The Inuit: Culture and Traditions

Culture and Traditions
Inventions such as parkas and kayaks are part of the rich culture of the Inuit. Many of their traditions, including Inuit language, beliefs, and customs, have developed over thousands of years.

Religion and Ceremonies
Traditionally, the Inuit believed that humans, animals, and forces of nature had spirits. When something went wrong, the Inuit believed that the spirits were unhappy, and so they asked a shaman to make the spirits happy again. Though many Inuit today are Christians, some Inuit still practice Shamanism. The Inuit continue to mark important events with ceremonies.

A Living Culture
Several communities of artists live in Nunavut. Many artists carve sculptures from stone, ivory, and animal bone. Others paint, make pottery, take photographs, or make prints. Inuit artists have formed artists’ cooperatives so they can work together to run businesses that sell their art.

Storytelling
The Inuit have a long tradition of oral literature. Before the Inuit had a writing system, they passed stories from one generation to the next by telling them aloud. Storytelling has kept ancient Inuit legends and history alive. More recently, the Inuit have written their stories in Inuktitut and in other languages so more people can read and learn about Inuit culture.

Before You Read
Find and underline a form of each vocabulary term.

parka noun, a warm, hooded coat
kayak noun, a boat with a small opening for a person
cooperative noun, a group of people who share the work of running a business
oral literature noun, the stories, legends, and history passed from generation to generation in spoken form

After You Read
What did the Inuit ask their shamans to do? Circle the sentence that tells the answer.

Why is storytelling important in Inuit culture? Highlight the sentence that gives the answer.