

Reading Explorer 5 Unit 12 Lesson A

DIRECTIONS: Choose the best answer for each question.

Gold Fever

From an open mine in an Indonesian rain forest to an elaborate wedding ceremony in southern India, writer Brook Larmer follows the path of humanity's most desired commodity.

[A] As a girl growing up on the remote Indonesian island of Sumbawa, Nur Piah heard tales about vast quantities of gold buried beneath the mountain rain forests. They were legends - until geologists from a U.S. company, Newmont Mining Corporation, discovered a curious green rock near a dormant¹ volcano about 13 kilometers from her home. The rock's mossy color meant it contained copper, an occasional companion to gold, and it wasn't long before Newmont began setting up a mine named Batu Hijau, meaning "green rock."

[B] Nur Piah, then 24, replied to a Newmont ad seeking "operators," thinking that she might be able to get a job answering phones. When she arrived for training, her boss showed her a different kind of operating booth - the cab of a Caterpillar 793, one of the world's largest trucks. Standing 6 meters tall and 13 meters long, the truck was bigger than her family home. Its wheels alone were double her height. "The truck terrified me," Nur Piah recalls. Another shock soon followed when she saw the mine itself. "They had peeled the skin off the Earth!" she says. "I thought, whatever force can do that must be very powerful."

[C] Ten years later, Nur Piah, the daughter of a Muslim cleric, is part of that force herself. Pulling a pink head scarf close around her face, she smiles demurely² as she starts up the Caterpillar's engine and heads into the pit at Batu Hijau. Her vehicle is part of a fleet of more than a hundred trucks that removes close to a hundred million tons of rock from the ground every year.

[D] For millions of years, a 550-meter volcano stood here; however today, no hint of it remains. Layers of rock have been removed, and the space the volcano once occupied has been turned into a pit that is 1.6 kilometers wide and reaches more than a hundred meters below sea level. By the time the gold supplies at Batu Hijau have been depleted, the pit will be about 450 meters below sea level. The environmental impact doesn't concern Nur Piah anymore. "I only think about getting my salary," she says.

[E] There is one thing, however, that Nur Piah finds curious: In a decade at Batu Hijau, she has never seen a speck of the gold she has helped mine. The engineers monitoring the process track its presence in the copper compounds that are extracted. And since the gold is shipped out to smelters³ overseas, nobody on Sumbawa ever sees the hidden treasure that has transformed their island.

[F] Newmont is one of several giant mining corporations that are pursuing gold to the ends of the Earth, from the lowlands of Ghana to the mountaintops of Peru. Part of the challenge of mining for gold is that there is so little of it. In all of history, only about 190,000 tons of gold have been mined, barely enough to fill two Olympic-size swimming pools. More than two-thirds of that has been extracted since 1950. Now the world's richest deposits - particularly those in the United States, South Africa, and Australia - are fast being depleted, and new discoveries are rare.

[G] In recent years, attracted by the benefits of operating in the developing world - lower costs, higher yields, fewer regulations - Newmont has generated tens of thousands of jobs in poorer regions of the world. But it has also come under attack from conservationists, who have filed complaints about unrestrained ecological destruction and the forced relocation of villagers. At Batu Hijau, where Newmont is responsible for the mine's operation, the company has responded by spending more on its community development and environmental programs - and by dismissing its critics.

[H] "Why is it that activists thousands of miles away are yelling, but nobody around the mine complains?" asks Malik Salim, Batu Hijau's former senior external relations manager. "Gold is what drives everybody crazy."

[I] Gold has been driving people crazy for millennia. The desire to possess gold has driven people to extremes, fueling wars and conquests, boosting empires and currencies, leveling mountains and forests. Gold is not vital to human existence; it has, in fact, relatively few practical uses. Yet its chief attractions - its unusual density and malleability,⁴ along with its imperishable⁵ shine - have made it one of the world's most desired commodities, a symbol of beauty, wealth, and immortality. From pharaohs (who chose to be buried in what they called the "flesh of the gods") to financiers (who, following Sir Isaac Newton's advice, made it the foundation of the global economy), nearly every society has invested gold with an almost mythological status.

