

## Reading Passages: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade March

### A Rabbit Named Sticks

1. Lop-Eared Rabbit Village was on the north edge of a forest. The rabbits who lived there were called lop-eared because their ears drooped down around their faces. They were all very proud of their long, floppy ears. One young rabbit in Lop-Eared Rabbit Village was not so happy. His ears were different. They stood straight up. Everyone teased him and called him Sticks.
2. "Be proud. Your grandfather had ears just like yours," his mother often said to him.
3. But Sticks didn't like looking different. He wanted his ears to be long and floppy like everyone else's.



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### The Marfa Lights

*Roberto wrote the following journal entry about his visit to Marfa, Texas.*

August 28, 2001

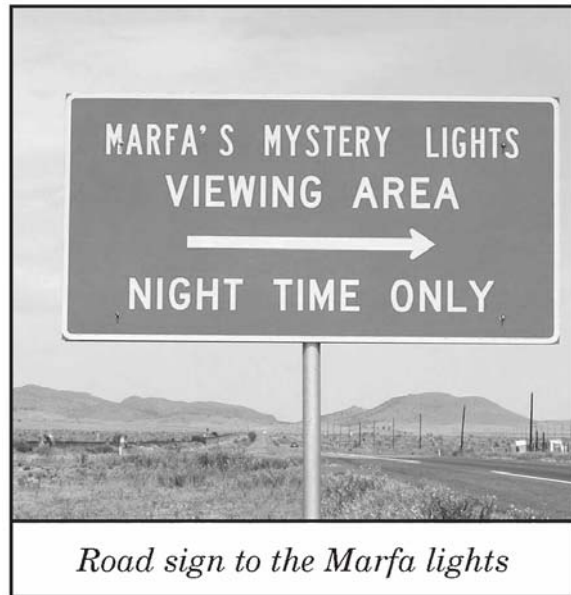
1. Mom, Dad, and I left Kerrville about 7:00 A.M. We were going to spend a few days at Big Bend National Park. Since it is such a long drive, we decided to spend the night in Marfa. After making two stops, we finally reached the town around 3:00 P.M.
2. We headed for the Thunderbird Motel to check in. The man there was very friendly. His name was Tom. He told us that we had come at a good time. The Marfa Lights Festival would be the next day. The festival is held each year near the end of summer. Tom said there would be concerts, a parade, lots of food, and games. I was glad we had stopped here. Dad said that even though we had planned to leave early the next day, we could stay for a little while.
3. We found our motel room and carried our bags inside. Dad wanted to relax before we walked around. While he and Mom rested, I read my book, *Interesting Places to Visit in Texas*.
4. I looked up *Marfa* to see what I could find out about the Marfa lights. I read that the Marfa lights are small lights that appear far off in the distance. Although they are usually white, sometimes the lights appear to be different colors. They seem to float around in the darkness and then disappear. People have seen these lights at night since 1883. There are many guesses about them. Some people say they are spaceships. Others think they are swamp gas. Still others believe they must be car headlights. No one really knows.
5. That evening we still had some time before sunset, so we went for a walk. I took a picture of downtown Marfa with the disposable camera Mom had bought me. It's the kind you throw away after the pictures are made. We stopped in a few stores as we walked around town. Most of the stores were selling T-shirts and postcards with pictures of the Marfa lights on them. Outside, some people were hanging blinking lights around a stage. Other people were setting up booths in the streets. Workers were shouting to one another and working around the tourists to hang signs. Everyone looked excited and in a hurry. It made me feel the same way. I was ready to see those Marfa lights!



*The town of Marfa, Texas*

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6. After an early dinner we drove to an area about nine miles east of town where the lights can be seen on most nights. A historical marker near there tells of a rancher who saw the lights in 1883. Dad stopped the car to let me take a picture of the sign. The sun was about to set, so we quickly found a place to park.



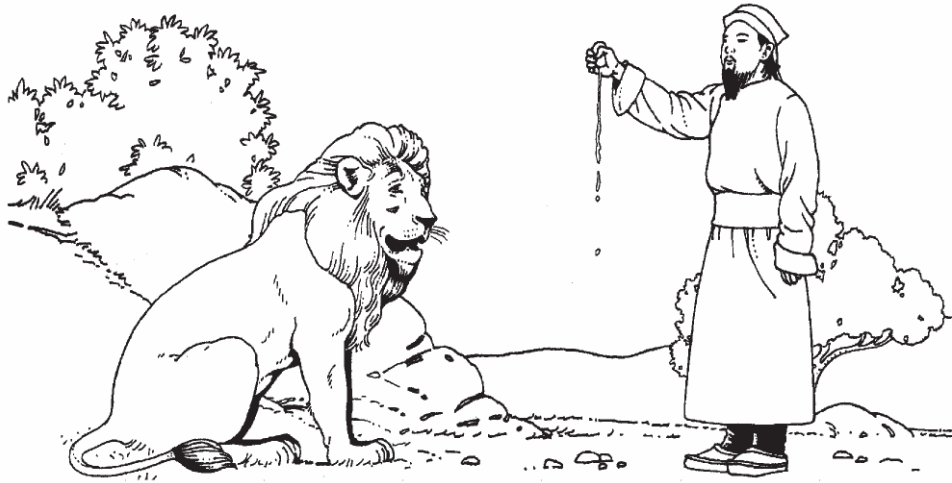
7. More and more cars pulled up. Many people had come to see the lights and go to the festival. We had been told that the lights would appear in the distance at the bottom of the Chinati Mountains. As the sun went down, we looked for the lights but didn't see anything. I was sitting on the hood of our car and complaining to Dad when a man walked up.
8. The man said he had heard us talking. He said he lived in Marfa. He pointed and told me to look over a fence and between two telephone poles. Then I saw the first light appear! It moved around. Then it disappeared. Another light showed up and did the same thing. I quickly got out my camera and took a picture. By now there was a big crowd of people watching the glowing, dancing lights. The lights reminded me of cotton balls bouncing around. We watched as more and more lights appeared and disappeared. Around midnight the lights finally stopped. We drove back to the motel and fell into our beds.
9. Now I've seen the lights, but I still have no idea what they are. One thing is for sure, though. Whatever they are, the lights have brought a lot of excitement to the town of Marfa.

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### **The Farmer and the Lion**

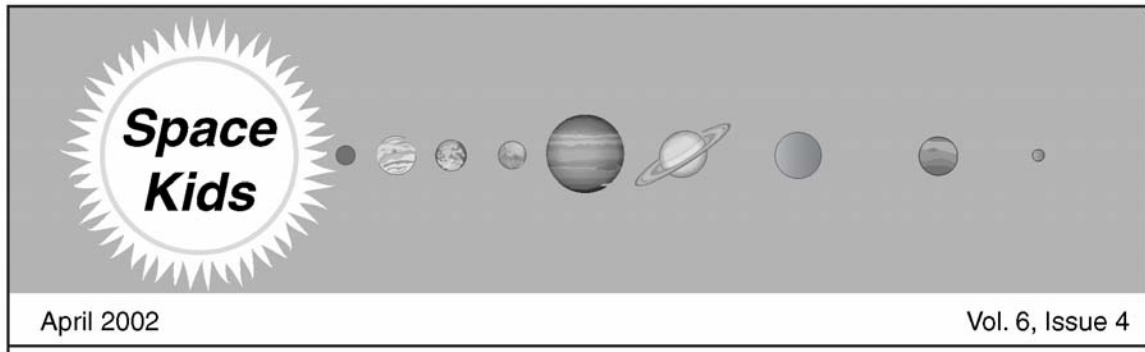
1. A farmer and his wife once lived in the country of Mongolia. Their home was a tent-like house called a *ger*. One day the wife was cleaning the *ger* when she heard her husband calling.
2. “Wife, where are you?” the farmer yelled.
3. The wife continued to tidy the house. As she was cleaning the table, the farmer ran into the *ger* and said, “There is a lion! He is coming toward our house. He looks really hungry. He could eat us in no time at all! What are we going to do?”
4. The wife said to him, “Don’t worry about that lion. Just tell him you are on your way to hunt for big, fat lions for supper.” Then she got out an egg. “Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you.” She whispered in his ear and put the egg into his pocket.
5. The farmer felt better after hearing his wife’s instructions. He told her he would do just what she said.
6. When the farmer walked out of the house, the lion asked, “Where do you think you are going, farmer?”
7. “I am going out to hunt for fat lions like you,” the farmer said.
8. The lion was surprised. “Do you think you can catch a strong lion like me? Ha!” said the lion with a laugh. “You must be crazy! I am much stronger than you. You should not be so foolish!”
9. “Let’s have a contest to see who is stronger,” suggested the farmer. “Whoever is stronger will be the master and command the other.”
10. The lion quickly agreed. “That is fair. What should we do?”
11. The farmer pointed to the ground and said, “Crush that rock over there.”
12. The lion picked up the rock and squashed it into powder. “Now, let’s see what you can do with a rock,” said the lion.
13. As the lion began to look for a rock, the farmer pretended to pick one up from the ground. Instead, he took the egg from his pocket and squeezed it until it cracked. “Oh, my! You have squeezed the rock so hard that the juice has come out of it!” the lion exclaimed.
14. “Yes, I have. And I can do even more with my strength,” said the farmer.
15. The lion had been defeated. Because he did not win the contest, he would have to do everything the farmer told him to do.

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16. The next day the farmer was riding on the lion's back. The farmer told the lion to stop so he could get down. "This is a good tree to get the wood I need to make a bow and some arrows," the farmer said. The farmer walked over to the branches. He tried to break one from the tree, but he could not even bend it.
17. "Do you need some help, master?" asked the lion.
18. "That would be nice," said the farmer.
19. As the lion reached for the branches, he asked, "What happened to your strength, farmer?"
20. The farmer quickly answered, "I'm just tired from not sleeping well. Keep working, lion." Then the farmer quietly sneaked off and ran home as fast as he could.
21. The farmer was very upset. "The lion knows! I'm sure he is going to catch both of us," he said to his wife as he kept watching out the window. "I see him! He is on his way here now!"
22. The wife said, "Calm down, husband. There is no reason to worry about that lion."
23. "How can you say that when we are in danger?" questioned the farmer.
24. The wife said, "Listen to me. When the lion gets near the door, ask me what we're eating for supper."
25. As soon as the lion was close enough to hear them talking, the husband asked, "What are we having for supper tonight?"
26. "Your favorite. I am cooking a stew from the lion you killed last night. It will be very tasty," the wife said loud enough for the lion to hear.
27. The lion suddenly became very frightened. He turned and ran away. He hoped that the farmer had not seen him.
28. The farmer and his wife never saw the lion again.

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### **HARD WORK MAKES DREAMS COME TRUE**

*by Debbie Davis, Staff Writer*

1. Astronaut Ellen Ochoa shows that with a good education and hard work, you can reach for the stars. Ochoa is the first Hispanic woman to fly into space. She is a scientist, an inventor, and a mother. She is also a hero to young people with big dreams.
2. Ochoa was born on May 10, 1958, in Los Angeles, California. As a child she didn't know what she wanted to be when she grew up. Ochoa's mother always told her to stay in school and study hard. She taught her daughter that she could do anything she wanted.
3. Ochoa listened to her mother. She worked very hard in school. She liked math, science, and music. When she was 13 years old, she won a spelling contest. In high school Ochoa spent many hours each week studying for all her classes. She finished with the best grades in her class.
4. After high school Ochoa went on to college. One day in college Ochoa heard that the U.S. government had chosen six women to become astronauts. They would be the first female astronauts from the United States. Ochoa decided she wanted to be an astronaut, too. After college she worked as a scientist. She also became an airplane pilot. Then she applied to become an astronaut. Her many years of hard work paid off. She was asked to become an astronaut in 1990.
5. Ochoa trained for three years. She had to learn all about spaceships called shuttles. She learned to fix things on the shuttle that could cause problems. She had to be ready for any difficulties that could happen in space. She even learned to float in space.

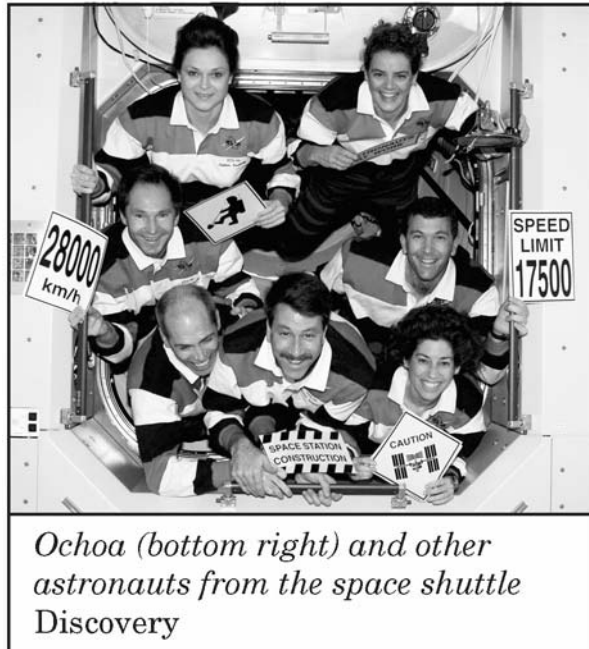
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*Astronaut Ellen Ochoa*

6. In April 1993 aboard the space shuttle named *Discovery*, she made history by becoming the first Hispanic woman to travel to space. Ochoa and the other astronauts had many jobs while on the *Discovery*. One of her tasks was to use the shuttle's robot arm to move large objects. Ochoa used a computer to make the arm pick up a satellite and put it into space. A satellite is a spacecraft that usually moves around Earth or some other object. Satellites can take pictures and gather information about planets and stars.
7. The nine days in space during Ochoa's first spaceflight were not all work for the astronauts. Ochoa found time to play songs on her flute. She also ate tortillas, one of her favorite foods. She says that tortillas make great space food. They are easy to eat and don't take up much room. Unlike crackers, tortillas don't leave crumbs that could float around and harm the shuttle's computers.

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8. Ochoa's second trip to space was in November 1994. This time she flew on the space shuttle *Atlantis*. During the trip she used the robot arm again. She used the arm to pull in a satellite from space. The satellite had been used to study the air around Earth. After the *Atlantis* flight, Ochoa went on two more shuttle trips. Altogether, she spent a whole month in space. That's more than 700 hours!
9. When she's not in space, Ochoa keeps busy. She likes to ride bicycles with her husband and two sons. She plays the flute. Ochoa also flies an airplane when she feels the need to get her feet off the ground.
10. Ochoa knows that she is a hero to young people who dream of going into space. She tells them the same thing her mother told her when she was a little girl. "Get a good education and believe in yourself," says Ochoa. "That's how I became a NASA astronaut. The future is yours—think big!"



