

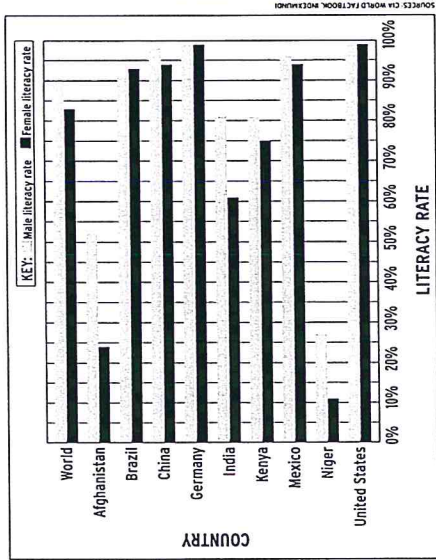
For use with "Afghanistan's Romeo & Juliet," on p. 14 of the magazine

The Literacy Divide

In the article "Afghanistan's Romeo & Juliet," 18-year-old Zakia has trouble using a

cellphone because she has never learned to read. That's hardly unusual in Afghanistan. Largely because of its history of excluding girls from education, the country has a literacy rate for women that's far below the literacy rate for men. In fact, its female literacy rate is one of the lowest in the world. The bar graph at right shows how Afghanistan's literacy rates stack up to rates in some other countries. For the purposes of the graph, literacy rate is defined as the percentage of men or women age 15 and older who can read and write.

This bar graph compares male and female literacy rates for selected countries along with the global average.



ANALYZE THE GRAPH

- According to the graph, about _____ percent of women worldwide can read and write.
 - 77
 - 83
 - 90
 - 26
- In Afghanistan, the female literacy rate is _____ percentage points lower than the male literacy rate.
 - 39
 - 83
 - 90
 - 27
- In which of these countries is the female literacy rate higher than the male literacy rate?
 - Brazil
 - Germany
 - Kenya
 - China
- In which of these countries is the male literacy rate more than 60 points lower than the global average?
 - Afghanistan
 - Niger
 - Brazil
 - India
- Which is true of the U.S. female literacy rate?
 - It is the same as Germany's.
 - It is about 5 points higher than China's.
 - It's the same as the U.S. male literacy rate.
 - all of the above

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- It has been said that female literacy has a "ripple effect" on a society. What do you think this means? Can you think of specific ways that increasing the female literacy rate can help a nation?
- What do you find most surprising or interesting about the data on the bar graph? Why?

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Get a Clue

Paying attention to context can help you infer the meanings of challenging words you encounter in texts. Use context clues in this excerpt from the article "Afghanistan's Romeo & Juliet" to figure out the meanings of the boldfaced words.

But the **oppression** of women was a big part of Afghan society long before the Taliban. After the American-led military intervention that ousted the Taliban in October 2001, the laws restricting women so harshly were repeated, but that did little to change attitudes. For example, honor killings are illegal on paper. But in reality, they're just one of many abusive customs toward women and girls that remain common, including child marriages and wife beating.

Afghanistan is also a deeply **tribal** society, and marriages between different ethnic groups are frowned on. This was another reason Zakia's father opposed her marriage to Ali.

Zakia is Tajik, and Ali is Hazara. To make matters worse, she's a Sunni Muslim, and he's a Shiite Muslim, and their **sects** have been in violent conflict for centuries.

Their forbidden relationship had started years earlier, across a low mud wall that divided their families' **adjacent** potato fields. "We were children and never thought about each other in that way," Zakia said. Then they reached their teens and did. But once an Afghan girl reaches adolescence, she's forbidden to see any men outside her family. So Ali **wooed** her in secret, playing his flute when no one was around and reciting bits of Persian love poems he'd memorized even though he couldn't read.

1. PART A

The word **oppression** most nearly means _____.

- conflicting views of how others should be treated
- the practice of treating adults like children
- cruel, unjust treatment
- sad and lonely feelings

2. PART A

The word **tribal** most nearly means _____.

- individualistic
- innovative
- well-educated
- having a strong sense of loyalty to one's own group

3. PART A

The word **wooed** most nearly means _____.

- to pursue someone romantically, often with an eye toward marriage
- to surprise someone with important news
- to flirt casually
- to impress someone deeply

PART B

Which word or phrase from the article provides the best support for the answer to Part A?

- "laws restricting women"
- "illegal on paper"
- "military intervention"

PART B

Which word or phrase from the article provides the best support for the answer to Part A?

- "frowned on"
- "marriage to Ali"
- "different ethnic groups"
- "violent conflict"

PART B

Which word or phrase from the article provides the best support for the answer to Part A?

- "reached their teens"
- "reciting bits of Persian love poems"
- "forbidden to see any men"
- "when no one was around"

GOING FURTHER Use context to explore these additional words from the article.

- Infer the meaning of the word **sects**: _____
Which word or phrase from the excerpt helps you to understand the meaning of the word **sects** as it is used here? _____
- Infer the meaning of the word **adjacent**: _____
Now use the word in an original sentence: _____

CLOSE READING

For use with "Afghanistan's Romeo & Juliet" on p. 14 of the magazine

Up Close

Afghanistan's Romeo & Juliet

Read the article closely, then answer each question below. Write three to five sentences for each response, using evidence from the text to support your answers. Use a separate sheet of paper if you need more space.

1. Use text evidence to infer why Zakia is living in a shelter at the beginning of the article.

2. Analyze how the author supports the claim that "getting married didn't solve their problems; it only created new ones."

3. Compare and contrast Zakia's and Ali's backgrounds. How do their differences help explain Zakia's father's opposition to the couple's marriage?

4. Summarize why the article's author decides to assist Zakia and Ali.

5. Based on the last section, "Robbed, Beaten & Deported," what is asylum? What context clues help you understand the word's meaning?

6. Read the sidebar "America's Longest War" on p. 16. What is the purpose of the sidebar?

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