

**Directions**  
Read this story. Then answer questions 1 through 7.

## Excerpt from *Last Regrets*

by Paige Hook

- 1 I sat in my pink-flowered swimsuit on the hot concrete of the driveway, my legs stretched out in front of me, my chipped pink toenails pointing to the sky. I was reflecting on the brilliant defeat the boys had just suffered in yet another water fight with the neighborhood girls.
- 2 Looking down the driveway to the road, I felt the ground beneath me rumble. My legs began to shake, the leaves on the trees trembled, and I could swear that a flowerpot tumbled over on my neighbor's front porch. The intense rattling increased with every passing second.
- 3 I got up and started to run, my bare feet smacking against the scalding pavement. I had to hide until I found an excuse. Something, anything, to get me out of it.
- 4 "Paige," I heard my mom call from the front door, "come inside. Your grandparents just pulled up."
- 5 "Rats," I whispered. Slowly, I turned around and walked back with my head down, looking at the pavement.
- 6 When I got to my driveway, I looked up and saw the familiar sight. It was a monster, a big white monster, complete with an "I Love Fishing" bumper sticker. The shadow it made almost covered the entire driveway. But the real problem sat behind the white monster. It looked harmless at first, but I had already spent too many boring afternoons in it this summer. It was a little red fishing boat, my grandpa and grandma's pride and joy.
- 7 I walked inside the house where my grandparents and my mom were standing around the island in the kitchen. I gave both of my grandparents a hug and proceeded to the cupboard for a glass.
- 8 "How 'bout some fishing, Paige?" my grandpa asked. "Your two brothers are raring<sup>1</sup> to go."
- 9 This is what I'd been dreading. "I don't know, Grandpa. It's pretty hot out."

**GO ON**

- 10 “It’s never too hot to fish. I brought the boat and everything. It’s all hitched up behind the RV. I know how much you love riding in the boat.”
- 11 He was wrong. I hated that boat. I liked riding in boats when they were going fast. I liked riding in boats that I could water-ski behind. I’d even settle for tubing if skiing wasn’t an option. But fishing boats hardly even moved.
- 12 “We’ll have to buy you a new fishing pole first. Your mom said you lost your last one,” said Grandpa.
- 13 I seemed to lose a lot of fishing poles, but my grandpa never minded. He would just take me to Target to buy another one.
- 14 In twenty minutes, I found myself walking into the mouth of the monster, complete with pink interior from the dirt-covered floor mats to the darker pink seats. Behind the seats nestled a small kitchenette, littered with what was surely last month’s breakfast: two plates covered with syrup, an old waffle box, an empty carton of eggs, and a basket filled with rotten fruit. Across from the kitchenette stood the bathroom, which contributed to the monster’s bad case of morning breath. Beyond this was a small bed, piled high with pink blankets, resembling a tongue that could lash out at any time and swallow me whole.
- 15 Hanging neatly on hooks above the kitchenette counter were Grandpa’s hats, white with stains, like teeth that hadn’t been brushed in a while. They all had sayings like “#1 Grandpa” and “King of the Sea.” Before he sat down in the driver’s seat, Grandpa plucked the nearest hat off a hook and put it on over his bald spot to avoid burning his head in the hot summer sun.
- 16 My grandpa maneuvered the large RV and boat out of our neighborhood, and in ten minutes, we were at Raccoon River, placing the red fishing boat in the water. I was going to borrow an extra pole that my grandpa kept “just in case.” Great.
- 17 In minutes, all three of us kids had our lines in the water. The sweat running down my body was already stinging my eyes and turning the fake leather seat beneath me into a wet, slippery mess. The breeze that may have made the summer heat bearable was nonexistent on the small lake surrounded by tall trees. It was going to be a long afternoon.



- 18 Three hours later, everybody else had caught at least two fish. The boat was once again attached to the back of the RV, and we were on our way home, a waste of another Saturday afternoon.
- 19 “Wasn’t that fun, kids?” asked my grandpa as he peeked back at us through the rear-view mirror.
- 20 My brothers both responded enthusiastically and then began arguing about who had caught the biggest fish. I continued to stare out of the RV window without answering Grandpa’s question.