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### **Greta and the Cat**

*St. Martin's Day is a holiday in a country named Holland. The "St." in St. Martin stands for the word saint. St. Martin was a man who did kind things for many people in need. He was a soldier who spent his life helping others. The people of Holland remember him every year on November 11.*

1. Greta rode her bicycle down the path with her classmates. In Holland this was the way most children traveled back and forth to school. They pedaled past the rivers and meadows of their little town. One by one, the children parted as they came to their houses.
2. "See you later!" Greta called to her friends. She turned into her yard. As she parked her bike, she heard a noise in the grass. She jumped back suddenly, dropping her books. At her feet was a small gray cat.
3. "That old cat keeps scaring me!" she complained as she walked in the door.
4. "It doesn't mean any harm," said her father.
5. "Why doesn't it just go home and stay out of our yard?" she grumbled. She frowned but could not stay angry for long. It was St. Martin's Day.
6. "We must eat before we celebrate," Mother said. She placed steaming bowls of stew called *hutspot* on the table.
7. Greta's younger brother Peter joined them. He was singing happily, "St. Martin walking home one day, St. Martin with his cape of gray." Then he stopped. "Who was St. Martin anyway?"
8. Greta laughed. "St. Martin was a man who lived long ago," she explained. "One chilly winter day he was walking home. He wore a cape to keep warm and had a small piece of bread to eat."
9. "Yes," said Mother. "Then he saw a stranger on the side of the road. The man sat on the ground, hugging his knees to keep warm. He was hungry and had no home."
10. Father finished the story. "St. Martin took his sword and cut his cape in two. He gave the man half of his warm cape. Then he gave the man half of his bread."
11. "So we celebrate St. Martin's Day," said Peter, "because he was kind to the man who didn't have anything?"
12. "Yes," answered Mother. "St. Martin had great sympathy for others, and we should be concerned about others, too."
13. As always on St. Martin's Day, Greta and her family enjoyed their dinner. Then they carried a lantern out into the dark night. Other families carrying lanterns joined them. Together they knocked on neighbors' doors. The visitors sang and were given sweet breads.
14. At the end of the evening, Greta's family walked back home. Just inside her yard, Greta heard a noise again. She dropped her bag of sweets as a gray shadow leaped across her feet.

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15. "You wait a minute!" she called as she chased after the cat. She caught it and picked it up. "Why are you always frightening me?"
16. She noticed the cat's dirty paws and matted fur. The cat had probably never been brushed, and it didn't have a collar. "I don't think this cat has a home," Greta said.
17. Peter reached up and petted the cat gently. "I know what St. Martin would do," he said.
18. Greta looked at the cat that had frightened her. Suddenly it didn't look so scary. It didn't even struggle as she held it in her arms. She opened her bag of treats. Taking out a sweet roll, she offered half to the cat. The cat hungrily ate the roll.
19. "May we make a box for it to sleep in?" Greta asked her mother.
20. "I can tear my sweater in half to keep the cat warm," offered Peter.
21. Mother smiled. "I think an old towel would be better," she said.
22. They fixed up a box and put it in a safe place. Peter returned with a bowl of milk. The cat lapped it up. "Tomorrow I'll see whether it belongs to anyone," said Greta.



23. "If not, may we keep it?" asked Peter.
24. Mother and Father looked at each other. "We'll see," they said.
25. As everyone returned to the warm house, Greta stayed with the cat. She rearranged the towel. It was cold and dark outdoors, but Greta felt content.
26. "Good night, Martin," she said, suddenly deciding on the cat's name.
27. The little cat purred.

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### **Tools for Animals and Insects**

1. Have you ever seen an ant's shopping bag? How about an elephant's back scratcher? Scientists have learned that some animals use things they find in nature as tools. These tools help them with many jobs.

#### **Mealtime Helpers**

2. The woodpecker finch is a bird that eats insects that live deep in the cracks of tree bark. The bird uses a small stick or a cactus thorn as a tool to reach the insects. It holds the stick or thorn in its beak and pushes out bugs to eat for supper.
3. The Egyptian vulture uses stones to help it eat ostrich eggs. The eggshells are too hard for the bird to open with its beak. When the vulture finds an egg, it looks for a stone. Then the bird uses its beak to throw the stone at the egg. The vulture will throw the stone again and again until the egg cracks open. It would be hard for the Egyptian vulture to eat ostrich eggs without the aid of stones.
4. Stones are essential tools for other animals, too. Sea otters like to eat clams, which live inside hard shells. However, it would be difficult for sea otters to eat clams without the help of stones. First a sea otter dives into the water for a clam. Then it dives again for a stone. As the otter floats on its back in the water, it puts the stone on its chest. Then it bangs the clam against the stone until the shell cracks open. Finally the otter digs out the meat inside with its paws and eats it.



*The sea otter eats clams by cracking the shells open against a stone.*

5. Some insects use leaves to help them get food. Scientists have studied a kind of ant that uses leaves as a shopping bag. The ants put pieces of fruit on the leaves. They use the leaves to help them carry the pieces of fruit back to their nest. The leaves soak up the juice from the fruit. Then the ants eat the fruit and the leaves, too.

#### **Scratching and Washing**

6. Mealtime isn't the only time that animals use tools. Many animals use things around them to help solve problems throughout the day.

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7. The heat in Africa can cause an elephant's skin to itch. Elephants have learned that sticks and branches are good for scratching. If an elephant has an itch, it picks up a stick with its trunk. Then it stretches its trunk over its head to scratch itself.
8. Chimpanzees have found an unusual way to stay clean. A chimpanzee makes a sponge out of leaves. The leaves are like paper towels and soak up water. The chimpanzee uses the damp leaves like a wet washcloth. It wipes off mud or sticky fruit juice from its body.



*An elephant uses a stick or branch for scratching.*

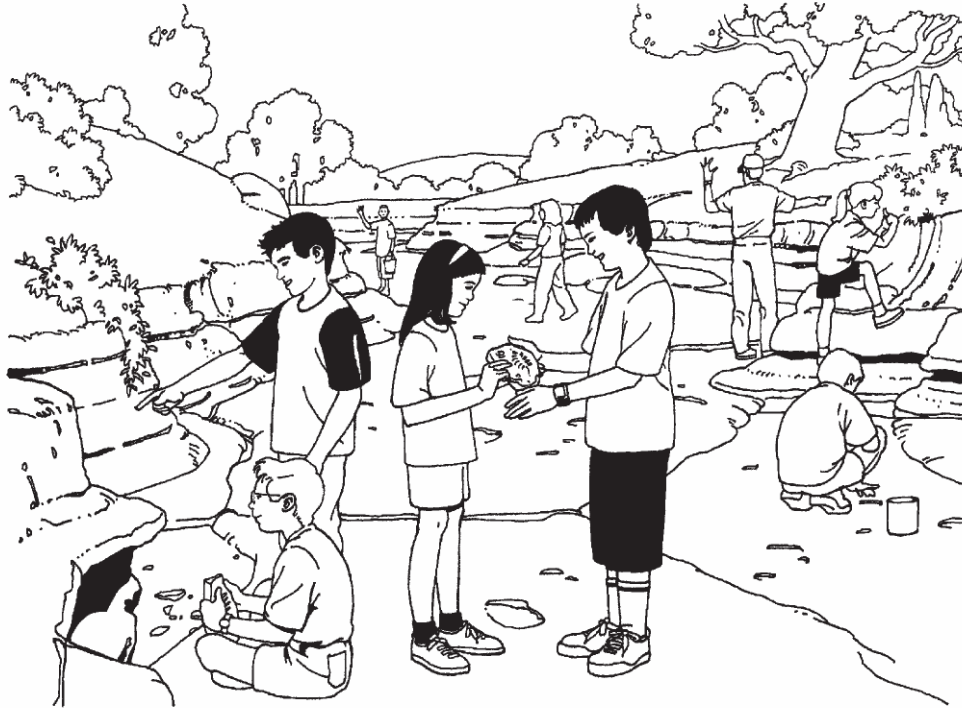
9. Not very many years ago, scientists believed that only people could use tools. Now we know that some animals use tools, too. In the years to come, scientists hope to learn more about the amazing ways that animals use tools from nature.

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### Fossil Find

1. The rain had finally slowed down. "It's about time," Clay Reyna thought. This place was not like sunny California at all. He had lived on this ranch for only a few weeks, but already he didn't like it. He hadn't made any friends at school. All it seemed to do here was rain.
2. It was Saturday afternoon, and Clay was bored. When the rain finally stopped, he decided to go outside and walk around. It had rained so hard for so long. Clay could see that water had washed away a layer of dirt. Rocks that had been covered with dirt now poked out. The top part of the ground had been washed away.
3. As Clay walked along, he saw a rock with an unusual shape. He carefully dug the rock out of the ground. He had to use both hands to pick it up. It was shaped like a cone. "This looks like a shell or a giant snail," Clay thought, "except that it's rock." Puzzled, he decided to take it to school on Monday. His teacher Miss Shaw could probably tell him more about it.
4. "Where did you find this?" Miss Shaw asked excitedly when Clay showed her the rock at school. When he told her where he had found it, Miss Shaw's face lit up. "May I keep this for a day or two?" she asked. "I promise to give it back." Clay agreed.
5. That night at home, the phone rang. After a few minutes Clay's mother came into his room.
6. "That was Miss Shaw. She wanted to know whether we would let her bring your class to our ranch on Friday," Clay's mother said.
7. "Really?" Clay asked, a little excited. It would be neat to have a field trip at his house.
8. "Miss Shaw said she took your rock to the college in town. She found out that the rock is really a fossil of a shell. She wants your class to look for more fossils. I told her we would love to have your class here," Clay's mother said.
9. The next day at school, Miss Shaw announced to the class, "I'm going to change our science lessons for this week. We're going on a fossil hunt. Clay's parents are going to let us look around their ranch. We're going to look for fossils like the one Clay found. I asked the principal, and she has approved our field trip for this Friday. But before we go, I want all of you to learn more about fossils."
10. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, Clay and his classmates studied fossils. They learned that fossils are signs of life from long ago. Fossils can be a deep print of a leaf, branch, or an animal's foot in a rock. Fossils can also be bones or shells that have turned into rock over the years. By studying fossils, people can learn about the plants and animals that once lived on Earth. They also can learn about the changes that have occurred in weather, water, and land. These changes have taken place over many years.

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11. Finally it was Friday morning. Clay's class, Miss Shaw, and several parents rode a school bus to the Reynas' ranch. Miss Shaw picked up a stone as soon as she got off the bus. "This might have been a clam once," she said, holding up a fat heart-shaped rock.
12. Several students gathered around her to look at the rock. Knowing what to look for, they found three more just like it. All the students started talking and walking around together. After about an hour of searching, Clay found a piece of flat, smooth stone with what looked like a leaf printed on it. One of the other students found a gray stone with the perfect fan shape of a seashell on it.
13. Miss Shaw finally announced it was time to go. Disappointed, the students got back onto the bus. A few students approached Clay when they arrived back at school.
14. "Do you think it would be O.K. if we came back to your ranch tomorrow?" one of the girls from Clay's class asked. "We could look for more fossils."
15. Clay thought that it would be great. He nodded his head thoughtfully. Maybe this place wasn't so bad after all.

## Reading Passages: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade July

### **A House in the Sky**

1. Last summer I went to stay with Grandma and Grandpa for two weeks. When I was younger, they had lived with us in Dallas. However, they moved back to Arizona because they missed their old home. Dad thought this trip would be a wonderful opportunity for me. He thought it would be a good time for me to learn more about our Native American ways.
2. At first I was afraid to ride in the plane by myself. But my parents reassured me. They told me I did not need to worry because special people on the plane would take care of me.
3. When I got off the plane, Grandpa was there waiting for me. While driving into the desert, Grandpa told me about his home. "We live on a flat, rocky hill called a mesa. Our Hopi village is on top of this mesa," Grandpa said.
4. Grandpa explained that *Hopi* means "peaceful people." He said that I would notice a difference in the way the Hopi people lived. I had already noticed how different the desert and the mesa were from Dallas. I also wondered how we would get to the top of the tall mesa.
5. Grandpa turned and drove up a winding road. We went up and up as far as we could go. Then Grandpa parked the truck. The mesa was even taller than I thought. Grandpa led me to a trail. We began to climb. It seemed as if we were climbing up into the sky. Finally Grandma met us at the top of the hill. From where we stood, I could see ladders leading up to rows of doors.
6. "This is where we live, Anthony. It's a kind of apartment building made of clay bricks," Grandma explained. "We live here on the first floor."
7. Grandma and Grandpa's rooms felt cool after the hot Arizona sun. Grandma said the bricks kept them cool. The rooms were decorated with rugs that Grandma had woven.
8. That evening Grandma fixed dinner. We ate beans, squash, fruit, and *piki*. *Piki* is a kind of bread made of corn. After dinner we visited the *kiva*. This is a large underground room in my grandparents' home. We had to climb down a ladder to get inside this room. The villagers meet there to visit or celebrate special events. I met many more Hopi people that evening. Almost everyone said how much I resembled my grandfather. "You have his eyes," they told me, "and his wonderful smile."

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9. During my visit I helped Grandpa and the other men in the cornfields. I pulled weeds. When the sun made us hot, I rested with Grandpa and his friends. We drank cool water from the well.
10. One day a man showed me how to make a bowl from red clay. He taught me to wet my hands before shaping it. I let it dry in the sun. Then I painted red and blue flowers on it. "Mom will like this," I said to myself.
11. Another afternoon a woman showed me how to weave a basket from grasses. I never thought that grass could make anything so pretty. "This will be for Dad," I decided.
12. When the children in the village had ball games and foot races, I joined them. An older boy told me that they don't race to see who finishes first. "We race so each person can do his or her best," he explained.
13. When it was time to go back to Dallas, part of me did not want to leave. Grandpa was right. It was different here. Now I understood why my grandparents had left the big city and returned to their house in the sky.



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*This is a story people might have read almost 100 years ago. In 1907 Theodore Roosevelt was president of the United States. He and his family lived in the White House in Washington, D.C.*



### **A LIVELY WHITE HOUSE**

by Woodrow Jones

1. Six years ago in 1901, President Theodore Roosevelt and his family moved into the White House. It was once a quiet home. Now it is a lively place to visit. The president and his wife have six children. The family also has a large number of pets. The children and their pets are free to wander throughout the dozens of rooms in the White House.
2. Visitors to the White House have learned to be careful where they sit. They must first make sure that a chair is not already being used. A dog, cat, or guinea pig might be napping there.
3. Alice, one of the president's daughters, had a snake named Emily Spinach that caused a bit of trouble around the White House. The snake often got loose, causing some workers to become frantic. They were often so upset and scared that they couldn't do their jobs. Emily Spinach is no longer at the White House.



President Roosevelt and  
his family in 1903

4. The White House is home to some animals even more unusual than Emily Spinach. A flying squirrel might be found sitting on a table. A badger might be spotted wandering down a hall. Kermit, one of the president's sons, has three kangaroo rats. Sometimes these pet rats sleep in a quiet corner. One usually stays in Kermit's coat pocket.

