

Reading

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

The Great Houdini

I

Harry Houdini was one of the most famous magicians of all time. He was born Ehrich Weiss on March 24, 1874. He claimed to have been born in Appleton, Wisconsin, but his birthplace was actually Budapest, Hungary. The family was poor, and Ehrich left home in order to work when he was 12. At the age of 14, he read about the French magician Robert Houdin. Soon after, he changed his name to Houdini, meaning "like Houdin" and took the first name Harry. He began to perform his magic tricks for audiences.

II

In 1894, Harry met the love of his life, Bess Rahner, and married her two weeks later. Bess joined him in his magic act, and the next year, both of them worked for Welsh Brothers' Circus. During that time, he started to perfect the escapes that he later became known for. He would stun audiences by getting out of handcuffs or a straitjacket. He boasted that no one could keep him from escaping, and he even offered

rewards to anyone who could prevent him from doing so. Often, he would perform the escapes in front of police stations, in the presence of newspaper reporters.

III

Later in his career, he jumped off the bridge into San Francisco Bay while wearing handcuffs on his wrists and with a 75-pound ball that was chained to his ankles. In another famous trick, he escaped from a giant milk can filled with water. Houdini let the audience think that he had died, and then he would suddenly reappear.

IV

On October 22, 1926, Houdini was approached by a young athlete who wanted to know if it was true that Houdini could withstand being punched in the stomach. Houdini said that it was, and the man began to punch him. However, Houdini didn't have time to tighten the muscles in his stomach. His appendix ruptured, and he later died.

A Decide if the following sentences are T (true) or F (false). Find evidence in the text to support your answers.

- 1. Ehrich Weiss was born in Appleton, Wisconsin.
.....
..... 2. Bess and Harry were married less than a month after they met.
.....
..... 3. Houdini dropped a 75-pound ball off a bridge.
.....
..... 4. Houdini died of a ruptured appendix.
.....

2. Houdini let the audience think that he had died.

The audience

3. Houdini died because he didn't have time to tighten his stomach muscles.

Houdini's death

C Find words or expressions in the text that mean the same as:

1. shock (paragraph II)
2. endure (paragraph IV)
3. beat (paragraph IV)
4. burst (paragraph IV)

B Rewrite the following sentences without changing the original meaning.

1. At the age of 14, Harry Houdini read about the famous magician Robert Houdin.

Robert Houdin

Writing

On a separate piece of paper, write a summary of the text (50-70 words). Use your own words where possible.

The Great Houdini – Answers

Reading

- A** 1. F. "... his birthplace was actually Budapest, Hungary."
2. T. "In 1894, Harry met ... Bess Rahner, and married her two weeks later."
3. F. "he jumped off the bridge ... with a 75-pound ball that was chained to his ankles."
4. T. "His appendix ruptured, and he later died."
- B** 1. Robert Houdin was a famous magician who Harry Houdini read about.
2. The audience thought that Houdini died.
3. Houdini's death was the result of a ruptured appendix.
- C** 1. stun
2. withstand
3. punch
4. ruptured

Writing

Answers will vary. Accept all logical and grammatically correct answers.