

Reading Explorer 5 Unit 4 Lesson A

DIRECTIONS: Choose the best answer for each question.

City Under Siege

The city Thomas Mann¹ called "half fairy tale and half tourist trap" finds itself threatened by more than just the rising tide. Cathy Newman investigates the trouble with Venice.

[A] Nowhere in Italy is there a crisis more beautifully framed than in Venice. Neither land nor water, the city lifts like a mirage from a lagoon² at the head of the Adriatic Sea. For centuries it has threatened to vanish beneath the waves of the *acqua alta*, the relentlessly regular flooding caused by rising tides and sinking foundations. But that is the least of its problems.

[B] Just ask Massimo Cacciari, former mayor of Venice and professor of philosophy, fluent in German, Latin, ancient Greek; a man who raises the level of political intellect to just short of the stratosphere.³ Ask about the *acqua alta* and Venice sinking, and he says, "So go get boots." Boots are fine for water, but useless against the flood that causes more concern for Venetians than any lagoon spillover: the flood of tourism. In 2016, there were around 55,000 residents living in the historic city center. The number of visiting tourists that year was over 20 million.

[C] In May 2008, for example, on a holiday weekend, 80,000 tourists descended on the city. Public parking lots in Mestre, where people board a bus or train to the historic center, filled with floodwater and were closed. Those who managed to get to Venice surged through the streets like schools of bluefish, snapping up pizza and gelato, leaving paper and plastic bottles in their wake.⁴

[D] "Beauty is difficult," says Cacciari, sounding as if he were addressing a graduate seminar. The black of Cacciari's dark hair and luxuriant beard complement his current mood. The preceding day, heavy rains had flooded Mestre again. Rain caused the flood, not *acqua alta*, Cacciari says. "High tide is not a problem for me. It's a problem for you foreigners."

[E] The problem, he stresses, lie elsewhere. The cost of maintaining Venice: "There is not enough money from the state to cover it all - the cleaning of canals, restoration of buildings, raising of foundations." The cost of living: "It's three times as costly to live here as in Mogliano, 20 kilometers away. It's affordable only for the rich or elderly who already own houses because they have been passed down. The young can't afford it."

[F] Finally, there is tourism, of which, Cacciari says: "Venice is not a sentimental place of honeymoon; it's a strong, contradictory, overpowering place. It is not a city for tourists; it cannot be reduced to a postcard."

[G] If you are a Venetian, the city is a different place altogether - the abnormal is normal, and a flood is routine. The alarm sounds, protective steel doors come down, and boots, essential to any Venetian wardrobe, are pulled on. The four kilometers of *passerelle* - an elevated boardwalk⁵ supported on metal legs - are set up. Life goes on.

[H] When Silvia Zanon goes to Campo San Provolo, where she teaches middle school, she knows it will take 23 minutes to walk there from her apartment on the Calle delle Carrozze. On the way she crosses the Piazza San Marco, blissfully⁶ empty in early morning. "I step on the paving stones and fall in love with the city all over again," she says.

[I] Gherardo Ortalli, a professor of medieval history, finds his path less poetic. "When I go out in the *campo* with my friends, I have to stop because someone is taking a photograph of us," he says. For Ortalli, it almost feels like local people are becoming an endangered species. "Perhaps one day we will be. You will go and see a sign on a cage: 'Feed the Venetians.' When I arrived 30 years ago, the population was 120,000."

[J] The decline seems inexorable. Ortalli thinks Venice will end up as simply a theme park for the rich, who will jet in to spend a day or two in their palazzo, then leave. It is 10 a.m., and he is headed toward a kiosk to buy a newspaper before going to his office, though you can hardly find the papers for all the tourist kitsch: miniature masks, gondola pins, jester⁷ caps. "Everything is for sale," he sighs. "Even Venice."

[K] Augusto Salvadori was once in charge of managing the impact of tourism in Venice. *Love* is an inadequate word to describe how Salvadori feels about Venice. He was not just the city's director of tourism and promoter of tradition; he was its defender. "The city is consumed by tourism," says Salvadori. "What do Venetians get in exchange? During part of the year, Venetians cannot elbow their way onto public transportation. The cost of garbage collection increases; so does the price of living."

[L] "Perhaps to help," Salvadori says, "we put a city tax on hotels and restaurants. [Then] they said tourists would not come - but I say, tourists won't come for a few euros? I could not worry about hotels; I had to think of the Venetians. My battle was for the city. Because Venice is my heart."

[M] Tourism has been part of the Venetian landscape since the 14th century, when pilgrims stopped en route to the Holy Land. I ask Ortalli what is so different about tourism now. "Now, Venice gets giant cruise ships. The ship is ten stories high. You can't understand Venice from ten stories up. You might as well be in a helicopter. But it's not important. You arrive in Venice, write a postcard, and remember what a wonderful evening you had."

[N] "There goes another piece of Venice," Silvia Zanon, the teacher, said sadly when Camiceria San Marco, a 60-year-old clothing store, had to move to a smaller, less prime spot because the rent had tripled. Susanna Cestari worked there for 32 years. "It's like leaving the house where you were born," she said, while packing boxes for the move. At least ten hardware stores have gone out of business. In the Rialto market, souvenir sellers have replaced vendors who sold sausages, bread, or vegetables. Tourists will not notice; they do not visit Venice to buy an eggplant.

[O] Some people suggest that Venice's wounds are self-inflicted. "They don't want tourists," observes a former resident, "but they want their money." There is talk about implementing new policies to limit the number of tourists, imposing additional taxes, and urging visitors to avoid the high seasons of Easter and Carnevale. But tourism - together with the loss of resident population, and combined with the interests of hotel owners, gondoliers, and water taxi drivers who all have an interest in maximizing the influx of visitors - defies simple solutions.

