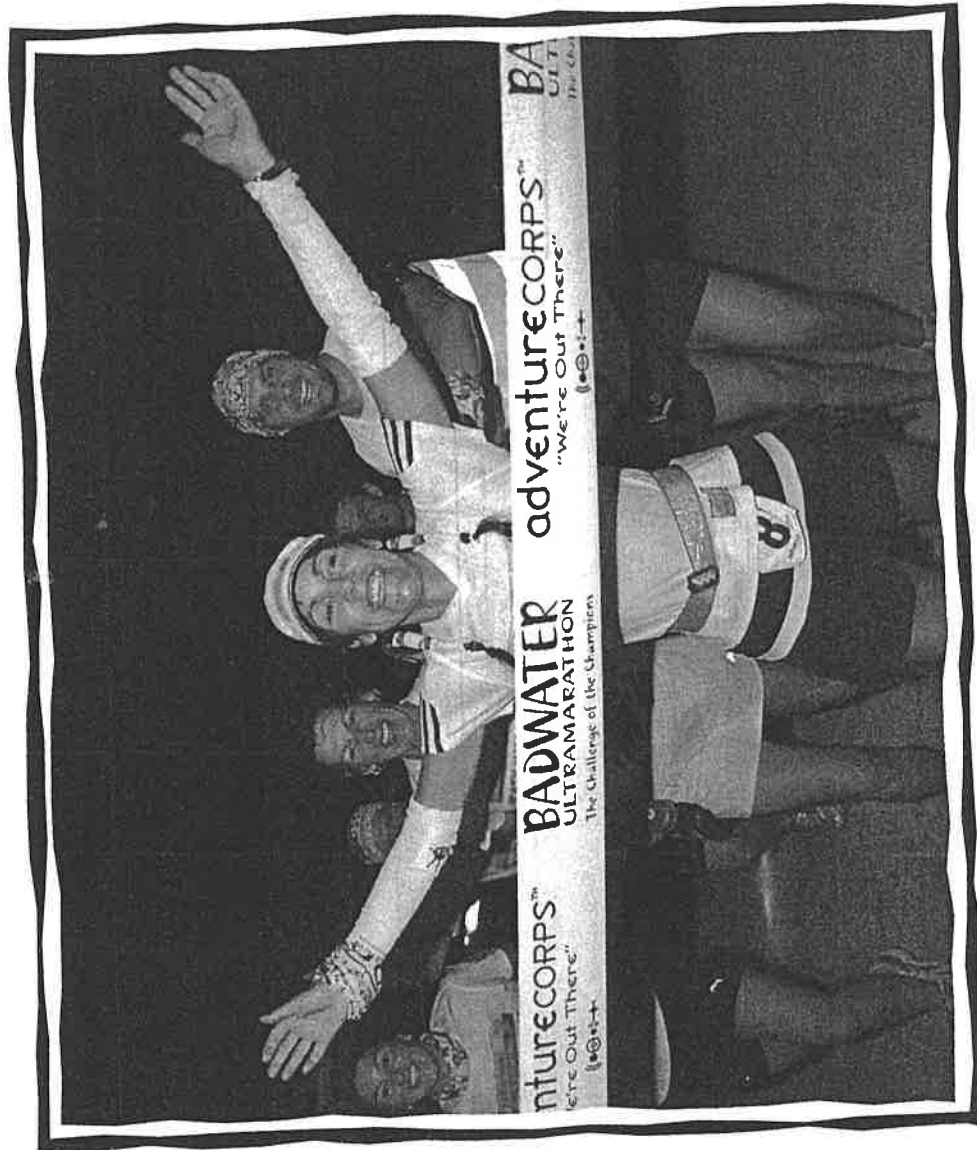


The Badwater Ultramarathon

There were moments, Lisa Tamati says, when she just wanted to lie down and die. Her body was exhausted, and her mind kept slipping into hallucinations. Alternating between nausea and fainting spells, she struggled just to keep her eyes open. She says. "There were times when I was sleepwalking, almost standing directly on a sleeping rattlesnake, vomiting, passing out, and collapsing on the road. . . ." Welcome to the Badwater Ultramarathon, the most brutal ultramarathon in the world. Given Tamati's description of her 2009 experience, it is no wonder some people refer to the race as "Satan's Fun Run."

