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| 1. Mark your confusion by highlighting or underlining anything you don’t understand. 2. Show evidence of a close reading (questions, connections, predictions, reactions, summarizing, clarifying, challenging, etc.). 3. Write a 1-page response. Possible Writer’s Notebook questions:  * How concerned should Americans be about the Ebola outbreak in Africa? Explain. * What had you heard previously about the Ebola virus? * What do you think is most important for people to understand about this virus? * Select any passage and respond to it. |

**What is Ebola and how do people catch it?**

Excerpted from Howard Bennett, *Washington Post*, September 23, 2014

Over the past month, you may have heard people talking about the Ebola virus. You may have also seen something about it on television, in the newspaper or on the Internet. The reason for this is because an outbreak of Ebola started in West Africa in March.

**What is Ebola?**

The Ebola virus was discovered in two African countries (Sudan and Congo, then known as Zaire) in 1976. The affected region in Congo was near the Ebola River, which is how the virus got its name. Scientists believe the virus spread to humans who had contact with the blood or bodily fluids of infected animals, including bats, monkeys, chimpanzees, gorillas, forest antelope and porcupines. There have been a number of Ebola outbreaks since 1976, but the current one is the largest. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia, says the current outbreak could reach 1.4 million cases by early next year.

Symptoms include a sudden onset of fever, muscle aches, weakness, sore throat and headache. These symptoms are followed by vomiting, diarrhea and a rash. As the infection progresses, many people develop bleeding in the internal organs and outside openings of their body.

**How do people catch Ebola?**

Ebola spreads from person to person, but it is not as contagious as the flu or cold viruses. Influenza and colds are spread through airborne contact. This means the virus can travel from one person to another through the air. It usually occurs from a sneeze. Ebola can be spread among humans only through direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids (saliva, mucus, etc.) of an infected person. This can occur by touching the infected person or by touching objects (such as needles) the person has been in contact with.

**What is being done to stop the spread of Ebola?**

To stop the spread of the disease, the World Health Organization and the CDC have been working with the governments of the affected countries to treat sick patients and contain the virus. Patients with Ebola are isolated from other people. Doctors and other aid workers wear protective clothing to keep them from coming in contact with the bodily fluids of infected people. In some countries, schools have been closed and air travel has been stopped to prevent anyone who might be in the early stages of the disease from spreading it to other countries.

**Why are people so scared of the disease?**

Ebola is scary for two reasons. First, as with most viruses, there are no medicines that can kill it. Infected people are treated with fever control, intravenous fluids to prevent dehydration and other measures. Second, the way Ebola attacks the body makes it much harder for the immune system to kill the virus. Many people who get Ebola die from it.

**Key Things You Need to Know about Ebola Today**

by Marisol Bello, *USA Today*, October 10, 2014

1. **No joking about Ebola on airplanes.** A man who sneezed and then allegedly joked about having Ebola on a flight from Philadelphia to the Dominican Republic prompted a full-scale alert when a hazmat team in protective suits and breathing apparatuses moved through the plane to inspect it. The man reportedly told seat mates after he sneezed, "I have Ebola. You are all screwed." A hazmat team greeted US Airways Flight 845 from Philadelphia when it landed in Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic. The 54-year-old jokester was taken into custody and will be sent back to the U.S. for further testing.

2. **Federal hearing will be held Friday in Dallas to examine government coordination.** U.S. Rep. Michael McCaul, a Texas Republican who chairs the Committee on Homeland Security, will hold a hearing at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport to examine the federal, state and local response to the Ebola case in Dallas. Thomas Eric Duncan initially sought treatment Sept. 25, five days after arriving in Dallas from Liberia, and was sent home with antibiotics. He returned to the hospital three days later and was diagnosed with the disease. He died Wednesday. The case has raised questions about screening and treatment procedures.

3. **Ebola patient's temperature spiked during initial ER visit.** During Duncan's initial visit to an emergency room, the Associated Press reports, his temperature spiked to 103 degrees Fahrenheit—a fever that was flagged with an exclamation point in the hospital's record-keeping system. Despite telling a nurse that he had recently been in Africa and displaying other symptoms that could indicate Ebola, Duncan underwent a battery of tests and was eventually sent home.

4. **Screenings to begin Saturday for passengers flying from West Africa to five major U.S. airports.** Travelers from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea arriving at five U.S. airports will have their temperature taken and face questions about their health in an effort to prevent the spread of Ebola, federal officials say. The stricter screening begins Saturday at New York's JFK and will be phased in next week at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson, Chicago O'Hare, Newark Liberty and Washington Dulles.

5. **No second Ebola case in Dallas.** A Dallas County sheriff's deputy who became sick after visiting the apartment of Ebola patient Thomas Eric Duncan does not have Ebola. Michael West Monnig went to an urgent care facility Wednesday with stomach pains. When he told the medical staff that he had been in Duncan's apartment, the facility was shut down and he was taken to Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital, the same hospital where Duncan died that morning. Tests found Monnig had an upper respiratory infection and was released Thursday from the hospital.

6. **More American troops on the ground to help fight the Ebola virus.** Six U.S. military planes arrived in Liberia Thursday with more Marines to help fight the virus. The 100 additional Marines bring to just over 300 the number of American troops in the country, said Maj. Gen. Darryl A. Williams, the commander leading the U.S. response, told the Associated Press. The U.S. military is working to build medical centers in Liberia and may send up to 4,000 soldiers to help with the Ebola crisis.

7. **More than 4,000 people are dead from Ebola**. The Ebola outbreak has resulted in 4,033 deaths, the World Health Organization reported Friday — all but nine of them in the three worst-affected countries, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. The agency says 8,399 confirmed, probable and suspected cases of Ebola had been reported from seven countries as of Wednesday.