[J] Humankind's feverish attachment to gold shouldn't have survived the modern world. Few cultures still believe that gold can give eternal life, and every country in the world - the United States was last, in 1971 - has done away with the gold standard,⁶ which the economist John Maynard Keynes famously called "a barbarous⁷ relic." But gold's appeal not only endures; fueled by global uncertainty, it grows stronger.

[K] Aside from extravagance,⁸ gold is also reprising its role as a safe haven in financially unstable times. Gold's recent surges have been amplified by concerns over a looming global recession. In 2007, demand exceeded mine production by 59 percent. "Gold has always had this kind of magic," says Peter L. Bernstein, author of *The Power of Gold*. "But it's never been clear if we have gold - or gold has us."

[L] While investors flock to gold-backed funds, jewelry still accounts for two-thirds of the demand, generating a record \$53.5 billion in worldwide sales in 2007. In the U.S., an activist-driven "No Dirty Gold" campaign has persuaded many top jewelry retailers to stop selling gold from mines that cause severe social or environmental damage. But such concerns have little impact on the biggest consumer nations, namely China and India, which together account for over half the world's gold jewelry sales.

[M] Nowhere is the gold obsession more culturally entrenched⁹ than in India. Per capita income in this country of 1.3 billion people is \$2,700, but it has been a world leader in gold demand for several decades. In 2017, India consumed 737 tons of gold, about 20 percent of the world gold market, just behind China (995 tons). India produces very little gold of its own, but its citizens have hoarded¹⁰ up to 24,000 tons of the yellow metal - 40 times the amount held in the country's central bank.

[N] India's obsession stems not simply from a love of extravagance, or the rising prosperity of an emerging middle class. For Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians alike, gold plays a central role at nearly every turning point in life - most of all when a couple marries. There are some ten million weddings in India every year, and in all but a few, gold is crucial both to the spectacular event itself and to the transaction between families and generations. "It's written into our DNA," says K.A. Babu, a manager at the Alapatt jewelry store in the southwestern city of Kochi. "Gold equals good fortune."

[O] The importance of gold is most obvious during the springtime festival of Akshaya Tritiya, considered the most auspicious day to buy gold according to the Hindu calendar. The quantity of gold jewelry Indians purchase on this day - over 20 tons in 2018 - so exceeds the amount bought on any other day of the year throughout the world that it often pushes gold prices higher.

[P] "We grow up in an atmosphere of gold," says Renjith Leen, a magazine editor based in Kerala, a relatively prosperous state on India's southern tip that claims just 3 percent of the country's population but 7 to 8 percent of its gold market. When a baby is born, a grandmother rubs a gold coin in honey and places a drop of the liquid on the child's tongue for good luck. When the child is three years old, a learned family member takes a gold coin and traces words on the child's tongue to give the gift of eloquence.¹¹

[Q] Aside from its cultural significance, gold is also the bedrock of the Indian economy. "Gold is the basis of our financial system," says K.A. Babu. "People see it as the best form of security, and nothing else lets you get cash as quickly." Hoarding gold as an intergenerational family nest egg¹² is an ancient tradition in India. So, too, is pawning¹³ gold jewelry for emergency loans - and then buying it back.

[R] As the price of the metal goes up, however, poor Indian families are having a harder time raising the gold they need for dowries.¹⁴ Rajam Chidambaram, a 59-year-old widow living in a slum on the outskirts of Kochi, recently found a young man to marry her only daughter, age 27. The groom's family, however, demanded a dowry far out of her reach: 25 sovereigns, or 200 grams of gold (worth approximately \$8,500 today). Chidambaram, a cleaning woman, has only the two earrings she wears; the gold necklace she once owned went to pay off her deceased husband's hospital bills. "I had to agree to the groom's demand," Chidambaram says, wiping away tears. "If I refuse, my daughter will stay home forever."

[S] In the end, local financiers advanced a loan for her daughter's dowry. Her daughter may now be married, but Chidambaram is now faced with a debt that she may spend the rest of her life trying to repay.

[T] Four thousand kilometers away, in her new house in the village of Jereweh, Nur Piah is focused more on the present than the future. "So many people depend on me," she says. Her husband makes some money as a timber trader, but Nur Piah's salary - about \$650 a month - paid for their two-story concrete home. As if in tribute, she has hung a large painting of the yellow Caterpillar 793 on her wall.