² Standard marathons such as the famed Boston Marathon or the New York City Marathon are 26.2 miles long. That's hardly a warm-up for the rare breed of runners who participate in ultramarathons. Although the definition of an ultramarathon is any foot race longer than 26.2 miles, the three most typical distances are 50 miles, 100 kilometers (about 62 miles), and 100 miles. Anything longer is usually defined by the time period allotted for completion. In the Badwater Ultramarathon, for instance, you have



Lisa Tamati was the first over the finish line at the 2009 Badwater Ultramarathon.

60 hours to complete the course. And just how long is the Badwater race? This challenging competition is an astonishing 135 miles long. It starts 280 feet below sea level in Death Valley, California, the lowest point in the Western Hemisphere, and ends at 8,360 feet above sea level, halfway up California's Mount Whitney. The route takes runners up and down three mountain ranges as well as through the brutal heat of the Mojave Desert, where temperatures rise to 135°F.

3 City marathons such as those in Boston and New York attract tens of thousands of runners every year, though only a handful has a legitimate chance to win. Most of the runners are simply enthusiastic joggers out to test themselves. The Badwater Ultramarathon, however, does not admit amateurs. It is an invitational race, with only 80 to 90 runners allowed to run in any given year. To get accepted into the race, runners face stiff competition from an international talent pool. The organizers are extremely strict about who gets to run and who doesn't. For safety reasons if nothing else, they limit the field to only the most experienced extreme-distance runners.

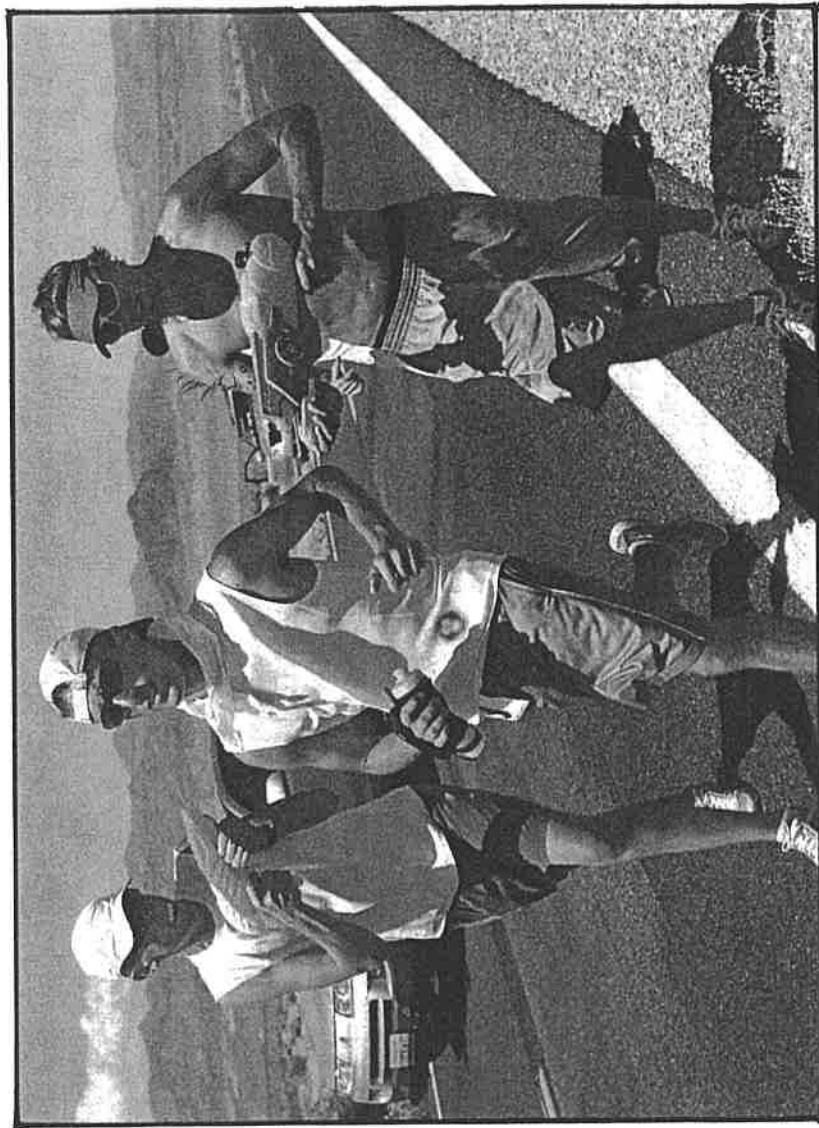
4 To apply for the Badwater race, you have to meet one of the following Minimum Qualifying Standards:

1. You must have officially finished the Badwater Ultramarathon before *and* you must have completed at least one extreme running event within the past 12 months.

