A Journey Across Europe

I awoke to find myself alone. The polite older Englishman who, like me, had boarded in Calais must have disembarked at some point in the night and I felt a sudden jolt of loneliness. In truth, we had done no more than swap cordial greetings before he had retreated behind his newspaper and left me to my own reflections. And that had suited me well. The sight of Northern France sailing past the train window had held me transfixed in any case. The fields looked so calm and peaceful as dusk descended over them – so unlike the last time I had lain eyes on them. They had been horrific battlefields then, carved through by trenches and stained with the blood of friends and enemies alike.

The view from the window had transformed overnight, from the flat expanses of Northern France to these wooded hillsides lit up by the morning sun. The trees hung with blossom and there was a fresh spring newness to the scene that captivated me. I looked at the timetable to confirm what I already knew: this was Germany. Here and there, I saw people. Had I faced them across the battlefield just a few years ago? It seemed absurd. What had it been for?

The train decelerated as we descended from the hills. I could spot the spire of a cathedral in the distance – we were approaching a city. We shuddered to a halt and instantly a crowd thronged the platform. I thought of my empty bunk and, sure enough, it took only a few minutes before the door opened - I had a new travelling companion.

The man who entered was about my age and smartly dressed. In one hand, he was hauling a travel case; his other hand gripped a crutch. As he tried to enter, his case became wedged in the narrow door. He muttered a few words under his breath and gave it a tug but his crutch made it awkward and I sprung up to help.

'Danke schon!' he said, with a grateful smile as the case came loose and he stepped inside.

He sat down and propped his crutch against the wall next to him. I could see straight away why he needed it: his trouser leg ended abruptly just below the knee. I did not need to ask why a man of my age might be missing a leg. Many of my friends and countrymen returned home from the battlefields with injuries visible or hidden inside their heads and hearts.

He turned to meet my gaze and I hurriedly averted my eyes.

'Keine Angst,' he said with a shrug and a lopsided grin.

He must have seen my panicked expression because he laughed.

'English?' he asked and I nodded gratefully. 'Karl, he said, pointing to himself.

'George,' I replied shyly.

'Where do you travel to?' he asked, hunting for the words.

'Istanbul,' I replied.

'I the same,' he said with a grin. 'We will be friends I think,' he added haltingly. 'It's a long way. There is much time.'

He chuckled and settled back into his seat.

It seemed barely believable: Europe had torn itself apart in the Great War, and yet, here I was, just a few years later, taking a train from one end of the continent to another with a German soldier as my companion.

INFERENCE FOCUS

1. Why was George transfixed by the view of Northern France?

2. What do you think Danke schon might mean? Use the context to help.

3. Why does George 'hurriedly look away'?

4. What do you think Keine Angst might mean. Use the context to help.

5. Why does George have a panicked expression?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R Where did George join the train?

R How does George first know they are approaching a city?

V What does *hauling* suggest about Karl's travel case?

V What does *haltingly* mean?

R Where is Karl travelling to?

Answers - A Journey Across Europe:

1. It seemed so different to his memory of it. The battlefields seemed so calm and peaceful

2. Thank you

3. He is embarrassed to have been staring at Karl's injury.

4. No worries, it's OK, no problem, don't worry

5. Karl spoke to him in German and he doesn't speak German.

R: Calais

R: He sees the spire of a cathedral

V: That is is heavy/hard to carry

V: Slow and hesitantly, falteringly

R: Istanbul

Answers - Białowieża Forest – Europe's Ancient Forest:

1. Small pieces of something larger, a piece/part left over, the remains of something.

2. Predominantly

3. After, following on from

4. Numerous

5. Get involved in or contribute to a debate or argument (especially in a forceful way).

R: Poland and Belarus

S: Bison used to be common but were hunted to extinction before later being successfully reintroduced into the forest.

I: As a sign of respect, honour or mark of recognition for the importance of these oldest trees. To suggest that they are not 'just' trees but are important individuals.

R: To combat the bark beetle infestation. To make paths safe.

E: The writer thinks the forest is special/important/valuable: they say that it deserves attention and respect; they call it mysterious, beautiful and precious.

Answers - Is tourism helping or harming European cities:

1. Unlimited, unrestrained, unconstrained, free

2. Parts of the countryside, away from towns or cities.

3. Its growing quickly, thriving, prospering

4. drastic

5. Enjoy, take pleasure in, appreciate

R: 5

E: Swarming makes it sound like there are a lot of tourists. It makes them sound like insects and creates a negative impression of the tourists as if they cover everything.