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5. Kermit likes to bring one of his kangaroo rats to the breakfast table. Some mornings Kermit takes the animal out of his pocket and puts it on the table. It hops over to the president, who feeds it a sugar cube. The animal is happy with its present. It seems to take a thankful bow. Then the kangaroo rat hops back to Kermit, who returns it to his pocket.
6. Various animals also live outside the White House. A horned toad is found near a porch. A large bird lives in the greenhouse. Chickens and rabbits are kept on the White House grounds. The Roosevelts also have a stable for their horses.
7. Once a horse even went inside the White House. Quentin, the president's youngest son, led the pony upstairs. His brother Archie was sick and missed his pony. Archie hugged it when he saw it. It must have been strange to see a horse in the White House.
8. Earlier this month there was another surprising incident. This unusual event happened after Quentin brought home some snakes from a pet store. He couldn't wait to show the snakes to his father.
9. Quentin ran into his father's office with a large king snake wrapped around his arm. He carried two smaller snakes in a bag. The president and a man were sitting and talking. Quentin hugged his father. Then he dropped the snakes into the president's lap.
10. The president calmly gave the snakes back. He told Quentin to show the snakes to the men who were waiting in another room.
11. Initially the men thought the snakes were made of wood. But after looking again, the men were surprised to find out the snakes were alive. The large king snake was starting to crawl up Quentin's sleeve! One man had to help Quentin take off his jacket.
12. The White House has changed a lot in the six years the Roosevelts have lived there. It has become more exciting. Some people even think the lively animals make the White House more fun. What strange animal will move in next? The answer is anyone's guess!

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### **The Littlest Horse in the Herd**

*Cory and his family live on a large ranch where they raise cattle. This working family rides horses to round up, or herd, cattle together. Once they guide the cattle into a group, they use their horses to drive, or move, the cattle back to the ranch.*

1. Cory had just turned nine years old. He took the tape measure out of his father's toolbox. Standing up straight against the wall, he marked above his head with a pencil. Then he measured from the mark on the wall to the floor. "I'm still the shortest person in my class," he sighed.
2. "Being tall isn't everything," his mother said.
3. "That's easy for a grown-up to say," Cory thought.
4. "You'll grow someday," his father said.
5. Someday wasn't soon enough for Cory. He decided to ask his father for advice. "Dad, do you know of anything I can do to grow faster? Are there any special foods or exercises that might help?"
6. "Not that I know of," his father answered. Cory felt like crying.
7. "Listen," his father said softly. "Tomorrow your brothers and I are riding out to the hills. We're going to round up the cattle. I want you to come with us. You're old enough now."
8. Cory couldn't believe his ears. He had dreamed of going on a roundup someday. "But I thought I was still too little to join the roundup," he said.
9. "You'll stay next to me," his father said. "Be ready at sunrise."
10. Cory had trouble sleeping that night. The next morning he was ready before dawn. At the barn Cory watched his brothers Jed and Lennie. They swung their saddles onto the high, strong backs of their horses. They mounted their horses just as easily. Jed and Lennie sat tall in the saddles. Cory wished he could do the things his big brothers could.
11. Then Cory's father walked up, leading a small horse.
12. "I'm not riding that little thing, am I?" Cory asked.
13. "Yep," his father said, cinching the saddle on the small horse. He gave the strap an extra pull to make sure that it wasn't loose.
14. Jed and Lennie smiled at each other. "Do you think that pony can keep up with our horses?" Jed asked.
15. "Yep," his father replied. "This horse's name is Spunk. The word *spunk* means a special kind of courage. You'll soon see why I gave him that name. Now let's get going."

### Reading Passages: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade July



16. After half an hour they started climbing the hills. Spunk was keeping up with the bigger horses just fine. After another hour he was ahead of them.
17. They found the cattle in a dry creek full of thick, thorny bushes. Jed's horse didn't like getting scratched. Lennie's horse kept slipping on the rocks. Spunk, however, was perfect for the job. He liked to weave through the bushes, moving in and out like a wild rabbit. He climbed rocky hills like a mountain goat. He could make cattle move faster than the larger horses could.
18. Cory sat proudly on Spunk as they herded the cattle back to the ranch. Cory helped his father put Spunk into a fenced area called a corral. As they closed the gate, Cory said, "Spunk is amazing. He's better than the big horses."
19. "He's the littlest horse in the herd," his father said, "but he's learned to do a lot. Being small hasn't bothered him."
20. Suddenly Cory understood what his father was saying. Cory vowed that he would not feel bad about his size anymore. He promised himself to be more like Spunk.

## Reading Passages: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

Lamai (lah-MY) is a girl who lives in Thailand. The following article describes her visit to a floating market.



### **A DAY AT THE FLOATING MARKET**

by Jerry Bridgens

1. City life in Thailand is much like city life in the United States. People live in tall buildings or in houses close together. They travel in cars and buses and buy what they need in stores. But outside the cities, life is different. People usually live on farms far apart from one another. Many of these farms do not have electricity for lights or refrigerators. Therefore, people grow their own food or buy it fresh almost every day at the market. But the market is not in a building. It is a floating market located on a river. People travel in their boats on the river, buying and selling almost anything.
2. Lamai and her family live on a farm. They grow fruits and vegetables and sell them at the market each day. The family's day starts about 3:00 A.M. Long before the sun comes up, Lamai and her brother help their parents. They pick out fruits and vegetables and clean them. Then they load everything into a long boat called a *ruilla pais*.
3. Their boat is ready by about 6:00 A.M. Lamai's father and brother stay on the farm to work while Lamai and her mother row to the closest floating market. On the way the water is still and peaceful. Lamai sees the bright sun beginning to shine.

Reading Passages: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade



*Crowds of people in boats gather at the floating market.*

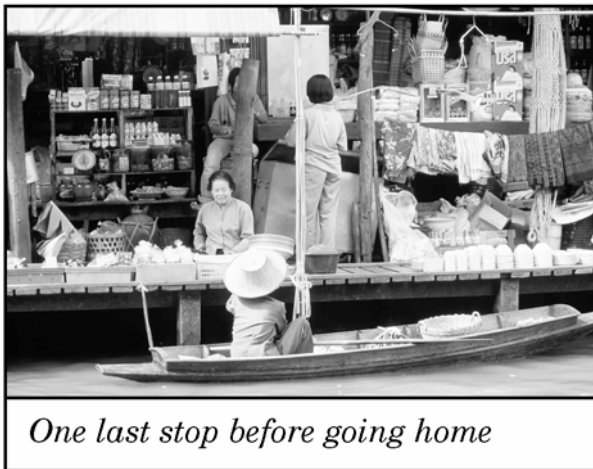
4. Soon the peace and calm are gone. Lamai hears laughing and yelling in the distance. Then the sounds grow louder. Her mother rows the boat around a corner. Suddenly they are at the floating market. Hundreds of boats are gathered at a wide place in the river.



*Foods sold at the floating market*

## Reading Passages: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

5. Merchants call out what they have to sell. Lamai's mother is selling bananas and ripe tomatoes today. Lamai sees baskets of yellow rambutan and sour star fruit in other boats. She hopes her mother will buy some star fruit later. It's Lamai's favorite. People go from one seller to another in their boats. Many of the long boats are parked right next to one another. Other boats float a little farther out in the river. People can buy sweet reddish-brown mangosteens at one boat and fresh bread at another.
6. For Lamai a trip to the market is more than just a chance to sell or buy something. It is a chance for her to talk to her friends. Today Lamai sees her friend Suki. He is helping his mother prepare meals in their boat. Lamai loves the smell of the fried bananas Suki's mother is making. Lamai's mother rows over to buy a late breakfast. As Lamai eats, she and Suki talk about their summer plans.
7. Lamai waves good-bye to her friend as she and her mother move away to sell the rest of their food. Lamai sees some people on the walkway beside the river. Many boats stop next to the walkway to sell things to the tourists. Some of these visitors buy food from the boats, but most of them go to the boats that have souvenirs for sale. They buy the T-shirts, pencils, statues, and colorful purses sold on these boats.



*One last stop before going home*

8. Around 11:00 A.M. people begin to go home. Lamai is glad. She is drowsy from waking up so early. Her mother has sold most of what they brought to the market. They will leave the market with less food in their boat but with more money for Lamai's family. Lamai's mother makes one last stop so Lamai can buy some star fruit. Then they row home. Tomorrow the work will begin again.

## Reading Passages: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Rhodopis and the Slippers**

1. Long ago Rhodopis left her home in Greece and went far away to Egypt, where she worked as a housemaid. Rhodopis didn't look like the other housemaids, so they often mistreated her.
2. "Rhodopis, make us something to eat! Wash our clothes!" the housemaids screamed. They also blamed Rhodopis for all their mistakes.
3. One day the master of the house saw Rhodopis dancing as she did her work. He was charmed by how gracefully Rhodopis danced, so he had a special pair of beautiful slippers made for her. Angered by the gift, the other housemaids treated Rhodopis even worse than before.
4. A month later, the pharaoh, or ruler, of Egypt announced a great feast. Even servants were invited, as long as they finished their work. However, the housemaids gave Rhodopis so much of their work that she wasn't able to go.
5. Later, while everyone was at the feast, Rhodopis sat alone by the Nile River. "What good are these?" she asked as she pulled the slippers from her feet. Suddenly a falcon flew down and stole one slipper. With a heavy heart, Rhodopis watched as the falcon flew away.



6. At the same time that Rhodopis sat on the shore of the river, the pharaoh's son Amasis sat alone at the great feast. To his surprise a falcon dropped a slipper onto his lap. Amasis knew this was a sign. The maiden who wore the slipper would be his princess.
7. The next day Amasis began his search. Women young and old tried on the slipper, but it fit none of them. Soon Amasis arrived at the house where Rhodopis lived. The other housemaids oiled their feet, but still the slipper wouldn't fit. Then Amasis saw Rhodopis watching from a distance and called her over. The slipper fit perfectly.



## Reading Passages: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **A Star for a Prince**

1. In Persia long ago a girl named Settareh, which means “star,” was born with a star-shaped mark on her cheek. Settareh’s mother died. Later her father married another woman who already had two daughters of her own. Shortly afterward Settareh’s father became ill and died, leaving Settareh to be raised by her stepmother.
2. Settareh’s stepmother and stepsisters treated her very unkindly. They took away her fine clothes and made her wear their old clothes. She had to do many of their chores. They let her eat only what was left after they had finished, so she often went hungry.
3. One day the family was invited to the prince’s royal ball. The stepmother gave her daughters and Settareh money to buy new dresses in town. While Settareh looked for a dress to buy, she felt weak. As she bought something to eat, she thought, “I will still have enough money for a dress.”
4. “Please, can you spare some food?” a beggar asked. The beggar looked thin and weak from starvation. Without a thought Settareh spent the rest of her money on food for the beggar.
5. “Please take this,” the beggar smiled, offering Settareh a small blue jug. Although it was cracked, Settareh accepted the old woman’s gift.
6. “Fool!” Settareh’s stepsisters laughed when she returned without a dress. Later they left for the ball without her.
7. “If only I had a dress,” Settareh sighed, holding the jug. Suddenly she was wearing a beautiful dress and matching anklets around her ankles.
8. “But how will I get to the ball?” No sooner had Settareh spoken than she was there.



### Reading Passages: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

9. Fearing her stepmother and stepsisters would see her new dress, Settareh stayed where they wouldn't notice her. She was sitting alone when the prince walked up and introduced himself. She had a wonderful time talking and laughing with the prince. Then she noticed the time. She fled so she could be home to change before her stepmother and stepsisters arrived.
10. The prince was heartbroken as he watched Settareh leave. As he walked sadly outside the palace, he came across one of her anklets on the ground. He decided that he must find Settareh again and make her his wife. The next day he began his search. He asked every woman in the land to try on the anklet, but it was too small. Finally he came to Settareh's house. Her stepsisters pushed and pushed, but the anklet would not fit. The prince was about to leave when he saw small footprints in the dirt. "Who made these?" he demanded.
11. "I did," Settareh said from behind her stepsisters. Keeping her head down, she slipped on the anklet. When she looked up at the prince, he recognized the star on her cheek.

## Reading Passages: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **A School on Rails**

1. Anne and Jim were visiting Grandpa. They liked the time after supper when they usually sat and talked. Grandpa often told them stories about the “old days,” when he was a boy. Sometimes his stories were funny. Other times they were sad. Most of his stories were about how things used to be.
2. “Last week I found a picture of a school I went to when I was a boy. Let me show it to you.” Grandpa went to his desk and brought back an old, faded photograph.
3. Jim looked at it and said, “But, Grandpa, this looks like a train!”
4. “It was my school for a while,” Grandpa said. “Would you like to hear about it?”
5. “A school in a train?” asked Anne.
6. “I have to hear this!” exclaimed Jim.
7. Grandpa looked at the picture silently for a moment. “When I was a boy, my father worked for the railroad in Canada,” he began. “His job was to take care of sections of railroad track in remote areas. The workers’ families lived along the tracks in small groups many miles from other towns or people. There was no school. Everyone knew this was a problem, but no one knew what to do about it.
8. “At last someone had an idea. A railroad car was turned into a schoolroom, and school was brought to us! It stopped at settlements where there were enough children to attend and stayed for several weeks. Then it moved on to the next settlement. There was a teacher on the train who taught the lessons.”
9. “Where did the teacher live?” asked Jim.
10. “The teacher lived in the railroad car! He had a small kitchen with a sink and stove and a living area with a dining room, bedroom, and bathroom. There was no electricity on the train. A small furnace burned coal to keep the school car warm.”
11. “It doesn’t look much like a school,” Anne said, looking at the picture again.
12. “In many ways it was just an ordinary railroad car,” Grandpa said. “It had comfortable cushioned seats and wood-paneled walls lined with windows. However, they did modify some things. The seats were turned to face each other, and a table was put in between each pair. At the front of the car were chalkboards, maps, and a desk for the teacher. Rows of shelves held books and other supplies.

## Reading Passages: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade



13. "Our parents didn't have to make us go to school. We were happy for the chance to go. Any child who was able to get to the school car was allowed to attend, so the school car served the children of loggers, farmers, and miners in the area, too. I had 10 classmates.
14. "School lasted from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M., with about an hour for lunch and recess. We learned most of the same lessons as students in regular schools did. The school car stayed for about six weeks. Then it was pushed back onto the main track, hitched to an engine, and pulled to the next settlement. While the school car was away, we did homework. When it returned, we were ready to continue to learn in our school on rails."
15. "Does it still exist?" Anne asked.
16. "No," Grandpa answered. "After a while, things changed. School cars aren't around any longer. More people moved into the area. New roads were built, and towns were established. Schoolhouses were erected, too. My family moved to a small town. Other families sent their children to school in nearby towns. The school car wasn't needed anymore."
17. "Too bad," Jim muttered.
18. "Oh, it's probably for the best," Grandpa added. "There was too much work for one teacher, and the time between visits was too long. Sometimes the homework was difficult, and no one could help. Still, while it was around, the school car was a special place for many of us."
19. "Do you remember the children in this picture?" Anne asked.
20. "Some of them," answered Grandpa. "But I remember all of those cold Canadian winters! After we do the dishes, I'll tell you all about them."

