

READ THE PASSAGE As you read, pay attention to the dates and events described in the passage.

Two Billion Chopsticks

Estimates claim that up to one quarter of the world's population—over one and a half billion people—use chopsticks as their primary eating utensils. Called *kuàizi*, or “quick little fellows” in Chinese, chopsticks originated in China about 5,000 years ago. Often made from wood, chopsticks allow users to pick up pieces of food by clamping together and releasing the sticks with the thumb and first three fingers.

Before the invention of chopsticks, the Chinese used only their hands to eat. One theory for why chopsticks were invented is that eating with one's hands allowed some people to take more food than others. This was considered rude, so using chopsticks, which limited the amount of food that could be taken at one time, was thought to be a more polite practice. Another theory involves the great Chinese philosopher Confucius, who was a vegetarian. He objected to the use of knives at the table, feeling that they reminded eaters of the slaughterhouse, so he preferred chopsticks.

At first, chopsticks were used only by nobles, or high-ranking citizens, at feasts. Later on, during the Western Han Dynasty, which began in 206 bc, commoners began to use chopsticks as well. At that time, people used chopsticks only to eat side dishes; spoons were used for rice and for soups that did not contain solid ingredients. It was around the end of the Western Han Dynasty that the fork came into use in Eastern Roman culture. During the Northern Song Dynasty, which lasted from ad 960 to 1127, noodles became a popular dish. It is very difficult to eat noodles with a spoon, so chopsticks were used more frequently. Today, chopsticks are the primary eating utensil in China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam; and people from countries all over the world commonly use these tools while eating Asian dishes.

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

1. Before the invention of chopsticks, people ate solid food with _____.
(A) knives and forks
(B) their hands
(C) only spoons
(D) forks and spoons
2. What type of people used chopsticks before the Western Han Dynasty?
(A) only philosophers
(B) only commoners
(C) only nobles
(D) only vegetarians
3. During the Western Han Dynasty, people used chopsticks to eat only _____.
(A) meat
(B) soup
(C) noodles
(D) side dishes
4. When did eating with chopsticks become most common?
(A) before the Northern Song Dynasty
(B) during the Western Han Dynasty
(C) just before forks came into use
(D) after noodles became popular

STRATEGY PRACTICE Reread the passage. How did rereading help you better understand the rise of chopstick use?

READ THE PASSAGE Think about the order of events in the passage and how they affect Juliana.

Avalanche!

Juliana zipped down the mountainside, spraying soft snow to either side and feeling totally in control. She had never had such an amazing snowboard ride. She was relaxed enough to appreciate the feeling of the warm sun and the beauty of the pristine, white snow as she raced down from the mountain's peak. Juliana squealed loudly to express her joy.

Suddenly, the mountain seemed to grow very quiet. Then, Juliana heard an incredibly loud crack and a rumbling sound that increased in volume and intensity as she sped downward along the snowboard path. Juliana could not stop to look behind her without falling, but she knew from the roaring sounds farther up the mountain that an avalanche was now racing her down the slope.

Juliana could feel that the avalanche was gathering speed behind her. She had to make it to the tree line, where she could steer into the trees while the tons of heavy snow rushed past her. Feeling the wind from the avalanche at her back, she aimed straight down, going as fast as she could.

An instant before the snow was to overtake her, Juliana twisted left between two large trees and sped to the side. When she dared to stop, she could see the river of snow still pouring past and feel the needle-like spray of the avalanche on her flushed cheeks. At least she was safe—for now.

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

- What did Juliana do first?
 - She squealed with delight.
 - She moved toward the tree line.
 - She snowboarded from the mountain's peak.
 - She felt a needle-like spray of snow.
- What happened immediately after the mountain grew quiet?
 - She heard a loud crack.
 - An avalanche roared past her.
 - She aimed straight downward.
 - She relaxed and enjoyed the sun.
- Juliana turned between two trees just before _____.
 - she shouted with joy
 - the avalanche began
 - the avalanche rushed past
 - she realized an avalanche was coming
- At what point was Juliana feeling relieved?
 - when she relaxed in the sun
 - as she started her snowboard ride
 - as she felt the wind at her back
 - after she saw the snow passing by

STRATEGY PRACTICE Visualize Juliana's face at the end of the passage. Describe your visualization.

READ THE PASSAGE Think about the main idea of the passage and the sequence of events.

Fifteen Days of Celebration

Imagine celebrating New Year's Day for more than two weeks! Chinese New Year, the longest and most important celebration in the Chinese calendar, does just that. It begins with the new moon on the first day of the first lunar month of the year and ends with the full moon of that lunar cycle.

On the first day of Chinese New Year, people visit their elders, drink tea, and eat sweets. On the second day, married women visit their parents. Days three and four are for visiting the graves of deceased relatives. Businesses that have been closed for the holiday reopen on day five, but many people stay home to welcome the god of wealth. People visit temples, friends, and relatives on day six. Day seven is called *renri*, or Human Day, and is considered the birthday of all common people, who grow a year older on this day. The eighth day is another day to share with family and friends, and the ninth day is the birthday of the Jade Emperor, the Emperor of the Universe in the Taoist religion. From the tenth to the twelfth day, people feast with friends and family, and on day thirteen, they eat small amounts of vegetarian food to cleanse their systems.

On the fourteenth day, people prepare for the Lantern Festival, which takes place on day fifteen—the final day of the Chinese New Year experience. Celebrants carry lanterns in parades, set off firecrackers, and feast on sweet dumplings. The Lantern Festival celebrates nature and the gods, encourages healthy relationships among people, and welcomes the return of the light of the moon.

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

- When during Chinese New Year do married women visit their parents?
 - after cleansing their systems with vegetables
 - before the day when one visits one's elders
 - before the day when one visits relatives' graves
 - after the birthday of all common people
- Which of these is part of the Lantern Festival?
 - drinking tea
 - setting off firecrackers
 - visiting temples
 - welcoming the god of wealth
- What signals the end of Chinese New Year each year?
 - the full moon
 - a tea ceremony
 - preparations for the Lantern Festival
 - the Jade Emperor's birthday
- What is the passage mostly about?
 - the length of Chinese New Year
 - the origins of Chinese New Year traditions
 - the daily events during Chinese New Year
 - the connection between Chinese New Year and astronomy

STRATEGY PRACTICE Was there a part of the passage you found confusing? What strategy did you use to figure it out?
