



“The U.S. Census”

Reading Comprehension – Informational Passages (6)



Directions: Read the passage. Then answer questions about the passage below.

Every ten years, in years ending with a zero, the U.S. Census Bureau counts all the people in the United States. The creation of a census is a process required by the U.S. Constitution. The results of the census are used to **distribute** government money and to allocate seats in Congress. The seats in the House of Representatives are allocated according to population. The population of your state determines how many seats your state has.

The first census of the United States was taken in 1790. At that time, there were an estimated 3,929,214 people in the United States. This estimate is low because the census records for five states were missing. In addition, slaves and Indians were not counted. At that time, the census was intended to show how many men were available for military service. By the time of the tenth census in 1890, the population was estimated to be 50,189,209. In 1920, at the time of the fourteenth census, the population first topped 100 million. The 1920 population was estimated to be 106,021,537. 1950 was the first time a computer was used for the census. The new room-sized computer named ENIAC was used for parts for the count. In fact, the Census Bureau **acquired** its own computer, named UNIVAC, during that era. By the year 2000, there were 281,421,906 people in the United States. That information was gathered using high-speed supercomputers, quite a difference from the 200 men who traveled throughout the country on horseback gathering information for the first census!

The census is important because the results are used to decide how federal money will be distributed throughout the country. Money for education, health care for older people, and funds for community development and housing is sent to the states according to the number of people in each state. Local and state governments use the results of the census to help them decide where to build schools, libraries, bridges, highways, and other public projects. Businesses use the numbers to help them **determine** where to open new businesses.

It is completely safe to give information to the U.S. Census Bureau. The law does not allow the Census Bureau to give out information about individuals. There is a 72-year waiting period. The waiting period is enforced so that people will feel free to tell the truth on the census questionnaires. The last census for which information is available is the 1930 census. Census workers may not give out personal information about people. If they break this law, they can go to prison for five years and pay \$5,000 in fines.

The official census is taken on April 1 of each census year. During March of the census year, the U.S. government counts people who do not live at a specific address. It counts students in dormitories, people in nursing homes, prisons and other places where **transient** people stay. It sends out questionnaires to most **residences**. Then census enumerators – people who count people – go from door to door to count people who do not respond to the questionnaires. Census workers must count migrant workers, seasonal farm workers, and people who live outdoors or in vehicles. They must also count people who live on ships, military bases, or in remote areas. The Census Bureau sets up help centers and toll-free phone numbers to help people fill out the census forms. The Census Bureau really wants to get accurate information about the people living in the U.S. The Bureau spends years preparing each census. It now costs billions of dollars to conduct a U.S. Census. The total cost of the 2010 census will be about 14 billion dollars!



Questions:

1) When was the first U.S. Census?

- A. 1780
- B. 1790
- C. 1870
- D. 1890
- E. 1896

2) How many enumerators worked on the first census?

- A. 100
- B. 200
- C. 1920
- D. 2000
- E. 2150

3) When were computers first used in the census?

- A. 1950
- B. 1970
- C. 1990
- D. 2000
- E. 2001

4) If a census worker gives out personal census information, he or she...

- A. could be forced go to jail.
- B. could be forced to pay a fine.
- C. must leave the U.S.
- D. must forfeit their position.
- E. Both A and B are correct.

5) When will the results of the 2010 census be available?

- A. 2011
- B. 2028
- C. 2082
- D. 2110
- E. 2092

Vocabulary:

1) The best synonym for *distribute* is...

- A. tax.
- B. give out.
- C. count up.
- D. charge.
- E. reclaim.

2) The best synonym for *acquired* is...

- A. obtained.
- B. built.
- C. made.
- D. rejected.
- E. owned.

3) The best synonym for *determine* is...

- A. refuse.
- B. decide.
- C. pay for.
- D. compromise.
- E. plan for.

4) *Transient* people are people who...

- A. live at the same address all the time.
- B. move from place to place.
- C. count other people.
- D. have migrated from another land.
- E. None of the above.

5) *Residences* are...

- A. toll-free phone numbers.
- B. places where people live.
- C. places where people eat.
- D. people who live on boats.
- E. people who count people.