R: Banning large cruise ships.

E: Various examples that serve to illustrate the point and show the size of the benefit/problem.

S: Various answers with evidence.

Answers - The Alps:

1. It has been formed by tectonic movement in the Earth's crust. (They are fold mountains.)

2. It hibernates

3. Golden eagle, peregrine falcon and kestrels

4. Mont Blanc

5. There were several first ascents during this period.

S: The African and Eurasian plates collided and rock was pushed upwards into mountains.

E: To help readers picture the shape of the mountains by comparing them with something more familiar.

V: suitable, appropriate, fitting

V: Look or seem alike/similar.

S: They used to be seen as inhospitable and inconvenient places. They were valued for their grazing but not otherwise. Now the mountains are seen as places for fun or for physical challenges like mountaineering or skiing.

Answers - The Story of the European Union:

1. Ravages

2. Culmination

3. Separating, untangling itself

4. It hasn't been solved or settled

5. Grappling means fighting so it suggests that they are difficult or challenging

R: 1992

R: The countries which use the Euro as their currency

S:

The Euro was introduced. 4

The UK voted to leave the EU. 5

The EEC was formed. 1

The Maastricht Treaty was signed. 3

European research and study programmes begin. 2

E: However, the early part of the millennium has thrown several challenges towards the European dream.

S: Various answers:

Possible evidence for yes – The EU grew which is a sign of success. It healed fractures between East and West after WW2. It brought together people with different language, culture and history. It united countries to face common problems.

Possible evidence for no – UK voted to leave the EU. Some people think the regulations are too constraining. The EU was meant to keep peace in Europe but there is war again in Ukraine.

Białowieża Forest – Europe's Ancient Forest

Straddling the border between Poland and Belarus in Eastern Europe is an enormous expanse of primeval forest called Białowieża forest. Though its name might be hard for English tongues to master (byah-wo-vyeh-za), it is one that deserves our attention and respect. Not only is it one of the largest remaining sections of an ancient forest that used to cover north-eastern Europe, it is also one of the most untouched and well-preserved forests of its kind.

Stretching from the Pyrenees Mountains in the west to the Ural Mountains in the East, the European Plain is a predominantly flat area which was once covered by forest. As humans began to settle in this region, the forest was pushed back. Today, only remnants remain and Białowieża Forest is the largest of these. It is a chunk of wilderness that hints at what large swathes of Europe would have been like thousands of years ago.

In recognition of Białowieża's importance, it has been designated as a UNSECO World Heritage Site. These sites are chosen because of their global significance and uniqueness. In this case, the forest is valued for its biodiversity: it is refuge to many species of animal, plant and fungi which have disappeared elsewhere and have been deemed in need of protection. Most notably, it is home to the largest population of European bison. Bison are Europe's heaviest land animal and these mighty beasts were once widespread in Europe. However, they were hunted to extinction for their meat and hide (skin). The last wild bison was shot in 1927 and at this point, only 48 European remained, all of them in zoos. However, bison were subsequently reintroduced and, due to conservation efforts, they are now once again thriving in Białowieża Forest. Along with bison, wolves, lynx, deer, elk, boar and moose also hide out in the forest, not to mention numerous important bird species and uncountable species of invertebrate. There are also oak trees so old that they have been given names.

Though the heart of Białowieża Forest is protected by a reserve, there have, in recent years, been attempts to increase logging again. Authorities have claimed that trees are being felled to combat an infestation of bark beetles – a pest which can harm infected trees – and to clear paths

and make them safe for people visiting the forest. However, environmentalists, scientists and conservationists argue that infestations such as these are part of the natural life cycle of the forest and that the forest has survived without human interventions for thousands of years. Indeed, part of Białowieża's unique nature as a primeval forest is that it has a lot of dead wood and it is this which helps promote diversity, especially in terms of insects. They insist that the forest should be left to its own devices. The European Union has weighed in on the dispute with the European Court of Justice ruling that the logging was illegal because trees older than 100 years old had been destroyed. However, the fight goes on and the best way of securing the future of this mysterious, beautiful and precious forest is still under discussion.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. What are *remnants*?

2. Find a word in the second paragraph which is closest in meaning to mainly.

3. What does *subsequently* mean?

4. Find and copy a word which means *many*.

5. What does the phrase *weighed* in mean in this context?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R Which two countries are home to the Białowieża Forest?

S In your own words, summarise the history of European bison in this area.