[U] Nur Piah's job is not without its hardships. Maneuvering the enormous truck over a 12-hour shift is especially stressful, she says, when the pit's graded roads are slicked by torrential rains. But now, after a long day, she smiles contentedly as her child, age six, falls asleep on her lap. The girl's middle name is Higrud, the Indonesian approximation of "high-grade," the best ore in the mine.

A Golden Wedding

[V] The gold ornaments come out of the velvet boxes one after another. They are family treasures that Nagavi, a 23-year-old Indian bride, always knew she would wear on her wedding day. The eldest daughter of a coffee plantation owner in the southern Indian state of Karnataka, Nagavi grew up marveling at the weddings that mark the merger of two wealthy Indian families. However, it's not until the morning of her own arranged wedding to the only son of another coffee plantation family that she understands just how beautiful the golden tradition can be.

[W] By the time Nagavi is ready for her wedding, the university graduate has been transformed into an Indian princess, covered in gold. An elaborately crafted hairpiece is so heavy - two and a half kilograms - that it pulls her head back. She is also wearing three gold necklaces. Those, and a dozen other pieces of jewelry, act as effective counterweights. As the family members convene, Nagavi walks slowly out of her home, trying to keep her balance as she tosses rice over her head in a traditional gesture of farewell.

[X] The gold treasures Nagavi wears are not a traditional dowry. In this circle of coffee growers around the town of Chikmagalur - unlike in many poorer parts of the country - it is considered inappropriate for a groom's family to make explicit demands. "This is seen as my 'share' of the family wealth," says Nagavi, gazing at the millions of dollars of gold jewelry. As with any Indian wedding, the gold also serves to display the value she brings to the union. "With daughters, you have to start saving gold from the day they are born," says Nagavi's father, C.P. Ravi Shankar. "It's important to marry them off well."

¹ When a volcano is **dormant**, it is inactive but may become active in the future.

² If an action is done **demurely**, it is done in a modest and reserved manner.

³ **Smelters** are machines or places that melt ores in order to extract the metals they contain.

⁴ **Malleability** refers to the ease with which an object can be altered and changed.

⁵ If a thing is **imperishable**, it never dies out or disappears.

⁶ **The gold standard** is a monetary system where the value of a country's currency is tied to the value of gold.

⁷ If something is described as **barbarous**, it is considered primitive and uncivilized.

⁸ **Extravagance** is the spending of more money than is reasonable or than you can afford.

⁹ If a custom or an idea is **entrenched**, it is firmly established and difficult to change.

¹⁰ When something is **hoarded**, it is accumulated and kept hidden away for future use.

¹¹ Someone who has the gift of **eloquence** can write and speak very well.

¹² A person's **nest egg** refers to their monetary savings, which have been put aside for later use.

¹³ **Pawning** is the act of giving or depositing personal property as security for payment of money borrowed.

¹⁴ **Dowries** are portions of money or property given by a bride's family to her husband at marriage.

1. Why is Nur Piah mentioned in the passage?
- It is usual for such a young woman to drive a huge truck.
 - Nur Piah is an example of a modern Indonesian working mother.
 - Nur Piah never sees the gold from the mine where she works.
 - Nur Piah is used to personalize the process of gold mining.

- _____ 2. What is implied about smelting in paragraph E?
- Copper ore is melted into a smelly liquid.
 - The smelter at Batu Hijau only processes copper.
 - It separates the gold from the copper rock.
 - The copper rock has a green shine.
- _____ 3. What does *that* refer to in the second last sentence of paragraph F?
- all the gold that has ever been mined
 - giant mining corporations
 - Olympic-size swimming pools
 - the world's richest gold deposits
- _____ 4. Which of these is NOT specifically mentioned in paragraph G as an attraction for setting up mining companies in the developing world?
- the chance to create job opportunities
 - lower operating costs
 - higher yields from the mines
 - fewer government and environmental restrictions
- _____ 5. According to paragraph I, in ancient Egypt, what was *flesh of the gods*?
- a beautiful shiny statue of a goddess
 - gold covering dead pharaohs at burial
 - a myth that wealthy people have gold skin
 - a way for rich people to live forever
- _____ 6. In paragraph K, what does Peter Bernstein mean when he says, "*But it's never been clear if we have gold - or gold has us*"?
- Gold is especially valuable in difficult economic periods like recessions.
 - It is widely believed that gold is magic.
 - Sometimes the demand for gold is greater than the supply.
 - People prize gold so much that it seems to control their behavior.
- _____ 7. What does *it* refer to in the last sentence of paragraph Q?
- security
 - a nest egg
 - gold jewelry
 - an emergency loan
- _____ 8. How was Chidambaram able to pay her daughter's dowry?
- She pawned her gold necklace.
 - She sold her gold earrings.
 - She used her life savings.
 - She took a loan from local financiers.
- _____ 9. Why does Nagavi wear so much gold on her wedding day?
- The gold items are presents Nagavi received.
 - It symbolizes the value she brings to the marriage.
 - The jewelry belongs to the groom's family.
 - The gold matches her wedding dress.

