Listening Comprehension

Vasa – the most expensive and highly decorated warship

In this radio programme you are going to hear some new words. Read and listen to them. Make sure you know what they mean.

warship : *vaixell de guerra / barco de guerra*
shipyard: drassanes / astilleros
mast: màstil / mastil
inquiries: investigacions / interrogatorios
preserved: *conservat / conservado*
mollusk*: molusc / molusco*
Ready?
Now read the questions on the next page. Read them carefully before listening to the radio programme.

Presenter: The warship *Vasa* was lost on her first voyage in 1628. Today this magnificent ship rests in the *Vasa* Museum in Stockholm, Sweden, as a testament to her past. Today in our programme "Round the World", I'm pleased to introduce Julia Donhauser, a keen traveller to the North and an expert on warships. Hi Julia and welcome to our programme.
[Now listen to the interview]

Julia: Hello. It's a pleasure to be here today.
Presenter: Julia, I started this interview telling our listeners that the most expensive ship in the world was lost on her first voyage. But before telling us something about this catastrophe, could you tell us something about the ship?
Julia: Well, maybe, first of all we have to go back to the seventeenth century in Sweden. In the early 17th century, Sweden was busy building an empire around the Baltic Sea in northern Europe. A strong navy was essential. During the 1620s Sweden was at war with Poland. In 1625 the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus ordered new warships and amongst them the Vasa. The King wanted to build the most impressive, the most expensive warship.
Presenter: The Vasa was built to be a warship, right, but ... err... Why such an impressive one?
Julia: The new ship filled everyone with admiration. People from Stockholm were proud of it. And the enemies were really afraid, frightened by the news that came from Sweden. There are a number of letters that prove so. The Danish Ambassador in Stockholm wrote a letter where he, impressed, spoke about the 64 cannons in the ship. So, as I said, the ship was needed to win wars but also to impress both the people in Sweden and the rest of the world.
Presenter: And ... how was the ship built?
Julia: The Vasa was built at the Stockholm shipyards by Henrik Hybertsson - an experienced Dutch shipbuilder. His experience was much needed as the Vasa was to be the most powerful warship in the world, armed with 64 guns. It took three years to build the ship. More than a thousand oak trees were used for its construction, including 50-meter tall masts and hundreds of golden statues. The ship was built in the centre of Stockholm, just beside the Royal palace, so everybody could see it.
Presenter: What an expensive toy! (*laughs*) So, how come it sank on her first voyage? It seems hard to believe…!

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Julia: Well ... yes, in 1628 the ship was ready. Sunday August 10 was the day of the Vasa's first voyage. The beaches around Stockholm were filled with spectators, among them foreign diplomats. The weather was nice and a weak wind was blowing.
Presenter (*interrumpting*): I can picture the scene…
Julia: Well, yes! The first voyage was to be an act of propaganda for the ambitious Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus. The Vasa set sail and fired a salute. But only after a few minutes of sailing the ship began to sink. Water started to enter through the open gunports. And, to everyone's horror and disbelief, the glorious and mighty warship suddenly sank! Of the 150 people on board, between 30 and 50 died in the disaster. When the Vasa was rescued, in 1961, archaeologists found the remains of 25 skeletons.
Presenter: I can imagine the faces of those people watching. And the king, was he there?
Julia: No, no. The king was away, he was not in Sweden at the time. He was fighting on one of his wars in Poland. It took two weeks for him to learn about what had happened. When he did, he wrote angrily that the disaster had happened because of "imprudence and negligence" and that those who were guilty had to be punished.
Presenter: So... he wanted someone guilty.
Julia. Yeah. So many efforts, so much money, apart from the lives of those that died! Well, just after the disaster the captain of the Vasa - Söfring Hansson - was arrested. The Government accused him of not doing his job. They said that the crew, the sailors, were drunk and that the cannons were not well built. Söfring Hansson and many others were questioned at the Royal Castle in Stockholm.
Presenter: What happened then?
Julia: They all said the same: that everything was OK in the ship and that no one was drunk since it was Sunday and they had gone to church. At the inquest people were troubled by the fact that the shipbuilder Henrik Hybertsson had died the year before the Vasa was completed. Instead, his brother and partner, was responsible for the completion of the ship. But in the end no one was condemned for causing the disaster. The people in charge of the inquiries concluded that the ship was well built - but badly proportioned.
Presenter: Right , but that's not the end of the Vasa, is it? Even if it was a total failure, now it's a treasure.
Julia: Yeah, yeah. On 13th September 1956, a brief piece of news was published in the Swedish newspaper *Expressen* about the discovery of an old ship in the port of Stockholm. The 38-year-old engineer, Anders Franzen, had found the Vasa. He had studied the Vasa. He also knew that the ... the Baltic Sea was unique in the sense that it does not have a special mollusc that destroys wood. That's why ships in the Baltic Sea can be preserved for longer.
Presenter: An interesting fact: a mollusc that destroys the wood in Oceans but not in the Baltic Sea.
Julia: Well, water isn't so salty there, that's why. Anyway, he "fished" a black piece of oak wood, something that he thought could belong to the Vasa. His friend Edvin Fälting dived and confirmed his suspicions. It took five years to bring it back on land.
Presenter: And then, the museum. Today the Vasa Museum is the most visited museum in Scandinavia, with over one million visitors a year.
Julia: Exactly, nowadays the Vasa is the only preserved seventeenth-century ship in the world, and a unique art treasure. For nearly half a century the ship was carefully restored to a state approaching its original glory. More than 95 percent of the ship is original, and it is decorated with hundreds of sculptures The three masts on the roof outside the museum show the height of the ship's original masts.
Presenter: This is an amazing story! It's been a very interesting discovery. Thank you, Julia, for being with us today.
Julia: My pleasure. Thank you.

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Clau de respostes

Choose the best answer according to the text. Only one answer is correct.

1. Why was the Vasa built?
- Because the Danish Ambassador wanted to.
- To carry 64 cannons to the war in Poland.
- **To impress both the people of Sweden and their enemies.**
- To prove that Swedish people could build the most expensive ship.

2. Which of these things does the Vasa NOT have?
- More than one hundred statues.
- Masts that are 50 meters tall.
- Wood taken from a thousand oak trees.
- **Two golden guns**.

3. What happened in 1628?
- The Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus saluted the people on the ship
- Between thirty and fifty people died while building the Vasa.
- The Vasa was rescued from the bottom of the sea.
- **The Vasa started her fist voyage**.

4. When and where did the King learn about the tragedy?
- Immediately. He was right there, on the beach.
- **Two weeks later in Poland**.
- Two weeks later in Stockholm.
- Immediately; he was in his palace in Sweden.

5. Who was first arrested for the disaster?
- The builder of the ship.
- **The Captain of the ship.**
- A group of sailors.
- The builder's brother.

6. Why did the Vasa sink, according to the inquiries?
- **The ship was badly proportioned**.
- The sailors were drunk.
- The cannons were not well built.
- The Captain did not do his job correctly.

7. Why was the Vasa so well preserved when it was taken on land?
- The ship was new when it sank so it was well protected against corrosion.
- **The Baltic Sea does not have a mollusc that destroys the wood of ships**.
- Black oak protected the ship. It does not deteriorate so quickly.
  No one knows.

8. How many people visit the Vasa nowadays?
- Ninety-five per cent of the people that visit Stockholm.
- Hundreds of people every year.
- **More than one million people every year.**
- Seventeen hundred people every week.

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