I Why might the oldest trees be given names?

R What two reasons have been given for cutting down trees?

E What is the writer's view on this forest? How do you know?

Is tourism helping or harming European cities?

European countries top the tables when it comes to tourist destinations. France, with its museums, landmarks, beaches and restaurants, is the world's most visited country, receiving nearly 92 million international visitors in 2019 alone. Sunny Spain sits in second place, and Italy in fifth place, with Germany and the United Kingdom also landing spots in the top ten. These visitors bring with them their hard-earned cash and spend it in local businesses. More tourism means more wealth. However, it's not all good news and the impact of tourism in some parts of Europe is significant. Is it time for the brakes to be put on unfettered tourism?

Europe has something for everyone. Whether it's world-famous art galleries or ancient castles, sun-kissed beaches or snow-capped mountains, relaxation and pampering or adrenaline-filled adventures, there will be somewhere in Europe to find it. Tourists spend their money in hotels, restaurants, shops and visitor attractions and these places in turn provide employment to local people and bring wealth to an area. In Croatia, tourism is worth about 20% of its economy whilst in Greece, about one in ten jobs are related to tourism. The tourism industry can be especially important in areas where there are few other jobs such as in rural areas.

However, tourism is not without problems especially where it grows out of control. The Spanish island of Ibiza is popular as a fun, sunny beach destination and tourism is booming. Each year, it receives a startling twenty visitors for each permanent resident. To meet the demand, natural areas or farmland have been developed and important plants or animals have been squeezed out. There have been problems with water shortages and the island is struggling to cope with all the waste that is left behind by visitors. The beautiful and historic cities of Venice, Amsterdam, Barcelona and Dubrovnik are also suffering from excessive tourism. At peak times of years, they are swarming with visitors. One problem for such places is that it gets more and more expensive for local people to afford homes. This is because landlords can make more money by renting to tourists by the night than they can on long-term rentals for residents.

In response to the challenges of over-tourism, some European countries and cities are

already taking action. Venice took the drastic step of banning the large cruise ships which spill visitors into the city every day. Many European cities charge a tourist tax to try to raise money for local facilities and services. Cities are also looking at ways to help make sure that housing remains available and affordable for residents. That could mean that a limit is placed on short term rentals in areas where there are shortages.

Many of us relish the chance to explore new places and experience different cultures. Tourism allows us to do that and it can help bring wealth to local economies. However, it has to be carefully managed with regard to the effects on the local people and the environment.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Use the context to suggest what unfettered is likely to mean.

2. What are *rural areas*?

3. What does *booming* tell us about tourism in Ibiza?

4. What word is closest in meaning to the word *extreme*?

5. What does *relish* mean in this context?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R How many European countries are in the top ten most visited countries in the world?

E What impression does the choice of the word 'swarming' create and why has the writer chosen this word?

R What is Venice doing to limit tourism?

E Give an example of how the writer uses facts and figures to support their arguments. How effective is this?

S Which side of the argument do you find more persuasive and why?

The Alps

Arcing for 1200km and through seven countries, the Alps is the largest mountain range that is entirely in Europe. It begins at the Mediterranean in the south of France before curving north and east into Switzerland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Germany, Austria and into Slovenia. Like the Andes and the Himalayas, it was formed as a result of tectonic movement in the Earth's crust. As the African and Eurasian tectonic plates moved towards one another, the rock collided and was compressed. Over millions of years, rock that was originally deep on the ocean floor, was forced upwards. The result are 'fold mountains' and their name is apt: they resemble the way a tablecloth might fold and wrinkle as it is pushed inwards across a table. This process continues to this day and so the Alps are still being pushed upwards. However, erosion due to weather means that the tops of the peaks are also being worn away. In some areas, erosion has matched the speed of the uplift meaning that the height of the peaks remains overall unchanged. However, scientists have found that in other areas, uplift is occurring faster than erosion and so the Alps are still growing.

From the verdant valleys to the ice-covered peaks, the Alps is home to a great variety of flora and fauna. Forest covers the lower elevations changing from deciduous trees like oak, beech, elm, birch and ash in the valleys to hardier coniferous trees like spruce, larch and pine further up. Above the tree line, mountain pastures can be found and these are often used for grazing cattle in the summer – it's no wonder the Alps produces such a delicious array of cheeses given the rich grasslands on offer! Higher up, rocky, craggy terrain dominates: wild goats like ibex and chamois are perfectly at home here and will ascend higher in summer before moving down the mountain as the winter snow sets in. The mountain hare has found another way to thrive in the changing seasons: its fur changes from brown to white in the winter allowing it to camouflage itself from predators when the snow comes. The marmot, meanwhile, sleeps out the cold in a long hibernation. In the skies above, golden eagle, peregrine falcon and kestrels soar keeping a close lookout for their next meal.