2. You must have officially finished at least three running races of at least 100 continuous miles, at least one of them in the previous 12 months. Meeting these standards does not guarantee you will be accepted into the race; it merely allows you to apply. A committee then reviews your application and decides whether or not you make the cut. If you do

make it in, you have to pay close to \$1000 in fees for the privilege of experiencing what many call "hell on earth."

- 5 Despite the superhuman demands of the Badwater Marathon, it attracts adventure racers from around the world. In addition to bragging rights, racers who complete the course in fewer than 48 hours receive the coveted Badwater silver belt



Zach Gingerich's crew cools him off as he runs through Death Valley, California, on the way to winning the Badwater Ultramarathon 2010.

buckle. That's right—no six-figure check, no lucrative job offers—just a belt buckle. As race veteran Marshall Ulrich says, however, "To talk about the buckle is to miss the point." Ulrich has finished the race more than a dozen times. He was 28 years old when his doctor warned him to get off the couch and start exercising to lower his high blood pressure. Still running in his late 50s, Ulrich says that ultramarathoning has helped him find personal freedom and get in touch with his essential values. "There's something in you that wants to get out there in the middle of nowhere," he says. Ulrich adds, "We are built to run, to cover great distance, for survival's sake."

6 Like Marshall Ulrich, many participants in the Badwater Ultramarathon have private reasons for subjecting themselves to this brutal test of endurance. At least one runner, however, has used the race for a public cause. Martin Franklin, chief executive officer for a major corporation, used his 2010 run to raise money for the Wounded Warrior Project. This organization helps severely injured veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to get training and jobs they need when they return home. Franklin got businesses to contribute money for each mile he ran, and he himself donated \$135,000, or \$1,000 per mile. When asked why he was raising money, Martin said, "Because, in a small way, this grueling run symbolizes the challenges our military veterans face when coming home from active duty."

7 *Grueling* really is the operative word. The desert heat of the Badwater Ultramarathon is notorious for causing dehydration, which can easily lead to organ failure and brain damage. There is the danger of not getting the proper amount of salt, which can cause people's hands and feet to swell like a balloon. There is also the risk of heat stroke. In a race this long, runners must contend with lack of sleep as well as dozens of painful blisters on their feet. Blisters may sound like the least of a marathoner's worries, but if not treated immediately, a tiny blister can explode into a crippling wound. Badwater runners also have to watch their step, since running straight through the night makes it hard to see where they are going, and they could easily twist an ankle or—as Lisa Tamati discovered—step on a rattlesnake.

8 Because so few racers cover such a vast distance, each one must have a support crew. Crew members ride in vans alongside the runner to monitor the runner's health and provide whatever food and drink he or she needs. The support crew carries buckets of ice to cool the runner down. Crew members also carry an assortment of bandages and ointments. Some even carry a variety of different-sized running shoes, since the runners' feet tend to swell as the race drags on. Finally, support crews contain pacers, people who take turns running with the racers and offering them encouragement. "My fate was within the hands of my amazing crew who talked me through every step," says Tamati. "Without

them I would not have been able to push through the pain to complete the race." Tamati did finish, and since her time was 37 hours and 14 minutes, she walked away with her very own Badwater belt buckle.

9 Although the Badwater Ultramarathon is not for everyone, those who have conquered it say they will never forget the triumph of crossing the finish line. Badwater racer Dr. Lisa Bliss, who is also the head of the medical staff for the race, understands both its allure and its dangers. Dr. Bliss is candid when she says, "No one can say that running 135 miles in the desert is healthy." But, she adds, "I'm not going to say it isn't one of the most incredible experiences of your life." ★

If you have been timed while reading this article, enter your reading time below. Then turn to the Words-per-Minute Table on page 147 and look up your reading speed (words per minute). Enter your reading speed on the graph on page 148.