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<sup>1</sup>**raring:** eager

**GO ON**

1

What does paragraph 5 reveal about Paige?

- A She fears going out on the lake.
- B She wants to avoid her grandparents.
- C She prefers the outdoors to coming inside.
- D She wants to play with the neighborhood girls.

2

How do paragraphs 8 through 10 develop the plot of the story?

- A They give background information about Paige.
- B They illustrate Paige's internal conflict.
- C They explain why Paige admires her Grandpa.
- D They show how Paige and her brothers are alike.

3

Read the sentence from paragraph 14 below.

**Across from the kitchenette stood the bathroom, which contributed to the monster's bad case of morning breath.**

What does the metaphor mean in the sentence?

- A The RV had a rotten smell.
- B People slept poorly inside the RV.
- C The RV was a cramped place.
- D People made a mess inside the RV.

**GO ON**

4

Which detail signals a change in the direction of the story?

- A Grandpa loans Paige a fishing pole.
- B Paige warns her family about the heat.
- C Grandpa and Grandma arrive in their RV.
- D Paige and the girls beat the boys in a water fight.

5

How does the author **most** develop Grandpa's point of view in the story?

- A by having the narrator describe Grandpa
- B by sharing Grandpa's thoughts with the reader
- C by including dialogue between Grandpa and the kids
- D by showing how Grandpa acts with Paige's brothers

6

Which detail would be **most** important to include in a summary of the story?

- A Paige loses a lot of fishing poles.
- B Grandpa owns many different hats.
- C Paige enjoys water-skiing and tubing.
- D Grandpa wants to take the kids fishing.

**GO ON**

**7**

Which sentence **best** expresses the theme of the story?

- A** People usually change as they grow older.
- B** Sometimes people are embarrassed by family.
- C** People often cherish their childhood memories.
- D** Sometimes people make choices to please others.

**GO ON**

**Directions**  
Read this article. Then answer questions 8 through 14.

## Excerpt from *Go Outside and Play!*

by Jennifer Kroll

1 Think about how much time you spent outside last week. Really “outside.” Walking from the car into the mall doesn’t count.

2 Now think about how much time you spent indoors—on the Internet or playing video games or watching TV.

3 “I play inside more than outside,” says Casey M., of South Bend, Ind. “I like to play games on the computer.”

4 If you’re like Casey and many other people, it’s likely that you spent more time inside four walls than outside in fresh air. Kids today spend two fewer hours per week on sports and outdoor activities than kids did 20 years ago. That’s according to a University of Michigan study. *Sedentary* (nonmoving) activities are more popular. Most people in the study reported spending most of their free time watching TV (85 percent) or playing computer games (81 percent). The costs “include obesity, greater stress, higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses—and less joy in being alive and aware,” says Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*.

5 So why is this happening? And what can you do about it?

### **Why Play? Why Outside?**

6 Play is important, even for adults. Goofing around relieves stress and lets us feel free and creative. And playing outside is especially good. Just being exposed to the great outdoors does wonders. “Outside light is . . . vital to the immune system and simply makes us feel happier,” Pica says.

7 Plugged in and missing out? Here are four great reasons to get outside and play.

8 **Outdoor activity expands your senses.** Try this: The next time you sit down to IM<sup>1</sup> your buddies, take note of your senses during and after your session. Then do the same experiment after you’ve done something outside.

