even though she came in tenth place, she was the first woman ever to complete the course. In 1974, Nyad set a record while swimming a 22-mile race in the Bay of Naples, Italy. That same year she tried to swim back and forth across Lake Ontario, a total of 64 miles. Nyad successfully made it across the giant lake, but on the return trip, she lost consciousness and had to be pulled from the water. In 1975, she swam around Manhattan Island, a distance of 28 miles, in a record 7 hours and 57 minutes. Three years later she swam 102 miles from the Bahamas to Florida.

In 2010, at the age of 61, Nyad announced she would swim from Cuba to Florida. In order to train, Nyad spent as many as 14 hours a day swimming in the ocean. The swim from Cuba to Florida would last at least 60 hours and cover 103 miles. Unfortunately, bad weather forced Nyad to wait until the next year. In 2011, Nyad attempted the swim but was blown off course after being in the water for 29 hours. Nyad attempted the swim again a few months later, but she had to stop because of multiple jellyfish stings.

Despite these setbacks, Nyad continues to persevere and plans to eventually make the Cuba-to-Florida swim. She has vowed to never stop swimming and wants other older Americans to understand that it is never too late to make one's dreams come true.

SKILL PRACTICE Read each question. Fill in the bubble next to the correct answer.

- When Diana Nyad turned from speed to distance swimming, it showed that she _____.
 - did not want to go to the Olympics
 - never found success as a speed swimmer
 - liked distance races better than speed races
 - was devoted to the sport of swimming
- What was the world of competitive swimming probably like in the early 1970s?
 - There were few female distance swimmers.
 - Distance swimmers competed only in the U.S.
 - Many Olympic records were being broken.
 - Distance swimming was more popular than speed swimming.
- Why was the Bahamas–Florida swim probably easier to complete than the swim across Lake Ontario and back?
 - She was younger then.
 - It was before she became ill.
 - The water was warmer.
 - It was a shorter distance.
- Which word best describes Nyad?
 - reckless
 - determined
 - sickly
 - imaginative

STRATEGY PRACTICE Did you understand Diana Nyad's need to challenge herself? Why or why not?

READ THE PASSAGE Think about whom the passage is about and where the events took place.

The Real Dracula

You have probably heard of the fictional vampire named Dracula. Did you know he may have been based on a real person? Vlad Dracula ruled in Walachia (located in present-day Romania) during the mid-1400s. He was the second son of Vlad Dracul, who got his surname from being in the Order of the Dragon. When Vlad Dracula's father and older brother were killed, Vlad Dracula assumed leadership in Walachia. Because the rural farming society was frequently invaded by neighboring principalities, he spent his life trying to keep the Hungarian kingdom and the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire from taking over his homeland. Following his death, he became known as Vlad Tepes, which translates to Vlad the Impaler.

Vlad Dracula was known for his exceptional cruelty, which he showed to peasants, noblemen, friends, and enemies alike. His nickname, Vlad the Impaler, came about because of his favorite way to execute people—by painfully impaling them on stakes and placing them in public view. It is estimated that Vlad Dracula killed between 40,000 and 100,000 people in his lifetime.

Although exact information about Vlad Dracula's homes has been lost to history, tourists still flock to the legendary fortresses where it is believed he lived. One of his likely residences, Castle Poenari, is a ruin now. It stands high on a cliff overlooking a deep gorge and is said to be haunted. Visitors to the ruin must climb almost 1,500 steps to reach it. Another castle, Castle Bran, is called Dracula's Castle and is a major tourist attraction in Romania. It has been renovated several times in its 600-year history, but it still looks like something out of a fairy tale.

In 1897 author Bram Stoker wrote a novel about a vampire named Dracula. Stoker chose the name believing it was the Romanian word for "devil." Stories began to circulate that Vlad Dracula, like the fictional Dracula, had been a vampire. From then on, the legends of the ruler grew greater—and bloodier—than ever before.

SKILL PRACTICE Read each question. Fill in the bubble next to the correct answer.

- Which word best describes Vlad Dracula?
 - ghostly
 - creative
 - brutal
 - resourceful
- Stories about Vlad Dracula being a vampire began because _____.
 - he really was a vampire
 - he killed so many people
 - his origins were so mysterious
 - a fictional vampire had the same name
- Where can tourists see Vlad Dracula castles?
 - Romania
 - Turkey
 - Hungary
 - Dracul
- Why is Vlad Dracula also known as Vlad the Impaler?
 - because that was also his father's name
 - because of the way he executed people
 - because of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*
 - because of the names of Romanian castles

STRATEGY PRACTICE Underline words or phrases from the passage that help you visualize the setting.

READ THE FOLK TALE

Think about the moral, or lesson, of the story.

Too Small, Too Loud

Once there was a man who lived in a house that he despised. He thought his house was far too loud. His neighbors lived nearby, and he could hear them shouting through the walls. The birds outside made a terrible racket. Even the sound of the wind blowing and the rain falling on the roof bothered the man. He also believed that his house was not large enough: it had very few rooms, and the furniture made it seem cramped and crowded. Finally, fed up, the man went to the wise woman of the village and asked her what to do.

"I have the answer," she replied. "You must bring your chickens, your sheep, your goats, and your cow to live in your house with you. Only then will you be able to solve the problem you are facing."

The man thought this advice was very peculiar and went home thinking he had wasted his time. But as the days passed and the man's discomfort grew, he finally decided to follow the wise woman's advice. He brought all the animals indoors. Now, he could barely move without tripping over a goat or a sheep, and the noise from the cackling chickens and mooing cow was unbearable. He went back to see the wise woman.

"Your advice has made the situation worse," the man cried. "What should I do now?"

