

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# African Proverbs - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. Most African history, stories and knowledge weren't passed down through books, but via family members, singers and storytellers. Virtually all of Africa's many cultures, as well as cultures around the world, share a rich tradition of proverbs—little sayings that contain big wisdom. The proverbs from this song are just a few of the thousands and thousands of proverbs from Africa's history.

What is a proverb?

A. a type of saying that only Africans use



**B.**

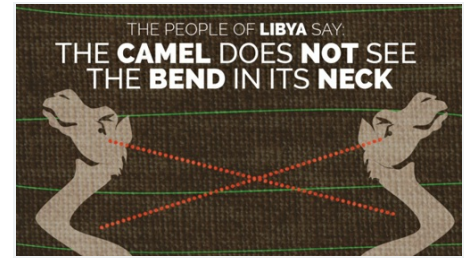
a short saying that contains advice or wisdom

*According to the passage, proverbs are “little sayings that contain big wisdom.”*

C. family stories that people tell each other in Africa

D. a part of African history

2. For hundreds of years, the camel was the car of the desert, and in many places it still is. Able to travel long stretches without water, it was the perfect animal for transporting people, food and goods across the seemingly endless sands of the Sahara. In Libya, the camels have long necks that are curved sharply. Locals, who think the camel's neck is unattractive, believe that a camel cannot see its own "ugliness." But look how the camels in the graphic above are looking at each other's necks.



"The camel does not see the bend in its neck" means that

- A. people should face forward and not turn around.
- B. people should look up and be hopeful and not down and be sad.
- C. it's easy to see the faults in others, but it's hard to see your own faults.
- D. people should think a lot more about one another and a lot less about themselves.

✓

*According to the passage, the Libyans "think the camel's neck is unattractive" and "believe that a camel cannot see its own 'ugliness.'" If you cannot see yourself, it is hard for you to see your faults, but easy to see them in other people.*

3. "Patience can cook a stone" is a Fula proverb. The Fula (or Fulbe) people live in many countries in West and Central Africa. Many Fula groups are nomadic, herding cattle and sheep across the African plains and live in grass houses that are easy to set up and take down. The Fula people eat all kinds of food, but they don't eat stones. This proverb takes something that seems impossible (cooking a stone) and says it can be achieved with patience.

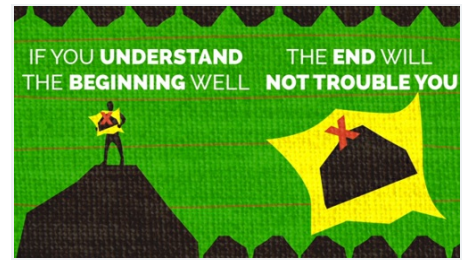


Which of the proverbs below is most similar to the Fula proverb?

- ✓
- A. "A green fruit gets ripe slowly."
- B. "Everyone has his own burden."
- C. "A book holds a house of gold."
- D. "Absence makes the heart grow fonder."

*According to the passage, the Fula proverb talks about what "can be achieved with patience." "A green fruit gets ripe slowly" is also a proverb about patience.*

4. “If you understand the beginning well, the end will not trouble you” is a proverb from the Ashanti people. The Ashanti people are a major ethnic group who live in central Ghana. They have a long, rich history that includes the Ashanti Kingdom, which ruled the land around present-day Ghana in the 17th century. The Ashanti are a very proud people who believe that they have been chosen by God to do good in the world. They place a strong value on doing things well and not rushing or being lazy, and they value knowledge. Stories from ancestors are passed down every evening after dinner.

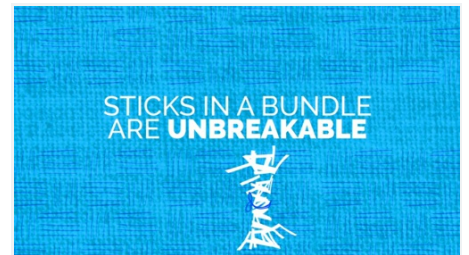


Where was the Ashanti Kingdom?