Reading Time: Lesson 15

Minutes : Seconds

A Finding the Main Idea

One statement below expresses the main idea of the article. One statement is too general, or too broad. The other statement explains only part of the article; it is too narrow. Label the statements using the following key:

M—Main Idea **B**—Too Broad **N**—Too Narrow

- _____ 1. The Badwater Ultramarathon is a difficult, invitation-only, 135 mile race that starts in Death Valley and ends halfway up Mount Whitney.
- _____ 2. The Badwater Ultramarathon is a race that takes place in southern California.
- _____ 3. The Badwater Ultramarathon is a race that awards a belt buckle to those contestants who finish in fewer than 48 hours.

_____ Score 15 points for a correct M answer.

_____ Score 5 points for each correct B or N answer.

_____ **Total Score:** Finding the Main Idea

B Recalling Facts

How well do you remember the facts in the article? Put an X in the box next to the answer that correctly completes each statement about the article.

- 1. The length of a standard marathon is
 - ☐ a. 50 miles.
 - ☐ b. 26.2 miles.
 - ☐ c. 100 kilometers.
- 2. The length of time that runners in the Badwater Ultramarathon are given to complete the course is
 - ☐ a. 48 hours.
 - ☐ b. 60 hours.
 - ☐ c. 2 days.
- 3. The lowest point in the Western Hemisphere is
 - ☐ a. 8,360 feet below sea level.
 - ☐ b. 135 feet below sea level.
 - ☐ c. 280 feet below sea level.
- 4. The Wounded Warrior Project is
 - ☐ a. a club of runners who have completed the Badwater Ultramarathon.
 - ☐ b. a club of runners who have attempted but could not complete the Badwater Ultramarathon.
 - ☐ c. an organization that helps injured veterans.
- 5. Not getting the proper amount of salt can cause
 - ☐ a. organ failure.
 - ☐ b. swollen hands and feet.
 - ☐ c. heat stroke.

Score 5 points for each correct answer.

_____ **Total Score:** Recalling Facts

C Making Inferences

When you combine your own experiences and information from a text to draw a conclusion that is not directly stated in that text, you are making an inference. Below are five statements that may or may not be inferences based on information in the article. Label the statements using the following key:

C—Correct Inference

F—Faulty Inference

1. The Badwater Ultramarathon is considered a long race, even compared to other ultramarathons.
2. The race's organizing committee receives thousands of applications.
3. Many of the runners in the Badwater Ultramarathon suffer an injury during the race.
4. Not all of the runners are able to complete the Badwater Ultramarathon.
5. Runners who participate in standard marathons never run in ultramarathons.

Score 5 points for each correct answer.

_____ Total Score: Making Inferences

D Using Words Precisely

Each numbered sentence below contains an underlined word or phrase from the article. Following the sentence are three definitions. One definition is closest to the meaning of the underlined word. One definition is opposite or nearly opposite. Label those two definitions using the following key. Do not label the remaining definition.

C—Closest

O—Opposite or Nearly Opposite

1. Only a handful of runners have a legitimate chance to win a major city marathon.
 - _____ a. unrealistic
 - _____ b. reasonable
 - _____ c. fantastic
2. Some racers receive the coveted Badwater silver belt buckle.
 - _____ a. not wanted
 - _____ b. valuable
 - _____ c. greatly desired
3. Those who finish the race receive no lucrative job offers.
 - _____ a. money-making
 - _____ b. unprofitable
 - _____ c. possible
4. Dr. Bliss understands both the allure and dangers of the race.
 - _____ a. appeal
 - _____ b. risks
 - _____ c. repulsion

5. The head of the medical staff is candid when she says, "No one can say that running in the desert is healthy."

- ___ a. discouraging
___ b. lying
___ c. telling it like it is

___ Score 3 points for each correct C answer.

___ Score 2 points for each correct O answer.

___ **Total Score: Using Words Precisely**

Enter the four total scores in the spaces below, and add them together to find your Reading Comprehension Score. Then record your score on the graph on page 149.

Score Question Type Lesson 15

___ Finding the Main Idea

___ Recalling Facts

___ Making Inferences

___ Using Words Precisely

___ **Reading Comprehension Score**

Author's Approach

Put an X in the box next to the correct answer.

