

## **Coming Into The World Reading Passage**

### **Coming Into The World**

In the early 1960s, when the British Empire was on the decline, not many people outside of London had heard of the archipelago that takes its name from the largest island, Tristan da Cunha. It would take a major volcanic explosion and an emergency evacuation to draw notice to this hidden outpost of the British Empire. Although they were almost halfway between Buenos Aires, South America, and Cape Town, South Africa, the islands in the Southern Atlantic Ocean seemed to avoid discovery at all costs.

They were typical of Tristan da Cunha's then-population of around 290. They were stranded on a completely cut-off island. This enormous carbuncle sticking out into the sea had no airport, nor was there room to construct one. The closest mainland port, Cape Town, was 1,500 miles from the lone harbour, which was inaccessible during rough weather. Signalling passing fishing boats was the primary means of contact, and once a year, a ship brought the islanders supplies they couldn't provide themselves.

Because this was a community that relied on its own resources and took pride in its members' ability to pull through tough times together. The island was first settled in the early nineteenth century, but it did not begin using currency until December 1942. But wartime conditions and new development, especially a new fishing business, saw the start of links that meant the Islanders had to acknowledge they were now part of the modern world, despite the fact that some of the older members of the island would reject such change.

From the beginning of July 1961 until the beginning of August 1961, the lives of the islanders ticked quietly, mostly ignored as the government of Britain wrestled with more significant events on the world stage. It all started on the 6th with some minor tremors and rockfalls, but by the end of October, the situation had gotten so serious that the island had to be evacuated.

Eventually, everyone ended up in England, where they received a lot of unwelcome media attention. They lived in military barracks outside of Southampton's harbour.

Several of the island's elders passed away since they had never experienced anything like the British Isles' bitter winters or the ailments that its inhabitants had to contend with. The administration appeared unsure of what to provide the Islanders. It was unclear what was taking on in their homeland, and prospects for the future were grim. Over the course of more than 150 years, these folks developed their own culture. They had lived together in a close community for generations under a total of seven different surnames, and now it appeared that their entire way of life was doomed.

Even though the islanders didn't want to talk to the media because they thought they were just historical curiosities, the attention helped keep their plight in the public's mind. When word got out that the island was once again safe to live on, most of the islanders voted to go back, despite strong opposition from the British government. They turned away from the brighter lights of their temporary home in favour of their own.

As a result of the publicity surrounding the volcanic eruption, the local economy quickly rebounded, even if communications were as challenging as ever. The last of the returning islanders returned in November 1963, and the crawfish canning industry was quickly rebuilt. Young British teacher Michael Parsons recalls that there was no television and that letters from the outside world arrived just eight times a year. He said, "I was allowed to send a 100-word telegraph home once a month, and having news from home brought a lump to my throat."

The island was once again isolated from the rest of the world on May 23, 2001, when a hurricane ripped across the area, despite technological advancements since the turn of the century. It did a lot of damage, including taking out the power grid, the radio station, and the satellite phone connection to the island. A rescue plan to assist the Islanders rebuild would take

several weeks to negotiate and agree upon after the news of the disaster finally reached London a week after it occurred.

A cyber cafe has opened on the island recently. This is a huge improvement over the past, where customers had to place an order and wait months for it to arrive, only to find out it wasn't what they needed after all. Finally, Tristan da Cunha appears to have become part of the global community.

## **Coming Into The World Reading Questions**

### **Questions 1 – 2**

Choose the correct letter A, B, C or D.

1. What does the author have to say about the Islanders?

- A. They might be isolated from the rest of society for a long time.
- B. Since they were trapped on the island, they couldn't communicate with the outside world.
- C. They communicated with passing boats by flags and hand signals.
- D. On the resupply ship, they made their way to the mainland.

2. Tristan da Cunha is a group of islands that the author described as

- A. not easy to locate in a crisis.
- B. Somewhere the Press Was Confused
- C. a country that several nations disputed.

D. is not widely known by the general population.

### Questions 3 – 8

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the Reading Passage?

Write:

YES if the statement agrees with the claims of the writer.

NO, if the statement contradicts the claims of the writer.

NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this.

3. There are frequent lapses in contacting the island.

4. Tristan da Cunha does not have access to any television networks.

5. The Islanders have been able to make money off of stamp sales.

6. After the volcanic explosion, some island residents avoided the island.

7. Islanders are prone to frequent illness.

8. The residents of Tristan da Cunha are completely independent.

### Questions 9 – 14

Complete the summary below.

Write NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS from the passage for each answer.

A (9)\_\_\_\_\_ compelled the small population of this remote island to abandon their houses and brought their existence to the attention of (10)\_\_\_\_\_, bringing widespread attention to Tristan da Cunha for the first time since its colonization in the early nineteenth century. The British government grudgingly allowed the island's inhabitants to return after two years in exile in (11)\_\_\_\_\_ once it was determined that the threat had gone. After the reconstruction was finished, the island's (12)\_\_\_\_\_ improved thanks in part to renewed interest in the (13)\_\_\_\_\_. A (14)\_\_\_\_\_ nearly forty years later again caused widespread destruction on the island.