

Name _____

Date _____

Prayer Flags

In Tibet, Nepal, and India, it is common to see strings of brightly colored flags tied outside buildings. These yellow, green, red, white, and blue flags flap in the wind outside homes, restaurants, and temples. But why are they there?

These flags are more than just decoration. They are known as Buddhist prayer flags. If you look closely, you will see writing and symbols printed on each flag. The flags are covered with prayers and wishes for good health, compassion, and peace. Each of the five colors represents the five basic elements: yellow for earth, green for water, red for fire, white for air, and blue for space.



People believe that as these flags blow in the wind, their prayers and good energy are carried across the countryside. People also believe that happiness, long life, and good fortune will come to those who fly these flags and to anyone nearby. This is the reason they are flown in so many places.

Prayer flags developed from an ancient tradition in India that dates back thousands of years. In the beginning they were just solid pieces of cloth. Only later did people begin to add the symbols and writing. The writing is most commonly printed using a wood block print.

Over time, the wind, rain, and sun may cause prayer flags to fade and become tattered. However, many people think that even these faded rags are a beautiful sight as they fly in the wind, spreading good wishes.

- 1) Buddhist prayer flags are mostly a way to
 - A. record symbols and writing
 - B. have good health
 - C. decorate buildings
 - D. spread good wishes

- 2) According to the passage, a blue prayer flag represents
 - A. water
 - B. space
 - C. air
 - D. earth

3) Based on its use in paragraph 4, it can be understood that **ancient** belongs to which word group?

- A. foreign, strange, unfamiliar
- B. important, meaningful, serious
- C. aged, long-standing, old
- D. accepted, popular, widespread

4) Which word best describes Buddhist prayer flags?

- A. colorful
- B. peaceful
- C. special
- D. faded

5) In the final paragraph, the author writes, "Over time, the wind, rain, and sun may cause prayer flags to fade and become tattered." As used in the final paragraph, which choice describes something that is also **tattered**?

- A. A tennis shoe left out in the rain becomes soaking wet.
- B. Towels hung to dry on a clothesline lose their color after time.
- C. A pair of jeans that has been worn too many times gets holes in both knees.
- D. A favorite hat can last ten years or more if taken care of properly.

6) Prayer flags are traditional objects of some forms of Buddhism. Think of a traditional object in another religion. How is that traditional object similar? How is it different?

Answers and Explanations

1) D

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

Throughout the passage, the author explains why people fly Buddhist prayer flags. In paragraph 2, the author claims these flags are “more than just decoration.” In paragraph 3, the author writes, “People believe that as these flags blow in the wind, their prayers and good energy are carried across the countryside. People also believe that happiness, long life, and good fortune will come to those who fly these flags and to anyone nearby.” This means that the prayer flags are a way to spread good wishes. In the final paragraph, the author confirms this idea, writing that prayer flags can be “a beautiful sight as they fly in the wind, spreading good wishes.” These details tell us that Buddhist prayer flags are mostly a way to spread good wishes. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Although symbols and writing are recorded on the flags, in paragraph 2 the author explains that this is because “the flags are covered with prayers and wishes for good health, compassion, and peace.” This means that the Buddhist prayer flags are not just a way to record symbols and writing, but a way to capture and spread good wishes. This makes **(A)** incorrect.

In paragraph 2, the author writes, “The flags are covered with prayers and wishes for good health, compassion, and peace.” This means that some of the good wishes on prayer flags are for good health. It does not mean, however, that prayer flags are mostly a way to have good health. This is just one of many wishes on prayer flags. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect.

In paragraph 1, the author writes, “In places in Asia like Tibet, Nepal, and India, it is common to see strings of brightly colored flags tied outside buildings. These yellow, green, red, white, and blue flags flap in the wind outside homes, restaurants, and temples.” But in paragraph 2, the author adds, “These flags are more than just decoration.” This tells us that Buddhist prayer flags are not just a way to decorate buildings. Although they do decorate buildings, they are mostly a way to spread good wishes. This means **(C)** is incorrect.

2) B

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

To answer this detail question correctly, we need to find where the author discusses what prayer flags represent in the passage. A good way to do this is to scan the topic sentence of each paragraph, since this sentence will likely tell us what information can be found in the rest of that paragraph. The topic sentence of paragraph 2 reads: “These flags are more than just decoration.” This lets us know that the details we are looking for can likely be found in paragraph 2.

In paragraph 2, the author writes, “Each of the five colors represents the five basic elements: yellow for earth, green for water, red for fire, white for air, and blue for space.” This tells us that a blue prayer flag represents space. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)**, **(C)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

3) C Core Standard: **Craft and Structure**

ancient (*adjective*): belonging to the very distant past; of great age.

In paragraph 4, the author writes, “Prayer flags developed from an ancient tradition in India that dates back thousands of years.” This tells us that the ancient tradition is thousands of years old, so *ancient* means very old. This means that ancient belongs to the word group *aged, long-standing, old*. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

This sentence tells us the age of the tradition, not whether or it is strange or familiar. This means ancient likely does not belong to the word group *foreign, strange, unfamiliar*. This eliminates **(A)**.

Although the tradition may be important to some people, this sentence only tells us that they tradition is very old. This means that ancient likely does not belong to the word group *important, meaningful, serious*. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect.

This sentence does not tell us whether the tradition is popular or not, only that it is very old. This means that ancient likely does not belong to the word group *accepted, popular, widespread*. This means **(D)** is incorrect.

4) **A**

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

In paragraph 1, the author describes prayer flags as “strings of brightly colored flags tied outside buildings” and later says they are “yellow, green, red, white, and blue.” In paragraph 2, the author writes that “each of the five colors represents the five basic elements.” This tells us that prayer flags come in five different, bright colors, so we can understand that they can be described as colorful.

Therefore **(A)** is correct.

In paragraph 2, the author writes, “The flags are covered with prayers and wishes for good health, compassion, and peace.” However, this does not mean that the prayer flags themselves can be described as peaceful or calm. This means **(B)** is incorrect.

Though some people may believe prayer flags are special, this word is too general to describe them. Also, it is an opinion. The passage provides facts about prayer flags, not opinions. This means **(C)** is not the best choice.

While in the final paragraph, the author writes that “over time, the wind, rain, and sun may cause prayer flags to fade,” this does not mean that all Buddhist prayer flags can always be described as faded. New ones, for example, are “brightly colored,” according to information in paragraph 1. This eliminates **(D)**.

5) C

Core Standard: **Craft and Structure**

tattered (*adjective*): ragged, worn, or torn.

In the final paragraph, the author writes, “Over time, the wind, rain, and sun may cause prayer flags to fade and become tattered.” This tells us that tattered is something that prayer flags become as they get older and are exposed to the elements. Then the author writes, “However, many people think that even these faded rags are a beautiful sight as they fly in the wind, spreading good wishes.” Since the author refers to prayer flags that get faded and tattered as “these faded rags,” we can understand that tattered means the flags turn into rags, or get worn out and torn up. A pair of jeans that has been worn too many times and has holes in both knees is also worn out and torn up, so this describes something that is *tattered*. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Something soaking wet is not necessarily torn up or in rags. This means **(A)** is incorrect.

Towels that lose their color may be faded, but the author describes the prayer flags as becoming both “faded” and “tattered.” This means that faded and tattered likely do not mean the same thing, because it would not make sense for the author to use two words that mean the same thing. It would be unnecessary. This eliminates **(B)**.

Something old is not necessarily tattered. A favorite hat could get old without becoming torn up. This means **(D)** is incorrect.