## Reading Passages: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **A Lasting Impression**

1. Seventeen-year-old Vinnie Ream's steps echoed down the long marble halls as she approached President Abraham Lincoln's office. It was the middle of the day—time for the president's half hour of relaxation. This half hour he spent in quiet, thinking or reading.
2. Vinnie opened the door of the office and quietly walked to the corner where her supplies were stored. She tied her apron around her waist and gathered her tub of clay and her tools. Then she removed the towel that covered the beginnings of a clay head and shoulders. Vinnie had draped the wet towel over the clay sculpture to keep it from drying out overnight.
3. President Lincoln was already reclining in his favorite chair. Most days he leaned back in his chair, his long legs stretched out in front of him. Some days he read. Other times he closed his eyes, rested his chin on his chest, and sat as still as a sleeping giant. He usually said nothing.
4. Each day for weeks Vinnie had studied Lincoln's expressions during his half-hour break. She was a sculptor known for more than her ability to shape the eyes, nose, and mouth of each of her subjects. The sculptures also captured their expressions and moods. Her sculptures of people seemed to say "I am worried" or "I am proud."
5. As she worked, Vinnie thought of the contrast between Lincoln and herself. The president stood six feet four inches tall, while Vinnie was barely five feet tall. He was the leader of a nation; she was just a student of sculpture. She often replayed the events in her mind of how her dream of sculpting Lincoln had come true.
6. Vinnie had been working at an art studio in the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. There she was learning the art of sculpting from master sculptor Clark Mills. Congressman James Rollins, a family friend, had introduced Vinnie to Mills. Recognizing that she had natural talent, Mills asked Vinnie to become his student helper. From time to time, Congressman Rollins stopped by to check on her progress. "How is my favorite sculptor doing today?" he asked one day.
7. "I've learned a great deal," Vinnie replied, "but each day I dream of one day sculpting a likeness of the president." Vinnie looked up from her work and sighed, "I know, I know, I'm just a dreamer."
8. "And a wonderful dream it is!" Rollins agreed.
9. Later that day Rollins asked Lincoln whether he would allow Vinnie to sculpt his likeness. At first Lincoln declined. He was still recovering from the death of his young son Willie. He told Rollins that he was in no mood to be stared at by anyone.
10. After talking for a while longer, though, Rollins finally won Lincoln over. Lincoln agreed to allow Vinnie to work quietly in his office for a half hour each day. Soon, her clay and tools were moved to a corner of the president's office. The idea of making a sculpture of the president thrilled Vinnie.

## Reading Passages: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

11. However, once she began working, Vinnie quickly became discouraged. She couldn't get Lincoln's expression right. He often stared out the window while she worked. She could see his melancholy expression grow even darker. "What makes him so unhappy?" Vinnie wondered.
12. Then one day, for the first time, Lincoln watched Vinnie as she worked. Finally he spoke. "You remind me of my son Willie. He liked reading books, and he was artistic." Lincoln then stood up and walked to the window. On his face the same look appeared that Vinnie had seen so many times before. This time she knew what it meant. When Lincoln stared out the window, he saw the empty lawn where his son Willie had played. Vinnie bent quickly over her work, and Lincoln's image began to appear in the clay.



Vinnie Ream poses next to her sculpture of Abraham Lincoln.

13. Each day when she uncovered her sculpture, Vinnie's satisfaction grew. She could see that she had perfected Lincoln's features—the large nose, the bushy eyebrows, the sunken cheeks. Everything was right. The eyes were sad but determined. The expression was perfect. It was Abraham Lincoln—the gentleman, the father, the president.

## Reading Passages: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

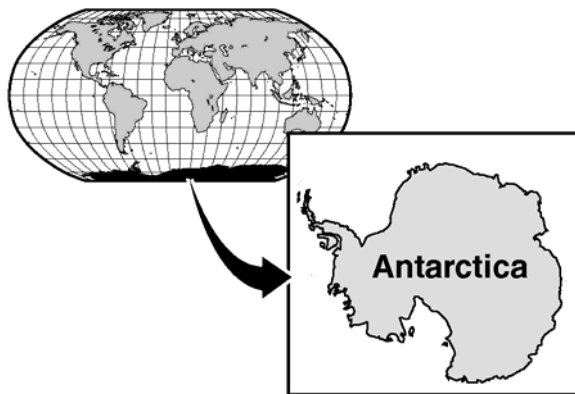
14. Finally, on April 13, 1865, nearly five months after she had started, Vinnie announced, “I believe I’m done.” It was a happy day, but a sad one, too. She knew her daily visits to Lincoln’s office would end.
  
15. *The next night, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated while attending a play at Ford’s Theater. Vinnie Ream was later chosen from among many fine sculptors to do a life-size statue of Lincoln. She used the sculpture of his head for the statue, which now stands in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.*



### **Emperors of the Antarctic**

*by Lynda Norwood*

1. A large male emperor penguin waddles slowly across the ice to the water. He dives deep into the chilly salt water and then springs back onto the ice. Nearby a female penguin sleeps as her baby rests on the tops of her feet. A group of smaller, younger penguins gather together in a circle to keep warm. The penguins are enjoying another beautiful day of sunshine and freezing temperatures in the Penguin Encounter, a special home built just for them in sunny California.
2. The Penguin Encounter is located at Sea World in San Diego, California. It is the home of several hundred penguins. The Penguin Encounter was built to help study the emperor penguin, the largest of all penguins. The emperor penguin's natural home is in the Antarctic, near the South Pole. Because of changes in the environment, scientists are concerned about the future of the emperor's home. Increases in Earth's temperatures, called global warming, could cause large amounts of ice to break up and float into the ocean. Scientists fear that this drastic change in the environment could destroy many of the emperor's nesting areas. This would cause the number of emperor penguins to greatly decrease. A new home for them seemed to be the perfect answer.





## Reading Passages: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade



A baby penguin rests on its mother's feet.

3. Scientists wanted to make the Penguin Encounter a comfortable home for the black-and white feathered birds. A team of scientists was sent to the Antarctic to learn more about the emperor penguin. Scientist Frank Todd led the team. Todd is an expert on birds, especially penguins. He has spent more than 25 years studying them.
4. Getting close enough to the emperor penguins in the Antarctic wasn't difficult for the group of scientists. The penguins were quite curious. Sometimes they would waddle close to Todd and his team. The scientists deduced that this behavior could be the result of poor eyesight. Penguins are nearsighted, which allows them to see better in the water than on land. Another possible reason for their behavior was that they had little to fear on the ice. Their enemies, such as leopard seals and killer whales, hunt mainly in the water.
5. Todd and his team spent many months studying the diet and social habits of the emperor penguins. It was easy to get close to the penguins, but it wasn't easy to study them in the Antarctic. The temperature rarely rises above zero degrees—perfect weather for penguins but not for scientists. Once Todd and his team had finally gathered enough information, they made plans for a new home in California for a number of emperor penguins. Scientists hoped to study the birds in conditions that were more scientist-friendly.

## Reading Passages: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

6. To make this new home fit the needs of the penguins, scientists had to make a world much like the real Antarctic. First it had to be cold—very cold—just like the Antarctic. The penguins' home was built inside a giant room that was kept as cold as a freezer. The room was filled with thousands of pounds of ice. Two saltwater pools were also included. Special lights were made to mimic the light conditions in the Antarctic. The lights were put on timers so that they grew brighter and then dimmer over the course of a day, just like the natural light in the Antarctic.



Emperor penguins play on the ice.

7. When the “new Antarctic” was complete, Todd and his team brought several hundred emperor penguins to California from the Antarctic. To keep the penguins comfortable during the trip, the temperature in the plane’s cargo bay was kept below zero. Once in California, the penguins quickly adjusted to their new environment. It took no time at all before they were sliding headfirst across the ice into the pools of water.
8. The penguins’ new home is now open to the public. Visitors can see the emperors in a setting much like their natural home. The Penguin Encounter is a great place to get a close look at some cool birds.

## Reading Passages: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Fighting Fires**

*Rosie lives in a small Texas town. Her town has no paid firefighters. Instead, the town has a volunteer fire department. The volunteers are a group of men and women who have learned how to fight fires and help out when needed.*

1. When Rosie came home from school, she was greeted by the sight of her father in the kitchen. He hadn't shaved. The corners of her mouth turned down.
2. "How did the job hunting go today?" Rosie asked.
3. "There's nothing out there right now," Dad answered.
4. Three weeks ago the machine-repair shop where Rosie's father had worked for years had closed down. At first her father had been optimistic that he could quickly find a new job. But the days had passed without any offers. Rosie's mother had just taken a second job part-time to help support the family.
5. "I'm just starting dinner," Dad said. "You want to help?"
6. "Sorry, I have homework," Rosie said. She poured herself a glass of juice, went into her room, and shut the door.
7. Rosie usually loved helping in the kitchen, but she didn't want her father to see how worried she was. Rosie's mother was doing O.K. for the family, but her second job was only temporary. It would last only until October. Rosie knew her father was looking everywhere for a job, but he just wasn't having any luck. She didn't know what would happen if he didn't find a job. To top it all off, she had to deal with the kids at school. She didn't want anyone feeling sorry for her.
8. After Rosie had finished her homework, she started writing about the day's events in her diary. At the top of the page, she wrote, "What will happen if Dad can't find a job?" She was just beginning to write about her fears when she heard her father shout, "Rosie! I just heard on the CB radio that Mr. Becket's barn is on fire, and Mike said it's bad. You're going to have to come with me. Get a jacket and shoes on while I leave a note for your mom."
9. For as long as Rosie could remember, her father had been a member of the town's volunteer fire brigade. In all those years he had never failed to respond to a call to fight a fire. Rosie couldn't believe she was actually going to be at the fire with him and the other volunteers. Tossing her pen and journal onto her bed, Rosie quickly scrambled to put on warm clothes. She ran into the hall.
10. As Rosie and her father drove onto Mr. Becket's land, she saw a reddish glow in the sky. They hopped out of their truck, and Dad threw on his firefighter's jacket. Snapping the strap of his helmet under his chin, he rushed over to help aim the heavy hose of the town's only fire truck. All 10 of the town's volunteer firefighters were there. They shouted to one another as they ran back and forth, throwing buckets of water on the fire and beating out the flames that were trying to spring up outside the barn. Rosie had never seen a fire raging like this one. It was like a hungry monster with a thousand yellow arms. The arms kept grabbing at the wooden sides of the barn, the grass, and the black sky itself.

## Reading Passages: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

11. The smell of charred wood filled Rosie's nostrils. She stood next to Mr. Becket and watched as her father helped control the water hose and keep it on the flames that shot out from the barn. Each time the firefighters managed to extinguish one part of the fire, it seemed to flare up even more brightly somewhere else. Rosie gasped as one wall of the barn fell, and flames came close to her father's face. But he didn't give up. He and the others held tight to the hose. One smoke-blackened hour blurred into the next until finally the last little flame was beaten out.



12. Rosie wandered into the crowd to find her father. She spotted him quickly. He was pulling off his soot-stained jacket. When he saw her, he put his arm around her shoulders and said, "Come on. The Hemingways down the road have food for us. Let's go eat."
13. The Hemingways were Mr. Becket's nearest neighbors. They had made several pots of coffee and laid out platters of meat and cheese for the firefighters to make sandwiches. Rosie was tired and didn't think she was hungry, but her stomach growled when she saw the food. She stood close to her father and chewed her sandwich as she listened to the conversation.
14. Finally Dad said, "Time to go, Rosie. It's almost one in the morning. Your mother will be waiting up for us."
15. Rosie couldn't believe how much time had passed. All her earlier exhaustion had dropped away as she stood in the circle of brave firefighters. She listened as her father and the others shared memories of other fires they had handled over the years. She hadn't realized how many emergencies her father had responded to.
16. Rosie and Dad sat quietly as they drove down the winding roads that took them back home. Dad finally broke the silence. "Everything's going to be fine, Rosie. I'll get another job. It's just a matter of time."
17. Back home Rosie saw her diary lying on her bed. She picked up her pen to finish writing what she had started earlier. But she wrote nothing. What she had planned to write didn't seem quite right anymore.

## **Reading Passages: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade**

18. As she sat there staring at the page, her mind raced with images of her father fighting the fire. She thought about the words her father had said to her on their ride home. She closed her diary, put on her pajamas, and climbed into bed.

## Reading Passages: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **A Personal Achievement**

1. “You’re next, Carl,” Mrs. Sosa said. Carl walked nervously to the stage. Why had he let his friend Neil talk him into trying out for the play? He hated standing in front of people.
2. He had spent the weekend memorizing lines, but he knew he wouldn’t get the part. It was a small part anyway, not like the lead role he just knew Neil would get. Neil had already finished his audition. As always he had done well even though he hadn’t practiced at all.
3. “You’re trying out for a guard?” Mrs. Sosa asked. “I’ll read the queen’s lines. Begin when you’re ready.”



4. Carl took a deep breath and tried to picture himself as a guard, just as his mother had suggested when she helped him practice. “Your majesty,” Carl began uncertainly, “the castle is under siege.”
5. “Call my knights!” Mrs. Sosa responded as the queen, sounding like Carl’s mother had. He almost smiled. At first he felt silly in front of the other students, but as he concentrated on his lines, he forgot about the people watching. It was as if he had really become a guard in a queen’s service!
6. After Carl finished, he walked over to Neil. As soon as Carl sat down, Neil asked, “Do you think I got the part of the knight?”
7. “I’m sure you did,” Carl mumbled. Sometimes he thought Neil just liked hearing how great he was. “It’s not like he doesn’t already hear what a great basketball player he is,” Carl thought. Neil was confident and talented. He seemed to succeed at everything without even trying, while Carl struggled just to be average.
8. “You should have made your voice sound like that actor in *The Bank Caper*,” Neil said.
9. “I had enough trouble just remembering my lines,” Carl said.

### Reading Passages: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

10. The next afternoon Carl went to Mrs. Sosa's room to see who had been given the part of the guard. His name wasn't listed. "Figures," he muttered.
11. Mrs. Sosa walked up to Carl and said, "Rehearsals start tomorrow. There's a lot of work to do." Seeing Carl's puzzled face, she said, "Oh, you haven't heard." She pointed to the top of the list. "You're playing Sir Trawood. You had the best tryout of anyone, Carl."
12. Carl was stunned. "But what about Neil?"
13. Mrs. Sosa sighed. "Neil was offered a smaller part, but he rejected it."
14. "He did?" Carl's eyes widened. "But I can't be in the play without Neil," he said.
15. Mrs. Sosa frowned. "But, Carl, you're the best actor for this part."
16. Neil called Carl that night and said, "I guess you're happy to get the best part. I have to admit I'm jealous." Carl was silent. He couldn't believe that Neil would be jealous of *him*.

