1. Africa Today

Newspaper and television reports around the world show Africa as a continent with many problems. They focus on the wars, the starving children, the terrible diseases, and the natural disasters. Other, more positive aspects of life in Africa are rarely shown.

There are, indeed, serious problems in many parts of Africa. The biggest problem facing Africans today is the continuing threat of wars. These wars are in part due to historic competition among tribes. However, in the past, the fighting was local and small scale. In recent years, it has become far more violent and destructive. This is partly because of the destructive power of modern weapons. It is also because the situation has changed dramatically.

Starting in the sixteenth century, European powers began to move into Africa. They took African people to sell as slaves in North and South America. They also took any valuable resources they could find, such as ivory, gold, or diamonds. In the nineteenth century, the European rulers divided up the continent into countries. They did not understand much about African tribal traditions, and so the borders of these countries did not match the traditional borders of tribal lands.

When the countries of Africa became independent in the twentieth century, there were often several different tribes in a country, and each tribe wanted to rule. The result was conflict and civil war. In many countries, the civil wars have been going on for decades as different groups fight for control of the government. Governing means having not only power, but also having access to wealth—and one of the few ways out of a life of poverty. In recent years, it has also meant having control over international aid and, therefore, access to food in times of starvation.

Many of the problems facing Africa today have been worsened by this fighting over control of the government. Countries that are at war have little time or resources to deal with poverty, hunger, or disease. They are unable to take any measures for a better future, and so many countries are becoming poorer and their problems are growing. For example, HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, has spread rapidly in Africa because of the lack of education and health care, as well as the lack of medical supplies. Other diseases, many preventable, have spread quickly for the same reasons.

In spite of these problems, however, many Africans are hopeful about their future. Ordinary people in many countries are joining together to change and improve their lives. Young and talented Africans are looking out to the rest of the world. They are experimenting with ways to use the Internet and other new technology to try to solve some of their problems. In the arts, and especially in music, many talented performers are showing the world what it means to be African. In this unit, the passages will focus on both the continuing problems facing Africa today and some of the interesting and positive developments there.

Circle the best answer for each item.

1. This passage is about
   a. the diseases in Africa.
   b. independence in Africa.
   c. the situation in Africa today.
   d. newspaper reports about Africa.

2. According to this passage, the main factor preventing a solution to Africa's problems is
   a. disease.
   b. poverty.
   c. war.
   d. international aid.

3. Wars are more violent in the twenty-first century partly because
   a. modern weapons are more destructive.
   b. of the lack of education and health care.
   c. there has been an increase in natural disasters.
   d. valuable natural resources are lacking.

4. In the past, European powers
   a. fought over control of the government.
   b. tried to help the Africans economically.
   c. could not find any valuable resources in Africa.
   d. did not understand African traditions.

5. In many countries, different groups are fighting for control over the government so they can
   a. control the spread of the HIV virus.
   b. free their country from European rulers.
   c. change the borders of their country.
   d. become richer and control food supplies.

6. You can infer from this passage that international aid
   a. can help prevent fighting between groups.
   b. may sometimes be a cause of fighting.
   c. might not be helpful in preventing AIDS.
   d. usually has no effect on the fighting.

7. According to this passage, there is a close connection between
   a. access to wealth and level of education.
   b. international aid and the spread of disease.
   c. war and the spread of the HIV virus.
   d. African tribal traditions and poverty.

8. Many young people in Africa today are
   a. hopeful in spite of their problems.
   b. talented politicians and leaders.
   c. hoping to move to other countries.
   d. not interested in their traditions.

2. Nelson Mandela and Democracy in South Africa

In the history of South Africa, Nelson Mandela is a key person and 1994 is a key year. Until then, a small minority of white people governed South Africa and blacks were forced to live separately from whites. In 1948, the white government had made the separation of races official with a policy called apartheid. Black South Africans were not allowed to live in the same area or go to the same schools or churches as white people. Blacks had to carry identification papers, and the government controlled their movement and their employment.

When the apartheid policy began, Nelson Mandela was thirty years old. He had completed law school, and together with his friend Oliver Tambo, he opened a law office—the first blacks to do so in their country. Mandela and Tambo disagreed with the policy of apartheid and they began working to try to change it. They became leaders of the African National Congress (ANC), a movement of blacks and whites for democratic political change.

