

Read the selection below and answer questions that follow it.

THE LEGEND OF THE PANDA	
Long years ago, Dolma, a young shepherdess, lived with her sisters in the Wolong Valley, deep in the mountains of Sichuan province.	1
Each day, Dolma led her small flock of sheep up the steep slopes of the nearby mountain. The rat-a-tat of woodpeckers echoed as Dolma and her companions travelled past frosty waterfalls and over moss-covered rocky paths to the fragrant meadows.	2
While the sheep grazed, Dolma collected herbs to make medicines for the villagers. She also gathered mountain blossoms—red and gold poppies, gentians as blue as the mists that veiled the mountaintops, and purple violets that lifted their tiny faces to the sunlight.	3
On a morning when the air was sweet with spring, a young animal crept from the nearby evergreen forest. “Will you join our flock, little Beishung?” laughed Dolma.	4
By the trickling stream, the white panda cub nibbled tender shoots. His hunger satisfied, he frolicked among the sheep and lambs like a furry acrobat celebrating the end of the bitter winter. And each day thereafter, the white cub joined Dolma’s flock to feed and play.	5
As she had so often, one day Dolma left her flock to gather herbs. Among the dewy grasses, she filled her basket and returned to the meadow. Dolma smiled to see her peaceful flock.	6
Suddenly, a snow leopard pounced from a tree. With teeth bared, he attacked the white cub. “Beishung!” cried Dolma, as the sheep fearfully bleated.	7
The leopard’s sharp claws tore at the helpless little Beishung. Yet Dolma, without a thought for her own safety, grabbed a stout branch and rushed forward to beat the leopard mightily.	8
The wounded cub withdrew weakly into the flock. The angry leopard, eager to claim a life, turned upon Dolma. Moments later, the shepherdess lay lifeless upon the trampled grass, the basket’s blossoms and herbs strewn about her.	9
Great were the lamentations in the Wolong Valley when the people learned of Dolma’s death. Heavy was the grief of all the Beishung. They knew of Dolma’s kindness to the cub, and of the brave act that had saved him from the leopard’s claws.	10
On the appointed day, the sorrowful villagers gathered with Dolma’s heartbroken sisters to bury the shepherdess. Grey clouds hung heavily over the mountains as the white cub led the Beishung to join the funeral procession.	11
As the bamboo grasses rustled in damp winds, the mourners smeared themselves with ashes. The Beishung wiped their tear-filled eyes with sooty paws and hugged themselves as they wept. They covered their ears against the loud lamentations and, wherever the animals touched their snowy bodies with ash, the black soot stained forever the thick white fur.	12
Dolma’s sisters were convinced they could not live without her. As the sisters’ cries reached the snow-capped mountaintops, the earth beneath their feet spoke to them with fierce rumblings, as if it, too, were mourning. The villagers fell back in awe as the earth suddenly split wide and received the four loving sisters. Where the meadow once lay rose a mountain of four peaks that reached beyond the clouds.	13
And this is exactly why to this day, the giant panda, the “bamboo-eater,” wears the black marks of mourning in memory of the brave shepherdess, Dolma. His home and refuge is in the protective forests of Siguniang, the “Mountain of the Four Sisters.”	14

Author’s Note	
Giant panda fossils found in Asia reveal that the mammal appeared nearly two million years ago. Pandas belong to their own subfamily within the bear family. In China, the panda is called daxiong mao meaning “large bear cat.”	15
The panda has the digestive system of a carnivore, or meat-eater; however, through the centuries, it has adapted to a vegetarian diet and feeds mainly on the leaves and stems of bamboo. In fact, the panda spends most of its waking hours eating up to twenty kilograms of bamboo each day. Its flexible forepaws allow the panda to hold onto its food. Strong flattened molars and powerful jaw muscles enable the panda to crush tough bamboo stalks, and a thick lining protects the panda’s esophagus from bamboo splinters.	16
The giant panda has thick, coarse fur that protects it from the cool, damp climate of the Chinese forests. Some scientists believe that the panda’s black markings provide camouflage in the shadows of the forests; others think the colouring warns other animals to keep away from the panda’s territory.	17
The panda leads a solitary life of eating and sleeping, except in the spring when mating may occur. One or two tiny cubs, covered in fine white fur, are born in August or September. After one month, they develop their black panda markings. The young live with their mother until they’re about eighteen months old. Then the pandas are on their own as the mother leaves to breed once again.	18
Scientists estimate that fewer than one thousand pandas remain living in the wild in China today. As people develop more land, the bamboo groves are destroyed and the panda has less to eat, and a smaller area to inhabit. Climate changes and the natural life cycle of the bamboo in some areas have left the panda with little to eat. Despite strict laws, hunters continue to trap and kill the panda as its pelt becomes increasingly valuable.	19
Efforts to save the endangered panda—the international symbol for the World Wildlife Fund—have been well-documented. The WWF is an agency that has been working on panda conservation in China since 1980. A captive breeding program at Wolong, China’s largest panda reserve, has been successful in recent years: thirty-six cubs have been born since 1987, and twenty-one have survived past six months.	20
There are plans to create new reserves in China, and to establish links between isolated panda populations. Special programs continue to alert the world of the decreasing number of pandas, and recent technology provides more options in the fight to save the endangered panda.	21
—LINDA GRANFIELD	

20. In the first three paragraphs of the story, the detail that **most effectively** shows that Dolma is a caring person is that she

- A. makes medicine for the villagers.
- B. lives in a very beautiful valley.
- C. tends a small flock of sheep.
- D. collects beautiful flowers.

21. The sentence "The rat-a-tat of woodpeckers echoed as Dolma and her companions travelled past frosty waterfalls and over moss-covered rocky paths to fragrant meadows" (paragraph 2) appeals mostly to the reader's

- A. senses.
- B. thoughts.
- C. emotions.
- D. experiences.

22. The word "frolicked," as used in paragraph 5, refers to

- A. humorous and joking teasing.
- B. leisurely rest and relaxation.
- C. quiet and thankful prayer.
- D. lively and carefree play.

23. Dolma's attempt to save Beishung can best be described as

- A. reckless and unwise.
- B. noble and courageous.
- C. loyal and sympathetic.
- D. responsible and caring.

24. The word "lamentations," as used in paragraph 10, refers to

- A. expressions of grief.
- B. displays of anger.
- C. plans for revenge.
- D. feelings of fear.

25. Which of the following phrases introduces the atmosphere of sorrow at Dolma's funeral?

- A. "Grey clouds hung heavily over the mountains" (paragraph 11)
- B. "the bamboo grasses rustled in damp winds" (paragraph 12)
- C. "The Beishung wiped their tear-filled eyes with sooty paws" (paragraph 12)
- D. "the sisters' cries reached the snow capped mountaintops" (paragraph 13)

Written Answers

26. Explain why "fewer than one thousand pandas remain living in the wild in China today" (paragraph 19).

Rough Notes

Use the space below for rough notes. Nothing you write in this space will be scored.