The World's Biggest Cactus

Just how big can cactuses be? Some cactuses (or cacti) are so small that they can fit inside flowerpots. Other cactuses can be as large as trees. The largest cactus of all is the saguaro cactus (pronounced sa-WAR-oh). The saguaro can grow to be over 70 feet (or 21 meters) tall!

Saguaro cactuses only grow in the Sonoran Desert, which is in northern Mexico and parts of the US states of Arizona and California. In 1994, the United States declared part of this desert to be a national park. Saguaro National Park was created to help protect these magnificent cactuses.

Like trees, saguaros provide homes and foods to birds, bats, and bees. The saguaro produces flowers that later turn into fruit. Some people like to eat saguaro fruit, too. People can collect the fruit, but they cannot harm the saguaro itself. In Arizona, it is illegal to harm or destroy a saguaro.

1) How tall can saguaro cactuses grow to be?
   A. 19 meters  
   B. 21 meters
   C. 70 meters
   D. 71 meters

2) Where do saguaros grow?
   A. the Sonoran Desert
   B. the Sahara Desert
   C. the Gobi Desert
   D. the Siberian Desert

3) In which two countries do saguaros grow?
   A. Mexico and Arizona
   B. Arizona and California
   C. California and Mexico
   D. Mexico and the USA
4) According to the passage, which of the following statements is NOT true?

A. It is legal to cut down a saguaro in Arizona.
B. Saguaro produce edible fruit.
C. Some cactuses are small enough to grow in flowerpots.
D. Saguaro can grow to be 70 feet tall.

5) As used paragraph 2, the word **magnificent** means

A. rare  
B. impressive  
C. endangered  
D. massive

6) Based on information in the passage, which of the following is true about Saguaro National Park?

A. It was established in 1894.
B. It is located in the Mexican state of Sonora.
C. It is illegal to visit Saguaro National Park.
D. It is located in the US state of Arizona.

7) Imagine you are in standing in the Saguaro National Park right now. What do you see? Use the passage to guide your story.

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Answers and Explanations

1) B
Core Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Paragraph 1 says: "The saguaro can grow to be over 70 feet (or 21 meters) tall." Therefore choice (B) is correct.

The passage does not provide any evidence to support choices (A), (C) or (D). Therefore they are incorrect.

2) A
Core Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Paragraph 2 says: "Saguaro only grow in the Sonoran Desert" Therefore choice (A) is correct.

The passage does not provide any evidence to support choices (B), (C) or (D). Therefore they are incorrect.

3) D
Core Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Paragraph 2 says: "Saguaro only grow in the Sonoran Desert, which is in northern Mexico and parts of the US." Therefore choice (D) is correct.

The passage does state that saguaros grow in Mexico, Arizona, and California. However, Arizona and California are states, not countries. The question asks in which countries saguaros grow. Therefore choices (A), (B) and (C) are incorrect.

4) A
Core Standard: Integration of Knowledge

Paragraph 4 says: "The saguaro produces flowers that later turn into fruit. Some people like to eat saguaro fruit, too." This means that the saguaro produces edible fruit. Choice (B) contains a true statement. However, we are looking for a statement that is NOT true. Therefore, choice (B) is incorrect.

Paragraph 1 says: "Some cactuses (or cacti) are so small that they can fit inside flowerpots." This means that choice (C) contains a true statement. However, we are looking for a statement that is NOT true. Therefore, choice (C) is incorrect.

Paragraph 1 says: "The saguaro can grow to be over 70 feet (or 21 meters) tall." This means that choice (D) contains a true statement. However, we are looking for a statement that is NOT true.
Therefore, choice (D) is incorrect.

The passage does not say that it is legal to cut down a saguaro in the state of Arizona. In fact, the opposite is true. Paragraph 4 says: "In Arizona, it is illegal to harm or destroy a saguaro." Therefore, choice (A) is correct.

5) B
Core Standard: Craft and Structure

**magnificent (adjective):** impressive; especially fine or grand

In paragraph 2, we read that "Saguaro National Park was created to help protect these magnificent cactuses." Throughout the rest of the passage, we read details about how special saguaros are. They are the largest cactuses in the world, they provide edible fruit, they give shelter to wildlife, and so on. These ideas are mentioned closely together, so we can infer that magnificent means special or impressive in some way. Therefore choice (B) is correct.

Although the passage does say that saguaros only grow in one specific desert, the passage does not say that saguaros are rare or endangered. Saguaro cactuses are not an endangered species, and in fact they are quite common in the Sonoran Desert. Therefore choices (A), and (C) are incorrect.

Although it is true that saguaros are massive, or extremely large, this is not exactly what magnificent means. Something can be magnificent or exceptional for reasons other than its size. The passage mentions special things about saguaros other than their size, such as their fruit and their relationship with other wildlife. Therefore choice (D) is incorrect.

6) D
Core Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Paragraph 3 says: "In 1994, the United States declared part of [the Sonoran] desert to be a national park. Saguaro National Park was created to help protect" saguaro cactuses. Earlier, the same paragraph says that the Sonoran desert is located partially in the state of Arizona. Therefore choice (D) is correct.

The passage does not provide any evidence to support choices (A), (B) or (C). Therefore they are incorrect.