The white government did not like the ideas of the ANC and soon it was banned (made illegal). However, Mandela and other members of the ANC continued to work against apartheid, leading large demonstrations and rallies. Mandela became the leader of the military wing of the ANC, and he traveled to Algeria for military training. Upon his return to South Africa in 1962, he was arrested and sent to prison.

While Mandela was in prison, other ANC leaders were arrested for fighting against the government. In June 1964, Mandela and the other leaders were all sent to South Africa's worst and most dangerous prison, on Robben Island. But still they managed to keep in contact with the antiapartheid movement and they did not give up hope. Mandela wrote his autobiography and sent it out of the prison with visitors, piece by piece.

Other members of the ANC told people around the world about Mandela and his struggle against apartheid. Many countries stopped doing business with South Africa. World leaders demanded that Mandela be released from prison. Finally, F.W. deKlerk, the white president of South Africa, decided to release him and allow the ANC to meet again. In February 1990, Nelson Mandela walked out of prison, a free man after twenty-eight years!

Mandela took over the leadership of the ANC once again and led talks with the white government for an end to apartheid. Many people feared that the white government would refuse to give up power and there would be a terrible war, a "blood bath." However, working together, Mandela and deKlerk were able to bring peaceful democratic change to their country. They were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for this achievement.

The next year, 1994, the first multiracial elections were held, and Nelson Mandela was elected president. At the end of his term as president in 1999, new elections were held and another black man, Thabo Mbeki, was elected. After his election, President Mbeki remarked, "One democratically elected president was followed by another, the true test of democracy."

Circle the best answer for each item.

1. This passage is about
   a. the policy of apartheid in South Africa.
   b. events in the history of South Africa.
   c. how black South Africans fought against apartheid.
   d. how Mandela brought democracy to South Africa.

2. Under the apartheid policy, black South Africans could not
   a. go to school or church.
   b. live where white people lived.
   c. carry identification papers.
   d. work for white people.

3. We can infer from this passage that
   a. many South African blacks supported the ANC.
   b. the ANC was not popular with South African blacks.
   c. other African countries were against the ANC.
   d. Mandela and Tambo disagreed with the ANC.

4. The white government of South Africa banned the ANC because it
   a. was a foreign organization.
   b. had no white members.
   c. wanted to change the government.
   d. wanted to make Mandela the president.

5. After Mandela returned from military training in Algeria, he
   a. was elected president.
   b. was arrested and sent to prison.
   c. began working to change apartheid.
   d. opened a law office with Oliver Tambo.

6. During his years in prison, Mandela
   a. wrote his autobiography.
   b. stopped working for the ANC.
   c. had no contact with the world.
   d. disagreed with Oliver Tambo.

7. Mandela was released from prison partly because of
   a. winning the Nobel Prize.
   b. the help of Thabo Mbeki.
   c. pressure from other countries.
   d. problems with his health.

8. Mandela's goal for South Africa was to have a
   a. government controlled by blacks.
   b. war against the government.
   c. military government.
   d. democratic government.

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2.
Nelson
Mandela
and
Democracy
in
South
Africa

3. Food for Learning

In Eritrea, a small country in northeast Africa, approximately 80 percent of the population is illiterate. That percentage is even higher for women. As in many developing countries, most Eritreans have traditional ideas about the role of women. They believe that women should stay home and take care of the family and should not try to get an education or look for a job.

These beliefs are one of the factors that prevent Eritrea and other developing countries from improving their economic situation. Experience in many countries has shown that educated women have fewer children and have more opportunities for improving their lives and the lives of their families. In Eritrea, in fact, there is great need for improvement. It is one of the poorest countries in the world, partly because of the dry climate and difficult farming conditions and partly because of thirty years of war with Ethiopia. For many Eritrean families, getting enough food is a daily problem.

To deal with these problems, the Eritrean government, together with the World Food Program, has a new program that offers food as a reward for learning. In primary schools, where there are many more boys than girls, all the children receive food packages to take home to their families. However, with the new program, the girls receive 50 percent more food than the boys. This way, parents are encouraged to send their daughters to school rather than keeping them at home.

Another government program that aims to educate women is Food for Training. Managed by the National Union of Eritrean Women, this program offers food rewards (also from the World Food Organization) to women and older girls who are willing to join the program. Because of the war with Ethiopia, many women are bringing up their families on their own. They often live in refugee camps, with no home or land of their own and no way to earn money. Most of these women are illiterate and have no skills they can use to find a job. They spend most of their day looking for food and preparing it for their families.

