Literacy Rates & Standard of Living: Southern & Eastern Asia

For a country to offer high-paying and high-quality jobs, the labor force in that country needs to be literate. To be literate, a person must have the ability to read and write. A country’s literacy rate is the amount of people within that country who can read and write. It is difficult to get good jobs or training and education for those who are not able to read and write. The literacy rate impacts the standard of living in a country. The standard of living is the level of wealth and material comfort that is available to the people.

The literacy rates across the countries in Southern and Eastern Asia vary from region to region. Low literacy rates typically mean a low standard of living. However, high literacy rates do not always mean a high standard of living. China, Japan, and South Korea all have rather high literacy rates. These nations have a relatively high standard of living for many of their populations. North Korea has a reported high literacy rate but a poor standard of living. This is, in part, due to the communist government suppressing and mismanaging the economy of the country. India has a relatively low literacy rate compared to the other countries in this part of Asia. In fact, it is below the global literacy rate.

In theory, high literacy rates can increase the standard of living by providing an educated and capable workforce. This educated and capable workforce can provide high quality goods and services to the rest of the nation. These high-quality goods and services that are available can increase the standard of living. Overall, China, Japan, and South Korea are good examples of this theory. However, government control can impact the standard of living regardless of the nation’s literacy rate.
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Directions: Match the vocabulary term to its definition.

1. ______ poor
2. ______ the ability to read and write
3. ______ the percentage of people who are over 15 years old who can read and write
4. ______ a measure of the material aspects of an economy (includes the level of wealth and material comfort available to people)

a. literacy
b. literacy rate
c. standard of living
d. impoverished

Directions: Follow the prompts below.

ILLUSTRATION
Illustrate the concept that literacy rates affect the standard of living.

VOCABULARY
List 2 vocabulary words that should be included in a summary of literacy rates & standards of living, then define them.

SUMMARY
Write a summary explaining how literacy rates typically affect the standards of living.
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Directions: Circle the best answer choice based on the passage.

1. Which is the best description of literacy rate?
   a. The ability to tell stories
   b. The ability to draw
   c. The ability to speak multiple languages
   d. The ability to read and write

2. What must happen before high quality and high paying jobs can exist?
   a. The population must be illiterate
   b. The population must be literate
   c. The country must have little resources
   d. Other countries must train the citizens

3. What typically happens to the standard of living in a country with low literacy rates?
   a. The economy is booming
   b. The jobs are plentiful
   c. People are wealth
   d. There is a low standard of living

4. Which is the best description of the literacy rate in North Korea?
   a. low, but high employment
   b. high, but low standard of living
   c. low, and low standard of living
   d. high with high standard of living

5. Write a sentence that will support the following sentence.
   Literacy can drastically affect the standard of living in a country.
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________

6. Does North Korea’s literacy rate match its standard of living? Why or why not? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
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