

Read the text and answer the questions that follow.

“HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT ... ?”

- I My cousin’s boyfriend knows a guy at work who swears he saw an alligator climb out of the underground water system in New York City. And my doctor’s receptionist says her neighbour has got proof that nobody ever landed on the moon. These are two examples of classic urban myths.
- II Experts define an urban myth or legend as a modern story, often containing humorous or horrific elements, that has little or no truth to it but spreads from one person to another. According to folklore expert Jan Harold Brunvand, these myths include three elements. First, they must be believable, often happening to an “unnamed friend of a friend”; second, they are a good story, and third, they generally convey a moral message or a warning.
- III Urban myths are not new. When film director Orson Welles broadcast *The War of the Worlds* in 1938 on US radio, many listeners fled, fearing an alien invasion. However, some folklore experts believe that these stories originated even earlier, and began in traditional fairytales. That’s why the word “urban” has been added to today’s myths and legends even if they don’t necessarily take place in a city. The name simply distinguishes them from folklore of pre-industrial times.
- IV Because most of these stories could theoretically happen, they may reflect the fears of a particular culture. However, some myths can be adapted from one society to another over time. The fictional “Aids Mary”, who is said to inject victims with infected blood, might be a modern version of Typhoid Mary, who actually spread typhoid fever early in the 20th century.
- V With technological communication, it seems odd that these myths still exist. It’s so easy today to check information with the click of a button. But ironically the Internet itself, especially e-mail and social media, often spreads them. Perhaps you too have been quick to believe something you read online and passed the information on to others?

1 Choose the correct answer.

- 1 Jan Harold Brunvand
 - a is known to spread urban myths
 - b studies urban myths
 - c believes urban myths are dangerous
- 2 Urban myths
 - a always take place in the city
 - b are often funny
 - c are spread only online
- 3 What does the writer think is ironic?
 - a There are still urban myths today.
 - b It’s easy to check if an urban myth is true.
 - c The Internet generates urban myths.

2 Decide if the following sentences are true (T) or false (F). Find evidence in the text to support your answers.

- 1 *The War of the Worlds* was believed to be true by many.
.....
- 2 Typhoid Mary was not a real person.
.....

3 Rewrite the sentences without changing the original meaning.

- 1 Many listeners fled, fearing an alien invasion.
Many listeners fled because
- 2 Her neighbour has got proof that the moon landings never happened.
Her neighbour can

4 Answer the question.

What is the urban myth "Aids Mary" an example of?

.....

5 Find words or expressions in the text that mean:

1 insists (paragraph I)

2 communicate (paragraph II)

3 ran away (paragraph III)

4 strange (paragraph V)