

Comprehension

Genre

A **Nonfiction Article** in a newspaper or magazine presents facts and information.

Summarize

Problem and Solution

A problem is a situation that needs to be overcome. A solution is how the problem is overcome.

THESE WALLS CAN TALK

How did the earliest human beings express themselves through art?

If you're looking for archaeological finds that really rock, you can travel to Europe, Africa, and Australia to find some of the earliest examples of the human creative spirit.

EXPLORING EUROPE'S CAVES

In 1994, three people exploring a cliff in southeastern France felt a breeze wafting from a pile of rock and debris. "That was a sign that there was a cave beneath it," recalls Jean-Marie Chauvet. With his companions, Chauvet cleared away an opening, then wriggled through a tunnel into a complex of large caves.

Then, in the pale glow of their headlamps, the explorers noticed two red lines on a cavern wall. Chauvet recognized the markings as "characteristic of the Stone Age." They had discovered an **immense** archaeological trove and, **presumably**, a clear window on prehistoric life.

Six days later they returned with **portable** lighting and plastic sheets that they spread about to avoid disturbing artifacts on the cavern floors. Probing deeper into the cavern system, they began coming upon exquisite, intricately detailed wall paintings and engravings of animals, as well as numerous images



A colleague of Jean-Marie Chauvet inspects the Stone Age cave paintings found in France.

of human hands, some in red, others in black pigment. “I thought I was dreaming,” says Chauvet.

The art was in pristine condition, apparently undisturbed for up to 20,000 years. The walls show images of lions, bison, deer, bears, horses, and some 50 woolly rhinos.

For now, tourists are not allowed in this amazing cave. The French Culture Ministry has put the Chauvet cave off-limits to all but a handful of **anthropologists** and other experts. The French learned a lesson from a cave at Altamira in Spain, another site where amazing rock art has been discovered. Early unrestricted access to this Spanish

cave obliterated archaeological clues and led to the rapid deterioration of artwork. At another well-known site of cave art in France—the Lascaux caves—the caves have also been sealed. Visitors tour a carefully created replica instead.

SAVING THE ROCK ART OF AFRICA

Equally beautiful works can be found in great abundance on rock shelters, walls, and overhangs throughout the African continent. Unfortunately, these ancient masterpieces are deteriorating at an alarming rate, and they may disappear entirely unless something is done to save them.

In an effort to record Africa's vanishing trove of rock art, David Coulson, a Nairobi-based photographer, and Alexander Campbell, former director of Botswana's National Museum and Art Gallery, began crisscrossing the continent. They visited known sites and stumbled across new ones, photographing as much of the art as they could. Campbell is convinced that if examples of Africa's rock art were counted, they would total many hundreds of thousands of individual images.

Everywhere Coulson and Campbell went, they found images dulled by sunlight, wind, and water, and damaged by chemical seepage from mining operations, tourism, and outright vandalism. An unthinking tourist, unaware of the art's significance and value, can be much more than just a

nuisance. Amateur photographers have been known to throw water and cola drinks on the art to enhance its contrast and make the colors more vivid.

HOW OLD IS THE ROCK ART OF AUSTRALIA?

The Australian continent abounds in Aboriginal rock art, both paintings and engravings. Much of it lies in a 1,500-mile-long, boomerang-shaped area along the country's north coast.

Archaeologist Darrell Lewis of the Australian National University estimates that there are at least 10,000 rock-art sites on the Arnhem Land plateau alone, in the Northern Territory. "Each of these sites," he says, "can have several hundred paintings." But unlike early inhabitants of Europe, who often decorated caves over a short period and then abandoned them, the Australian Aborigines would return



Ancient carvings show a herd of giraffes on a stone outside a cave in Niger.

Scientists date these ancient drawings by Australian Aborigines to 23,000 B.C.



over and over to the same sites. This is a practice that still goes on today. Unraveling the history of a single site can thus be extremely complicated.

