

A. Read the article about two young men who worked on a farm and answer the questions

The Run

Dennis and Mac had been driving for almost a week, and they hadn't seen a single soul. They were worried. When they'd left the ranch, they'd thought maybe they'd run into someone, another survivor. But there was no one. The roads were almost empty. There was the occasional abandoned car, but that was it. They drove mostly on highways, to make better time. Mac wondered if they might not have better luck on the smaller country roads, but Dennis wouldn't have it. Those roads had curves and were thick with trees. There was no way of seeing danger coming. If someone wanted to spring a surprise on you, you wouldn't know it until it was too late.

When the plague came, Dennis and Mac had been working as ranch hands on a cattle farm. Both had just finished their first year of college. Dennis went to school on the East Coast, Mac on the West. They found that they were very similar people. They both studied hard and read a lot of books. But they also both liked being outdoors. At the end of a good day, they came home smelling of sweat and dirt. They quickly became friends.

The ranch was a small, family-run operation, with only about 50 head of cattle. The family that ran it, the Greersons, would advertise in college newspapers in the spring. There were plenty of ranch hands in the area who needed work, but Bucky Greerson felt city kids could benefit from an exposure to country life. Young men would apply, and then the Greersons would hire about a half-dozen hands every spring to help them run cattle. It was tough work, but Dennis and Mac felt lucky to be picked.

The farm didn't have a TV or the Internet or a telephone. As a result, the first time they heard of the plague was on the radio. Every night, the ranch hands liked to gather in the hall and play cards. While they played, they listened to the radio. The ranch was so far up in the hills that the radio only got one station. At night they listened to the station's best DJ, Petey "The Muskrat" Coltrain, who played old records. Sometimes, between records, The Muskrat told stories. Dennis and Mac thought he was very funny.

One night, though, The Muskrat's radio show was very different. It couldn't have been more than six months ago, but to Dennis and Mac, thinking back on it now, it felt like another lifetime. The Muskrat had been playing a Bill Monroe song when he cut out the record halfway through the chorus. The ranch hands stopped their game of cards. They turned and looked at the radio. The Muskrat always played a record all the way through. What could be wrong?

"Folks," said the Muskrat. "I don't know how to tell you this, but I'm going to ask you to stay very calm. The manager of my station has just passed me a note. It seems that the local health authorities are asking us radio folks to tell you, our listeners, that... well, a disease is spreading."

The ranch hands put down their cards. Dennis and Mac exchanged a glance.

"Now," The Muskrat said, his rich voice sounding uncharacteristically shaky, "they don't quite know what this disease is, but it's real bad. It's very contagious, and people who get it don't have a lot of luck recovering. Now, doctors are trying to figure out a cure, but there's been no luck yet. So, in the meantime, we're asking that you stay in your homes as much as possible and avoid public places until the disease dies down."

"Please, folks, do what the doctors say," The Muskrat pleaded. "I'm sure it'll just be for a few days." He was quiet for a moment. Then the ranch hands heard the sound of a turntable needle hitting the record, and an old Earl Scruggs song came on.

1. Why didn't Dennis want to drive the smaller country roads?
2. Dennis and Mac didn't have too much in common. True False
3. How did the Geersons find the people they needed to work on their farm in the summer?
4. When The Muskrat stop his radio show to tell his audience about the disease the ranch hands were playing a game of cards. True False
5. What were the characteristics of the disease The Muskrat described?

B. Go on reading the story and fill in the blanks with the right form of the verbs in brackets.
When you see + use a modal

That was the beginning of it. For the next few days, the ranch went about its business. The Greersons told the boys (1. not worry) _____, that this would all be over soon. They had enough food on the ranch to last months. In the meantime, they (2. +keep) _____ working on

the farm. At night, everyone gathered around the radio and listened to updates. The news seemed only (3. get) _____ worse. More and more people (4. get) _____ sick. The symptoms were strange. People (5. +become) _____ violently ill, then fall into a long, deep sleep. The big cities - New York, Los Angeles, Chicago - (6. become) _____ like ghost towns. No one dared (7. go) _____ out into the street for fear of catching the disease.

The news kept getting worse until, finally, the radio station stopped (8. transmit) _____. The Greersons called a meeting in the dining room of the main house. Everyone (9. sit) _____ around the big dining room table where Ann Greerson served Sunday supper. After everyone (10. sit) _____, Bucky Greerson stood up.

"Now," he said, "I know you're worried, and I (11. not feel) _____ right keeping you here while you don't know what (12. happen) _____ to your family and friends. So, anyone who (13. want) _____ to leave is free to go."

Dennis and Mac looked at each other. They (14. talk) _____ about leaving but had tried to pretend they (15. + not need to) _____. They had hoped the plague would be over soon, that the world would return to the way it was, that it had all been a strange hallucination. Now that they (16. have) _____ the option to go out into the world and see how bad things really were, they weren't sure they wanted (17. know) _____.

If Bucky Greerson had not given them the option, they (18. not leave) _____, but Mac and Dennis decided they (19. +not stay) _____ there any longer.

The Greersons gave them enough food (20. last) _____ them a couple of weeks and as Mac and Dennis packed up their things and put everything into Mac's truck, the Greersons and the ranch hands gathered around to see them off.

C. Go on reading and fill in the blanks with One word.

A week later, Mac and Dennis had zigzagged through dozens of small towns and a few larger cities. (1) _____ they found frightened them: every place was empty. (2) _____ they looked one way or another, there was not a person out.

Sometimes, they would stop and knock on doors. (3) _____ the fact that no one would answer, they sometimes went inside. (4) _____ they would sometimes find the dinner table set, they never found a single person home. Every time they entered a new room, they both winced, thinking they'd find a dead body. (5) _____ they never did. It was a very strange feeling, (6) _____ if the whole world had disappeared around them.

Sometimes, (7) _____ the place still got electricity, they'd try to use the phone. Every time, no (8) _____ what number they dialed, the same recorded message came on: "The number is not in service. Please check the number and try again."

Eventually, the young men decided to go in the direction of the (9) _____ big city. Even (10) _____ it would be a full day of driving, they thought it was their best chance of finding someone. You can't abandon a whole city.

D. Dennis and Mac started talking in the car. Complete the dialogue

- Dennis** Mac, I'm scared! There seem to be some people coming our way!
- Mac** I' scared, too! Did you get a good look at them? (1) _____ ?
- Dennis** Like zombies! And their eyes were wild!
- Mac** Zombies? You can't be serious, Dennis.
- Dennis** I believe in what I see. And they didn't look like ordinary people!
- Mac** But maybe they need our help. Maybe we should turn back.
- Dennis** Turn back? Help them? (2) _____ serious, Mac. I'm telling you they were dangerous.
- Mac** Ok, Ok.

- Dennis** Just keep driving as fast as you can.
- Mac** Dennis, you must calm down. It's no good (3)_____. We must think of a plan.
- Dennis** The only plan I can think of is to hide from those horrible people.
- Mac** (4)_____?
- Dennis** I think I saw a cave a few kilometres away from here. Maybe we can hide from them in there.
- Mac** That may be a good plan, but unless (5)_____ a gas station we'll soon run out of petrol!
- Dennis** Oh, no!!! I think I saw a gas station somewhere near here. Keep going, Mac! Please!!!

E. Composition. Write about 200 words on ONE of the following:

- The End of the Road. Continue the story of Mac and Dennis
- “There is no life after death.” Discuss