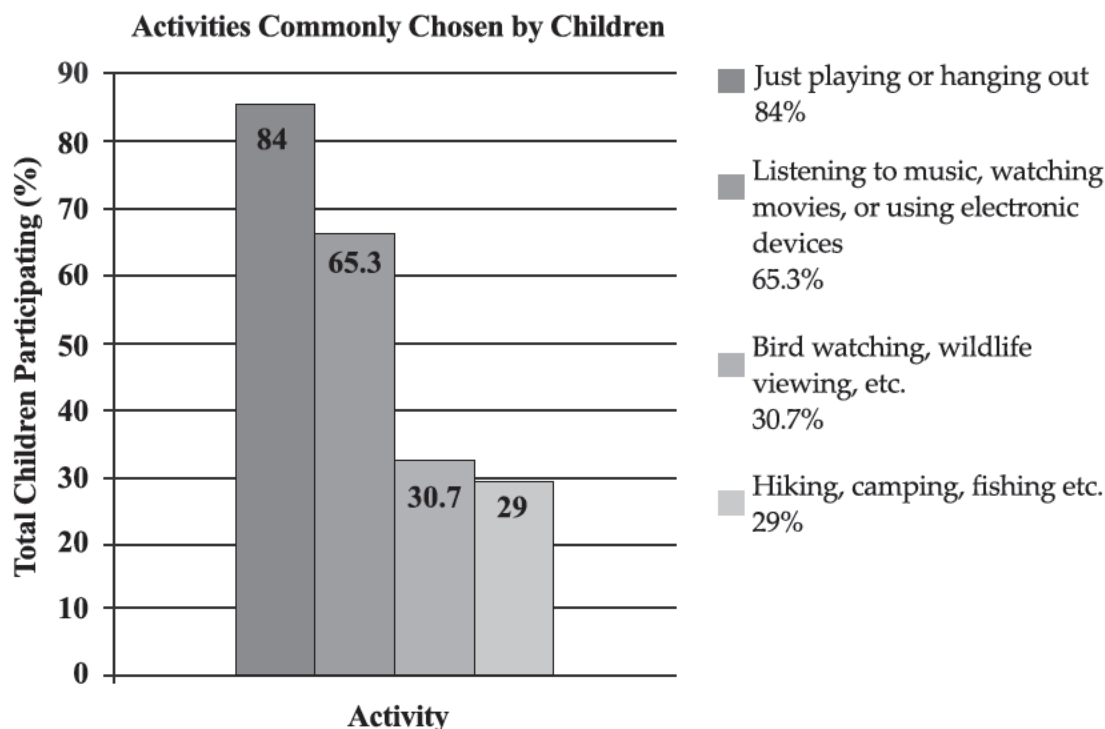
9 Which makes you feel better?

**GO ON**

- 10 Being outdoors brings the senses to life. In fact, 75 percent of students polled by *Weekly Reader* said they felt better after spending time outside. “Hiking, exploring, and fishing help hone all of your senses,” says Betsy Keller. She’s a professor of exercise and sports sciences at Ithaca College in New York. “Smell, sight . . . [they’re] all engaged when you’re outside.”
- 11 Bonus! With your senses engaged, you’ll feel free and more creative. Clements reports that in a park near her home, young people turned a concrete slab into their own outdoor theater. “They’re role-playing . . . enjoying the creativity and imagination that you can’t when you’re indoors,” she says.
- 12 **Playing outside helps your body.** Want to get fit? Go outside! “The outdoors is the best place for [you] to practice and master physical skills and to experience the pure joy of movement,” says Pica.
- 13 You’ve probably heard teachers and others tell you that getting 30 minutes of exercise a day or walking 10,000 steps helps you stay fit. “We’ve emphasized physical activity levels and not focused on the fun aspect,” Keller admits. But if you’re having fun, you’re more likely to stick with it, and being outside offers special fun and fitness. When playing outside, says Keller, “the terrain varies. You can be on stairs, hills, walls, play equipment. It challenges your balance, coordination, and stamina. Playing on a flat floor doesn’t always do that.”
- 14 Time spent outdoors pays off later too. It helps keep your body’s clock on track so that you sleep better at night and feel less sleepy during the day.
- 15 **Outdoor play eases your mind.** Are you stressed out? Having trouble concentrating? Too much time indoors—away from the natural world—may be a cause. Louv uses a term to describe the set of problems caused by too much time indoors: *nature-deficit disorder*. “I use it not as a medical diagnosis,” he says. “I use it to describe the price we pay for being so separated from nature.”
- 16 **Spending time outdoors brings you closer to the environment.** Hearing the leaves crackle underfoot and breathing in fresh air builds awareness and appreciation of the environment. If you walk through the woods in search of cool birds and plants, you may find your mind expanding.



- 17 No woods nearby? You don't need a huge park to enjoy nature's benefits. Nature can be as close as your own backyard or that clump of trees at the end of the street. There are bits of nature everywhere—even in cities. "Some naturalists call that 'nearby nature,'" Louv says. "It's a great way to experience a piece of the natural world without wandering too far from home."
- 18 So the next time you sit down to spend quality time with a video game, consider treating yourself to a little outdoor play instead. It's not called the great outdoors for nothing.