## Reading Passages: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Star of the Show**

1. "Begin when you're ready, Neil," Mrs. Sosa said.
2. Neil started to speak. "Humph," he coughed, trying to stall. He had looked at the script that morning, but now his mind was blank. Maybe he could improvise—make up his own words now and memorize his lines after he got the part. Then luckily he remembered. "Knights of the Royal Order," he hissed, trying to sound like his favorite actor, "this means war!"
3. He saw Mrs. Sosa raise her eyebrows. He could tell she was impressed. He stumbled over his words a couple more times, but he still felt confident when he had finished. He couldn't wait to star in a real play. Most days he imagined himself as a basketball star, but sometimes he thought he would like to star in the movies. "Maybe I'll be an actor after I retire from basketball," he thought.
4. His friend Carl was next. Neil felt sorry for him. Carl looked terrified. When he started talking, he sounded as if he had swallowed a frog. Carl remembered all his lines, but he didn't act very well. He just used his regular voice.
5. When Carl returned, Neil noticed that he was sullen. "Do you think I got the part of the knight?" he asked his friend, hoping to take Carl's mind off his own tryout. "Maybe I'll ask Mrs. Sosa to give Carl another chance," Neil thought.
6. After basketball practice the next day, Neil rushed to Mrs. Sosa's room to see who else was in the play. He noticed right away that Carl hadn't gotten the part of the guard. Then Neil gasped. Carl had gotten the part of Sir Trawood! There had to be some mistake.
7. "I'm afraid you didn't get the part you wanted, Neil," Mrs. Sosa said. "You'll be playing the part of a messenger."
8. "But Carl didn't even try out for Sir Trawood," Neil protested.
9. Mrs. Sosa nodded. "Yes, but I think he'll make an excellent knight."
10. "He didn't even sound like an actor," Neil complained.
11. "That's why he did so well," Mrs. Sosa said. "You'll see what I mean at practice tomorrow."
12. "No, I won't," Neil said. "I'm not going to be some stupid messenger." He stormed out. As he walked home, he kept thinking it wasn't fair. Carl probably wouldn't even have tried out for the play if Neil hadn't insisted. He felt angry that Carl would be in the play without him. "But I guess I should congratulate him," he thought. "After all, I'm the school's star basketball player, and Carl didn't even make the team."



## Reading Passages: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **The Bank Deposit**

1. Jennifer watched as her mother carefully counted the money from the cash register and filled out the morning's bank deposit slip. It was the first week of summer vacation, and Jennifer was finally getting the chance to work a real job. Mom and Dad had agreed to let her work part-time at the family diner to earn enough money to buy the new computer she wanted. Jennifer was in charge of cleaning the tables after people finished eating. She worked hard and tried to do a good job to show her parents that they had made a good decision. She wished she could do more than just clean up, but her mother said she was too young to take orders or cook meals.
2. "It must be taking your father longer than he expected," Mom said, glancing at the door. Normally Mom would walk across the street to the bank and deposit the money right away. But Dad had taken their car in for some repair work that morning and wasn't back yet. "I guess I'll just have to take this money to the bank later," Mom said, walking into her office. She locked the money in a small lockbox in the desk drawer and put the key into her apron pocket.
3. "I can take it for you, Mom," Jennifer said, trying to be as helpful as possible.
4. "That's O.K.," Mom said. "I need you to do just what you're doing."
5. Jennifer frowned. She knew that her mother didn't trust her with the money. "The bank's right across the street," she muttered.
6. "Oh, no!" Mom said after refilling a customer's coffee cup. "We're almost out of coffee, and the supply truck won't get here for another hour." She looked at her watch nervously. "Jennifer," she said, reaching into her apron pocket and taking out some folded money, "will you go across the street to Fred's Market and buy a can of coffee?"
7. "Sure," Jennifer said, taking the money from her mother. She went back to the office to grab her jacket while Mom resumed waiting on customers. As Jennifer was putting the money into her pocket, she saw the key to the lockbox tucked between the folded dollar bills. Jennifer remembered the bank deposit in the desk drawer. She knew it was ready to take to the bank. "I'll surprise Mom and take the deposit to the bank on my way to the market," she thought. "Then she'll see that I can be trusted." She took the key, unlocked the lockbox, and took out the bank bag. "I'll be right back," she said as she headed out the door.
8. "O.K. Thanks, Jennifer," Mom called after her.
9. Jennifer walked across the street to the bank. "I should put the money in the bank first," she said to herself. But when she opened the bank door, she saw a long line. "Maybe there won't be as many people after I go to the market," she thought. She walked next door to the market and found the coffee aisle. As she grabbed a can of coffee, she set the bank bag down and reached into her pocket to get the money for her purchase. Jennifer counted the dollar bills out as she walked toward the front of the store. Then she went up to the cashier and paid for the coffee.

## Reading Passages: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade



10. "Thanks, honey," Mom said when Jennifer walked into the diner. "Why don't you open the can and make a pot of coffee? Do you remember how?"
11. "Sure!" Jennifer said. She could see that Mom was busy, and it felt good to be helping out. Just as she was starting the pot of coffee, her father returned.
12. "Hi, Dad," Jennifer said.
13. "Frank," Mom said as Dad walked into the diner, "can you take the money to the bank before you get started? It's in the desk drawer." Jennifer felt her stomach drop. The bank deposit! Her heart raced. What had she done with the bank deposit?
14. "I don't see it," Dad called a moment later from the office.
15. "Well, I put it right there," Mom said, walking back to the office. After frantically searching the office, she sighed. "Somebody must have sneaked in here and taken it while I was busy with customers and Jennifer was at the store."
16. "We should call the police," Dad said.
17. "Mom, Dad," Jennifer said hesitantly as she approached them, "I lost the bank deposit."
18. "What?" Mom asked, puzzled. Jennifer explained as quickly as she could. "You must have left it at the market," Mom said. "Let's go look. Maybe someone turned it in." Jennifer and Mom dashed across the street to Fred's Market and asked the manager if anyone had turned in a bank bag. No one had. Then they retraced Jennifer's steps through the store. Finally Jennifer spotted the bank bag lying on the floor, under the edge of a shelf.
19. "Mom," Jennifer said, "I found it!"
20. Mom opened the bag nervously. "Well," she said, frowning, "the money is gone." Jennifer hung her head. "But the checks and the credit card receipts are still here, so it's not a total loss." Jennifer felt terrible. She went with her mother to the bank to deposit the checks. Then they went back to the diner and explained everything to her father.

### **Reading Passages: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

21. "I just wanted to show you and Mom that I could do more than wipe tables," Jennifer finished.
22. "Jennifer," Dad said, "I know you were trying to help, but that doesn't excuse what you've done."
23. "I guess you don't want me to work here anymore," she said softly, her face burning red. Jennifer felt sick to her stomach. She couldn't even look at her parents.
24. "On the contrary," Dad said. "You need to work to reimburse the diner for the money you lost. And after you've paid your debt, you might still be able to save enough for that new computer."

## Reading Passages: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade



*A Newspaper for the Students by the Students*

April 19, 2003

Weekly Edition

*On April 23 the Clear Springs sixth-grade class will visit the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum. This issue of the Clear Springs Cougar will give readers information about the museum and its history. The next issue will describe the students' visit.*

### **The Smithsonian Institution—How It Started**

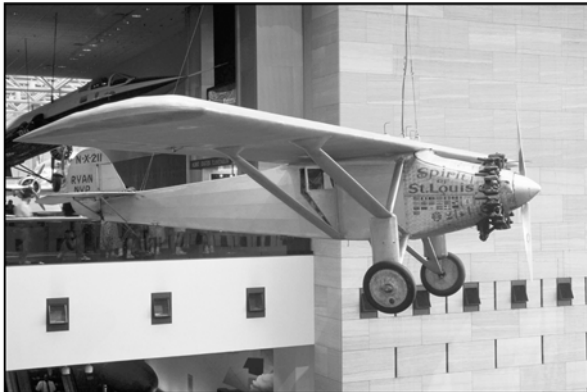
*by Troy Mason*

1. There is still mystery surrounding how the Smithsonian Institution was founded. In his will James Smithson gave more than \$500,000 to the United States. He wanted the government to establish an institution to help increase and spread knowledge. Congress accepted his gift and in 1846 created the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. No one is really sure why Mr. Smithson gave this money to our country. He wasn't a U.S. citizen. In fact, Smithson was born in France, grew up in England, and was educated there at Oxford University. He never even set foot in the United States.
2. The Smithsonian Institution had a humble beginning. It started in a large stone building called the Castle. At first the Castle was home to a variety of objects from the areas of art and natural history. The Castle also had a chemistry laboratory and a library.
3. Since 1846 the Smithsonian has grown into a multibuilding organization. It now includes a zoo and 16 museums. The National Air and Space Museum, which opened in 1976, is one of the Smithsonian's most popular museums.
4. The National Air and Space Museum is dedicated to the history of flying. The museum has more than 20 galleries, a theater, and a planetarium. Inside the museum are many famous aircraft, including the *Wright 1903 Flyer*, also known as the *Kitty Hawk*. On December 17, 1903, Wilbur and Orville Wright made the world's first flights in the *Kitty Hawk*. Also displayed is the *Spirit of St. Louis*, the plane in which Charles Lindbergh made the first solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean.

Reading Passages: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade



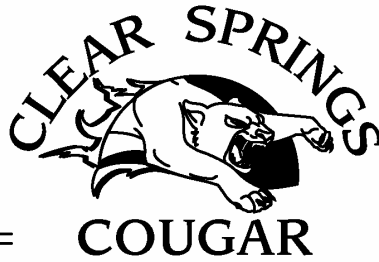
The National Air and Space Museum is one of the Smithsonian's most popular museums.



Charles Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic in the *Spirit of St. Louis*.

5. The museum holds some of the first U.S. spacecraft. These include John Glenn's *Mercury Friendship 7* capsule, which was the first U.S. spacecraft to orbit Earth. Also on display is the *Apollo 11* command module *Columbia*. In 1969 the *Columbia's* lunar module *Eagle* was the first spacecraft to land on the moon.

Reading Passages: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade



*A Newspaper for the Students by the Students*

April 26, 2003

Weekly Edition

**Sixth Graders Visit the National Air and Space Museum**

*by Chris Allen*

1. Our English teachers would have been proud! We, the sixth-grade class of Clear Springs Middle School, must have used every synonym for the word *awesome* that there is. And awesome is exactly what the National Air and Space Museum is. "Cool" and "neat" were just some of the expressions students used to describe the impressive museum tour. It is easy to understand why more than nine million people visit the museum every year. Almost every event in the history of human flight is represented in one of the museum's many galleries. It was truly a phenomenal experience to reach out and touch the famous airplanes and amazing spaceships that we've all heard and read about.  
  
**The Wright Brothers' Kitty Hawk**
2. The *Kitty Hawk*, officially called the *Wright 1903 Flyer*, was the first famous aircraft that we saw. Standing under the long, narrow wings, we found it hard to imagine flying in what looks like a paper airplane. It is incredible to think that 100 years ago, two brothers who were bicycle mechanics made a plane of wood and fabric that flew for the first time. Orville Wright piloted the plane, which flew for 120 feet and remained in the air for 12 seconds. The brothers made three more flights that day. It was really inspiring for all of us to hear about two young men who followed their dream and changed the world with their invention.

## Reading Passages: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

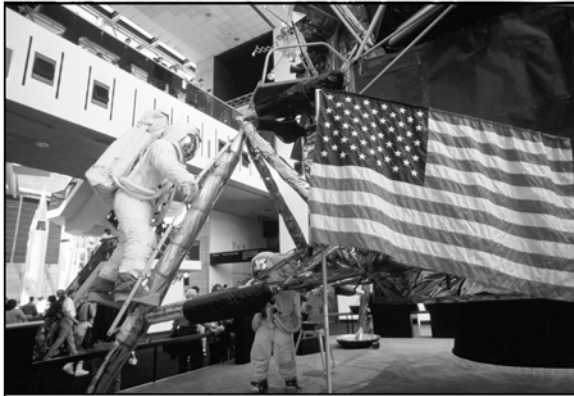


The *Kitty Hawk* and command module *Columbia* are just two of the many displays at the National Air and Space Museum.

### **Spaceflight**

3. Another crowd pleaser was the gallery that houses the first U.S. spacecraft. John Glenn's *Mercury Friendship 7* capsule is by far the most fascinating space exhibit in the museum. On Glenn's 1962 flight, he alone circled Earth three times in less than five hours. Looking at the small cylinder that was the first module, we found it hard to believe that it weighs almost 3,000 pounds. The black marks on the module from the heat of reentering Earth's atmosphere made the dangers of space travel seem more real to us.
  
4. The next display we saw was the *Apollo 11* mission command module *Columbia*. Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr., were the first men to land on the moon. On July 20, 1969, they touched down on a rocky plain of the moon in the lunar module *Eagle*. They explored the moon on foot and returned to the module with surface material. We were actually able to look at these moon rocks. It was hard to believe that these rocks were once part of the moon we see almost every night. Many of us wondered aloud whether there would be space travel in our future. I wondered whether I would one day touch the moon.

## Reading Passages: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade



A display depicts astronauts proudly placing the U.S. flag on the moon.

### **Other Sights**

5. The Lockheed Martin IMAX Theater, with its five-story-high movie screen, was also a very popular part of the museum. The flight film that we watched made us feel as if we were actually on board a high-speed jet airplane. At one point during the movie, several students swayed back and forth as the plane turned spirals in the sky. One student compared it to riding a roller coaster.

### **A Trip Worth Taking**

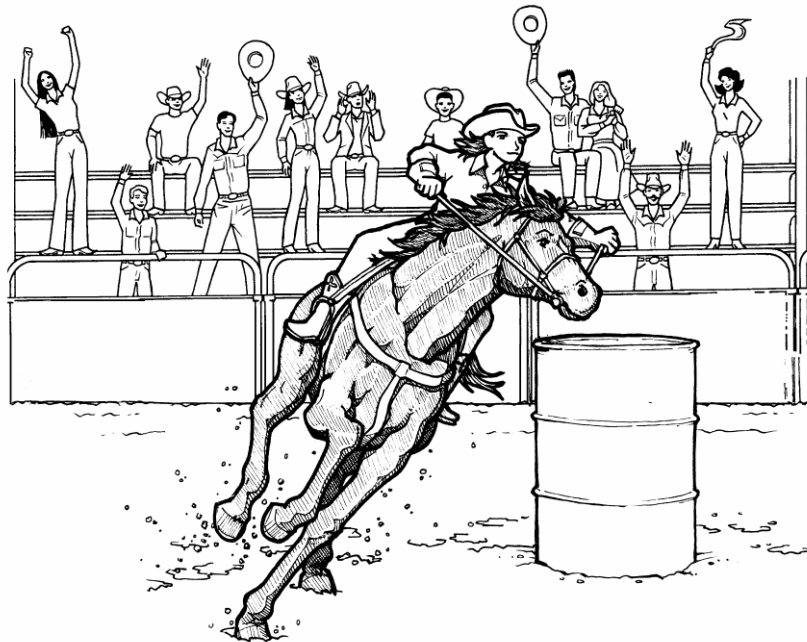
6. The National Air and Space Museum is definitely a place worth visiting. Touring the museum was an incredible experience for us. A big THANK YOU to James Smithson, who made this museum available to everyone!



