

# Volunteering Abroad Experiences: Learning While Helping

COMPREHENSION • VOCABULARY • DISCUSSION

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## Reading Passage

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*Read the passage carefully. Each paragraph is labelled with a letter for easy reference.*

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Many young people dream of seeing the world, but flights and hotels can be expensive. Volunteering abroad offers a different way to travel: you give time and skills, and in return you gain new friends, knowledge, and memories. Below are three true-to-life stories that show what foreign volunteers often experience.

**Maria in Peru** Maria, a university student from Spain, spent six weeks in a small Peruvian town. Her job was to assist local teachers with English classes. At first, she worried that her accent was strange to the students. However, the children were excited just to speak with someone from another country. Maria soon discovered that drawing pictures on the board and using songs made lessons fun and clear. Outside school, she learned simple Quechua phrases from village elders and tasted quinoa soup every evening. “I taught verbs,” she said, “but the community taught me patience.”

**Jonas in Thailand** Jonas, a carpenter from Germany, joined a wildlife rescue center near Chiang Mai. His main task was to repair wooden platforms for injured gibbons. The tropical heat surprised him, and hammering in 35 °C made him tired quickly. Yet each time a monkey climbed onto a new platform, he felt proud. On weekends, the center organised trips to local temples, so volunteers could understand Thai culture. Jonas enjoyed the balance between hard physical work and peaceful meditation.

**Aisha in Kenya** Aisha, a nurse from the UK, volunteered in a rural medical clinic in western Kenya. She helped local staff give vaccinations and taught basic hygiene to families. Electricity sometimes failed, and clean water was limited, so medical work was challenging. Still, Aisha believes she received more than she gave. She learned creative ways to keep equipment sterile and practiced Swahili while chatting with patients. Before leaving, she helped plant twenty fruit trees beside the clinic to provide shade and fresh mangoes for future visitors.

**Common Lessons** All three volunteers faced difficulties: language gaps, hot weather, or limited resources. Yet they also discovered the joy of teamwork and cultural exchange. Volunteering abroad is not a long holiday. Days can be long, and comfort is not guaranteed. Even so, the personal growth can be huge. Volunteers often return home with better problem-solving skills, greater respect for other lifestyles, and a clearer idea of what truly matters—community, health, and kindness. For anyone thinking about their next adventure, giving time abroad may be the most rewarding journey of all.

## Vocabulary Glossary

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Key words and phrases from the passage. Study them before attempting the exercise below.

WORD / PHRASE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
<b>assist</b>	to help someone do something	<i>Can you assist me with my homework?</i>
<b>accent</b>	the way someone pronounces words, often related to where they are from	<i>She speaks English with a French accent.</i>
<b>platform</b>	a flat surface raised above the ground	<i>The performers stood on a platform to be seen by the crowd.</i>
<b>injured</b>	hurt or harmed	<i>He was injured in the accident and needed to see a doctor.</i>
<b>meditation</b>	a practice where you sit quietly and focus your mind	<i>She does meditation every morning to feel calm.</i>
<b>vaccination</b>	a shot given to protect against disease	<i>Children need vaccinations before starting school.</i>
<b>sterile</b>	very clean and free from germs	<i>The doctor made sure the tools were sterile before the surgery.</i>
<b>teamwork</b>	working together with others to achieve a goal	<i>Good teamwork is important for winning the game.</i>
<b>exchange</b>	the act of giving one thing and receiving another	<i>They did an exchange of gifts during the holiday.</i>

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### Vocabulary Exercise — Fill in the Blank

Use one word or phrase from the glossary above to complete each sentence. Each item is used only once. Answers are on the final page.

1. She needed to \_\_\_\_\_ the teacher with the class activities.
2. People often have a different \_\_\_\_\_ when they learn a new language.
3. The workers built a \_\_\_\_\_ for the new statue.
4. He took care of the \_\_\_\_\_ bird until it could fly again.
5. Many people use \_\_\_\_\_ to relax their minds and bodies.
6. The nurse gave a \_\_\_\_\_ to the child to protect against the flu.

## Comprehension Questions

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*These questions are different from the online practice test. Choose the best answer (A, B, C, or D). Answers and explanations are on the final page.*

### Question 1

**What was one challenge Maria faced while volunteering in Peru?**

- A. The students did not understand her accent.
- B. The lessons were too easy for the students.
- C. She had difficulty finding teaching materials.
- D. She was not able to learn the local language.