The Alps draws humans too. Alpine villages were historically farming communities and

the mountains were places to graze their cattle and gather wood. Other than that, they were inhospitable and inconvenient places which made travel difficult especially in the winter. Later, the challenge of the mountains became a draw and climbers flocked to test themselves on iconic Alpine peaks including the highest peak - Mont Blanc, the punishing north face of the Eiger or the jagged tooth of the Matterhorn. A flurry of first ascents came in the 1850s and 1860s leading this period to be known as the Golden Age of Alpinism. In the 1930s, skiing became another Alpine pastime. Nowadays, the Alps relies on income from tourism as people seek out the majesty of the mountains for hiking in the summer and skiing in the winter. It has truly become one of Europe's playgrounds.

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What does the Alps have in common with the Himalayas?

2. How does the marmot cope with the cold conditions of the Alps?

3. What birds live in the Alps?

4. What is the highest mountain in the Alps?

5. Why was the 1850s and 1860s a Golden Age of Alpinism?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

S Summarise how the Alps were formed?

E Why does the writer compare fold mountains to a tablecloth?

V What word could replace *apt*?

V What does *resemble* mean?

S How have attitudes to the mountains changed over time?

The Story of the European Union

The European Union emerged from a continent that had suffered the ravages of war. World War I was meant to be the war to end all wars and yet, only 21 years afterwards, a second terrible war left many cities, towns and lives in tatters. After the Second World War, Europe was divided between east and west; peace felt fragile and yet so vital. Western Europe set about rebuilding itself. In the process, it began to forge treaties between countries. The hope was that, through these agreements, another war could be prevented from ever happening.

The early treaties were initially focussed on trade. The European Economic Community (The EEC) was created in 1957 with six members: West Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands. These enemies-turned-friends allowed trade to take place freely and without restrictions across their borders. In 1973, the UK, Denmark and Ireland joined, followed in the 1980s by Greece, Spain and Portugal. The cooperation grew to include European programmes for research and for study.

In 1992, The European Union (the EU) was officially born through an agreement called the Maastricht Treaty. Through the 1990s, more countries joined the union and integration between countries grew. The culmination, in 1999, was the introduction of a new currency, the Euro, which many EU countries, with the exception of the UK, Sweden and Denmark, adopted. Those countries which use the Euro are called the Eurozone.

In the 2000s, the EU grew eastwards. The fracture between East and West Europe which had existed since World War Two seemed to be healing. People with different languages, cultures and, in many cases, a history of conflict, were united under shared values of dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights. However, the early part of the millennium has thrown several challenges towards the European dream. From the economy, to climate change and to the refugee crisis, finding shared solutions to these difficulties has been challenging. All the agreements and regulations that have been put in place to solve these problems or to uphold the values of the EU, have been accused by some of being too limiting or constraining

on member states. In 2016, the UK voted to leave the EU. The vote was a close one. Leave voters were motivated by the desire to have control over UK's borders and laws or by the belief that the UK would be stronger outside of Europe. Those who voted to remain in the EU felt that the UK benefited from being part of the union and from having easy access to European markets or other European institutions. What most people agree upon though is that leaving the EU has been a period of immense change for the UK. Disentangling itself from the EU has involved lots of negotiations and new agreements and there are still difficult matters that are unresolved.

Meanwhile, Europe faces fresh challenges with a war in Ukraine, the recovery from the pandemic and the climate emergency as key topics it is grappling with. For European countries, whether they are inside or outside the EU, there is still a need to work together to help find solutions to these problems.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Find a word in the first paragraph which means damage.

2. Find a word in the third paragraph which means endpoint.

3. What does disentangling mean?

4. What does unresolved mean?

5. What does the word grappling suggest about the problems the EU faces?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R When was the European Union first formed?

R What is the Eurozone?

S Put these events in order:
- The Euro was introduced.
- The UK voted to leave the EU.
- The EEC was formed.
- The Maastricht Treaty was signed.
- European research and study programmes begin.

E The mood of the first half of the text is positive and optimistic. Find and copy the sentence where this changes.

S Do you think the EU has been a success? Yes/No/A bit of both. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.