<sup>1</sup>IM: Instant message (such as a phone text message or online chat)

**GO ON**

**8**

How does the author first introduce the idea of outdoor play or outdoor activity?

- A** by inviting the reader to consider his or her own behavior
- B** by providing data about changes in outdoor play
- C** by stating the opinion that outdoor play is good for health
- D** by listing effects of too much time spent indoors

**9**

How does paragraph 4 support the author's argument?

- A** by describing the TV watching habits of children
- B** by explaining reasons for the popularity of computer games
- C** by providing solutions to the problems of indoor, nonmoving play
- D** by suggesting that playing inside too much can cause children to become sick

**10**

What is the definition of "vital" as it is used in paragraph 6?

- A** related
- B** harmful
- C** essential
- D** unfamiliar

**GO ON**

**11**

How does paragraph 13 develop a central claim of the article?

- A** by describing how children are creative when playing outdoors
- B** by emphasizing that children are physically healthier because of outdoor play
- C** by explaining how children are interested in playing with friends the most
- D** by illustrating how children are aware of the benefits of the environment

**12**

How does the graph **best** support Richard Louv’s claim that people are “separated from nature” (paragraph 15)?

- A** by showing that activities such as bird watching and camping are less popular than other activities
- B** by showing that spending time with friends is the most popular activity
- C** by showing that listening to music is an activity that happens as often as using electronic devices
- D** by showing that many do not know how to bike, fish, or camp

**13**

How do paragraphs 16 through 18 contribute to the structure of the article?

- A** The paragraphs describe a problem introduced earlier in the article.
- B** The paragraphs contrast ways of accomplishing goals described in the article.
- C** The paragraphs summarize the points made previously in the article.
- D** The paragraphs give support to the main argument in the article.

**GO ON**

Which quotation **best** expresses the central idea of the article?

- A** “If you’re like Casey and many other people, it’s likely that you spent more time inside four walls than outside in fresh air.” (paragraph 4)
- B** “Just being exposed to the great outdoors does wonders.” (paragraph 6)
- C** “If you walk through the woods in search of cool birds and plants, you may find your mind expanding.” (paragraph 16)
- D** “It’s not called the great outdoors for nothing.” (paragraph 18)

# Directions

Read this story. Then answer questions 15 through 21.

*10-year-old Rakhee Singh and her mother have flown to India from Minnesota to visit her mother's childhood home for the summer.*

## Excerpt from *The Girl in the Garden*

*by Kamala Nair*

- 1 We had to board a second plane, smaller and bumpier than the last, which carried us south, along the western coast of the country. My heartbeat quickened as I peered out the window, down through the clouds at the blue waves tossing and turning below us. My first glimpse of the ocean.
- 2 “Your grandmother will be so pleased to see you, Rakhee. Do you remember her—your Muthashi?” Amma asked over the whirl of the engine.
- 3 I did remember Muthashi, my grandmother. She had come to stay with us in Minnesota when I was around three or four. I could not recall the exact details of her face, but I had a vague mental picture of a slight woman draped in white who used to sit me on her knee and sing a song in Malayalam about ants.
- 4 I used to run out onto the driveway humming the ant song, and guide a string of the black insects into my palm. Weaving my fingers together and making a delicate cup with my hands, I would transport them into the house, giggling as the ants tickled inside their little cage. Muthashi would always act so pleased when I proudly deposited the squirming ants into her outstretched hand, although I’m sure she would let them out the back door as soon as I wasn’t looking.
- 5 “Rakhee,” continued Amma. “I haven’t told you much about our family, have I?”
- 6 I shook my head.
- 7 “Well, the Varma’s are the most prominent, respected family in the village. My father was a doctor, and he started a hospital across the street from our home. He died a long time ago, so now my younger brother, Vijay, is in charge. You’ll also meet my big sister, Sadhana, and her three daughters. One of them is about your age. And Vijay’s wife, Nalini, who I have never met, recently had a baby boy. Everybody lives together at Ashoka—that’s the name of the house where I grew up. You see, in India families stick together under one roof. It’s not the same as it is in America.”