- A. South Africa      B. Morocco  
✓ C. Ghana      D. Egypt

*According to the passage, the Ashanti Kingdom “ruled the land around present-day Ghana in the 17th century.”*

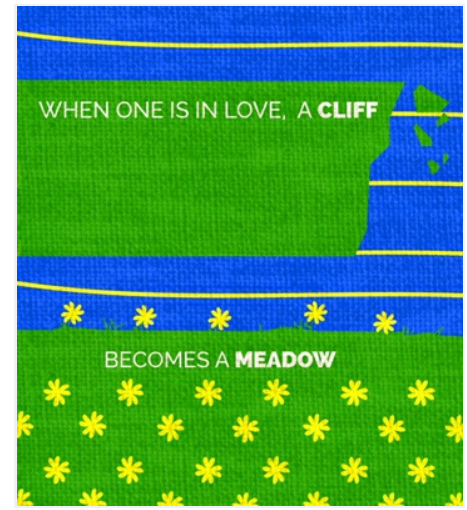
5. “Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable” is a proverb from Tanzania. Tanzania is a country on the east coast of Africa that borders the Indian Ocean. The people there are a mix of original Bantu speakers and Arab traders who built settlements in the first century. They speak Swahili, but come from many different ethnic groups. Despite their varying cultures, the people of Tanzania know that sticking together is important, and that there is strength in unity.



“Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable” means that

- A. it’s not always good when everyone agrees with each other because they can’t consider other perspectives. ✓
- B. even if people have little power on their own, sticking together makes them very strong.  
*According to the passage, “Despite their varying cultures, the people of Tanzania know that sticking together is important, and that there is strength in unity.”*
- C. groups of people are easy to manage.
- D. people who stick together are weak.

6. Ethiopia is one of the oldest countries in the world. Fossilized bones from some of the earliest human ancestors have been found there, and powerful civilizations have called Ethiopia home since around 1000 BCE. The famous Greek historian Herodotus thought Ethiopians were the tallest and most beautiful people in the world. They were fierce fighters, and they created powerful empires and successfully repelled European invasions until the 20th century. But Ethiopians were also peace-loving people with a strong appreciation for stories and art.



Many African proverbs, such as the Ethiopian one in this song, speak of love as a powerful force that can make rational people do irrational things.

“When one is in love, a cliff becomes a meadow” means that

A. love makes you weak.



B.

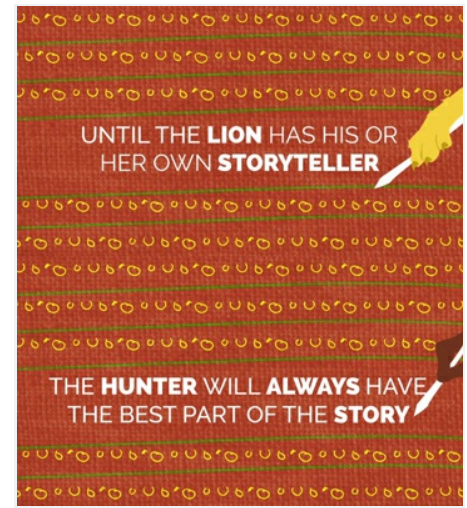
love is powerful but potentially dangerous.

*According to the passage, “Many African proverbs, such as the Ethiopian one in this song, speak of love as a powerful force that can make rational people do irrational things.” If love makes a cliff become a meadow, it is powerful but dangerous.*

C. you shouldn’t trust someone in love.

D. love doesn't really exist.

7. This proverb comes from the Ewe: “Until the lion has his or her own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story.” The Ewe are one of the major ethnic groups in Benin, Ghana and Togo. They mostly form farming communities but also hunt and fish. Hunters are revered in the communities that rely on hunted prey for food, so a hunter who returns with a lion or steer will have an audience who wants to hear all about the kill. People listen to the story, but they also realize that the hunter might be exaggerating to make himself look better. They're only getting one side of the story—the lion, after all, is dead.



The Ewe proverb is mostly about the importance of

- ✓ **A.** hearing both sides of a story.
- According to the passage, people listening to Ewe hunters “realize that the hunter might be exaggerating to make himself look better.” And those people are “only getting one side of the story.” The proverb is mostly about the importance of hearing both sides of a story.*
- B.** hunting lions.
- C.** storytelling to pass on traditions.
- D.** sharing.