The Food for Training program helps the teenagers and women change their lives. If they agree to join the program, they receive a large package of food each month. In return, the women are required to attend free literacy classes for two hours every day. When Food for Training started with classes in two regions of Eritrea, 5,000 girls and women joined in the first two months. It is especially popular with teenage girls, age fourteen to sixteen, who have never had a chance to go to school before.

The organizers of Food for Training also plan to offer other kinds of courses for women, using the same system of food rewards. In these courses, they will teach women job skills and crafts such as basket weaving. These women will not only learn to read and write. They will become aware of what is going on in their country, and they will be able to have a voice in their future.

Circle the best answer for each item.

1. This passage is about

    a. the educational system in Eritrea.
    b. new educational programs in Eritrea.
    c. the lack of food in northeast Africa.
    d. job skills training in Eritrea.

2. According to this passage, traditional ideas about women

    a. help improve the economy.
    b. make no difference to development.
    c. prevent economic development.
    d. are not common in Eritrea.

3. The Eritrean government is offering extra food to girls in school in order to

    a. encourage parents to keep girls at home.
    b. create more jobs for Eritrean teachers.
    c. change traditional attitudes about women.
    d. help girls get their housework done faster.

4. The war with Ethiopia

    a. made life more difficult for women.
    b. allowed women more freedom.
    c. offered opportunities to women.
    d. did not affect the lives of women.

5. We can infer from this passage that Eritrean women

    a. are not allowed to go to work.
    b. prefer a traditional style of life.
    c. are not interested in education.
    d. want to learn to read and write.

6. The new literacy programs are an example of

    a. the government of Eritrea working to keep its power.
    b. local and international organizations working together.
    c. the work of 5,000 women and teenage girls.
    d. the problems with international aid organizations.

7. The women who attend the literacy classes will have time to learn because they will

    a. not spend so much time looking for food.
    b. spend more time looking for food.
    c. not have to live on their own any longer.
    d. bring up their families on their own.

8. According to this passage, the literacy programs will

    a. help women become better citizens.
    b. teach women about international aid.
    c. allow women to spend more time at home.
    d. encourage women to leave their country.

4. The Internet in Africa

When it comes to technology, Africa is far behind the rest of the world. For example, Africa has very few telephone lines compared with other areas. In fact, it has only about 2 percent of all the telephone lines in the world. In Africa, there are about 2.5 phone lines for every 100 Africans, while there are about 70 phone lines for every 100 Americans. There are also very few computers—only about 6 million on the entire African continent. As for the Internet, there are fewer Internet users in Africa than in the city of London alone.

The lack of telephones and computers in Africa may not seem like an important problem on a continent with many serious problems. However, more telephone lines and computers would allow more Africans to connect to the Internet. Through the Internet, Africans could have better access to information and better contacts with the rest of the world. In this way, they could end their dependence on others and begin to take control of their own development.

People in many African cities are already using the Internet. However, there are often problems with the quality and the speed of the satellite connections to the Internet. Cables can carry much more Internet data than satellites and can do it more quickly, so new cables are being put down on the ocean floor along the coast of Africa. One cable will go along the west coast, making connections from South Africa to eight other countries and finally ending in Spain. The other cable will circle all around Africa, connecting countries on the east and west coasts.

Though many people cannot afford to buy a home computer, they can go to "cybercafés" and pay for computer use by the hour. The cybercafés are especially popular with young people. They use the Internet to get in contact with people from other countries. One company that has opened many cybercafés is Africa Online, started by a young Kenyan who studied in the United States. Africa Online now has cybercafés in Kenya, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, and it is planning to open cafés in Egypt and other countries.

The Internet is also an important resource for students. School and college libraries often do not have many up-to-date books and students usually cannot afford to buy the books themselves. With the Internet, students can access libraries and databanks around the world. They can also sign up for and follow distance-learning courses at many universities in the developed countries.

As the connections for the Internet are made more direct and reliable, new opportunities will open up for jobs. The Internet will allow Africans to develop an information-based economy that can do business with the whole world. For example, even today an American health insurance company in Kentucky has hired computer operators in Ghana to do some of their correspondence work. With a direct Internet connection between Kentucky and Ghana, the real distance becomes unimportant.