**GO ON**

- 8 This airport was not as crowded or chaotic as the one in Bombay, and the people seemed neater and more subdued. In the bathroom Amma changed into a buttercup-yellow sari and painted a red raindrop on her forehead<sup>1</sup> with a bottle that she produced from her purse. “I can’t show up at home dressed like an American,” she explained.
- 9 I loved seeing that transformation, from my regular mother who took the trash out every morning with a bulky coat flung over her nightgown to this wondrous creature. From the moment she put on the sari and released her hair from its bun so that it streamed down her back in a lustrous river, she appeared younger and somehow more natural.
- 10 “How do I look?” she asked, as she ran a comb through her hair.
- 11 “You look beautiful, Amma,” I told her honestly.
- 12 A compact man with a bushy mustache and a symmetrical crescent of sweat under each arm met us outside the airport, holding a sign with “Mrs. Chitra Varma Singh and daughter” printed across it in block letters. He led us through the thick heat toward a white car and loaded all our suitcases into the trunk. Amma and I both slid into the backseat. My legs stuck to the synthetic leather.
- 13 “Are you hungry, molay?” Amma asked me. “We’ll be home soon.” But she sounded absent, as if my hunger was hardly her main concern.
- 14 I stared out the window as we drove. Unlike the gray, arrow-straight highways I was accustomed to, here the roads were red and twisty. In the distance I could see groves of coconut trees, their green fronds waving against the sky like pinwheels. We passed forests of rubber trees and stretches of lime-green grassland that Amma told me were rice paddy fields. Wiry, mustachioed men with protruding rib cages spiraling down their torsos and white cloths knotted around their waists (“Those cloths are called mundus,” explained Amma) were scattered here and there in the treetops, tapping the trunks and collecting sap in metal buckets.
- 15 At one point the driver stopped the car abruptly. I leaned over the seat and was shocked to see a cow blinking her long black lashes at me. The driver honked the horn and she took her sweet time ambling out of the way.
- 16 Soon after, I heard a dull thud and a hulking elephant rounded the corner, heading toward us, the tough black ripples of its trunk swaying to and fro.
- 17 “Amma!” I cried.

18 But Amma only laughed. “It’s normal for elephants to walk around on the street here, don’t worry.”

19 A man wearing a faded blue turban and carrying a gnarled stick was riding atop the great animal. I waited for either the turbaned man to steer his charge out of the way or for the car to slow down, but neither thing happened. The driver pushed forward with alarming speed, straight toward the elephant. I gasped, but at the last second he swerved, and both he and the man nodded politely to one another, as if this were perfectly normal. The elephant lumbered past the car window so close that I could have reached out and brushed my fingers against its sagging hide.

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<sup>1</sup>**Painted a red raindrop on her forehead:** known as a bindi, which is a red dot painted on the forehead, commonly worn by Hindu women

**15** How do paragraphs 3 and 4 contribute to the story?

- A** They help show Rakhee's kindness and ease around creatures in the outdoors.
- B** They help the reader understand Rakhee's concern of whether her grandmother will remember her.
- C** They provide evidence for Rakhee's love of singing Indian songs as a child.
- D** They give the reader insight into Rakhee's memories of her grandmother.

**16** Which important idea does the author develop in paragraphs 7 through 9?

- A** Rakhee has lived a very exciting life.
- B** Rakhee wishes she had grown up in India.
- C** Rakhee has much to learn about her family's culture.
- D** Rakhee's family is typical of Indian families.

**17** Which statement **best** describes how the narrator reacts to the events in paragraphs 8 and 9?

- A** She becomes more appreciative of her mother.
- B** She is uneasy about the change in her mother.
- C** She becomes confused by her mother.
- D** She admires the change in her mother.



**18** In paragraph 9, what is the meaning of the phrase “it streamed down her back in a lustrous river”?

- A** her long hair was flowing and shiny
- B** her long hair was damp from being in a bun
- C** her long hair seemed heavier than normal
- D** her long hair moved steadily in one direction

**19** What does paragraph 9 **most** reveal about the narrator’s mother?

- A** that she is more talkative when she is in India
- B** that she follows customary traditions when she is in India
- C** that she is more self-conscious when she is in India
- D** that she visits many people when she is in India

**20** Which statement **best** states a theme of the story?

- A** Families can be surprising.
- B** Beauty can be found in most things.
- C** Traveling to new places can be tiring.
- D** New experiences can change how we see the world.

