I. Vocabulary: Read the following article and choose the correct words for the blanks. (20%)

-- The Time Magazine, April 20, 2009  L'Aquila (p.7)

In the early hours of April 6, Italy's worst earthquake in nearly three decades
_1_ in the nation's central region of Abruzzo, killing more than 200 people, leaving _2_ homeless and destroying everything from schools to medieval churches. Days later, rescue workers were still searching through flattened apartment blocks and rubble-packed ruins in the slim hope that there were survivors _3_.

Italy is no stranger to earthquakes. A 1980 quake in the country's south killed more than 2,500. Now, in the _4_ of the latest deadly temblor, come a series of familiar questions: Had all the buildings that _5_ been built up to standards? Will the money that has been promised for relief and rebuilding _6_ the right hands?

It turned out that an Italian _7_ had warned a few weeks ago that an earthquake was likely to happen to the region, but officials had poured _8_ on his work and accused him of spreading false information. Many scientists still believe that it is impossible to _9_ earthquakes, and many people believe that it is impossible to adequately guard _10_ them.

1. (A. struck  B. striking  C. struck)
2. (A. ten and thousand  B. tens of thousands  C. ten thousandth)
3. (A. being found  B. to be found  C. founded)
4. (A. aftermath  B. aftereffect  C. aftershock)
5. (A. crashed  B. clashed  C. collapsed)
6. (A. make up for  B. add up to  C. end up in)
7. (A. seismologist  B. ecologist  C. pharmacist)
8. (A. cold water  B. cold shoulder  C. cold wave)
9. (A. project  B. preview  C. predict)
10. (A. towards  B. against  C. over)

II. Read the following article and answer questions 11-15. (10%) -- Time, Jan. 12, 2009 (p. 38)

The usual way to test the economic pulse in a downturn is to go for a stroll down Main Street. Perhaps we should take to the high seas instead. There may be no better measure of the reach, depth and potential duration of the global economic slowdown than the fast-sinking fortunes of the shipping industry.

From the historic docks of Rotterdam to China's booming trading hub of Ningbo, troubling symptoms abound. The Baltic Dry Index, which tracks the cost of shipping raw materials, has plummeted from an all-time high of 11,793 last May to below 800, a 22-year low. The daily rental rate for the largest bulk carriers plunged from $234,000 last summer to less than $3,000 in early December, a staggering 99% reduction. "The violence of the drop is more extreme than anything we've ever seen before," says Jeremy Penn, chief executive of the London-based Baltic Exchange.

A global demand for Chinese toys, German cars and Japanese electronics has dived, container trade has been hit hard as well, with some 200 vessels now lying idle. Container traffic between Asia and Europe is shrinking for the first time on record, according to some estimates. Shipping a container from Hong Kong to Rotterdam now costs just a few hundred dollars, down from more than $2,500 in late 2007. Shipping companies have been hit by a double whammy: falling global demand and, even more importantly, paralysis in the financial markets.
What would you sacrifice for an education?

A South African village is demanding that a bridge be built across a crocodile-infested river to stop children swimming it to get to school.

Students as young as seven have been making the crossing for two months since the community’s boat was stolen.

This brings into focus just how far some people are willing to go for an education.

For some other individuals and families, the sacrifice that is made is financial.

A recent study says many extremely poor parents in Lagos made great financial sacrifices to send their children to private rather than public schools.

16. What sacrifices did those young South African students make to get education?  (A. youth
     B. life  C. hobby  D. finance.)

17. A crocodile-infested river is (A. dangerous.  B. polluted.  C. contaminated.)

18. "...just how far some people are willing to go for an education" means:
     (A. Some schools are too far.  B. Some people are ready to sacrifice much.  C. Some individuals prefer to study abroad.)

19. Siblings are: (A. One’s brothers and sisters.  B. One’s offspring.  C. One who shields you from trouble.)

20. The lion’s share is: (A. the most important part of something.  B. the largest part of something.  C. the least significant part of something.)

IV. Please add your comment to this Have Your Say:  (60%)

What would you sacrifice for an education?  What sacrifices did you make to get your own education?  Do you find that the quality and standard of education in your country today is worth making great sacrifices for?