

Select Readings, Second Edition
Pre-Intermediate, TOEFL®iBT-Style Final

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

My Peace Corps Experience

by Jason Gilbert

The beginning of the Peace Corps goes back to 1960, when then Senator John F. Kennedy challenged students to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. From that inspiration grew an organization in the United States federal government devoted to world peace and friendship. Some 200,000+ volunteers later, the Peace Corps is still going strong today.

Like many new graduates, I left university full of hope for the future but with no real idea of what I wanted to do. My degree, with honors¹, in English literature had not really prepared me for anything **practical**. I knew I wanted to make a difference in the world somehow, but I had no idea how to do that. That's when I found out about the Peace Corps.

I started my journey as a Peace Corps volunteer by learning as much about the job as possible. I read as much as I could about the experiences of previous volunteers. I knew I would have to give up two years of my life and receive very little pay. I knew it would be a lot of hard work, and that I would be away from my family and friends for a very long time. In short, I did not take my decision to apply for the Peace Corps **lightly**. Neither did my family.

Eventually, however, I won the support of my family, and I sent in all the paperwork needed for application. After several months and countless interviews, I finally received my assignment. I would be going to a small village located a few hours from the capital city of Colombo in Sri Lanka. Where? What? Sri Lanka? I had no idea. But I was about to find out.

Stepping off the plane in Colombo for my three-month training course, I was immediately hit by two things: the heat and the smell. Firstly, it was hot. I mean, *really* hot! Growing up in northern Maine had not prepared me for the intense heat of tropical Sri Lanka. Doing my best to get used to the heat, I was suddenly hit by something else. Though I would learn to *love* **it** over the next two years, my first experience with the earthy, spicy, incredibly strong aroma of curry nearly overpowered me. The sensory overload² did not stop there. The people, sounds, colors, and cars—it was all new to me. And I welcomed it with the excitement of a small child with a new toy.

After completing my training, I was sent to the place where I would be spending the next two years of my life. The village was small and **desperately** in need of decent housing. Though the people of the village were poor, they offered their homes, hearts, and food as if I were part of their own family. I was assigned to lead a small team of local people in building a new schoolhouse for the village. The work was hard, but when the building was standing proudly on the site, we all felt a sense of **fulfillment**. For the next year or so, I taught in that same schoolhouse. But I sometimes think I learned more from my students than they did from me.

¹ **with honors** with very high grades

² **sensory overload** too many things entering the senses at once

Sometime during that period, I realized that all those things that had seemed strange or unusual to me no longer did. And before I knew it, I returned to the U.S. a different man. The Peace Corps had changed my life forever.

1. According to paragraph 1, the main cause of the formation of the Peace Corps was
 - a challenge issued by Senator Kennedy to young people.
 - American students working and living in developing countries.
 - the creation of a new organization by the American federal government.
 - the inspiration of over 200 thousand volunteers.

2. When Jason graduated from university, he
 - knew he wanted to join the Peace Corps.
 - didn't know that he wanted to make a difference in the world.
 - worked as a teacher of English literature.
 - wasn't sure what kind of job he should look for.

3. The word **practical** in the passage is closest in meaning to
 - affordable
 - viable
 - academic
 - managerial

4. Jason started his journey to the Peace Corps by
 - going to several months of interviews.
 - getting his family to agree to let him send in his application.
 - learning as much as he could about what the Peace Corps does.
 - saving up enough money to spend two years in Sri Lanka.

5. The word **lightly** in the passage is closest in meaning to
 - nervously
 - thoughtlessly
 - extremely
 - seriously

6. Jason considered all of the following hardships before applying for the Peace Corps EXCEPT
 - he wouldn't be able to see his family and friends while away.
 - he would receive very little pay.
 - he had read a lot of negative reports from previous volunteers.
 - he would have to do a lot of hard work.

7. Which of the following can be inferred from paragraph 4?
- Jason went through a fairly easy interview process.
 - Jason didn't tell his family he was applying to the Peace Corps at first.
 - Jason had read a lot about Sri Lanka before he applied for the Peace Corps.
 - The application process took a long time.
8. In paragraph 5, **it** refers to
- heat
 - experience
 - curry
 - aroma
9. Which of the following can be inferred from paragraph 5?
- Jason was already used to tropical weather.
 - Jason didn't like curry the first time he smelled it.
 - Jason wasn't sure he'd like Sri Lanka when he got there.
 - Jason stopped eating curry when he got to Sri Lanka.
10. The word **desperately** in the passage is closest in meaning to
- urgently
 - perfectly
 - possibly
 - quickly
11. When did Jason begin his Peace Corps training?
- Before leaving the U.S.
 - As soon as he reached Colombo.
 - After he reached the small village in Sri Lanka.
 - After he built the schoolhouse.
12. The word **fulfillment** in the passage is closest in meaning to
- satisfaction
 - interest
 - distress
 - intensity
13. The villagers in Sri Lanka made Jason feel
- in need of decent housing.
 - a sense of fulfillment.
 - as if he were part of their own family.

poor but proud.

14. Look at the four squares (labeled A–D) that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the paragraph.

Even though they had so little, they gave me so much, and I was really moved by their generosity.

After completing my training, I was sent to the place where I would be spending the next two years of my life. [A]□ The village was small and desperately in need of decent housing. Though the people of the village were poor, they offered their homes, hearts, and food as if I were part of their own family. [B]□ My assignment there was to lead a small team of local people in building a new schoolhouse for the village. [C]□ The work was hard, but when the building was standing proudly on the site, we all felt a sense of fulfillment. For the next year or so, I taught in that same schoolhouse. [D]□ But I sometimes think I learned more from my students than they did from me.

Where would the sentence best fit?

- Position [A]
 Position [B]
 Position [C]
 Position [D]
15. **Directions:** An introductory sentence for a short summary of the reading passage is provided below. Choose the THREE sentences that contain the most important ideas in the passage. Some sentences do not belong in the summary because they give information that is not in the passage, or are only minor ideas in the passage.

After Jason Gilbert graduated from university, he found out about the Peace Corps, and he decided he wanted to try it.

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Answer Choices:

1. Jason graduated with a degree in English literature, with honors, which helped prepare him for his time in the Peace Corps.

2. Jason got a great sense of fulfillment from building a schoolhouse, where he taught for the rest of his Peace Corps assignment.
3. After his assignment was over, Jason decided to accept another assignment, and returned to the U.S.
4. After his three-month training, Jason went to work in a small village, where he led a group of American volunteers.
5. It was not an easy decision for him or his family, but after several months and interviews, Jason received an assignment to go to Sri Lanka.
6. When he arrived in Sri Lanka, Jason knew right away that this place was incredibly different from his home in Maine, but he was filled with excitement as he started his assignment.