

READ THE PASSAGE Look for details that describe the 1918 and 2009 flu viruses.

Flu Pandemics

In 1918, the world suffered one of the worst flu outbreaks in recorded history. A flu pandemic, or worldwide outbreak, infected roughly one in every three people in the world. Recordkeeping was not very accurate at that time, so the final death toll remains unknown. Given what we do know, it is estimated that as many as 100 million people died from the 1918 flu pandemic. It is still considered to be the worst natural disaster in history.

The flu, short for *influenza*, is caused by a virus. When the human body detects any virus, the immune system becomes active in order to fight it. Typically, people with strong immune systems, such as healthy young adults, recover faster from the virus than people who have weak immune systems, such as the elderly or very young children. However, the 1918 flu virus killed more healthy adults than it did the elderly or the very young. The 1918 virus was so deadly that people's bodies overreacted. Strong immune systems then became too aggressive in fighting the virus and actually caused more harm, often killing those infected.

Fortunately, science, recordkeeping, and disaster-response measures have all improved greatly. Today, doctors have better medicines to treat potential outbreaks, and they know more about how viruses spread. In 2009, another flu pandemic broke out. The virus was related to the one in 1918. However, this flu virus was less dangerous and did not cause people's immune systems to overreact. Also, medicines to treat or prevent the flu were stronger, so the 2009 pandemic caused only a tiny fraction of the amount of damage done by the pandemic in 1918.

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

- Compared to other natural disasters, the 1918 flu virus was _____.
(A) not as deadly
(B) much deadlier
(C) equally severe
(D) the least severe
- How did the 1918 flu virus affect people compared to most other flu viruses?
(A) It affected people with weaker immune systems the most.
(B) Elderly people recovered more slowly.
(C) More young children were affected.
(D) More victims were healthy young adults.
- How were the 1918 flu virus and the 2009 flu virus similar?
(A) Both caused pandemics.
(B) Both infected the same number of people.
(C) Both created immune system overreactions.
(D) Both were untreatable with medicine.
- Which best explains why fewer people died from the 2009 flu virus than from the 1918 flu virus?
(A) The 1918 outbreak affected people with weak immune systems.
(B) Doctors in 1918 did not have the right medicines.
(C) People's immune systems were stronger in 2009.
(D) People kept better records in 2009.

STRATEGY PRACTICE Describe a recent natural disaster that you are familiar with. How was it similar to or different from the 1918 flu pandemic?

READ THE PASSAGE If you do not understand the main idea in a paragraph, reread the paragraph slowly.

The Northwest Passage

At the end of the fifteenth century, Western explorers began looking for the Northwest Passage—a water route through the Arctic that is north of the Canadian mainland and connects the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Early in the nineteenth century, a passage was discovered, but it proved to be ice-bound and impossible to navigate. Recently, however, the situation has begun to change.

In August 2007, scientists confirmed that Arctic sea ice had shrunk to its lowest levels since records have been kept. As a result, the entire length of the Northwest Passage was ice-free and navigable for the entire month that August. Why did this happen? The answer is believed to be global warming. The planet's rising temperatures caused Arctic ice to thaw at a rate faster than scientists had predicted.

Because sea ice is white and reflective, most of the sun's rays bounce off its surface. When sea ice melts, however, dark ocean waters are exposed. These dark waters absorb the sun's light instead of reflecting it, which causes the water to warm. In warmer water, new ice has trouble forming, which then causes more ice to melt and less ice to form in the years to come.

Scientists are not predicting that the Northwest Passage will be open year-round in the foreseeable future. Global warming has no effect on the tilt of Earth's axis, which is what makes winter in the Arctic extremely harsh. But if global warming continues, sailors of the future may one day be able to claim the Northwest Passage for good.

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

- What is the passage mostly about?
 - why the Northwest Passage opened in 2007
 - the expeditions of Western explorers
 - what causes global warming
 - the long search for the Northwest Passage
- Which event happened after the Arctic sea ice shrank to its lowest level?
 - The Northwest Passage was ice-free and navigable for an entire month.
 - The presence of sea ice began increasing at alarming rates.
 - Global warming began to affect Earth's axis.
 - Explorers tried unsuccessfully to find and navigate the Northwest Passage.
- How did Arctic sea ice change in 2007?
 - It blocked the passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.
 - It melted more than it had since measuring began.
 - It started reflecting the sun's rays.
 - It opened the Northwest Passage for good.
- What happens after dark ocean waters are exposed?
 - The water reflects more of the sun's light.
 - New ice forms deep in the ocean.
 - The water absorbs the sun's energy and gets warmer.
 - Winters in the Arctic become harsher.

STRATEGY PRACTICE Describe something in the passage that you better understood after rereading it.

READ THE PASSAGE

As you read, think about what Nora Gross is like and what the theme of the passage is.

A Penny Saved

When Nora Gross was just four years old, she and her father passed a homeless man. Concerned about the cold winter weather, Gross asked, "Can we take him home?" Her innocent question became the starting point of a project that has become one of the largest youth philanthropy programs in the world.

Gross's big idea was small coins. She knew that pennies often seem like worthless clutter. But she thought that if she and other students could gather enough of them, the money could really make a difference. This was the beginning of the Penny Harvest. Today, more than half a million students take part in the program. In its first 20 years, the Penny Harvest has collected \$8.1 million in pennies!

Gross and her father founded Common Cents, a not-for-profit organization, to manage their fundraising efforts. They believe the penny drives can help develop young people's generosity and moral character. After the pennies are collected, students form philanthropy roundtables to evaluate community problems and to decide where to donate the collected funds. Many students become inspired by the process and go on to become volunteers at the organizations they support, which include animal care facilities, community gardens, senior centers, and homeless shelters.

Teddy Gross explains: "We at Common Cents regard America's billion-dollar resource of idle pennies—found in startling quantities in the homes of both the rich and poor—as the philanthropic property of young people. For this reason, every penny the children collect is theirs to give away in an educational group process." The students involved with the Penny Harvest have changed the world for the better, and they have learned valuable lessons about caring for others in their communities.

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

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| <p>1. What was the basis of Nora Gross's idea?</p> <p>(A) We should prepare for harsh weather.</p> <p>(B) We should take care of people in need.</p> <p>(C) We should clean up city streets.</p> <p>(D) We should be more careful with money.</p> | <p>3. Teddy Gross would most likely agree that young people _____.</p> <p>(A) can be trusted to make smart giving decisions</p> <p>(B) must be taught to be generous</p> <p>(C) can run businesses more efficiently than adults</p> <p>(D) are too idealistic to be practical</p> |
| <p>2. The Penny Harvest was created to help young people _____.</p> <p>(A) save money for college</p> <p>(B) get rid of worthless pocket change</p> <p>(C) contribute to their communities</p> <p>(D) learn about how people become homeless</p> | <p>4. Which of these best describes Common Cents?</p> <p>(A) a critical voice against poverty</p> <p>(B) a positive force for social change</p> <p>(C) a logical response to monetary waste</p> <p>(D) a group effort to solve housing problems</p> |

STRATEGY PRACTICE What is the difference between the Penny Harvest and Common Cents? How did you figure it out?
