

The World's First Modern Shopping Mall

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The country in the world with perhaps the most malls, and also some of the biggest malls, is America. That's unsurprising given the state of Minnesota was the site of the first modern mall. The granddaddy of malls is Southdale Center in Edina, Minnesota. This mall is the first unique American enclosed-retail-shopping experience.

Before this mall opened in 1956, Southdale Center was actually going to be a new version of a traditional European arcade. An arcade is a semi-covered walkway with shops on both sides. They have these arcades in Italy and all over Germany. The mall in Minnesota was going to be surrounded by apartments, schools and facilities like medical and emergency services, too. But then the plans changed completely.

The developer of the building, Dayton Company, and designer and architect, Victor Gruen, saw a much bigger opportunity. Malls, up to that point in time were not inside a building. Southdale, as Gruen designed it, was going to be different; it was going to be inside a big building. It was going to be on more than one level, and have a town square in the middle under a skylight. The mall also ended up including fishponds, trees, a cage with birds, and balconies with hanging plants. All the windows were going to face inward.

This mall was the first fully enclosed climate-controlled retail space with multiple shops. The developing team wanted to create something new and exciting, so they created a place with all the services they could possibly need all in one place. From grocery stores, to a postal office, to various department stores—they were all put under one roof. But even more exciting was that they had included a small zoo! The mall was ready to really excite the American public.

On opening day of the mall, 40,000 people came to see it and shop. People came from cities close by, but also from far away, to see this mega mall they had never experienced before.

Although the building was enclosed, there was some daylight coming through glass panels that were built into the roof. On top of that, there was electric lighting fitted throughout the mall. This was so the afternoon would feel much longer for people in the mall. This was supposed to encourage these shoppers to stay for longer and buy more things.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Where was the first modern shopping mall built?

- A Italy
- B New York
- C Germany
- D Minnesota

2. What does the author mainly describe in the passage?

- A the design philosophy of Victor Gruen
- B the creation of Southdale Center
- C famous arcades in Italy and Germany
- D the opening day of Southdale Center

3. The development team of Southdale Center wanted to encourage customers to stay and shop for longer. What feature did the developers implement to achieve this goal?

- A windows in the ceiling and electric lights to make the day seem longer
- B climate control to make sure customers were comfortable
- C a zoo to keep customers entertained
- D trees and plants to relax customers

4. What was the “bigger opportunity” that Victor Gruen saw in Southdale Center?

- A to attract customers by developing the biggest shopping center
- B to attract customers by developing a shopping center surrounded by apartments
- C to attract customers by developing a shopping center built in the traditional European style
- D to attract customers by developing a new and exciting shopping experience

5. What is the passage mainly about?

- A the architect Victor Gruen
- B the history of European arcades
- C the first modern shopping mall
- D why the USA has the most malls in the world

6. "The **granddaddy of malls** is Southdale Center in Edina. This mall is the first unique American enclosed-retail-shopping experience."

What tone does the author set by using the phrase "**granddaddy of malls**"?

- A casual
- B scientific
- C mocking
- D formal

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Southdale Center has many different shops and services, _____ department stores, a post office, and a zoo.

- A in particular
- B including
- C currently
- D in summary

8. What is a European "arcade" as defined by the passage?

9. How was Victor Gruen's design for a retail space different from previous retail models? Give two examples from the text.

10. How did the design of the Southdale Center change the shopping experience for shoppers? Use information from the text to support your answer.

Teacher Guide & Answers**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 910

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8. What is a European "arcade" as defined by the passage?

Suggested answer: An arcade is a semi-covered walkway with shops on both sides.

9. How was Victor Gruen's design for a retail space different from previous retail models? Give two examples from the text.

Suggested answer: Answers may vary but should include it was inside a big building, it had more than one level, and it had a town square in the middle under a skylight.

10. How did the design of the Southdale Center change the shopping experience for shoppers? Use information from the text to support your answer.

Suggested answer: Answers may vary and should be supported by the text. For example, students may explain it provided shoppers an opportunity to shop at a number of stores that were located in one place, since all the stores are inside one big building. Students may also explain that shopping became more comfortable due to the climate-controlled retail space. Shoppers were also more inclined to shop for longer due to the glass panels and electric lighting meant to make the afternoon feel longer.