Circle the best answer for each item.

1. This passage is about
   a. the popularity of cybercafés.
   b. why the Internet is important.
   c. how the Internet can help Africans.
   d. building Internet cables in Africa.

2. According to this passage, few Africans use the Internet because
   a. there are few telephones and computers.
   b. they do not know how to use computers.
   c. the cybercafés in Africa are expensive.
   d. there are more serious problems to deal with.

3. Access to the Internet could
   a. prevent Africans from solving serious problems.
   b. make Africans more dependent on international aid.
   c. allow Africans to become more independent.
   d. create many problems for young Africans.

4. At present, in Africa
   a. people usually connect to the Internet by cable.
   b. few cybercafés have Internet connections.
   c. most people have Internet connections at home.
   d. people mainly connect to the Internet by satellite.

5. The new cables for Internet data will
   a. slow down Internet connections.
   b. improve telephone connections.
   c. speed up Internet connections.
   d. make computers cheaper.

6. In Africa, cybercafés are especially important for
   a. students.
   b. friends.
   c. teachers.
   d. workers.

7. An American insurance company
   a. is buying an African Internet company.
   b. hires Africans as computer operators.
   c. sells health insurance in Africa.
   d. plans to open a factory in Africa.

8. You can infer from this passage that
   a. many Africans study in the United States.
   b. few Africans are interested in the Internet.
   c. many Africans would like to use the Internet.
   d. many American companies hire Africans.

4.
The
Internet
in
Africa

5. Pop Music in Africa

Young musicians in African countries are creating a new kind of pop music. The tunes and the rhythms of their music combine African traditions with various forms of music popular today, such as hip-hop, rap, rock, jazz, or reggae. The result is music that may sound familiar to listeners anywhere in the world, but at the same time is distinctly African. It is different also in another way: Many of the songs are very serious and they deal with important social or political issues in Africa today.

Eric Wainaina is one of these African musicians. He grew up in Nairobi, Kenya, in a family of musicians. As a teenager, he listened to pop music from the United States, and later he moved to Boston to study at the Berklee College of Music. Now he has produced a CD in Kenya. Eric's most popular song, "Land of 'A Little Something,'" is about Kenya's problem of bribery, or paying others for illegal favors. He wants people to listen to his songs and think about how to make Kenya a better place to live.

Another musician who writes serious songs is Witness Mwaijaga from Tanzania. Her own experiences have helped her understand the suffering of many African women. At the age of fifteen she lost her home, but she was luckier than other homeless young people. She could make a living by writing songs and singing on the street. By the time she was eighteen years old, she had become a star. Her songs are written in rap or hip-hop style about the problems that she sees in Tanzania, especially AIDS and the lack of rights for women.

Baaba Maal, from Senegal, also feels that pop music must go beyond entertainment. He says that in Senegal, storytellers have always been important people. In the past, they were the ones who kept the history of their people alive. Baaba believes that songwriters now have a similar responsibility. They must write about the world around them and help people understand how it could be better. The words of his songs are important, in fact. They speak of peace and cooperation among Africans, as well as the rights of women, love for one's family, and saving the environment.

One of South Africa's most popular musicians was Brenda Fassie. She was sometimes compared to Madonna, the American pop star, because she liked to shock people in her shows. But she also liked to make people think. She became famous in the 1980s for her simple pop songs against apartheid. After apartheid ended, she wrote songs about other issues in South African cultures. Until she died in 2004, she continued to sing in local African languages.

In recent years, people outside of Africa have also begun to listen to these young musicians. Through music, the younger generation of Africans are connecting with the rest of the world and, at the same time, influencing the rest of the world.

Circle the best answer for each item.

1. This passage is about how African pop music is

   a. usually about love and romance.
   b. more serious than most pop music.
   c. popular with young people in Africa.
   d. mostly written just for entertainment.

2. For people outside of Africa, African pop music is

   a. the same as other pop music.
   b. not usually very interesting.
   c. entirely strange to them.
   d. both familiar and different.

3. You can infer from this passage that most young African musicians want to

   a. copy American music.
   b. make a lot of money.
   c. help their countries.
   d. leave their countries.

4. The musicians mentioned in this passage all

   a. write about serious problems.
   b. studied in the United States.
   c. lost their homes at a young age.
   d. write songs in a new pop style.