## Reading Passages: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Riding to Win**

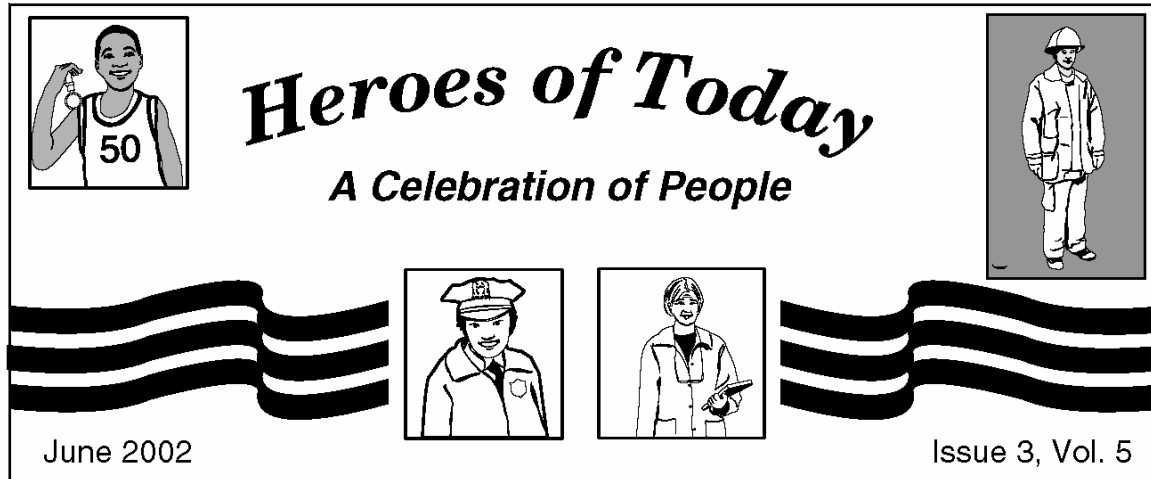
1. Tacy waited anxiously for the gate to open and her race to begin. She could feel her horse Stubby restlessly stomping the ground. Tacy tried to pretend it was just like all her practices back at her father's ranch, but she couldn't fool herself. The rodeo crowd buzzed in the background, and the air seemed charged with excitement. "I can do this," Tacy told herself. Tacy looked over at her sister Sheri, who was always calm. Sheri had been through this many times before. Sheri smiled and gave Tacy a thumbs-up sign.
2. Then the gate opened, and Stubby charged out toward the first barrel. The big chestnut horse knew what to do without Tacy even guiding him. They had spent many hours practicing, so circling the barrels was automatic for both of them. But now Tacy thought Stubby was going a little too fast. She tugged on the reins and guided him carefully around the first barrel. Stubby seemed to fight her, as if to say, "I can do this. Let me show you." But Tacy didn't want to mess up. It was the first of two rides to determine the winner of the Ranger County Rodeo Junior Barrel Racing Championship. Riders had two chances to circle the three barrels with their horse and return to the starting point. The contestant with the fastest combined time would win.
3. After Stubby got around the first barrel, Tacy let him gain speed across the arena toward the second barrel. She could feel the powerful horse digging into the ground and picking up speed. Tacy knew they needed to be fast to have a chance of winning, but she also knew that missing a barrel or knocking one over could put her in last place. She didn't trust her racing skills that much yet. She pulled back on the reins, just a little, to make sure that Stubby was not going too fast. Stubby snorted as they circled the second barrel. Now he shot toward the final barrel at the end of the arena. Tacy slowed him again, leaning into the turn as they rounded the barrel. She urged him forward, and he sped back to the line. Tacy looked for her time: 19.6 seconds. Not bad for the newest rider in the championship. So far that put her in fourth place out of more than twenty riders.



## Reading Passages: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

4. Now it was her sister's second turn. "Ride carefully," Tacy said as her sister waited at the line.
5. "Lynda Adams finished her first race in 18.1," Sheri reminded her. "I'm not going to beat that by riding carefully."
6. "But—" Tacy started to protest as the gate opened and Sheri raced out. She was riding a black mare named Beetle. Beetle and Sheri headed full speed toward the first barrel. "Slow down. Slow down," Tacy whispered. Tacy had watched her sister race before but never this fast. She was sure that Sheri would knock the barrel over. Beetle's front hooves dug in, and the mare's hind legs swiveled hard, looking as if they would wind around the barrel. Somehow Sheri and Beetle made it safely around and began racing for the second barrel. Tacy looked at the clock; Sheri had made good time. "Be careful," she pleaded under her breath, but Sheri and Beetle charged full speed. Again, somehow, Beetle managed to get cleanly around the barrel. Now they were charging for the last barrel. Tacy could see they were making great time. She could hear the roar of the crowd building. "Maybe Sheri can beat Lynda's time!" Tacy thought. But then Beetle cut around the last barrel too early, knocking it down. The crowd groaned as Sheri and Beetle raced back to the start gate. Their time was 18.0, but a five second penalty was added for knocking one barrel over, bringing their time to 23.0 seconds—last place.
7. "Sheri, why weren't you more careful?" Tacy asked her sister in surprise. "Now you don't have a chance to win."
8. "I told you, Tacy," Sheri said. "I didn't have a chance to win anyway if I rode carefully. So I rode to win." Tacy walked away slowly. She had another ride to make. She might still be able to finish in the top three. "I'm not like you, Tacy," Sheri called after her. "I try my best to win, and if I lose, well, I'll just try again next time."
9. Tacy mounted Stubby and got ready for her second ride. Sheri's words were still in her ears. Lynda Adams was just finishing her second ride. Her horse had slipped a little, and she had finished her second run in 19.8 seconds. Tacy did the math in her head. She needed to finish in 18.0 seconds to beat Lynda. "That's crazy," she thought. She had ridden that fast in practice but never in a real rodeo. If Stubby slipped, she wouldn't finish in the top three. She looked over at Sheri. Her sister smiled and clapped her hands. "Come on, Tacy!" she yelled. "You can do it!"
10. But it was Sheri's earlier words that echoed through Tacy's mind as the gate opened: *"I'm not like you, Tacy."* Stubby seemed to be charging too hard. She started to pull him back, but something stopped her. Instead, she leaned into the turn and let her horse swing around toward the first barrel. Stubby had never felt so fast. The ground seemed to thunder under them as he tore for the second barrel. In a dizzying whirl, Stubby was around it and streaking toward the third and final turn. Tacy could hear the noise of the crowd rising as they saw that she had a chance. Now Stubby turned hard around the last barrel, his hind legs bumping it as he dug for the finish. "That's it," Tacy thought. With a five-second penalty, she would finish near the bottom. But the crowd noise was increasing! The barrel had wobbled but hadn't fallen. As Stubby flashed across the line, Tacy saw her time: 17.9 seconds! She had done it. She had won! She looked at Sheri, who was jumping up and down. "Way to go, Tacy!" she shouted. "Way to go!"

Reading Passages: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade



The cover features the title "Heroes of Today" in a large, bold, serif font, with the subtitle "A Celebration of People" below it. The title is flanked by two illustrations: on the left, a basketball player in a jersey with the number 50, and on the right, a firefighter in full gear. Below the title, there are two smaller illustrations: a police officer and a person in a lab coat. The cover is decorated with wavy black and white stripes. The date "June 2002" is on the bottom left, and "Issue 3, Vol. 5" is on the bottom right.

**Heroes of Today**  
*A Celebration of People*

June 2002 Issue 3, Vol. 5

**Mattie Stepanek, Poet-Hero**

*by S. L. Dulak*

1. Mattie Stepanek is very busy. He speaks at conferences and participates in fund-raising events. He has been a guest on television shows in Chicago and New York City. He has written two number-one best-sellers. He owns a motorized scooter that he calls Slick. Although this sounds like an exciting life, Mattie has to deal with many hardships as well. Mattie is an 11-year-old boy with a life-threatening disease.



Mattie J.T. Stepanek, National Goodwill Ambassador of the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

## Reading Passages: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

2. Matthew Joseph Thaddeus Stepanek likes to be called Mattie. He was born with a rare form of muscular dystrophy, or MD for short. MD interferes with the body's ability to breathe and also affects the heart. Mattie's muscles have become so weak that he has a hard time walking. His scooter is a motorized wheelchair. He must take a portable oxygen tank everywhere he goes. These things remind Mattie of the seriousness of his disease, as do the many time consuming medical treatments he has to have each day. But despite the disease, Mattie enjoys many of the same activities as other children his age. He loves to watch baseball and read. He has favorite games and toys. He even has a first-degree black belt in a martial art. And like other 11-year-olds, he has schoolwork. Because of the complications related to his disease, Mattie is homeschooled instead of going to a regular school.
3. Every summer Mattie spends one week at Camp Maria, the Muscular Dystrophy Association camp in Leonardtown, Maryland. The camp motto is "Friends Helping Friends." A friend is assigned to help each camper. Mattie's friend helps him with arts and crafts, wheelchair football and baseball, singing, and dancing. At the close of the session, campers write their special wishes on a piece of paper. The papers are then put into a basket, which is tied to balloons and released into the air. The balloons sail into the sky, launching the wishes.
4. For the past five years, Mattie has made the same three wishes: to have some of the thousands of poems he has written published in a book, to meet one of his heroes, former U.S. president Jimmy Carter, and to have his poems read on television. Now Mattie believes the balloon wishes work.
5. Mattie's first wish came true during one of his numerous stays in the hospital. Cheryl and Peter Barnes, founders of VSP Books, read some of Mattie's poems and knew right away that they were special. In July 2001 the Barneses agreed to print some of the poems in a book Mattie entitled *Heartsongs*. His second book, *Journey Through Heartsongs*, was published in October 2001. More than 450,000 copies of both books have been sold.
6. While Mattie was in the hospital in Washington, D.C., another wish came true. He spoke on the telephone with Jimmy Carter. During their conversation Mattie didn't mention his disease. Instead, he and Mr. Carter talked of bringing peace to countries at war, such as Bosnia. Mattie thinks Jimmy Carter is the perfect hero. Since his presidency ended in 1981, Mr. Carter has worked for world peace and human rights. Mattie, too, wants to grow up to be a peacemaker and a politician.
7. On October 19, 2001, the last of his wishes came true. Mattie was a guest on Oprah Winfrey's nationally televised talk show. He talked with Ms. Winfrey about his desire for peace in the world. She read several of Mattie's poems on television. Some of Mattie's poems are about the ordeal of living with a serious disease. But Mattie doesn't always write about the hardships of life. Most of his poems are about hope, peace, and wisdom.
8. Mattie is the Muscular Dystrophy Association's 2002 National Goodwill Ambassador. As a spokesperson for Children's Hospice International, he speaks on behalf of sick children and their families. Although he has received many honors, Mattie feels that his greatest achievement is being alive today, especially since he has had many close calls throughout the years. Mattie continues to spread his message of peace and goodwill, hoping to inspire people to help others.
9. Mattie tries to live his life by three ideas. The first is to play in the puddles after every storm. The second is to celebrate life every day. The third is to never give up trying to reach what you want. Mattie's life is certainly a reflection of each of these principles.

## Reading Passages: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **A Mysterious New World**

1. I looked out the window of the spaceship and smiled. With each passing day, the distant blue planet seemed to grow larger. I couldn't help but feel excited. Soon I would set foot on what, for me, would be a mysterious new world. I had heard many stories and legends about this strange planet, and now at last I would live there.
2. In the quiet solitude of my cabin, I tried to sleep. Lying there by myself, I recalled the pictures I had seen all my life: the blue oceans, the green forests, the golden sunsets—pictures of a world I both knew and didn't know. I longed to breathe that world's open air, feel its grass on my feet, and watch its birds soar in blue skies. It wouldn't be long now. After traveling for months, we were scheduled to arrive in just 10 hours.
3. I closed my eyes, but my actions belied my excitement. How could my parents expect me to sleep? It was easy for them. They had been there. What for me had been only a dream, almost a fairy tale really, was home to them. What I had seen only in photographs and videos, they had experienced firsthand. That was before they had become astronauts and traveled to a space station orbiting the planet Saturn—the space station where I was born 15 years ago. It was the only home I had ever known. I looked out the window again. Now only hours away, my future home looked like a sapphire gleaming on a velvet carpet. Staring at the planet, I allowed my mind to float back to the day my mother had told me that we were leaving the space station.
4. "Tell me about the wind," I had said eagerly.
5. "Kalmara," Mom had said, "you've seen it on video."
6. "Yes, but how does it feel?" I insisted. "Tell me again. What will it be like?"
7. "It pushes air against your face, like the oxygen vents here at the station," Mom said. She didn't seem to understand my excitement.
8. "Only faster, right?"
9. Finally she smiled. "Sometimes—sometimes much faster. In fact, some storms even blow down buildings."
10. "They're called tornadoes," I said. "And hurricanes?"
11. Mom nodded. "They have many different names."
12. "And the snow is like powdered ice that falls from the sky," I said. "Do you think it will be snowing when we get there?"
13. "Snow in July? In Texas?" she said, laughing. "It's highly unlikely."
14. I knew that, of course. In school my friends and I had studied about Texas and many other places. "Texas," I whispered now, lying in bed. The name seemed filled with wonder and promise. Yes, I knew about Texas, but knowing I would soon be living there made it seem somehow more real. During our journey I had spent countless hours in the ship's library reading about Texas on the computer.

