

READING



Read the passage below quickly. Match a heading (A-H) to each paragraph (1-7). There are more headings than you need.

Burning Man

- 1 ▼
- 2 ▼
- 3 ▼
- 4 ▼
- 5 ▼
- 6 ▼
- 7 ▼

- A. Birth of a tradition.
- B. Encouraging people to work together
- C. Different forms of creativity
- D. A temporary settlement
- E. The man behind Burning Man
- F. How to survive Burning Man
- G. A new symbol for a new age.
- H. What is Burning Man?

1. On the 21st June 1986 – the date of the summer solstice – Larry Harvey and Jerry James invited a few friends to Baker Beach in San Francisco to celebrate the longest day of the year. They marked the event by setting fire to a nine foot wooden model of a man and a dog. As they watched the flames consume the crudely made figures, none of them could have known how their small gathering would grow over the next two decades and develop into an annual seven day experience that has become known simply as Burning Man. In 2011, so many people wanted to be part of it that the number of participants had to be limited to 50,000.

2. Even the organisers of the Burning Man project find it difficult to describe the experience. 'Trying to explain what Burning Man is to someone who has never been to the event,' says their official website, 'is a bit like trying to explain what a particular colour looks like to someone who is blind.' Part celebration, part act of rebellion, part community theatre, the week long event – now held in the Black Rock Desert of Nevada – attracts tens of thousands of people. They still come to watch the ritual destruction of a wooden figure (now more than forty feet high), but most of all they come to take part in a series of spontaneous 'happenings' and to create a temporary community of like-minded people.

3. Larry Harvey, one of the founding members, is now executive director and has become the project's official spokesperson. Famous for his grey cowboy hat, which he wears in memory of his father, he has become a familiar figure in the media, featuring on television news reports and in newspaper and magazine articles that appear as regularly as the Burning Man festival itself. The success and the scale of the Burning Man owe a great deal to Larry Harvey's imagination and sense of vision.

4. Burning Man is often called a phenomenon of the 'Internet Generation' and, like social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, the festival encourages the notions of community participation and self-expression. The event is governed by ten principles which emphasise the key beliefs of self-reliance and communal responsibility. People are encouraged to take part in the events and - by working with and helping each other - to discover something about themselves.

5. Although the event takes place in a harsh desert environment, all participants – called 'burners' – are expected to be able to fend for themselves over the seven day period. The organisers do not provide meals or accommodation and there are no conventional shops to buy food at or hotels to sleep in. In fact, Burning Man has its own distinct economy based on the concept of gift-giving, and the use of money is forbidden.

6. Burners are encouraged to express themselves artistically through painting, music, dance, performance and other forms of creativity. Each year Larry Harvey announces a theme for the event to provide them with inspiration – in the year 2006, for example, it was 'Hope and Fear'. The theme influences almost everything about the event – from the clothes the people wear to the vehicles they travel around in. In keeping with the original idea many of the art exhibits and events revolve around fire, and specially constructed platforms are erected to ensure that all acts of burning are done safely.

7. For the duration of the event the burners make their home in a self-built community called Black Rock City, which regular attendees abbreviate to the letters BRC. The city is always arranged in a distinctive semi-circular pattern, but its street names differ from year to year in keeping with the changing theme. Just as it seems to appear miraculously in the desert, the city disappears with equal suddenness. Following the principle of 'Leave No Trace', the participants dismantle the temporary structures that they built for shelter and take them away together with all their litter as they depart, leaving the desert in the same condition that they found it. Once Burning Man is over for the year, it is as if it never took place at all.

Key: 1-A, 2-H, 3-E, 4-B, 5-F, 6-C, 7-D, Distractor-G