- From the statements below, choose the one that you believe the author would agree with.
 - ☐ a. Good support crews contribute to the success of the runners in the Badwater Ultramarathon.
 - ☐ b. The Badwater Ultramarathon should be shortened for the safety of the runners.
 - ☐ c. The Minimum Qualifying Standards for the Badwater race are too strict.
- The author probably wrote this article in order to
 - ☐ a. compare standard marathons to the Badwater Ultramarathon.
 - ☐ b. persuade the reader to become a marathon runner.
 - ☐ c. describe the challenges of the Badwater Ultramarathon.
- What does the author imply by the statement "It is no wonder some people refer to the race as 'Satan's Fun Run'"?
 - ☐ a. Some people call the race a fun run so it will sound easier than it really is.
 - ☐ b. Some people think that only Satan would find the Badwater Ultramarathon fun.
 - ☐ c. There are people who call the race "Satan's Fun Run" because they disapprove of it.

4. Judging by statements from the article, you can conclude that the author wants the reader to think that
- ☐ a. no one should run in the Badwater Ultramarathon because the only award is a belt buckle.
- ☐ b. the health risks associated with ultramarathons make running in them too risky.
- ☐ c. the runners in the Badwater Ultramarathon are incredibly tough, motivated people.

____ Number of correct answers

Record your personal assessment of your work on the Critical Thinking Chart on page 150.

Summarizing and Paraphrasing

Put an X in the box next to the correct answer for questions 1 and 3. Follow the directions provided for question 2.

1. Read the statement about the article below. Then read the paraphrase of that statement. Choose the reason that best tells why the paraphrase does not say the same thing as the statement.

Statement: Despite the superhuman demands of the Badwater Ultramarathon, it attracts adventure racers from around the world.

Paraphrase: Even though the Badwater Ultramarathon is tough, it attracts runners.

- ☐ a. Paraphrase says too much.
- ☐ b. Paraphrase doesn't say enough.
- ☐ c. Paraphrase doesn't agree with the statement.

2. Look for the important ideas and events in paragraphs 7 and 8. Summarize those paragraphs in one or two sentences.
- _____
- _____
- _____

3. Choose the sentence that correctly restates the following sentence: "Tamati did finish, and since her time was 37 hours and 14 minutes, she walked away with her very own Badwater belt buckle."

- ☐ a. Although it took her more than 37 hours, Tamati, who had a Badwater belt buckle, walked to the finish of the race.
- ☐ b. Tamati, who walked for 37 hours and 14 minutes, finished the race with her own Badwater belt buckle.
- ☐ c. Because Tamati finished the race in 37 hours and 14 minutes, she was awarded a Badwater belt buckle.

____ Number of correct answers

Record your personal assessment of your work on the Critical Thinking Chart on page 150.

Critical Thinking

Put an X in the box next to the correct answer for questions 1, 2, 4, and 5. Follow the directions provided for question 3.

1. Which of the following statements from the article is an opinion rather than a fact?
- ☐ a. "The desert heat of the Badwater Ultramarathon is notorious for causing dehydration."
- ☐ b. "Major city marathons such as Boston and New York attract tens of thousands of runners every year."
- ☐ c. "We are built to run, to cover great distance, for survival's sake."

Personal Response

What was most surprising or interesting to you about this article?

Self-Assessment

Before reading this article, I already knew

2. From the information in paragraph 5, you can predict that

- ☐ a. people will apply to run in the Badwater Ultramarathon for the health benefits it offers.
- ☐ b. racers will continue to run for the sense of accomplishment rather than money.
- ☐ c. organizers will start awarding six-figure checks to the race's finishers.

3. Choose from the letters below to correctly complete the following statement. Write the letters on the lines.

In the article, _____ and _____ are different.

- a. standard marathons
- b. marathon runners
- c. ultramarathons

4. Of the following theme categories, which would this story fit into?

- ☐ a. Extreme Sports
- ☐ b. Nature
- ☐ c. The American Dream

5. From the information in paragraph 8, you can conclude that

- ☐ a. support crew members are former marathon runners.
- ☐ b. having a reliable support crew could mean the difference between finishing the race and giving up.
- ☐ c. support crew members have medical training.

_____ Number of correct answers

Record your personal assessment of your work on the Critical Thinking Chart on page 150.