## Reading Passages: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

15. At last I settled into sleep. The next thing I knew, Mom was nudging me awake with a soft shake. “Kalmara, we’re here. The spaceship is in orbit. Pack up your bag. Make sure you don’t leave anything in the cabin.”
16. I sat up and looked out the window expectantly. For a second I seemed to lose my breath. There it was! Earth! It was close enough now that I could see areas of green and brown land on its surface. Thin white clouds swirled around it, and hundreds of tiny spaceships darted here and there—transport shuttles taking passengers to the surface. While I was packing, my father stopped by my small room.
17. “It will be a couple of hours before we can disembark,” he said. “We might as well eat breakfast while we wait for a shuttle.”
18. A couple of hours! Earth seemed close enough to touch. Anyway, how could I eat at a time like this? But after taking our travel bags to the transport area, we went to the galley for one last meal. My heart racing, I picked at my food.
19. “Space eggs,” my father complained, pushing the yellow goop around his plate. “I can’t wait to taste some fresh eggs.” I couldn’t remember when Dad hadn’t complained about our food. I didn’t care much for the eggs either, but most of our meals didn’t seem too bad.
20. “Not me,” Mom said. “Fresh fruit. That’s what I want. I can’t wait to sink my teeth into a nice, juicy apple.” Usually I felt left out of these conversations, but now I listened closely. I couldn’t wait to try some of the things my parents had always talked about.
21. At last we boarded the shuttle for the short trip to the surface. I sat at the window, eager for my first close look at our new home. The ride down was smooth until we hit the outer atmosphere. There the shuttle began to rock and bump. I looked at Dad nervously. “It’s only turbulence,” he assured me. “It’s caused by the air outside the shuttle.”
22. His words were magical—air outside the shuttle. For me, outside had always meant space—a vast expanse of emptiness, a huge vacuum where humans couldn’t exist without special equipment. Now, there was air outside the ship. Suddenly we broke through the clouds, and I saw the ground below. It felt like a dream as we plunged downward. First mountains and then rivers and streams came into focus. Finally I noticed small buildings clustered together. Houses! We would live in a real house!
23. The shuttle landed, and after a few minutes, we began exiting. Standing in the hatch, Dad put his arm around me. As we walked down the steps together and I touched Earth for the first time, my hair suddenly flew up into my eyes. “Wind!” I said, laughing. “It’s wind!”

Reading Passages: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade



## Reading Passages: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

### Angel Falls

1. It was the beginning of the rainy season in Venezuela, and my father had just completed his work in the capital city of Caracas. He had promised to take me on a tour of Canaima National Park before we returned home, and now we were on our way. The 7.4-million-acre reserve is larger than the state of Maryland. It is home to Angel Falls—Earth's highest waterfall.
2. The June air was heavy with moisture as our small airplane flew out of Ciudad Bolívar. Passing over the Orinoco River, we could see the distinct forms of the mountains as they jutted upward through the thick forest canopy. Ramón, our Venezuelan guide, explained that these rugged contours had taken millions of years to form. The soft sandstone that had once covered the area had eroded over time, leaving behind the hard rock that makes up the flat-topped mountains now outlined against the evening sky. The Pemón people, who have lived here for centuries, call these mountains *tepuís*.
3. Flying over the thick vegetation, I felt as if we were entering a jungle that time had overlooked. I almost expected to see a dinosaur crash through the forest at any moment. As I looked down, I thought there were probably areas below the trees that had never been seen by humans. After all, as large as Angel Falls is, it was not discovered by the outside world until 1935.
4. Each towering mountaintop we passed was like an island, separated from the other mountains by the jungle thousands of feet below. Ramón told us that each *tepuí* has unique plant and animal life, much of which cannot be found anywhere else. He said that many of these isolated mountaintops have never been explored. Some people think that prehistoric creatures might still live on some of them. I thought about how thrilling it would be to discover a new species or a species thought to be long extinct.
5. "Angel Falls is only a few minutes from here," Ramón called out over the plane's steady hum. "Its waters plunge 3,212 feet from the edge of one of these mountains," he continued. "The Pemón call it Auyán-tepuí—Mountain of Evil. Because of its fierce thunderstorms and mysterious cloud formations, some believe it's haunted by evil spirits."
6. Given the mountain's Pemón name, Angel Falls didn't seem like a very fitting name for the waterfall. However, Ramón explained that the falls are named after Jimmy Angel, the pilot who discovered them in 1935 while searching for gold.
7. On the way to our base camp, the plane circled Auyán-tepuí several times, but we were able to catch only brief glimpses of it. The huge flat-topped mountain and its famous waterfall were almost completely hidden behind thick cloud cover. From what I could see, the shiny curtain of water flowed from several cracks in the mountain's side. It plunged out of sight toward the unseen bottom of a dark canyon.



## Reading Passages: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade



At 3,212 feet, Angel Falls is the world's highest waterfall.

8. At Canaima National Park we spent a rainy night in hammocks under an open-sided thatched hut. Early the next morning after a breakfast of fruit and canned meat, we set off in the rain down the Carrao River. Along with our Pemón guides, we headed for Angel Falls in small motorized dugout canoes called *curiaras*.
9. The swift river tossed us wildly. I was afraid the canoes would sink, but our guides managed to keep them afloat. They expertly navigated the many twists and turns.
10. At last the rain stopped, and the sky cleared to reveal jagged sandstone cliffs looming high above us. Through the thick trees, we caught glimpses of numerous waterfalls pounding piles of fallen rock.
11. We turned up the smaller Churun River for the final five miles. The jungle became thicker almost immediately and seemed to close in on both sides. The air grew heavy, and our guides fell quiet and watchful, speaking only in hushed, solemn tones.
12. "To them this is sacred ground," Ramón whispered.

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13. When the river narrowed, the guides stopped the engines and began to paddle through the still, tea-colored water. Strange squawks, roars, chirps, and whoops echoed through the jungle. Ramón said they probably came from monkeys, insects, frogs, and birds. As the distant rumble of the falls became a dull roar, our guides nosed the boats onto the muddy bank. It was not yet 10:00 A.M.
14. We hiked along a slippery path for about an hour. Dripping vegetation soaked our clothes and shoes, and the roar now filled our ears. At last Ramón stopped and pointed up through the trees. There, towering above us, stretching into the clouds, was Auyán-tepuí—and the top of Angel Falls. We hurried on and soon broke into an open field scattered with huge boulders, many the size of houses.
15. The mist and the roar of the crashing water suddenly engulfed us. I shielded my eyes and gazed up. The water tumbled straight down more than 2,500 feet before colliding with the rocky face of the mountain. Then it tumbled several hundred feet more, crashing over cracked stone before settling into a wide, deep pool. I staggered backward as I tried to grasp the tremendous size and power of the falls. No doubt the boulders near where we stood had once been a part of that cliff face.
16. “You’re fortunate to be here now,” Ramón shouted over the roar. “During the dry season, the falls dwindle until they are no larger than a small stream.”
17. It was time to head back to camp all too soon. Later in the day the canyon would be dark and foggy. It would be almost impossible to see the falls, and our trip back would be more dangerous. As we prepared to leave, my father and I took one last look upward through the cloudy mist. Standing there, I felt small and insignificant. The world we were returning to seemed distant and less meaningful as I said good-bye to this awesome place.

## Reading Passages: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Florence Nightingale: The Lady of the Lamp**

1. As she prepared to sail home in 1856, Florence Nightingale was triumphant. Since her arrival in Scutari, Turkey, almost two years earlier, she had not only improved medical care for British soldiers, but she had also transformed the public's view of nursing. Grateful citizens in London eagerly awaited her return.
2. Nightingale had long wanted to help others. Born into a wealthy family in 1820, she spent her early life traveling across Europe. Through her family's travels, Nightingale saw the finest European society. However, she also saw the poverty, sickness, and hardship of Europe's common citizens. While still a teenager, she decided to spend her life helping others.
3. Nightingale's parents expected her to marry, but she refused all proposals. She did not want to be a wife and mother. At the age of 24, she decided to become a nurse. Her family was horrified.
4. In those days nursing was not a respected vocation. Hospitals were dirty, dangerous places. Nurses were seen as careless and dishonest. Moreover, respectable women would never do such work. Though her parents discouraged her, Nightingale secretly read and studied everything she could about caring for the sick. Eventually, she left her parents' home to begin her nursing studies, first in Germany and then in France.
5. After finishing her studies, Nightingale returned home and, despite her family's continued objections, accepted a job running a hospital. In her new job she immediately set about making improvements in the care being given to patients. She had hot water piped into the hospital and insisted that the wards be kept spotless. She ordered that bed linens be cleaned and changed regularly. Most importantly, she hired properly trained nurses. Not all her changes pleased her employers, but Nightingale persisted. She was soon recognized as the leading hospital expert in England.
6. During this time the British army was in Turkey, fighting a war with Russia. At first Great Britain rejoiced at the news of great victories, but disturbing reports soon followed. Thousands of soldiers had been wounded, and only a few doctors were available to treat them. The soldiers had almost no food or warm clothing. Outraged citizens demanded action. Finally Britain's secretary of war, a friend of Nightingale's, asked for her help. Nightingale and 38 nurses set out for Turkey.
7. In Scutari, Nightingale found a filthy army hospital swarming with lice, fleas, and rats. The soldiers' bedding and clothes were covered with disease-spreading pests. Food supplies were spoiled, often causing the soldiers to become even sicker. Though the army commander was uncooperative, Nightingale devised ways to improve conditions. Within months the hospital became a place where soldiers got better, not worse. Stories of Nightingale's work reached England. Hearing of her nightly visits to wounded soldiers, people began calling her the Lady of the Lamp. Nightingale herself fell seriously ill but continued working from her bed.

## Reading Passages; 7<sup>th</sup> Grade



8. Finally, peace was declared. Nightingale returned to England exhausted but elated. After her return, she met with Queen Victoria to urge that injured or sick British soldiers never again be so neglected. Later in her life, Nightingale wrote books about nursing and hospitals and started a nursing school with money donated by the grateful people of England.

## Reading Passages: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Help on Horseback: Mary Breckinridge and the Frontier Nursing Service**

1. Mary Breckinridge urged her horse up a hill deep in the Kentucky woods. Inside the small house ahead was a man with a broken leg. The man's friend had seen Breckinridge while on his way to bring back the only doctor available, a horse doctor, to amputate the leg. Breckinridge was hurrying to examine the injured man. She knew he would be unable to support his family if his leg were removed. She didn't want it done unless it was absolutely necessary.
2. "I'm a nurse," she said when a child opened the door. The injured man lay in bed, a splintered fragment of bone piercing his skin. "What happened?" she asked. The man didn't answer. His leg was infected, and he was weak and in pain. Still, Breckinridge thought the leg might be saved. She sent the child away and began cleaning the wound.
3. When she was a child, Mary Breckinridge probably never expected to be a nurse. The daughter of a wealthy and important U.S. diplomat, she had spent part of her youth living in the palace of Nicholas II, czar (king) of Russia. But though her childhood had been happy, Breckinridge's early adult life was filled with tragedy. Her first husband had died just two years after their marriage. She married again and had two children, but they both died very young. Grief stricken, Breckinridge became determined to spend her life improving health care for mothers and children.
4. She joined the American Red Cross and was sent to Europe with the American Committee for Devastated France. World War I had ended, but the French people were still suffering. While she was there, Breckinridge started a program to provide food and medical care to children and their mothers.
5. Inspired, Breckinridge decided to continue her nursing studies in England. She also traveled to Scotland to observe a nursing service that cared for people living out in the country. Breckinridge knew that children in the rural United States desperately needed health care, too. She returned to the United States and started the Frontier Nursing Service, recruiting other nurses to help her. They traveled on horseback to care for people who lived far from doctors and hospitals.
6. Breckinridge chose to start the service in Leslie County, Kentucky. Although it was originally started to care for mothers and children, the service helped anyone in need. The nurses gave shots, treated diseases, bandaged wounds, and delivered babies. What began as a small clinic eventually expanded into a hospital and a nursing school.

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7. Today the Mary Breckinridge Hospital continues to care for patients from the mountains of Kentucky. People from around the world travel there to study the program Breckinridge started. Many come from places where people have little or no medical care. Though she died in 1965, Breckinridge's ideas continue to help people.

## Reading Passages: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

### Fair Is Fair

1. Dr. Santos looked across the table at his son Héctor and frowned. “Don’t worry,” he said into the phone. “I’ll see that it doesn’t happen again. Thanks for calling.” Héctor grimaced as his father hung up the phone. “Mrs. Domínguez says you came to class without your book *again* yesterday,” Dr. Santos said, accentuating the word *again*.
2. Héctor hung his head and stared down at the table. He had been expecting the call all morning. He had hardly touched his bowl of *posole*. Usually the delicious dish was one of his favorite foods. “I know, Dad,” he mumbled. “I’m sorry. It’s just that sometimes I have too much to remember.”
3. “I know, Héctor,” Dr. Santos said. “You were sorry last time, too. But I bet you don’t forget the equipment you need for soccer practice each day, do you?”
4. “No,” Héctor admitted. He never forgot those kinds of things.
5. “Well, after practice today I want you to clean the garage. While you’re doing that, you can think of ways to remember your math book.”
6. “O.K., Dad,” Héctor said, hanging his head even lower. There went his Saturday. Soccer practice would last a couple of hours, and cleaning the family’s big garage would take the rest of the day.
7. “I’m late for class,” Dr. Santos said. “Make sure you lock the door when you leave. Your mom should be home when you get back.”
8. “O.K.,” Héctor repeated as his father closed his briefcase and left. His father was a professor at the nearby community college. On Saturday mornings he taught a chemistry class. Héctor still couldn’t believe that college students actually volunteered to go to school on Saturday mornings. This morning, however, he almost wished he were going to school, too. Why did Mrs. Domínguez have to call anyway? He had promised her he wouldn’t forget the book again.
9. Héctor was going to change for soccer practice when some papers on one of the kitchen chairs caught his eye. They were his father’s class notes. Dr. Santos had been working on them when Mrs. Domínguez had called. Héctor had seen how often his father referred to his notes while teaching class. Maybe now his father would see how easily people could forget things. Héctor put the notes back on the chair and went to his room to start dressing for practice.
10. But as he got ready for practice, Héctor kept thinking about his father’s notes. The words “Test Review” had been written on top of them. If his father was planning to give a test next week, the review would be important to the students. Héctor thought about calling the school, but there probably wasn’t anyone there to answer on a Saturday morning. Besides, even if his father got the message, it wouldn’t be feasible for him to drive back home. It would take too long, and by the time he returned to the college, his class would be over.

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11. Héctor decided he should find a way to help his father. He had an idea. Opening his bank, he shook out a few coins. He stuffed the money into his pocket, grabbed his father's notes, and ran out the door. He knew that a bus would be leaving for the college soon. As he ran to the bus stop, he looked at his watch. There was no way he would ever get back in time for practice. Coach Johnson would probably be upset. Héctor hesitated but then kept going. His parents were always telling him that he had to learn whether something was a priority or whether it could wait.
12. Far ahead Héctor saw the bus that he needed to take to the college. The bus driver had closed the door and was starting to pull away. Héctor sprinted as fast as he could, waving his arms frantically. Fortunately the driver saw him and pulled to a stop. The bus's big doors opened, and Héctor scrambled inside. Out of breath and sweating, he looked at his watch as the bus began to rumble down the street. His father's class would be starting soon.
13. The trip seemed to take twice as long as Héctor remembered. Every few blocks the bus stopped to pick up or let off passengers. Héctor couldn't believe how slowly some of the people moved. Finally the bus pulled up in front of the college. Héctor tried to dash out but got stuck behind a man carrying an armload of packages. It seemed to take the man hours to get through the door. Out of the bus at last, Héctor raced inside the college. He wasn't sure where his father's Saturday class met. "I think it's on the second floor," he said to himself, bounding up the stairs. "Or is that where his Tuesday class meets?" Then he heard his father's voice coming from a nearby room.
14. "Let me just find my notes," Dr. Santos was saying, "and we'll get started on the review."
15. When Héctor looked inside the room, his father was searching through his briefcase with a worried look on his face. "Dad," Héctor said in a half-whisper. Dr. Santos turned and looked up. Héctor held up the notes. "You left them on the chair," he said.
16. Dr. Santos smiled and shook his head in embarrassment. Héctor could tell they were both thinking the same thing. "Well," Dr. Santos announced to the class. "It seems I forgot my notes, but my son was thoughtful enough to bring them to me." Standing in the doorway, Héctor could feel the eyes of the college students looking at him. He felt a little embarrassed, but he also felt good knowing that he had helped his father. "Fair is fair," his father whispered as he took the notes. "I guess you'll have some help in that garage today."