[P] "Let me remind you, the loss of population ... is not only a problem in Venice but in all historical towns, not only Italy," cautions former Mayor Cacciari. "The so-called exodus, which dates back very far in time, is deep-rooted with the lodging⁸ issue." For some, a solution to Venice's troubles already seems out of reach. "It is too late," Gherardo Ortalli, the historian, says. "The stones will remain. The people won't."

[Q] But, for now, there is still life as well as death in Venice. Silvia Zanon, on her way to school, still crosses San Marco only to fall in love with the city again. And, assuming it is in season, you can still manage to buy an eggplant. The city's beauty, difficult and bruised, somehow survives.

¹ **Thomas Mann** (1875-1955) was the author of the 1912 novella *Death in Venice*.

² A **lagoon** is a body of water cut off from the open sea by coral reefs or sand bars.

³ The **stratosphere** is the atmospheric layer between 15 and 50 km above the Earth.

⁴ Something that is left in someone's **wake** remains behind after the person has left.

⁵ A **boardwalk** is a footpath made of wooden boards.

⁶ Somewhere that is **blissfully** empty is a place that is happy and peaceful because it is empty.

⁷ A **jester** was a professional clown employed by the nobility during the Middle Ages. Jesters' hats are known for being colorful with pointed tips.

⁸ **Lodging** is temporary, often rented, accommodations.

- _____ 1. In paragraph B, what does *the flood of tourism* refer to?
- Tourists are causing the *acqua alta* to rise.
 - The floods are only a problem for tourists.
 - Floods are forcing tourists out of the city.
 - Venice has a very large number of tourists.
- _____ 2. In paragraph C, what does the author mean when she says that tourists were *like schools of bluefish*?
- Some tourists came to Venice on study groups.
 - The tourists' blue jeans and jackets were reflected in the water.
 - The tourists moved through Venice in large groups.
 - The tourists were eager to eat Venice's famous seafood.
- _____ 3. Which of the following is NOT a concern for Massimo Cacciari?
- the expense of maintaining the old city
 - the *acqua alta* or tidal flooding of the city
 - the cost of living in the city for young people
 - tourists misunderstanding the nature of the city
- _____ 4. For residents of Venice, what is the first indication of a flood?
- the sound of a loud alarm
 - the clang of protective steel doors closing
 - the sight of everyone wearing boots
 - the setup of the elevated walkway
- _____ 5. In paragraph J, which of the following is NOT given as an example of *kitsch*?
- miniature masks
 - newspapers
 - gondola boat pins
 - jester hats
- _____ 6. What is Ortalli's main point in paragraph M?
- Cruise ships are so high these days that you can't get a good view of Venice.
 - Tourists have been coming to Venice for seven centuries, so there's nothing new to see.
 - To really understand Venice, you have to spend time actually exploring it.
 - If you only have one night to spend in Venice, be sure to get postcards.
- _____ 7. What is the purpose of paragraph N?
- to allow Silvia Zanon to reminisce about the old days when she was growing up
 - to explain why tourists find it difficult to buy food in the Rialto market
 - to give examples of the tourism economy driving away small businesses
 - to explain the increase in souvenir sellers in the city

___ 8. The following sentence would be best placed at the end of which paragraph?

Every day I tell my students what a joy and privilege it is to live and work in such an amazing city.

- a. Paragraph G
- b. Paragraph H
- c. Paragraph K
- d. Paragraph P

___ 9. In paragraph N, what does Cestari mean by *"It's like leaving the house you were born"*?

- a. She felt like she was now grown up.
- b. It was time to leave as she had been there for too long.
- c. She was sad to leave a place that felt like home.
- d. She had been born in a clothing store.

___ 10. What does the historian Ortalli mean when he says, *"The stones will remain. The people won't"*?

- a. If the current trends continue, Venice will be a set of empty buildings instead of a lively city.
- b. Throughout Italy, young people are moving out of the cities into the countryside.
- c. Even if the high tides and floods continue, the famous stone buildings will remain intact.
- d. People are fed up with dealing with repeated floods, so they will build higher buildings.

DIRECTIONS: Match the correct word or phrase to complete each sentence.

- a. complement
- b. elevated
- c. framed
- d. implemented
- e. impose
- f. inadequate
- g. inflict
- h. maximize
- i. sentimental
- j. so-called

___ 11. When her ___ friend started spreading rumors about her, she decided to end the friendship.

___ 12. The windows of the cottage were ___ with beautiful mahogany wood.

___ 13. The restaurant served a wide selection of wines to ___ the menu.

___ 14. He had a(n) ___ attachment to the painting. It reminded him of his deceased wife.

___ 15. The city constructed ___ walkways so people wouldn't get their feet wet in the flood waters.

___ 16. They could not go ahead with the purchase of the building due to ___ funds.

___ 17. To ___ pain on an innocent animal is cruelty and should be a punishable offence.

___ 18. The government ___ budget cuts in the education system last year, and many of the teachers were unhappy.

___ 19. They decided to ___ a heavier fine on those who did not submit their taxes on time.

___ 20. To ___ your profits, you'll need to think of creative ways to draw customers in.

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18. ANS: D PTS: 1 REF: Page 83 OBJ: Vocabulary
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19. ANS: E PTS: 1 REF: Page 83 OBJ: Vocabulary
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20. ANS: H PTS: 1 REF: Page 83 OBJ: Vocabulary
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