

## TOEFL Reading Text:

**Circassian: A History of Resilience and Resistance** The Circassian people, an ethnolinguistic group primarily residing in the North Caucasus region of Russia, boast a rich and complex history marked by resilience, resistance, and a profound cultural heritage. Their story unfolds against a backdrop of shifting political landscapes, military conflicts, and cultural transformations, ultimately shaping their identity and leaving an indelible mark on the wider world. The Circassian language, a Northwest Caucasian language, is considered one of the oldest in the world, with roots reaching back millennia. Its unique structure and diverse dialects are a testament to the long-standing cultural identity of the Circassian people. Their traditions and customs, including their elaborate clothing, vibrant music, and distinct code of honor, have been passed down through generations, fostering a strong sense of communal identity. From the 16th century onwards, the Circassian people found themselves increasingly drawn into the sphere of influence of the expanding Russian Empire. This period witnessed a gradual but steady encroachment of Russian power, characterized by political maneuvering, military incursions, and ultimately, a full-scale conflict. The Circassians, fiercely independent and determined to defend their homeland, fought a protracted war of resistance against the Russian Empire, a struggle that lasted for over a century. The Circassian War (1763-1864), also known as the Caucasian War, stands as a pivotal moment in Circassian history. The war, which was marked by intense battles and devastating consequences, ultimately ended with the forced deportation of the Circassians from their ancestral lands. The Russian Empire, seeking to solidify its control over the North Caucasus region, implemented a policy of mass expulsion, known as the "Circassian Genocide." This tragic event resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Circassians, many of whom were forced to flee to the Ottoman Empire, leaving behind their homeland and a legacy of pain and suffering. Despite the hardships they faced, the Circassian people have displayed an enduring spirit of resilience. They have successfully preserved aspects of their cultural heritage, including their language, traditions, and customs, even in exile. The Diaspora communities that emerged in the Ottoman Empire, and later spread to other parts of the world, have played a vital role in keeping the Circassian identity alive. The Circassian story is not only one of resistance and displacement but also one of adaptation and cultural innovation. The diaspora communities have successfully integrated into their new societies while retaining their cultural distinctiveness. They have made significant contributions to their adopted countries, contributing to fields ranging from politics and science to art and literature. The Circassian people continue to face challenges in the modern world, including the preservation of their language and cultural identity in the face of globalization and the ongoing struggles for political autonomy in the North Caucasus region. However, their history demonstrates the power of resilience, the enduring strength of cultural heritage, and the unwavering spirit of a people who have fought for their independence and cultural identity for generations. The Circassian legacy serves as a reminder of the human cost of imperial expansion, the importance of cultural preservation, and the unwavering spirit of a people who have weathered countless storms to maintain their identity and their collective memory. As their story continues to unfold, their past serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration, reminding us of the power of resilience and the enduring strength of cultural heritage in the face of adversity.

## TOEFL Reading Questions:

Circassian History

1. Question: What is the primary purpose of the first paragraph?
  - A) To introduce the Circassian people and their historical context.
  - B) To discuss the significance of the Circassian language.
  - C) To highlight the cultural traditions of the Circassian people.
  - D) To emphasize the importance of Circassian resilience.

2. Question: The word "encroachment" in the third paragraph is closest in meaning to:

- A) Expansion
- B) Collaboration
- C) Protection
- D) Acceptance

3. Question: According to the passage, what was the main objective of the Russian Empire in the North Caucasus region?

- A) To establish peaceful relations with the Circassian people.
- B) To promote cultural exchange between the Circassian people and Russia.
- C) To gain control of the region through military conquest.
- D) To provide aid to the Circassian people during their conflict.

4. Question: Which of the following statements is NOT supported by the passage?

- A) The Circassian War was a protracted and devastating conflict.
- B) The Circassians were forced to flee their homeland during the "Circassian Genocide."
- C) The Circassian people successfully preserved all of their cultural traditions after their displacement.
- D) The Circassian diaspora communities have contributed significantly to their adopted societies.

5. Question: The author uses the phrase "enduring spirit of resilience" to describe the Circassian people. What specific examples support this claim?

- A) The Circassians' fierce resistance against the Russian Empire.
- B) The successful preservation of their language and cultural traditions in exile.
- C) The contributions made by the Circassian diaspora to their new societies.
- D) All of the above.