The woman smiled and nodded sagely. "Yes, that is exactly what I thought would happen. This is very good. Now go home and empty your house of all the livestock. Put the animals back in their pens."

The man went home and did as the wise woman suggested. As soon as the last chicken had been ushered out of the house, the man was astonished by how big and quiet it now seemed.

SKILL PRACTICE Read each question. Fill in the bubble next to the correct answer.

- What is the man's complaint?
 - He thinks his house is too big.
 - He feels his house is too tiny and noisy.
 - He is very lonely and bored.
 - He does not know what to do with his animals.
- What happens when the man brings his animals inside?
 - The house seems smaller and louder.
 - The wise woman gives the man advice.
 - The animals do not like living inside.
 - The neighbors complain about the noise.
- The wise woman tells the man to put the animals back outside so he will _____.
 - stop bothering her with his silly problem
 - find new ways to organize his house
 - spend more time with his neighbors
 - realize the house seems large and peaceful without them
- Which of the following best describes the passage's theme?
 - Silence is golden.
 - Animals belong outside.
 - Everything is relative.
 - Every house has problems.

STRATEGY PRACTICE Do you understand the point the author is trying to make? Why or why not?

READ THE PASSAGE Think about the message of the passage.

Swimming with the Sharks

Marine biologist Luke Tipple has spent a lot of time in shark cages. People use shark cages, which are underwater structures with metal bars, to observe and study dangerous sharks, especially great white sharks. The practice of using shark cages is very controversial; the sharks are lured with bait so that scientists or tourists inside the very large cages can watch them. Despite some people's objections, Tipple feels that shark cages are a safe, effective way to study great whites.

One argument against using shark cages is that baiting sharks interferes with the natural world and may make sharks more likely to attack humans in the wild. An incident from 2007, in which a great white shark attacked a shark cage off Guadalupe Island, Mexico, is often cited as evidence for this claim. Tipple feels that in that case, the bait was badly positioned, causing the shark to crash into the cage and get caught in its bars. He believes the shark did not attack at all—it was just trying to escape.

Tipple now runs a shark diving company. He points out that the practice of using shark cages has benefits for both humans and sharks. Shark cages allow scientists to study sharks up close in their natural environment, especially the endangered great white shark. And it gives non-scientists a way to observe and understand sharks, which are generally feared. This contact between human and shark makes it far more likely, in Tipple's view, that people will support shark conservation.

SKILL PRACTICE Read each question. Fill in the bubble next to the correct answer.

- Why do some people object to using shark cages?
 - They feel that feeding the sharks will make them rely on people.
 - They believe the cages can kill sharks.
 - They feel that luring sharks interferes with nature.
 - They do not believe that people should study sharks.
- Luke Tipple thinks shark cages are beneficial for scientists because the cages _____.
 - help scientists study sharks in nature
 - allow scientists to capture wild sharks
 - show scientists how sharks react to metal
 - allow scientists to get funding from tourists
- Tipple approves of using shark cages for tourists so they will _____.
 - learn to fear sharks
 - help to feed sharks
 - better understand sharks
 - stay away from sharks
- One theme of the passage is that _____.
 - scientists should be careful when doing research
 - wild animals can be tamed with bait
 - sharks are not dangerous creatures
 - greater understanding can lead to greater protection

STRATEGY PRACTICE Imagine you are observing sharks from inside a shark cage. Describe your visualization.

READ THE PASSAGE Pay attention to the people, events, and locations in the passage.

Batter Up!

It is May 15, 1941. The New York Yankees baseball team is playing the Chicago White Sox at Yankee Stadium in New York City. The Yankees are in fourth place in the American League. Ted Williams has been leading the Boston Red Sox with an incredible batting average. In contrast, Yankees centerfielder Joe DiMaggio has been in a hitting slump. But on this day, he hits a single. The Yankees lose the game, but the world's greatest hitting streak has begun.

Between May 15 and July 16, the Yankees play 56 games. In each one, DiMaggio hits the ball and gets safely to first base at least once. In game after game, he makes one, two, or three base hits. Encouraged by the streak, the Yankees do better and better and are soon on their way to the World Series.

Then on July 17, everything changes. DiMaggio takes a taxi to the ballfield in Cleveland, Ohio. The cabdriver tells the ballplayer that he has a strange feeling the hitting streak will end that day. DiMaggio is thrown out on his first turn at bat, walks on his second, is thrown out on his third, and hits into a double-play on his fourth at-bat. The streak is over. Despite the end of the hitting streak, the Yankees go on to beat the National League's Brooklyn Dodgers in the World Series later that year.

To this day, Joe DiMaggio is considered one of the greatest ballplayers of all time. He is widely praised for the amazing 1941 streak in which he had 91 hits out of 223 at-bats, exceeding Williams's batting average. Years later, when asked whether he felt the cabdriver had jinxed him on that last day of the streak, DiMaggio replied, "I told him he hadn't. My number was up."

SKILL PRACTICE Read each question. Fill in the bubble next to the correct answer.

- Where did Joe DiMaggio's hitting streak begin?
 - New York City
 - Cleveland
 - Chicago
 - Boston
- DiMaggio's attitude toward the cabdriver shows that DiMaggio was _____.
 - resentful
 - embarrassed
 - good-natured
 - angry
- On the day the hitting streak began, the Yankees _____.
 - beat the White Sox
 - were in fourth place
 - were in the World Series
 - took a taxi to the ballfield
- The 1941 Yankee performance illustrates the theme that _____.
 - one person can inspire many others
 - baseball is the world's best sport
 - words can affect someone's fortune
 - sports bring strangers together

STRATEGY PRACTICE List two important facts from the passage about Joe DiMaggio.