### Question 2

**Why did Jonas feel proud during his volunteer work in Thailand?**

- A. He learned to speak Thai fluently.
- B. He completed a difficult project alone.
- C. Monkeys used the platforms he repaired.
- D. He built platforms faster than expected.

### Question 3

**What did Aisha do to help the clinic in Kenya after she left?**

- A. She donated medical supplies.
- B. She planted fruit trees.
- C. She wrote a guide for future volunteers.
- D. She started a fundraising campaign.

### Question 4

**What is a common lesson learned by all the volunteers?**

- A. How to speak multiple languages fluently.
- B. The value of teamwork and cultural exchange.
- C. How to live without modern conveniences.
- D. The importance of having a detailed plan.

### Question 5

#### What is the main idea of the passage?

- A. Volunteering abroad is a cheap way to travel.
- B. Volunteers often face challenges but gain personal growth.
- C. Only certain professions can benefit from volunteering.
- D. Volunteering is not as rewarding as people think.

### Discussion & Writing Prompts

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*Each prompt references a specific detail from the passage above. Use for classroom discussion or a short written response (150–200 words).*

1. Maria's story mentions her learning patience from the community in Peru. Have you ever faced a situation where you learned something unexpected from others?

2. In Jonas's experience in Thailand, volunteers visited local temples to understand Thai culture. How important do you think it is to learn about the culture of a place you visit?

3. Aisha helped plant fruit trees at the clinic in Kenya to provide shade and food. What are some other sustainable actions volunteers can take to leave a positive impact on a community?

# Answer Key

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Q1 A

Q2 C

Q3 B

Q4 B

Q5 B

## VOCABULARY EXERCISE

FIB1 assist

FIB2 accent

FIB3 platform

FIB4 injured

FIB5 meditation

FIB6 vaccination

## Comprehension Question Explanations

Why the correct answer is right — and why each wrong option is incorrect.

### 1. What was one challenge Maria faced while volunteering in Peru?

✓ A — The students did not understand her accent.

Maria worried that her accent was strange to the students, but they were excited to talk with her (Paragraph 2).

✗ B — The lessons were too easy for the students.

The passage does not mention the lessons being too easy.

✗ C — She had difficulty finding teaching materials.

There is no mention of difficulty in finding teaching materials.

✗ D — She was not able to learn the local language.

Maria did learn some Quechua phrases during her stay.

### 2. Why did Jonas feel proud during his volunteer work in Thailand?

✓ C — Monkeys used the platforms he repaired.

Jonas felt proud each time a monkey climbed onto a newly repaired platform (Paragraph 3).

✗ A — He learned to speak Thai fluently.

The passage does not mention Jonas learning Thai fluently.

✗ B — He completed a difficult project alone.

He worked as part of a team, not alone.

✗ D — He built platforms faster than expected.

The passage does not state that he finished faster than expected.

### 3. What did Aisha do to help the clinic in Kenya after she left?

✓ B — She planted fruit trees.

Aisha helped plant twenty fruit trees beside the clinic before leaving (Paragraph 4).

✗ A — She donated medical supplies.

The passage does not mention donating medical supplies.

✗ C — She wrote a guide for future volunteers.

There is no mention of her writing a guide.

✗ D — She started a fundraising campaign.

The passage does not mention a fundraising campaign.

### 4. What is a common lesson learned by all the volunteers?

✓ B — The value of teamwork and cultural exchange.

All volunteers discovered the joy of teamwork and cultural exchange (Paragraph 5).

✗ A — How to speak multiple languages fluently.

The passage does not mention fluency in multiple languages.

✗ C — How to live without modern conveniences.

The focus is on teamwork and exchange, not living without conveniences.

✗ D — The importance of having a detailed plan.

The passage does not emphasize having a detailed plan.

## 5. What is the main idea of the passage?

✓ **B — Volunteers often face challenges but gain personal growth.**

The passage emphasizes both the challenges and the personal growth from volunteering abroad (Introduction and Paragraph 6).

✗ **A — Volunteering abroad is a cheap way to travel.**

*The passage focuses on experiences, not costs of travel.*

✗ **C — Only certain professions can benefit from volunteering.**

*The passage includes various professions benefiting from volunteering.*

✗ **D — Volunteering is not as rewarding as people think.**

*The passage highlights the rewarding nature of volunteering.*

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Exploring Health Fitness Trends — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b1/exploring-health-fitness-trends>

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