

Reading Sample Questions

Text: The Beach

For many of us, there is nothing better than lying on a beach, listening to the waves, and feeling the sand under our toes. Millions of people do it every year, and it is often seen as the perfect way to completely relax. However, this love of the beach is fairly new. It only became popular in Western countries during the 19th and early 20th centuries, and at first, it was mostly enjoyed by wealthy people. Before this, Europeans, and especially the ancient Greeks, often were scared of the sea and saw the beach as a place of danger or even death. Even Greeks who lived near the coast and were skilled sailors believed that farming was a safer and more respectable way of life.

Greek literature shows how different ancient attitudes were compared to modern beach culture. It often ignores the pleasant sights and sounds of the beach, focusing instead on negative experiences. For example, ancient poems describe the strong and unpleasant smell of seaweed and sea salt. In the famous poem *Odyssey*, the hero Menelaus and his friends get lost in a small boat near the coast of Egypt. They must cover themselves with thick seal skins to catch a sea god and find the way home. The smell of the seals, seaweed and sea salt is so bad that their plan almost fails. Only a magical perfume can stop them from giving up.

While many people today find the sound of gentle waves calming, ancient Greek writers described only frightening storms at sea. These storms were sometimes caused by pirates or strong winds, and they were compared to the noise of battle. In the *Iliad*, the fierce Trojan attack is described as a deadly storm that shakes the earth and stirs the sea with huge, white-crested waves.

Even handsome heroes could become unattractive after long journeys at sea. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus spends ten years travelling after the Trojan War, not five or twenty, before reaching land. By then, the hot sun and salt water has left his skin burned and rough, and his hair tangled with seawater. When he finally arrives, he frightens the princess's two servants, who at first think he might be a dangerous stranger.

For the ancient Greeks, it was not just the sea, but also the beach that was troubling. People didn't go there for fun – they often went there to remember loved ones who had died, especially those lost at sea. Tombs were sometimes built near the shore, and without being buried in a proper way, the dead were believed to wander forever as ghosts. The beach was seen as a border between the world of the living and the dead.

However, beaches were not always viewed negatively. They could be places of mystery and power, connecting the living, the dead, and the gods. Merchant ships, farmers trading goods, pirates, and even enemy ships sometimes landed there, so the coast could be risky. But shipwrecks could also bring surprises. In the ancient story *Daphnis and Chloe*, a poor shepherd finds a small purse on the beach, which changes his life for the better. In other tales, damaged ships wash ashore with coins, shells, or wooden chests. Such discoveries, though rare, could dramatically change someone's life and social position.

Source: https://theconversation.com/the-beach-wasnt-always-a-vacation-destination-for-the-ancient-greeks-it-was-a-scary-place-259356?utm_source=DamnInteresting

Questions

1. Comprehension: How long did Odysseus spend at sea after the Trojan War?

- A) Five years
- B) Ten years
- C) Twenty years
- D) Two years

2. Comprehension: In the Odyssey, what did Menelaus use to hide?

- A) A sea god
- B) Animal skins
- C) Seaweed
- D) A small boat

3. Comprehension: Why were people scared of Odysseus when he returned after the Trojan war?

- A) He had a bad smell.
- B) He was acting differently.
- C) He was difficult to recognise.
- D) He wore strange clothes

4. Comprehension: How did ancient Greek writers usually describe the sea?

- A) As a place where fierce winds could be compared to natural disasters.
- B) As a place where rough waters could be compared to mysterious lands.
- C) As a place where strong waves could be compared to life in the military.
- D) As a place where dangerous storms could be compared to battles.

5. The word 'plan' in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to:

- A) map
- B) project
- C) idea
- D) hope

6. The word 'proper' in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to:

- A) accepted
- B) accurate
- C) polite
- D) suitable



7. The word 'risky' in paragraph 6 is closest in meaning to:

- A) uncertain
- B) unreliable
- C) tricky
- D) dangerous

8. What is suggested about shipwrecks?

- A) They would lead to danger.
- B) They were blamed on the gods.
- C) They were used to teach lessons
- D) They could offer opportunities.

9. What can we guess about the beach as a 'border between the world of the living and the dead' for the Greeks?

- A) They were scared you could die there.
- B) They thought it was a place where spirits might be present.
- C) They believed the sea could bring people back to life.
- D) They thought it was the best place to pray for loved ones.

10. Why did ancient Greek writers often describe the beach in negative ways in literature?

- A) They wanted to show the coast was not safe.
- B) They wanted to show nature's power over humans.
- C) They wanted to stress travel was dangerous.
- D) They wanted to link the shore with suffering.

11. What is the best title for this article?

- A) Ancient Greeks and Their Dangerous Shores
- B) Changing Attitudes Toward the Beach
- C) Why Greeks Avoided the Seashore
- D) The Evolution of Seaside Tourism

12. Complete the sentence with a word from paragraph 4: When Odysseus returned, people thought he was a ____ and were afraid of him.

Insert a word above

13. Complete the sentence with a word from paragraph 2 : The only thing that could help Menelaus was a perfume said to be ____.

Insert a word above



14. Based on the text, is the following statement TRUE, FALSE OR NOT GIVEN? The Ancient Greeks enjoyed holidays at the beach.

- A) True
- B) False
- C) NOT GIVEN

15. Based on the text, is the following statement TRUE, FALSE OR NOT GIVEN? The purse found by Daphnis contained gold coins.

- A) True
- B) False
- C) NOT GIVEN

16. Based on the text, is the following statement TRUE, FALSE OR NOT GIVEN? Ancient Greek poets often wrote about people fishing on the beach.

- A) True
- B) False
- C) NOT GIVEN

-END-