Which of the following describes the Great Wall of China: a Chinese fortification, a World Heritage Site, the world's longest cemetery, or the source of a stubborn urban legend? If you chose "all of the above," you would be right.

Throughout much of China's history, it was troubled by invasions from its northern neighbors, the Xiongnu (Huns) of Mongolia. Beginning in the 6th century BC, walls were built - originally of earth packed in between wooden walls - to repel the invaders, or at least slow them down. More walls were built during the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC). Over the centuries since its original construction, the Wall fell into disrepair and lost importance as a military strategy. This changed in 1449 following a military defeat by the Ming Dynasty (1388-1684). After this, the remaining sections of the Wall were repaired and connected into what we now call the Great Wall of China.

The Wall, much of it now built of brick and stone, eventually extended for about 4000 miles in northern China, approximately following the border with Mongolia. It is about 25 feet high and 30 feet wide at the base, and 12 feet wide at the top (wide enough to drive a wagon or march troops). It has guard towers, arsenals and other buildings. In its heyday, it was guarded by a million soldiers.

The Great Wall of China was built by laborers, prisoners, soldiers, and local residents. By some estimates, between two and three million workers died during the construction of the Wall. Many of them were buried within the wall, making it the world's longest grave.

You may have heard that the Great Wall of China is the only man-made object visible from the moon. This was reported in Ripley's Believe It Or Not, and it was an answer to a question in the game Trivial Pursuit. However, it is not true. Astronauts have reported that although some man-made objects such as cities or roads, can be seen from orbit, it is very hard to see the Great Wall of China, which is the same color as its surroundings.

From the moon, which is more than ten times further away, no man-made objects are visible. In fact, astronauts report that it is even hard to see the continents – the planet Earth looks like a blue and white ball from that far away.

The Great Wall of China has played many roles and been many things. It is a symbol of China and its long history. It was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. Millions of people contributed to its construction, and it is visited by millions of tourists every year. But if you are ever on the moon, you won't be able to see it.
Answer these questions about THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

1. When did construction start on the oldest parts of the Wall?
   a. over 2,500 years ago
   b. over 1440 years ago
   c. over 600 years ago
   d. over 200 years ago

2. What was the main purpose of the Great Wall of China?
   a. tourist attraction
   b. cemetery
   c. military fortification
   d. urban legend

3. Where is the Great Wall of China?
   a. in Mongolia
   b. in Northern China
   c. in Central China
   d. in Southern China

4. How long is the Great Wall of China
   a. About 4000 miles
   b. About 10,000 miles
   c. About 1987 miles
   d. About 30 feet

The Great Wall of China has no military use today. What is its main importance now?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Write complete sentences to answer the questions below.

1. Imagine trying to convince the emperor of China to build the first Great Wall. Describe what you would say to him.
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

2. Tell how the story reminds you of an experience you (alone, or with family and/or friends) have had.
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

3. After reading the story what do you think is meant by “disrepair”?
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

4. What did you learn about the Great Wall of China that you did not already know? In what situation might this new information be useful?
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
Answers to **THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA**

**Multiple-choice:**

1. a  
2. c  
3. b  
4. a

Answers to this question will vary; accept reasonable answers including: tourist attraction, national symbol of China, historical monument, UNESCO World Heritage Site

**Short-answer:**

1. Answers may vary; accept reasonable answers.  
2. Answers may vary; accept reasonable answers.  
3. *disrepair* = disorder, shabbiness, poor condition  
4. Answers may vary; accept reasonable answers.