5. Eric Wainaina

   a. prefers to sing in English.
   b. listened to traditional music.
   c. studied music in Boston.
   d. performs only in the United States.

6. Witness Mwaijaga writes about the problems of women partly because

   a. she has had a difficult life herself.
   b. there are many problems in Tanzania.
   c. she has had an easy life herself.
   d. there are no other women singers.

7. In Senegal, pop musicians are like the old storytellers because they sing about

   a. American jazz.
   b. the world around them.
   c. apartheid in South Africa.
   d. paying bribes.

8. In the 1980s, Brenda Fassie wrote songs

   a. about peace and love.
   b. copied from Madonna.
   c. in the *kwaito* style.
   d. against apartheid.

5.

Pop Music

in

Africa

6. Transportation, Nigerian Style

In Nigeria, villages and small towns often lack hospitals, markets, and government offices. That means Nigerians have to travel to the cities for these services. However, transportation can be a problem in Nigeria, as in many African countries. The public transportation system is limited and costly, the roads are poor, and few people own cars. But some people own motorcycles, and so with their motorcycles the Nigerians have invented a new kind of taxi.

While the name is different in various parts of Nigeria, the most common name for this new kind of motorcycle taxi is *okada*. The first okada riders were the owners of motorcycles who stopped on the country roads to give people a ride. Then the motorcycle owners realized that they could make money this way. They began to look for passengers and charge fares for the rides. Soon the okada system became a part of Nigerian life.

Though the okada has solved some transportation problems, it has created others. The biggest problem is that the government does not regulate the system. For instance, there are no rules about who can be an okada rider. The riders do not have to pass any special test or get a special license, so many of them are poorly educated and do not know the rules of the road.

Another problem is that the okada system is now big business in Nigeria. That means more people—mostly government workers and businessmen—are trying to get some of the profits. They buy motorcycles and rent them out at high prices to okada riders. The riders must then work hard in order to pay the rent and also earn a living for their families. That is why okada riders often drive fast and dangerously.

Yet another problem is the conflict that has developed between okada riders and bus drivers. Regular drivers of commuter buses often take a half day off and rent out their buses to "half-day" drivers. These half-day bus drivers, like the okada riders, must earn enough in fares to pay for renting the bus and earn a living. And like the okada riders, their income depends on the number of passengers they carry. Thus, they are in direct competition with the okada riders.

This competition has at times become a real battle, as both the okada riders and half-day bus drivers become more desperate. Okada riders and passengers have been injured and killed by buses at bus stops. There have been fights between bus drivers and okada riders, and the riders have set fire to several buses. Sometimes Nigerians have found that with all these problems, they have no transportation at all.

According to a local newspaper, many Nigerians are angry about this situation. They believe that the government should take control of the okada system and make sure that okada riders know how to drive safely. They also want the government to find a way to resolve the conflict between the okada riders and the bus drivers.

Circle the best answer for each item.

1. This passage is about
   a. public transportation in Africa.
   b. conflict between buses and taxis.
   c. the okada system in Nigeria.
   d. traffic problems in Nigeria.

2. In Nigeria, *okada* is a common name for
   a. big business.
   b. motorcycle taxis.
   c. public transportation.
   d. commuter buses.

3. The okada system
   a. was started by the Nigerian government.
   b. began in the streets of Nigerian cities.
   c. was invented by a wealthy businessman.
   d. grew out of the need for transportation.

4. The Nigerian government
   a. has passed strict laws about the okadas.
   b. regulates the buses and the okada system.
   c. buys new motorcycles for okada riders.
   d. has no control over the okada system.

5. Okada riders
   a. all have a special license from the government.
   b. are often government workers or businessmen.
   c. can only use motorcycles that they own.
   d. often have to pay rent for their motorcycles.

6. We can infer from this passage that many Nigerians use okadas because they are
   a. less expensive than buses.
   b. less dangerous than buses.
   c. better regulated than buses.
   d. more profitable than buses.

7. Conflict developed between
   a. the government and okada riders.
   b. bus drivers and okada riders.
   c. okada riders and their passengers.
   d. businessmen and okada riders.

8. According to this passage, many Nigerians are
   a. happy with the transportation system.
   b. angry about the okada system.
   c. worried about the poor bus service.
   d. unhappy with the government.

b. Transportation, Nigerian Style