

Reading Explorer 5 Unit 2 Lesson A

DIRECTIONS: Choose the best answer for each question.

The Sky Runner

[A] Growing up in a village in eastern Nepal's Bhojpur Mountains, Mira Rai had dreams that went far beyond the conventional expectations for Nepali women. The eldest daughter of five children, she was expected to fetch water, tend crops and livestock, and help out at home. By age 12, she no longer regularly attended school, and instead hauled heavy bags of rice up and down steep trails - often barefoot - to trade at the market. It was hard work - but great training for a future trail runner.

[B] "As a girl," Rai recalls, "I would constantly be told to know my place, suppress my voice, and act in a certain manner. For me, breaking free from these traditions itself was a big dream."

[C] Several years ago, Rai's dream became reality. She was running outside Kathmandu when two male trail runners invited her to enter her first trail race, the Kathmandu West Valley Rim 50K. She had never run 50 kilometers before, had no special gear or training for such a distance, and was also the only woman in the competition. But against all odds, she beat everyone - even the men. From there, a community of supporters came together to give her a chance to compete in international trail running competitions.

[D] Today, the running world recognizes Rai as a high-elevation trail racing phenomenon. Now she is on a mission to help both women and men of Nepal through sports. Rai believes her work to empower others has just begun. "We have realized that Nepal has tremendous potential to develop competitive athletes," she says.

[E] Wasfia Nazreen, a mountain climber from Bangladesh, knows first-hand the impact Rai has had on the young women of Nepal. "For someone who has left school so early and missed the learning we take for granted, Mira has been able to turn back time and set a rare example by being the change herself," she says.

[F] "It's hard to find good role models¹ for young women in our region, especially one coming from the same rural village background as most of the young generation," Nazreen says. Mira is blazing a trail, not just in terms of being able to speak nationally on gender equality, but also by getting young people into running through the new Kathmandu Trail Race Series. "The grit² and joy she embodies throughout all her hardships and victories is an inspiration to all of us!"

[G] Rai, however, remains humble. "I have been able to do the things I did because so many people believed in me and took chances, and I want to give back so others can have a chance just the way I did," she says. "We have a saying in Nepal, '*Khana pugyos, dina pugos*,' which means, 'Let there be enough to eat, let there be enough to give.'"

[H] Interviewer: Which is more difficult: running a hard, steep trail race or breaking gender stereotypes?

Mira Rai: Running is no issue, but breaking gender stereotypes is. For the society we live in, it's difficult for women and men alike because doing anything out of convention means a lot of struggle - especially for women. As women, we are expected to help out with chores at home from childhood and then get married and raise a family, so it becomes a struggle, not merely a challenge. You get called a rebel, and for an adventure sport that involves risks, nobody encourages you. "You'll end up breaking your bones!" they'd say. Though the mindset³ seems to be changing, it's still at a snail's pace and has a long way to go before women are seen as equivalent to men.

[I] What advice do you have for someone who wants to be a stronger runner like you?

MR: It was a matter of chance and luck that I became a runner. Back in the village we had to walk hours on end - up and down grueling terrain, often barefoot, with a heavy weight on our backs - and this definitely contributed. I started running, I got professional training that taught me techniques, and gradually I became more determined, motivated, and persistent to chase my dreams. However, I've also learned that proper diet, enough rest, confidence, yoga, and mental well-being - as well as having good support from my mentor Richard Bull and my coach Dhruba Bikram Malla - are just as important as being in shape.

[J] You stopped going to school regularly when you were 12. Do you wish you'd had more school?

MR: I feel that if I'd finished more school, I would have been able to communicate with more confidence and have a better insight into world affairs. In many cases when I first started racing abroad, I couldn't even be a part of conversations because of my poor English skills. I used to just sit there and listen, but I didn't feel uncomfortable being there as everybody was very supportive. However, with media and sponsors, it would've definitely been more helpful had I obtained more education back home. Even today when I try to read newspapers, I fail to understand quite a few words, so I am taking English classes these days, and it's certainly helping.

[K] Running has helped you see the world. What is it like to return to your village now that you have been to Hong Kong, Italy, and other places?

MR: I return once a year during the Dashain, the largest festival of the year, and the people there are living the same sort of lives as I saw when I was a kid. We used to have kerosene lanterns, but now there are bulbs that run on solar power. The village had no access by road back in the day; now there are dirt tracks that connect to big towns. But the mud houses are the same. There's phone connection, but it doesn't work well. When I go back, I meet a lot of youngsters that ask me how they can live differently. They definitely seem motivated, but sadly their folks do not agree with such ambition. While the physical infrastructure in my village has improved, the mindset has not. I remain hopeful that the future generation will break the mold.

[L] What work are you doing now with communities in Nepal?

MR: While recovering from knee surgery, I have been providing guidance to men and women alike in running and encouraging them to pursue a career as professional athletes. Every so often, I visit schools and children's homes to share my knowledge about running, particularly training, diet, and more importantly, an active lifestyle.

[M] We have realized that Nepal has tremendous potential to develop competitive athletes, so we're organizing a series of trail races in Kathmandu. These are short races aimed for both beginners and experienced runners. I also organized a small race back in my hometown of Sano Dumma last October, to introduce the sport to the young crowd and get them interested in running. In the coming days, I plan to organize races that aim to identify and promote promising runners.

