Read the passage from the article “The Importance of Elsewhere.” Then answer questions 9 through 11.

from “The Importance of Elsewhere”

by Paul Theroux

1 As a child, yearning to leave home and go far away, the image of my mind was flight—my little self hurrying off alone. The word “travel” did not occur to me, nor did the word “transformation,” which was my unspoken but enduring wish. I wanted to find a new self in a distant place, and new things to care about. The importance of elsewhere was something I took on faith. Elsewhere was the place I wanted to be. Too young to go, I read about elsewhere, fantasizing about my freedom. Books were my road. And then, when I was old enough to go, the roads I traveled became the obsessive subject in my own books. Eventually I saw that the most passionate travelers have always also been passionate readers and writers. And that is how this book came about.

2 The wish to travel seems to me characteristically human: the desire to move, to satisfy your curiosity or ease your fears, to change the circumstances of your life, to be a stranger, to make a friend, to experience an exotic landscape, to risk the unknown, to bear witness to the consequences, tragic or comic, of people possessed by the narcissism of minor differences. Chekhov said, “If you’re afraid of loneliness, don’t marry.” I would say, if you’re afraid of loneliness, don’t travel. The literature of travel shows the effects of solitude, sometimes mournful, more often enriching, now and then unexpectedly spiritual.

3 All my traveling life I have been asked the maddening and oversimplifying question “what is your favorite travel book?” How to answer it? I have been on the road for almost fifty years and writing about my travels for more than forty years. One of the first books my father read to me at bedtime when I was small was Donn Fendler: Lost on a Mountain in Maine. This 1930s as-told-to account described how a twelve-year-old boy survived eight days on Mount Katahdin. Donn suffered, but he made it out of the Maine woods. The book taught me lessons in wilderness survival, including the basic one: “Always follow a river or a creek in the direction the water is flowing.” I have read many travel books since, and I have made journeys on every continent except Antarctica, which I have recounted in eight books and hundreds of
essays. I have felt renewed inspiration in the thought of little Donn making it safely down the high mountain.

4 The travel narrative is the oldest in the world, the story the wanderer tells to the folk gathered around the fire after his or her return from a journey. “This is what I saw”—news from the wider world; the odd, the strange, the shocking, tales of beasts or of other people. “They’re just like us!” or “They’re not like us at all!” The traveler’s tale is always in the nature of a report. And it is the origin of narrative fiction too, the traveler enlivening a dozing group with invented details, embroidering on experience. It’s how the first novel in English got written. Daniel Defoe based Robinson Crusoe on the actual experience of the castaway Alexander Selkirk, though he enlarged the story, turning Selkirk’s four and a half years on a remote Pacific Island into twenty-eight years on a Caribbean island, adding Friday, the cannibals, and tropical exotica.

5 The storyteller’s intention is always to hold the listener with a glittering eye and riveting tale. I think of the travel writer as idealized in the lines of the ghost of Hamlet’s father at the beginning of the play:

6 I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part
And each particular hair to stand on end.

7 But most are anecdotal, amusing, instructional, farcical, boastful, mock-heroic, occasionally hair-raising, warnings to the curious, or else they ring bells like mad and seem familiar. At their best, they are examples of what is most human in travel.

9. Part A

How does the author develop the idea that travel narratives are worthwhile?

- He describes a book that influenced him.
- He explains that he admires Shakespeare.
- He defines the role of a story teller.
- He provides personal and text examples.

Part B

Which detail from the passage best supports the response to Part A?

- "One of the first books my father read to me at bedtime when I was small was *Donn Fendler: Lost on a Mountain in Maine.*"
- "The traveler’s tale is always in the nature of a report.”
- "The book taught me lessons in wilderness survival . . . .”
- "I think of the travel writer as idealized in the lines of the ghost of Hamlet’s father . . . ."
10. Part A

How does the author of “The Importance of Elsewhere” use the Chekhov quotation in paragraph 2?

A. to demonstrate how travelers’ relationships suffer
B. to illustrate a point about the isolated nature of traveling
C. to express annoyance at others’ viewpoints about traveling
D. to reveal how the urge to travel is a typical human desire

Part B

Which two sentences from “The Importance of Elsewhere” support the answer to Part A?

A. “As a child, yearning to leave home and go far away, the image of my mind was flight—my little self hurrying off alone.”
B. “I wanted to find a new self in a distant place, and new things to care about.”
C. “The wish to travel seems to me characteristically human: the desire to move, to satisfy your curiosity or ease your fears, to change the circumstances of your life, to be a stranger, to make a friend, to experience an exotic landscape, to risk the unknown, to bear witness to the consequences, tragic or comic, of people possessed by the narcissism of minor differences.”
D. “The literature of travel shows the effects of solitude, sometimes mournful, more often enriching, now and then unexpectedly spiritual.”
E. “All my traveling life I have been asked the maddening and oversimplifying question ‘what is your favorite travel book?’”
F. “‘They’re just like us!’ or ‘They’re not like us at all!’”
11. Part A

Which is a central idea of "The Importance of Elsewhere"?

- the varied scope of human desires
- the importance of literacy
- escaping one’s family
- traveling as a means of self-discovery

Part B

Which two sentences from "The Importance of Elsewhere" support the answer to Part A?

- “The word ‘travel’ did not occur to me, nor did the word ‘transformation,’ which was my unspoken but enduring wish.” (paragraph 1)
- “And then, when I was old enough to go, the roads I traveled became the obsessive subject in my own books.” (paragraph 1)
- “I would say, if you’re afraid of loneliness, don’t travel.” (paragraph 2)
- “The literature of travel shows the effects of solitude, sometimes mournful, more often enriching, now and then unexpectedly spiritual.” (paragraph 2)
- “I have been on the road for almost fifty years and writing about my travels for more than forty years.” (paragraph 3)
- “The travel narrative is the oldest in the world, the story the wanderer tells to the folk gathered around the fire after his or her return from a journey.” (paragraph 4)