**GO ON**

How does the author **most** develop Rakhee's point of view?

- A** by comparing Rakhee's experience to her mother's
- B** by having Rakhee describe her impressions of India
- C** by showing Rakhee's alarm during the scene with the elephant
- D** by including Rakhee's reaction to Amma's changed appearance

**Directions**  
Read this article. Then answer questions 22 through 28.

## Lightning Strikes

*by Charlene Brusso*

- 1 The only difference between a lightning bolt and the small spark that jumps between your hand and a metal doorknob after you scuff across a rug is size. Both happen when electrical charge builds up and suddenly discharges.

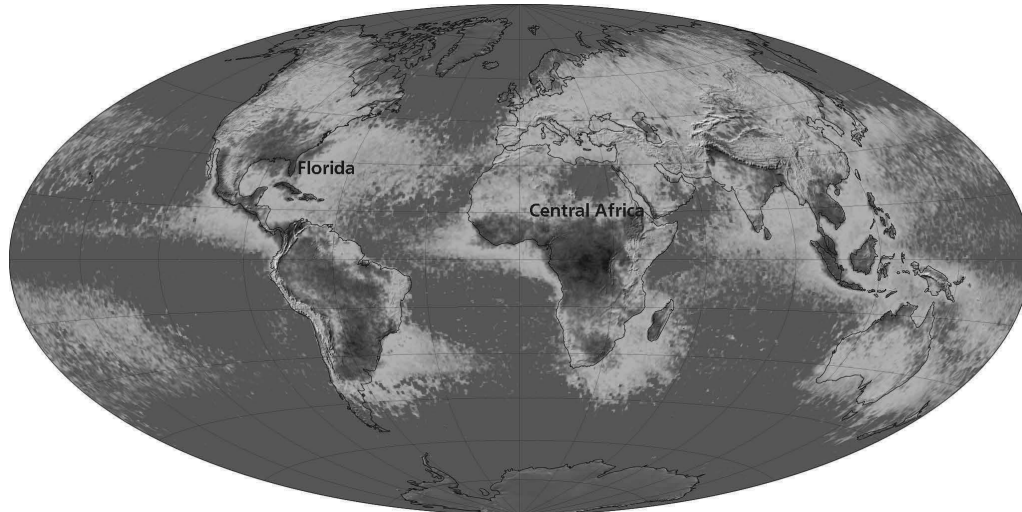
### **What Is Lightning?**

- 2 Lightning begins inside thunderstorms. Updrafts of air lift raindrops from the bottom of the cloud into freezing air at the top. Downdrafts move ice particles lower, into warmer air. Negatively charged electrons build upon the falling ice as it passes the water droplets. In time, the storm cloud becomes negatively charged on the bottom and positively charged on top.
- 3 When the negative charge builds up enough, a huge number of electrons jump through the air, looking for something that conducts electricity: the ground, a tree, a lightning rod. We see that discharge as a flash of lightning.
- 4 Lightning zips along at 40 miles (64 kilometers) a second. The center of the lightning bolt is only about as thick as a pencil, but it packs so much energy that it can melt rock or metal and set wood ablaze. An average lightning bolt has enough electricity to run the appliances in your house for a couple of days. But all that electricity arrives at once, at 54,000 degrees Fahrenheit (30,000 Celsius)—six times hotter than the surface of the sun. It would melt anything you tried to use to collect it.
- 5 Thunder is the sound of lightning. Each bolt super heats the air around it to 18,000 degrees Fahrenheit (9,980 Celsius) in less than a second. The superhot air instantly expands, sending out a shock wave that we hear as thunder. The farther away lightning strikes, the deeper the sound of the thunder—and the longer it takes to get to you. That's because light travels much faster than sound. In fact, if you count the delay between the lightning and the thunder, you can tell approximately how far away the lightning is (about a mile for every five seconds).

