

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question.

## from The Inca Chasqui

by Wendi Silvano

- 1 Every boy, when he reached the age of fourteen, was expected to train for service in the Inca empire. To pay his *mita*, or tax requirement, each was assigned a particular service. Some were chosen to be builders or soldiers. Others were servants in the Sapa Inca's<sup>1</sup> household. The fastest and most dependable boys were chosen to be Chasquis.
- 2 Chasquis were stationed in small, one-room huts about every two miles along the rock-paved Inca road system.
- 3 Each boy carried a message or parcel as fast as he could to the next hut and passed it on to a waiting runner. In this manner, messages could traverse the entire Inca kingdom, from north to south, in just a matter of days. Chasquis had to be strong, loyal, and brave. If even one runner failed to make his delivery, the entire chain would be broken, and the message would never reach its destination.
- 4 Natu heard the wail of the conch shell, signaling an approaching runner. He scurried up the hill to where his older brother Mayta stood ready. Mayta was the fastest Chasqui in the southeast quarter. Natu loved to see him run.
- 5 He watched with envy as Muru, the runner, told Mayta the message. Then, like a racing puma, Mayta sped off toward the next hut.
- 6 Muru stood, looking majestic in his white headdress, his club and sling carefully tucked in the pouch at his side. Natu smiled.
- 7 "Can you tell me today?" he asked Muru.
- 8 "Yes, Natu. Today we carry word to the Sapa Inca that the northwest quarter has had an earthquake and needs supplies and men. Tomorrow the governor will send a *quipu*<sup>2</sup> detailing just what he requires.

<sup>1</sup>The Sapa Inca was the supreme ruler of the Inca Empire.

<sup>2</sup>A *quipu* ('kē-pū) is an Inca device for recording information, usually made of knotted strings of cotton or other fiber.

- 9            "Then I will see you tomorrow?" said Natu.
- 10          "I suppose you will," replied Muru.
- 11          "Good."
- 12          For three years Natu had watched Mayta and Muru with admiration. For three years he had longed for the day when it would be he who raced along this rugged stretch on the road to the Inca capital of Cuzco.
- \* \* \*
- 13          "Tell me of today's journey," begged Natu the moment Mayta appeared in the doorway that evening.
- 14          "All right," said Mayta. "Just give me a moment to catch my breath."
- 15          Natu sat by him on the llama-skin mat that was his bed.
- 16          "Today was quite exciting. I had only just started up the steep slope when our friend, the puma, decided it liked the smell of the guinea pig Mother had given me for lunch. It glared at me with a look so fierce that I wondered if maybe it wasn't thinking how much more meat there would be on a Chasqui!"
- 17          Natu laughed. "What did you do?"
- 18          "For a few moments we both stood frozen, staring at each other like two llamas eyeing the same patch of grass. I carefully reached into my pouch and pulled out my sling and the meat. I slid the meat into the sling and pulled it back as slowly as I could. Then, with a shout that echoed over the mountain and back again, I shot that meat right past our friend's nose and so deep into the brush that I'm sure it took the puma quite some time to find it."
- 19          "Oh, Mayta!" said Natu, beaming with pride. "You are so cunning and brave. I, too, wish for such adventure!"
- 20          Natu arose early the next morning. He wanted to take the llamas to pasture at dawn so he wouldn't miss Muru's arrival. He listened to every sound that swept down through the mountain passes, expecting to hear the blow of a conch. What he heard instead made him tighten with fear. It was Mayta's voice yelling for help!
- 21          Natu ran up the slope, where he found his brother Mayta lying on the ground, writhing and grabbing his ankle.