How old is Australia's art? It is clear that artists were at work in Australia at roughly the same time as their European cousins. Anthropologist Alan Thorne of the Australian National University claims that a small piece of red ochre (a kind of clay), dated to 50,000 years ago, was worn down on one side—like a piece of chalk—by humans. “Whether it was ground to paint a shelter or a person or part of a wall, I don't think anyone would disagree that it is evidence of art,” says Thorne.

These ancient masterpieces found around the world offer windows into the rich lives of our prehistoric ancestors. But if nothing is done to save and preserve the rock art, some of these windows could close forever.

Think and Compare



1. What problem is discussed in this selection, and what solutions are described?
2. What difference between European and Australian cave art is described?
3. If you were given the task of preserving for the future a single work of art from the present, what would it be? Explain your choice.
4. Summarize the common thread in all the selections you've read in this section.



Test Strategy

Think and Search

Read on to find the answer.
Look for information in more
than one place.



LeRoy Sealy helps
his niece Patricia
learn Choctaw.

Languages at Risk

When you hear the words *endangered* or *extinct*, you may think of rhinos, tigers, and other wildlife. But languages can also become endangered or extinct. Linguists, people who study languages, say about half of the world's 6,500 languages are in trouble. Some have fewer than five living speakers, and nearly 3,000 may disappear in the next 100 years.

Concerned linguists are working to save endangered languages. They are publishing books and making recordings of languages that are at risk.

The most common reason for a language to become endangered is that a small group of people speaking one language comes into contact with a larger community speaking another language. Over time, the smaller group begins speaking the dominant language. Technology and travel have also contributed to the problem by helping the rapid spread of common languages such as English and Spanish.

Says one linguist, "Every language has its way of expressing ideas about the world. When a language dies, we lose that insight."

Directions: Answer the questions.

1. What problem is described in this selection?

- A** Certain languages are being banned in some places.
- B** Because of technology and travel, the world needs a single, common language.
- C** Thousands of the world's languages are in trouble and may become extinct.
- D** People who speak one language have trouble learning to speak a new language.

2. Concerned linguists are working on this problem by

- A** teaching common languages such as Spanish and English in schools.
- B** publishing books and recordings to preserve languages that could disappear.
- C** introducing new languages in communities where only one language is spoken.
- D** simplifying the spelling of words in endangered languages.

3. A linguist is a person who

- A** teaches foreign languages to high school students.
- B** studies and preserves languages.
- C** publishes books about technology and travel.
- D** works with endangered animals.

4. Explain the most common cause of a language becoming endangered or extinct.

5. Do you believe that it is important to preserve every language currently being spoken in the world? Explain your ideas. Use details from the article in your response.

Tip

Look for information in more than one place.

Write to a Prompt

A wall-size mural in the entrance to your school was created 75 years ago by the school's first graduating class. The paint is peeling. Preserving it will cost a lot of money. Most students think it is ugly and should be painted over. However, some think it should be preserved. Write a persuasive editorial for the school paper giving your view.

Save the Mural!

I've never paid much attention to it myself, but maybe that's because it is so faded. Still, I believe strongly that we should save the Garden Valley School mural.

Styles of art and tastes change all the time. But we don't go around burning paintings from the past because they are old and no one paints like that anymore. Think about what we'd lose if that happened.

That mural was there when our grandparents were born. The first students who ever walked through these halls made it. They were expressing their pride in their school. They were thinking about the students who would follow them; they were thinking about us.

The mural is part of school. It's part of us. If we don't save it, we'll be saying we don't care about the past, and we don't care about the future, either.



I kept my audience in mind as I chose ideas to emphasize.

Writing Prompt

When construction begins on a new community fitness center, a network of caves is discovered. The cave walls are painted with what appear to be ancient images and symbols. The local university wants to stop the construction and preserve the caves for their historical and cultural value. The developer wants to continue. Write a persuasive editorial for your local paper giving your opinion.

Writer's Checklist

- Ask yourself, who is my audience?
- Think about your purpose for writing.
- Choose the correct form for your writing.
- Form an opinion about the topic.
- Use reasons to support your opinion.
- Be sure your ideas are logical and organized.
- Use your best spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

