Read this adaptation of an old Japanese myth. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Bamboo Cutter and the Moon Child

Long ago, there lived a bamboo cutter, Taketori no Okina. He was very poor and sad, for he and his wife had never had children. One morning as usual, Taketori no Okina was gathering bamboo from the forest. Suddenly, he saw a glowing light within the bamboo grove. He followed it and, to his great surprise and delight, discovered a tiny child, no more than three inches tall and glowing with the soft light of the moon. The old man gently carried the lovely creature home. He and his wife were filled with joy! They resolved to raise the tiny girl as their own child. They named her Kaguya-hime, Princess of Bamboo Scattering Light. Kaguya-hime grew quickly into a lovely, radiant, full-grown woman.

In the years following the day that Taketori no Okina found Kaguya-hime, his fortunes changed. Not only did he and his wife have the child they had always dreamed of, they soon found great prosperity as well. Every time the old man cut a piece of bamboo from the forest, he found nuggets of gold or precious stones inside. Soon, the family was very wealthy. News of their great fortune, and the loveliness of Kaguya-hime, spread far and wide. Tales of Kaguya-hime's beauty led men from faraway lands to come seek her hand in marriage. They camped outside her home, but she refused to see them. She had no desire to marry anyone. But five of the knights refused to give up, until finally, Kaguya-hime sent to each of them a challenge to prove their love. The challenges were impossible tasks, but each knight gladly accepted his challenge for the chance to win Kaguya-hime's hand in marriage.

But not one of the knights proved himself worthy. The first, tasked with bringing back Buddha's very own stone bowl, instead tried to pass off an ordinary bowl as the real thing. The second was tasked with bringing Kaguya-hime a jeweled branch from the silver-and-gold tree of Mount Horai. Instead, he hired jewelers to make a **counterfeit** branch. The third, tasked with fetching the robe of the mythical fire rat, also offered up a fake. The fourth, tasked with bringing back the radiant, five-colored stone of a dragon, became resentful for having to go on such a dangerous journey; he simply gave up. Alas, the fifth, tasked with finding a shell of a snail born of swallows, was never heard of again. As such, Kaguya-hime was finally free from the unwanted attentions of the five knights. But now, the Emperor had heard of her legendary loveliness; he traveled to meet Kaguya-hime and fell instantly and deeply in love with



her. But Kaguya-hime refused to go with him, telling him that she would fade away should he force her to go with him. The Emperor relented, and the two instead struck up a friendship, writing letters and poems to each other from afar.

As time continued, Taketori no Okina and his wife noticed that Kaguya-hime had grown melancholy. They often found her weeping and gazing at the moon. Kaguya-hime confessed to them that she was a moon princess; on the next harvest moon, the moon people would come to take her back home. She did not want to leave. Taketori no Okina desperately sought the Emperor's help. The Emperor sent guards to prevent the moon people from stealing Kaguya-hime away. Despite their greatest efforts to protect her, on the night of the harvest moon, the moon people descended, blinding the guards and taking Kaguya-hime to their chariot. Before leaving, Kaguya-hime kissed her grieving Earth parents goodbye. She wrote a letter to the Emperor and enclosed in it a vial of the Elixir of Life. Then, she ascended to Tsuki-no-Miyako, the city of the moon.

The Emperor was overcome with grief that his beloved Kaguya-hime was gone from Earth. He sent a letter to the top of the most sacred mountain in Japan. He ordered his men to burn the letter in hopes that his message would reach her on the moon. Having no desire for immortality without Kaguya-hime, the Emperor had them burn the Elixir of Life as well. To this day, the smoke from the fire can still be seen, forever burning on the Mountain of Immortality, Mount Fuji.

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Answer the questions about "The Bamboo Cutter and the Moon Child."

1. **This story is a Japanese myth. It was meant to explain a natural feature that was visible at the time of its telling. What feature was that?**

a. snow on the top of Mount Fuji

b. a lunar eclipse

c. smoke rising from the top of Mount Fuji

d. a meteor shower

2. **What clues in the first paragraph of the story indicate that the child found by Taketori no Okina is no ordinary child? Choose <u>two</u>.**

a. The child is lovely.

b. The child is found in the forest.

c. The child stands no more than three inches tall.

d. The child glows like the light of the moon.

3. **How does Taketori no Okina's decision to take the tiny child home advance the plot?**

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4a. **Which two adjectives describe Taketori no Okina's character?**

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4b. **Cite two pieces of textual evidence that reveal aspects of Taketori no Okina's character.**

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5. **Why does Kaguya-hime assign impossible tasks to the five knights?**

a. She wants to teach them a lesson.

b. She wants them to leave her alone.

c. She wants to marry someone else.

d. She truly desires the things she sends them after.

6. **In the third paragraph, what does the word <u>counterfeit</u> mean?**

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7. **How does the Emperor prove himself different from the five knights?**

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8. **What theme below can be seen in the relationship of Kaguya-hime and the Emperor?**

a. Never give up, even if a task seems impossible.

b. If you truly love someone, let them be free.

c. Fortune follows fame.

d. Be careful what you wish for.

9. **Summarize the last two paragraphs of the story.**

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