6. Question: Which sentence best summarizes the main idea of the passage?

- A) The Circassian people have endured a long history of conflict and displacement, but they have demonstrated resilience and cultural preservation.
- B) The Circassian War was a significant turning point in Circassian history, resulting in their forced deportation.
- C) The Circassian diaspora communities have played a vital role in maintaining Circassian cultural identity in exile.
- D) The Circassian people's resilience serves as a reminder of the importance of cultural preservation and the enduring strength of human spirit.

7. Question: Insert the following sentence into the passage in the most logical place: "This violent act of displacement had devastating consequences for the Circassian people, leading to a significant loss of life and cultural heritage."

- A) After the sentence: "The Circassian War (1763-1864), also known as the Caucasian War, stands as a pivotal moment in Circassian history."

B) After the sentence: "This tragic event resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Circassians, many of whom were forced to flee to the Ottoman Empire, leaving behind their homeland and a legacy of pain and suffering."

C) After the sentence: "The Diaspora communities that emerged in the Ottoman Empire, and later spread to other parts of the world, have played a vital role in keeping the Circassian identity alive."

D) After the sentence: "The Circassian story is not only one of resistance and displacement but also one of adaptation and cultural innovation."

8. Question: The author states that the Circassian story is "not only one of resistance and displacement but also one of adaptation and cultural innovation." What does the author mean by this?

A) The Circassian people have found ways to preserve their culture while integrating into new societies.

B) The Circassian people have been forced to adapt to their new lives in exile, even though they resist assimilation.

C) The Circassian people have adapted their traditions to suit their new environments.

D) The Circassian people have successfully integrated into their new societies, abandoning their traditional culture.

9. Question: Which of the following is an example of a rhetorical device used in the passage?

A) Simile

B) Metaphor

C) Personification

D) Alliteration

10. Question: Simplify the following sentence from the passage: "The Circassian language, a Northwest Caucasian language, is considered one of the oldest in the world, with roots reaching back millennia."

A) The Circassian language is an ancient Northwest Caucasian language.

B) The Circassian language is one of the oldest languages in the world.

C) The Circassian language has roots that go back thousands of years.

D) The Circassian language is a unique and ancient language.

## Explanations and Answers:

1. Correct Answer: A) To introduce the Circassian people and their historical context.

Explanation: The first paragraph sets the stage for the entire passage, introducing the Circassian people, their geographical location, and the historical themes of resilience and cultural preservation.

2. Correct Answer: A) Expansion

Explanation: "Encroachment" means gradual or stealthy expansion, which accurately describes the Russian Empire's increasing influence over the Circassian territories.

3. Correct Answer: C) To gain control of the region through military conquest.

Explanation: The passage explicitly states that the Russian Empire sought to solidify its control over the North Caucasus region, suggesting a strategy of military conquest and dominance.

4. Correct Answer: C) The Circassian people successfully preserved all of their cultural traditions after their displacement.

Explanation: While the passage highlights the resilience and cultural preservation efforts of the Circassian people, it acknowledges the significant losses and challenges they faced. It does not claim that they were able to preserve all aspects of their culture without any losses.

5. Correct Answer: D) All of the above.

Explanation: The Circassians' fierce resistance against the Russian Empire, their successful preservation of cultural traditions in exile, and their contributions to their adopted societies all demonstrate their enduring spirit of resilience.

6. Correct Answer: D) The Circassian people's resilience serves as a reminder of the importance of cultural preservation and the enduring strength of human spirit.

Explanation: This option highlights the central theme of the passage: the remarkable resilience and cultural preservation efforts of the Circassian people in the face of adversity.

7. Correct Answer: B) After the sentence: "This tragic event resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Circassians, many of whom were forced to flee to the Ottoman Empire, leaving behind their homeland and a legacy of pain and suffering."

Explanation: This placement emphasizes the devastating consequences of the "Circassian Genocide" for the Circassian people and their cultural heritage.

8. Correct Answer: A) The Circassian people have found ways to preserve their culture while integrating into new societies.

Explanation: This statement accurately describes the Circassian diaspora communities' efforts to maintain their cultural identity while integrating into their new societies.

9. Correct Answer: B) Metaphor

Explanation: The phrase "enduring spirit of resilience" is a metaphor, using the imagery of resilience as a spirit that helps the Circassian people overcome challenges.

10. Correct Answer: B) The Circassian language is one of the oldest languages in the world.

Explanation: This statement directly addresses the age and historical significance of the Circassian language.

## Question Types Count:

Prose Summary or Fill in a Table: Prose Summary

Insert Text: 1

Factual Information: 1

Negative Factual Information: 2

Inference: 1

Rhetorical Purpose: 1

Vocabulary: 1

Reference: 1

Sentence Simplification: 1