- _____ 10. According to paragraph X, why doesn't Nagavi have a traditional dowry?
- a. Among wealthy planters, it is considered impolite to ask for money.
 - b. A father cannot find a mate for his youngest daughter without paying gold.
 - c. The groom's father forgot to ask the bride's family for gifts.
 - d. The husband's parents are expected to give the wife's family money and property.

DIRECTIONS: Match each vocabulary word with the underlined word or phrase that best demonstrates its meaning.

- a. auspicious
- b. convened
- c. depleted
- d. explicit
- e. filed
- f. grade
- g. hardship
- h. merged
- i. reprised
- j. unrestrained

- _____ 11. The bitter cold winter meant that the villagers used up their heating fuel.
- _____ 12. The landlord made a complaint when his tenant refused to pay his rent.
- _____ 13. Uncontrolled logging in the Amazon forest has resulted in habitat destruction of many wildlife species.
- _____ 14. The elderly actress repeated the role that made her a star fifty years ago.
- _____ 15. Astrologers consulted the stars to find a favorable date for the wedding.
- _____ 16. After the husband lost his job, the family experienced severe suffering.
- _____ 17. High quality sterling silver jewelry has a 925 mark stamped on it.
- _____ 18. When the two airline companies combined, they repainted all their planes.
- _____ 19. World leaders came together to discuss global literacy standards.
- _____ 20. The dorm rules are clearly stated. Smoking is not allowed within the building.

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Answer Section

1. ANS: D PTS: 1 REF: Pages 249-253
OBJ: Purpose TOP: Precious Resources
2. ANS: C PTS: 1 REF: Pages 249-253
OBJ: Inference TOP: Precious Resources
3. ANS: A PTS: 1 REF: Page 256 OBJ: Identifying Coherence Devices
TOP: Precious Resources
4. ANS: A PTS: 1 REF: Pages 249-253
OBJ: Negative Detail TOP: Precious Resources
5. ANS: B PTS: 1 REF: Pages 249-253
OBJ: Figurative Language TOP: Precious Resources
6. ANS: D PTS: 1 REF: Pages 249-253
OBJ: Paraphrase TOP: Precious Resources
7. ANS: C PTS: 1 REF: Page 256 OBJ: Identifying Coherence Devices
TOP: Precious Resources
8. ANS: D PTS: 1 REF: Pages 249-253
OBJ: Supporting Detail TOP: Precious Resources
9. ANS: B PTS: 1 REF: Pages 249-253
OBJ: Supporting Detail TOP: Precious Resources
10. ANS: A PTS: 1 REF: Pages 249-253
OBJ: Main Idea TOP: Precious Resources
11. ANS: C PTS: 1 REF: Page 257 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: Precious Resources
12. ANS: E PTS: 1 REF: Page 257 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: Precious Resources
13. ANS: J PTS: 1 REF: Page 257 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: Precious Resources
14. ANS: I PTS: 1 REF: Page 257 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: Precious Resources
15. ANS: A PTS: 1 REF: Page 257 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: Precious Resources
16. ANS: G PTS: 1 REF: Page 257 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: Precious Resources
17. ANS: F PTS: 1 REF: Page 257 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: Precious Resources
18. ANS: H PTS: 1 REF: Page 257 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: Precious Resources
19. ANS: B PTS: 1 REF: Page 257 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: Precious Resources
20. ANS: D PTS: 1 REF: Page 257 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: Precious Resources