# Nevada's Bristlecone Pines Printable Reading Comprehension

Word Count: 287| Lexile 850

***The Ancient Bristlecone Pine***

The mountains of Nevada are home to one of the oldest living things on Earth—the bristlecone pine. These rugged trees grow high above the desert floor, where snow, wind, and rocky soil make survival difficult. At first glance, a bristlecone pine might look half-dead, with twisted branches and patches of bare wood. Yet inside those ancient trunks, life continues. Some of these trees began growing more than four thousand years ago, long before the pyramids of Egypt were built.

Bristlecone pines thrive where few other plants can. They live on dry mountain slopes between 9,000 and 11,000 feet in elevation. The thin air and cold temperatures slow their growth. Each year, a tree might add only a fraction of an inch to its trunk. The wood becomes extremely dense and resistant to insects and rot. Even after a branch dies, it can remain on the tree for hundreds of years without breaking apart.

Their needles, grouped in clusters of five, can stay green for forty years or more. The cones are small and covered with sharp bristles that give the tree its name. When strong winds sweep across the ridges, the pines bend but rarely break. Their roots cling to cracks in limestone, drawing just enough water to survive.

Scientists study bristlecone pines to learn about Earth's past. The tree rings record centuries of changing weather—years of drought, cold, or warmth. By reading those rings, researchers can understand how the climate has shifted over time. The bristlecone pine reminds us that life in the desert may be slow, but it is strong, patient, and enduring.

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1. **What makes bristlecone pines especially remarkable?**
   A. They grow faster than most trees.
   B. They are common in wet lowlands.
   C. They are among the oldest living things on Earth.
   D. They produce large, soft cones.

2. **Where do bristlecone pines typically live?**
   A. On sandy desert flats at sea level
   B. On dry mountain slopes between 9,000 and 11,000 feet
   C. In tropical rainforests
   D. In city parks and neighborhoods

3. **What mainly slows the growth of these trees?**
   A. Rich soil and heavy rainfall
   B. Thin air and cold temperatures at high elevations
   C. Frequent forest fires
   D. Lack of sunlight in thick forests

4. **What happens when strong winds sweep across the ridges?**
   A. The trees snap easily due to age.
   B. The pines bend but rarely break.
   C. The cones fall off and scatter.
   D. The needles drop within days.

5. **Which statement about scientists and bristlecone pines is supported by the passage?**
   A. Scientists study the trees mainly to find new medicines.
   B. Tree rings help researchers learn how climate has changed over time.
   C. Scientists harvest cones to grow the species in rainforests.
   D. Researchers avoid high elevations due to thin air.

6. **What gives the bristlecone pine its name?**
   A. Cones with sharp bristles
   B. Bark that peels into bristles
   C. Needles that fall off in bristles
   D. Roots that look like bristles

7. **Select ALL traits or features described in the passage.**
   ☐ Needles grouped in clusters of five
   ☐ Roots that cling to cracks in limestone
   ☐ Cones that are large and smooth
   ☐ Needles that can stay green for forty years or more

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# Answer Sheet

1. C
2. B
3. B
4. B
5. B
6. A
7. ✅ Needles grouped in clusters of five
   ✅ Roots that cling to cracks in limestone
   ✅ Needles that can stay green for forty years or more