- 22           “Mayta!” yelled Natu. “Are you all right?”
- 23           “Oh, Natu,” grunted Mayta. “I fear I have lost a battle with a lowly stone.”
- 24           Mayta winced with pain as Natu helped him up. Slowly they made their way to the hut, where Mayta rested on the mat. They both looked down at his swollen ankle.
- 25           “Just wait until Muru sees this,” said Mayta. “The tale will reach Cuzco faster than any message ever sent to the Sapa Inca.”
- 26           Natu didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. But he knew there was not time for either. In the distance he could hear the sound of the conch. Muru was coming!
- 27           “Natu,” cried Mayta. “You must take the quipu. I cannot run.”
- 28           “But, Mayta—”
- 29           “No buts. The chain must not be broken. Muru will be too tired to go on. You know the route. You can do it.”
- 30           Natu’s heart pounded. This was the chance he had always hoped for—the chance to prove he could be a Chasqui.
- 31           “I will do it, my brother. I won’t let you down.”
- 32           He grabbed Mayta’s headdress and pouch.
- 33           “Mayta is hurt!” called Natu as Muru neared. “Pass me the quipu and go help him.”
- 34           Muru hesitated just a moment. He looked at Natu, then at the hut. “Here,” he said. “Be careful.”

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- 1** Which word from paragraph 1 best helps the reader understand that the word requirement refers to something that is an obligation?

Record your answer in the space provided.

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- 2** Which characteristic of historical fiction is present in the excerpt?
- Ⓐ The main character is a real person who lived long ago.
  - Ⓑ The conflict is based on actual events from long ago.
  - Ⓒ The dialogue actually occurred between people of the past.
  - Ⓓ The setting includes details about a culture that existed in the past.

- 3** Which sentence from the excerpt best reveals how the conflict will be resolved?
- (A) *Mayta was the fastest Chasqui in the southeast quarter.* (paragraph 4)
  - (B) *Muru stood, looking majestic in his white headdress, his club and sling carefully tucked in the pouch at his side.* (paragraph 6)
  - (C) *For three years he had longed for the day when it would be he who raced along this rugged stretch on the road to the Inca capital of Cuzco.* (paragraph 12)
  - (D) *"For a few moments we both stood frozen, staring at each other like two llamas eyeing the same patch of grass."* (paragraph 18)
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- 4** The third-person limited point of view in the excerpt helps the reader understand —
- (A) how Natu feels when he listens to Mayta's story
  - (B) what Mayta thinks about Natu's ambition to be a runner
  - (C) why Muru will spread the story of what happened to Mayta
  - (D) how all the characters feel when Mayta is hurt
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- 5** Which detail supports the key idea that Natu must take his brother's place?
- (A) Natu is excited to show Mayta he would be an excellent runner.
  - (B) Muru no longer possesses the strength to make the journey.
  - (C) Natu has watched Mayta and Muru exchange messages for years.
  - (D) The fastest and most reliable boys are chosen to become Chasquis.

- 6** Read the question carefully. Then record your answer in the box provided.

Why is it important to the conflict that this excerpt takes place in the distant past? Support your answer with evidence from the excerpt.


- 7** Read these sentences from paragraph 18.

*"I slid the meat into the sling and pulled it back as slowly as I could. Then, with a shout that echoed over the mountain and back again, I shot that meat right past our friend's nose and so deep into the brush that I'm sure it took the puma quite some time to find it."*

What can the reader infer from these sentences?

- Ⓐ Mayta scares the puma with the meat.
  - Ⓑ Mayta enjoys watching the puma search for the meat.
  - Ⓒ Mayta plans to return for the meat after the puma leaves.
  - Ⓓ Mayta uses the meat to distract the puma.
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- 8** How does the author's use of language in paragraph 26 affect the mood of the excerpt?

- Ⓐ By expressing a feeling of profound sadness
- Ⓑ By conveying a sense of hope for the future
- Ⓒ By hinting at feelings of regret and confusion
- Ⓓ By creating a sense of suspense and excitement

**9** What does Mayta's encounter with the puma reveal about him?

- Ⓐ He remains calm under pressure.
- Ⓑ His recklessness causes his later injury.
- Ⓒ He chooses not to deliver the messages himself.
- Ⓓ His vanity means that he does not care about others.