Name: Date: Score: / 6

The California Gold Rush: Comprehension

Nonfiction: History · about 270 words

Read the passage. Then answer each question. Circle the best answer or write your answer on the lines.

⛏️ The California Gold Rush

In January 1848, a carpenter named James Marshall was building a sawmill for John Sutter along the American River in California. One morning, he spotted something shiny in the water. He picked up a few small flakes and pounded them with a rock. They flattened instead of shattering. It was gold.

Sutter tried to keep the discovery a secret, but news spread quickly. By 1849, about 90,000 people had rushed to California hoping to strike it rich. They became known as "forty-niners." Over the next few years, about 300,000 people arrived from across the United States and from countries such as Mexico, Chile, China, and Australia.

Getting there was difficult. Some traveled for months by wagon across deserts and mountains. Others sailed around the tip of South America, a voyage of about 18,000 miles. Many became sick or ran out of supplies along the way.

Most miners did not get rich. Finding gold took backbreaking work, panning in icy streams for hours. Prices in mining towns were sky-high. Eggs could cost a dollar each, which was a full day's wage for many workers back East. Some of the people who earned the most money were merchants who sold supplies to miners. A man named Levi Strauss later became famous for making sturdy work pants for miners.

The Gold Rush transformed California. San Francisco grew from a small settlement of about 1,000 people to a city of about 25,000 in just two years. In 1850, California became the 31st state. But the rush also brought terrible harm to Native Californians, who lost their land and lives as miners poured in.

1. **Main idea:** What is this passage mostly about?

   A. sailing around South America B. the California Gold Rush and how it changed California

   C. the life of Levi Strauss D. how to pan for gold

2. **Detail:** Who found gold at Sutter's sawmill?

   A. James Marshall B. Levi Strauss C. a forty-niner D. John Sutter

3. **Detail:** Why were the gold seekers called "forty-niners"?

   A. They were 49 years old. B. There were 49 of them. C. They found 49 pounds of gold.

   D. Many rushed to California in 1849.

4. **Inference:** Why did merchants often earn more than miners?

   A. Merchants found more gold. B. Miners needed supplies, and prices were very high.

   C. Miners gave their gold away. D. Merchants did not pay for anything.

5. **Detail:** When did California become a state?

   A. 1850 B. 1900 C. 1848 D. 1776

6. **Inference:** How did the Gold Rush affect Native Californians?

ANSWER KEY

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