**GO ON**

## Lightning around the World

- 6 Between 1,500 and 2,000 thunderstorms are crackling and booming around the world at this very moment—scientists estimate that lightning strikes somewhere on Earth about 100 times every second. Where does it strike the most often? Lightning zaps the remote mountain village of Kifuka, in central Africa, nearly every day. There, air masses from the Atlantic Ocean collide with cooler mountain air, making lots of thunderstorms. The Himalayas are another lightning hotspot. In the United States, the best place to spot lightning is Florida. Warm air from the Gulf of Mexico banging into cool air from the Atlantic Ocean creates lightning almost daily across the Sunshine State.
- 7 Places with very stable weather get the least lightning. The Arctic and Antarctica have almost no thunderstorms because their air is about the same temperature everywhere. Lightning is also uncommon far out over the ocean, away from land, for the same reason.



**This map shows how often lightning strikes different places around the world (darker areas get more).**

## Lightning Safety

- 8 Because of its unpredictability and power, lightning can be extremely dangerous. If you're caught outside during a lightning storm, don't stand under a tree or lie flat in the open. Instead, crouch down with your hands and your head tucked close (but not touching the ground) and your feet close together. This makes you less of a conductor for any bolts that strike near you. Rubber-soled shoes are no protection—if lightning can zap through miles of air, which is an excellent insulator, your favorite trainers<sup>1</sup> won't stop it either.

- 9 If you can, try to get inside a car or building. You're safe inside the car because electricity will travel over the metal surface instead of through the interior. In buildings, stay away from metal faucets and telephones connected to the wall—lightning can travel through pipes and wires. Then, once you're safe inside, look out and enjoy the awesome beauty of Earth's electricity!

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<sup>1</sup>**trainers:** British term for “sneakers”

**GO ON**

22

How is the idea “Lightning begins inside thunderstorms” (paragraph 2) developed in the article?

- A by comparing a lightning bolt to a small spark
- B by describing how lightning occurs in different types of weather
- C by explaining how air at different temperatures creates a charge in clouds
- D by providing examples of how much electricity is produced by electrons jumping through air

23

Read this quotation from paragraph 6.

**Between 1,500 and 2,000 thunderstorms are crackling and booming around the world at this very moment . . .**

Why does the author use the words “crackling and booming” instead of “occurring”?

- A to help the reader experience the speed of lightning
- B to help the reader imagine the sounds of thunderstorms
- C to be clear about the electrical nature of lightning
- D to be accurate about how common thunderstorms are

**24** How does the illustration support the author’s claims in the section “Lightning around the World”?

- A** by highlighting the size of lightning strikes in particular areas
- B** by providing evidence of why lightning strikes in some areas
- C** by illustrating which areas are more affected by lightning strikes
- D** by showing the limited areas in the world where lightning strikes occur

**25** How does the section “Lightning Safety” connect to the section “What is Lightning?”

- A** “Lightning Safety” summarizes the effects of lightning described in “What is Lightning?”
- B** “Lightning Safety” contrasts different types of lightning described in “What is Lightning?”
- C** “Lightning Safety” elaborates on the cause of the powerful lightning described in “What is Lightning?”
- D** “Lightning Safety” describes ways to avoid the powerful lightning explained in “What is Lightning?”

**26** Which sentence **best** expresses a central idea in the article?

- A** Lightning strikes are only about as thick as a pencil.
- B** Lightning strikes are uncommon far out over the ocean.
- C** Lightning strikes are due to unstable weather conditions.
- D** Lightning strikes are able to travel through pipes in a building.

**GO ON**

27 What does paragraph 9 suggest about the author’s point of view in the article?

- A The author has great respect for lightning.
- B The author has difficulty understanding lightning.
- C The author believes that lightning can be useful.
- D The author believes that it is impossible to avoid lightning.

28 Which idea would be **most** important to include in a summary of the article?

- A “The farther away lightning strikes, the deeper the sound of the thunder . . .” (paragraph 5)
- B “Lightning zaps the remote mountain village of Kifuka, in central Africa, nearly every day.” (paragraph 6)
- C “Because of its unpredictability and power, lightning can be extremely dangerous.” (paragraph 8)
- D “You’re safe inside the car because electricity will travel over the metal surface instead of through the interior.” (paragraph 9)