[N] **Is there a personal challenge that you still want to achieve?**

MR: I have always dreamed of running in the Ultra-Trail du Mont Blanc in France. It's a challenging race for elite runners from all over the world - 166 kilometers! I would love to see where I stand in this race.

¹ A **role model** is someone who is a good example for young people to follow.

² If you show **grit**, you have courage.

³ Your **mindset** is your way of thinking.

- _____ 1. What is this passage mainly about?
 - a. how marathon runners train for a race
 - b. why girls should be allowed to go to school
 - c. the personal story of a competitive athlete
 - d. Mira Rai's fight for gender equality
- _____ 2. How many siblings does Mira Rai have?
 - a. two
 - b. three
 - c. four
 - d. five
- _____ 3. In paragraph B, what does *breaking free* mean?
 - a. escaping from imprisonment
 - b. stop being attached to something
 - c. leaving a relationship
 - d. doing something differently
- _____ 4. In paragraph C, the expression *came together* means _____.
 - a. started to work
 - b. put in the same place
 - c. formed a group
 - d. arrived at the same time
- _____ 5. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as something that Mira Rai has achieved?
 - a. organizing a series of trail races in Kathmandu
 - b. competing in the Ultra-Trail du Mont Blanc in France
 - c. competing in international trail running competitions
 - d. winning the Kathmandu West Valley Rim 50K race
- _____ 6. Which of the following events happened most recently to Mira Rai?
 - a. She left school to help support her family.
 - b. She started racing in international competitions.
 - c. She visited schools and children's homes.
 - d. She was invited to enter her first trail race.

- _____ 7. Which of the following is Mira Rai most likely to agree with?
- a. Adventure sports are very dangerous and are not worth the risk.
 - b. Nepalese men and women should be encouraged to become athletes.
 - c. Nepalese tradition is sacred and should always be followed.
 - d. Women should get married and raise a family, even if it's challenging.
- _____ 8. In paragraph H, the expression *at a snail's pace* means _____.
- a. very slowly
 - b. repeatedly
 - c. faster than expected
 - d. at the same time
- _____ 9. In paragraph I, the expression *being in shape* means _____.
- a. performing very well
 - b. running in circles
 - c. believing in yourself
 - d. being fit and healthy
- _____ 10. In the third last sentence in paragraph K, what does *They* refer to?
- a. kerosene lanterns
 - b. big towns
 - c. mud houses
 - d. youngsters

DIRECTIONS: Complete the sentences. Choose the correct word.

- a. gear
- b. humble
- c. merely
- d. odds
- e. pace
- f. persistent
- g. pursue
- h. rural
- i. stereotypes
- j. throughout

- ____ 11. There's no need to rush, just go at your own ____.
- ____ 12. Against all ____, he won the case on appeal and walked away a free man.
- ____ 13. She tried to break free of gender ____ in her field of occupation.
- ____ 14. She seized every opportunity to learn as much as possible ____ her month-long internship.
- ____ 15. In spite of everything he achieved, he always remained ____ and polite.
- ____ 16. Don't forget to pack your hiking ____ for your camping trip.
- ____ 17. My grandmother was born on a farm in a small ____ village in China.
- ____ 18. The teacher was very passionate about her job and did not see it ____ as a way to pay the bills.
- ____ 19. She decided to quit her job and ____ her dream of starting her own business.
- ____ 20. The salesman was very ____ and refused to take no for an answer.

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Answer Section

1. ANS: C PTS: 1 REF: Pages 30-34 OBJ: Gist
TOP: High Achievers
2. ANS: C PTS: 1 REF: Pages 30-34 OBJ: Detail
TOP: High Achievers
3. ANS: D PTS: 1 REF: Pages 30-34 OBJ: Paraphrase
TOP: High Achievers
4. ANS: C PTS: 1 REF: Page 37
OBJ: Guessing Meaning from Context - Idioms and Colloquial Language
TOP: High Achievers
5. ANS: B PTS: 1 REF: Pages 30-34 OBJ: Negative Detail
TOP: High Achievers
6. ANS: C PTS: 1 REF: Pages 30-34 OBJ: Sequence
TOP: High Achievers
7. ANS: B PTS: 1 REF: Pages 30-34 OBJ: Inference
TOP: High Achievers
8. ANS: A PTS: 1 REF: Page 37
OBJ: Guessing Meaning from Context - Idioms and Colloquial Language
TOP: High Achievers
9. ANS: D PTS: 1 REF: Page 37
OBJ: Guessing Meaning from Context - Idioms and Colloquial Language
TOP: High Achievers
10. ANS: D PTS: 1 REF: Pages 30-34 OBJ: Reference
TOP: High Achievers
11. ANS: E PTS: 1 REF: Page 38 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: High Achievers
12. ANS: D PTS: 1 REF: Page 38 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: High Achievers
13. ANS: I PTS: 1 REF: Page 38 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: High Achievers
14. ANS: J PTS: 1 REF: Page 38 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: High Achievers
15. ANS: B PTS: 1 REF: Page 38 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: High Achievers
16. ANS: A PTS: 1 REF: Page 38 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: High Achievers
17. ANS: H PTS: 1 REF: Page 38 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: High Achievers
18. ANS: C PTS: 1 REF: Page 38 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: High Achievers
19. ANS: G PTS: 1 REF: Page 38 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: High Achievers
20. ANS: F PTS: 1 REF: Page 38 OBJ: Vocabulary
TOP: High Achievers