## Reading Passages: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

### Queen of Scream

1. Jennifer “Juniper” Jairala grips the rail of one of the water rides at Universal Studios’ new theme park in Osaka, Japan. She knows the drop is coming, but she still feels a thrill as the boat she is on plunges over the edge. Unlike most people who ride the roller coasters and water rides at the new theme park, Jairala is more than just a casual observer. As one of the park’s ride-show engineers, Jairala helps design, assemble, and test some of the scariest rides in the world. You might even call her the Queen of Scream.



Engineers put the Jurassic Park ride at Universal Studios Japan through many test rides before the first passengers were permitted to ride.

2. How did Jairala get what she calls her dream job? She says it all started with a childhood interest in how things work. While she was growing up in Chicago, Jairala was constantly trying to fix anything in her house that broke. Moreover, she was a good student. She says that when people asked her what her favorite subject was, she would reply, “All of them.” After graduating from high school, Jairala went to Cornell University, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering. Now she works for one of the biggest theme-park corporations in the world.

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3. Although the theme park where Jairala works has been open for approximately a year, she has worked there for about two years. Before the park opened, she oversaw the construction of the rides. Although customers are hoping to be scared on the rides, the park obviously doesn't want to really imperil its customers. It was Jairala's job to inspect the rides at each step to make sure they were being built correctly. The rides go through many tests before any human passenger is allowed to climb aboard. For example, the roller coasters are first tested with sandbags that each weigh about the same as a human passenger. In addition, Jairala and other engineers took numerous test rides. Jairala enjoys the thrill of testing a new ride, but she keeps safety foremost in mind.
4. Roller-coaster engineers like Jairala say the best part of designing roller coasters is turning fear into fun. It all starts with illusion. Amusement-park designers and engineers always try to make roller coasters look and feel as frightening as possible without the rides actually being dangerous. They sometimes give the coaster an aged appearance. They might play strange noises over the sound system or run the coasters through dimly lit passages. Then most coasters tantalize the rider with a slow climb to the top before the first drop. Wooden coasters have a natural, but safe, tendency to clickity-clack, shake, tremble, and whine as the cars climb. It's all part of what makes the coasters so much fun. Though coasters usually travel slower than the speed limit on most highways, they seem faster. The closeness of things flashing by and the jerky, rough ride make passengers feel as if the roller coaster is rocketing out of control. Not all of the coaster's effects are an illusion. On some drops passengers are subjected to forces of gravity (called G's) more than four times as strong as normal. Loops and corkscrews turn the riders around, literally forcing the breath out of them.
5. There is much more to planning amusement-park rides than just figuring out how to scare people. Roller-coaster engineers must keep other factors in mind when building a ride. They must build a ride that is scary but will entice customers to keep coming back. It wouldn't be good for park business if a rider rode a coaster once and decided never to ride it again. Therefore, designers look for a balance.

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6. Jairala and other engineers must also pay attention to the length of the ride. The physical forces of gravity determine how long the coaster's momentum will keep it going. No matter how tall the coaster is, rides will usually last only about a minute after the first drop begins. Customers who sometimes must wait for more than an hour to ride want their money's worth. With this in mind, engineers sometimes extend the length of a ride by using machinery to pull the coaster back up for more drops.
7. On the other hand, rides can't last too long. Engineers like Jairala must keep in mind how many thrills passengers can take in the space of a few minutes. It's also important to limit the length of a ride so that people aren't kept waiting. Theme parks prefer that customers purchase snacks and souvenirs rather than wait in a line. Shorter waits also encourage customers to return to the park in the future. In addition, engineers must consider how easy it is to get into and out of the rides and how to best accommodate large groups that want to ride together.
8. Now that Universal Studios Japan is open, Jairala spends most of her time testing and checking rides to ensure that they are working properly and are safe. However, she is still able to help with the design of the new rides that are constantly being planned for the park. While Jairala hopes to continue building thrill rides, she also wants to continue her education. She plans to someday go back to school for an advanced college degree. Right now, though, she's happy to see another part of the world and work in her dream job.

## Reading Passages: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Together Forever**

1. Orestes Lorenzo stared out at the darkening waters of the Caribbean. “It can’t be much farther,” he thought, straining to see the coast of Cuba, his homeland. Now he was returning, but only briefly. He planned to land his small plane on a highway near the coast just long enough to rescue his wife and two sons and return with them to the United States and freedom.
2. There it was: the slopes of Pan de Matanzas! “They’ve spotted me by now,” Lorenzo thought. He had flown the last half hour just a few feet above the ocean, hoping to avoid the Cuban Air Force’s radar. But this close to the coast, the radar would have detected him even at that height. He imagined the air force frantically responding to an alert that an unidentified aircraft was approaching the coast. As a member of the Cuban Air Force for more than 10 years, he felt sure that officers had already ordered an air-defense missile to be fired. Unless he could pick up his family quickly and get far enough away, he knew that his small plane could be obliterated at any moment. His heart pounded. Everything needed to go perfectly.
3. As Lorenzo’s plane raced toward the coast, he thought back to the last time he had seen his homeland. Almost 21 months before, he had been in another plane—a Cuban Air Force fighter jet. That day he had made the most difficult decision of his life: he left Cuba for the United States. Angry and disillusioned by a government he felt was corrupt, he had decided to risk everything for a new beginning. After discussing it with his wife Vicky, he decided that he should fly his plane to the United States to begin a new life. Lorenzo and his wife felt that the Cuban government would be forced to allow her and the children to join him in the United States. Unfortunately, the Cuban government refused, even after the president of the United States asked. Angry with Lorenzo for leaving with a government plane, Cuban leaders dared Lorenzo to come back and get his family. Realizing that the Cuban government would never allow his family to leave, Lorenzo decided to do just that.
4. Lorenzo slowed the plane and looked for the highway alongside El Marney Beach. Just the night before he had sent a coded message telling his wife to meet him at a prearranged place. “Are they there?” he wondered nervously. “Have they had problems?” So many things could have gone awry. As he looked for the highway, he worried. It would be impossible to land if the traffic were too heavy. At last he spotted the narrow strip of pavement running next to the coast. Flying low over cars and trucks, he searched ahead for his family. Then he spotted three orange dots. They had made it! Lorenzo prepared to land, but a bus and a small white car were in his way. He flew low over the car, nearly scraping it with his landing gear. Then he saw a new problem, a large rock. Lorenzo started to steer around it, but a traffic sign blocked his way. He couldn’t risk clipping the plane’s wing on that sign. The plane slammed down, somehow missing the rock, and Lorenzo hit the brakes.
5. Lorenzo looked behind him. He saw his wife and two sons desperately running for the plane. He gripped the steering control and slowly turned the plane around. Traffic on the highway had stopped all around him. The bus driver looked at Lorenzo with wide eyes. To Lorenzo it seemed as if his wife and sons were moving in slow motion. He couldn’t afford to get out and help them. Finally, they were there. “Watch the propellers,” he thought, turning the plane sideways to make it easier for them to get inside. He pulled open the door, and his 11-year-old son Reyniel scrambled aboard. “Dad!” he screamed, hurrying into the back, his face full of fear and joy.

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6. "Daddy!" The voice of his six-year-old filled the cabin next. Lorenzo felt Alejandro's small arms hugging him. He glanced at his watch as his son climbed into the backseat with his brother. The seconds seemed like minutes.
7. Finally Lorenzo's wife climbed into the plane. Her eyes were wet. Lorenzo felt tears filling his eyes too as he thought of the nearly two years she had endured after he had left. Lorenzo reached for the door to close it. It was jammed and wouldn't close! He tried again, but it was still stuck.
8. "Calm yourself, calm yourself!" he told himself. He grabbed the door with both hands, and finally it closed. "We're on our way!" he shouted. Gunning the engine, Lorenzo raced the plane back down the highway. He looked at his watch. It hadn't quite been a minute since he had landed. Lorenzo steered frantically around oncoming cars. A curve was just ahead in the highway. He had to get the plane into the air before he reached it, but he wasn't going fast enough. He pulled the controls all the way back, and the plane slowly struggled into the sky, skimming the tops of the palm trees that lined the highway. "We did it!" he shouted. "We did it!" But Lorenzo knew they weren't safe yet. They needed to get farther away.
9. When they had reached the 12 1/2-mile point and missiles were no longer a danger, Lorenzo cried again, this time with certainty, "We did it! We're together forever."
10. "Forever!" his wife repeated.



Orestes Lorenzo and his family after Lorenzo rescued them and returned to the United States on December 19, 1992.

## Reading Passages: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **I Have Crossed Famous Rivers**

1. A metallic chatter rose from hundreds of cameras as Nelson Mandela walked toward the gates of Victor Verster Prison in South Africa. Mandela had been told to expect a large crowd, but he was still startled by what he saw. Outside the gates thousands of supporters waited along with reporters and television crews. Freedom was just 50 feet away. Mandela moved forward, but each step seemed to take him back.
2. Mandela had been imprisoned for more than 27 years. Like all black South Africans, he had lived with discrimination his entire life. South Africa's white minority ruled the country, though they were only 25 percent of the population. The government of South Africa felt that white and black citizens should be kept apart. Mandela had attended black-only schools, lived in black-only communities, and traveled on black-only buses and trains. He had never been allowed to vote. As a young man Mandela had joined the African National Congress (ANC), an organization that fought for the rights of black South Africans. Being a knowledgeable attorney, he soon became one of the ANC's leaders.
3. When Mandela was 30 years old, the white-controlled National Party won control of the South African government. Though South Africa had been racially segregated for years, the National Party began to further limit the rights of black citizens. A new policy of apartheid ("apartness") was adopted. Laws were created to ensure that South Africa's wealth and power remained under white control. These laws classified all citizens by race and outlawed marriages between different races. They also specified where blacks could live and which jobs they were allowed to have. Black South Africans had to carry identification passbooks at all times.
4. The ANC protested these laws by calling for strikes. South Africa depended greatly on the labor of its black citizens, and ANC leaders hoped that by refusing to work, blacks could force a change in the laws. The government, however, forcefully crushed the protests. Black organizations, including the ANC, were banned, and future protests were prohibited. When Mandela continued to organize protests, he was arrested, convicted of treason, and sentenced to life in prison.
5. In prison Mandela continued the struggle. As more people learned about apartheid, the South African government faced increasing criticism. Most foreign governments refused to trade with South Africa until its laws were changed. The South African government eventually offered to release Mandela if he agreed not to organize protests, but Mandela refused. Opposition continued to grow until 1989, when South African president F. W. de Klerk revoked the oppressive laws and began to end apartheid. He also granted political prisoners, including Mandela, their unconditional release.
6. Now just seconds from freedom, Mandela's thoughts were crowded with memories of his long struggle. He remembered the victories and the defeats and the friends of all races he had made—he had even made friends with some of his guards. To honor the wisdom of age and experience, his people had a saying: I have crossed famous rivers. Mandela's spirit swelled as he crossed into freedom and thrust his fist upward. The roar of the crowd was deafening.

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7. *Nelson Mandela's release was a significant event that marked the end of the apartheid in South Africa. Mandela was elected president of South Africa four years later.*



Nelson Mandela looks out the window from his cell at Victor Verster Prison in South Africa.

## Reading Passages: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Why Do You Push Us Around?**

1. Having skipped an earlier bus that was too crowded, Rosa Parks was relieved to see plenty of empty seats on the next Montgomery city bus that came to her stop. She walked past several empty seats and sat down just past the movable sign that read “Colored.”
2. The year was 1955. Although African Americans had been free from slavery for 90 years, Montgomery, Alabama, enforced some of the country’s strictest segregation laws. Meant to keep African Americans separated from whites, these so-called Jim Crow laws angered Parks. A few years earlier she had joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an organization that tried to protect African American rights. The NAACP had convinced the U.S. Supreme Court that it was unconstitutional to separate public school children based on race.



3. The bus Parks was riding on began to fill up. At one stop four white passengers boarded. Three took seats at the front, and one man grabbed the rail to ride standing.
4. The driver twisted around in his seat. Looking at Parks and the other African American passengers, he barked, “Move, y’all. I want those seats.” Parks’s eyes widened. It was James F. Blake, the same man who had once before ordered her off a bus he was driving. Blake’s scowl sent Parks’s mind tumbling back to that incident 12 years earlier.
5. Montgomery bus drivers used their own discretion in how they enforced the city’s segregation rules. Some disregarded the rules. Other drivers, including Blake, required African Americans to pay their fare at the front of the bus, exit, and then reboard at the back to find a seat. Blake had a reputation of driving off before riders could reboard the bus.



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6. On that day 12 years earlier in 1943, Parks had refused to exit and reboard at the rear because the back aisle was already crowded with standing passengers. When Blake insisted, Parks responded that she was already on the bus and didn't understand why she had to get off just to get back on. Blake ordered her off. Rather than disgrace herself by obeying his petty demand, Parks left, vowing to never again ride a bus driven by Blake. But this day she hadn't noticed who the driver was.



7. "Y'all better make it light on yourselves and let me have those seats," Blake growled when nobody moved. Since African Americans weren't allowed to sit in the same row as white passengers, Blake ordered everyone in the row to stand. Finally the two women across the aisle from Parks stood. Then the man next to Parks stood too. "Are you going to stand up?" Blake asked Parks, who replied that she wasn't. "I'm going to have you arrested," Blake stammered.
8. Parks didn't want to go to jail, but she had had enough. She wanted to be treated like a human being. "You may do that," she replied calmly. The police arrived within minutes. One policeman, F. B. Day, asked Parks why she had refused to stand. Parks replied with a question that Day couldn't answer.
9. "Why do you push us around?"
10. Day shrugged. "I don't know, but the law is the law, and you're under arrest."
11. *Rosa Parks's arrest led African Americans to come together in Montgomery to refuse to ride buses citywide. This protest helped give rise to the Civil Rights movement. The U.S. Supreme Court later ruled that Alabama's segregation laws were unconstitutional.*

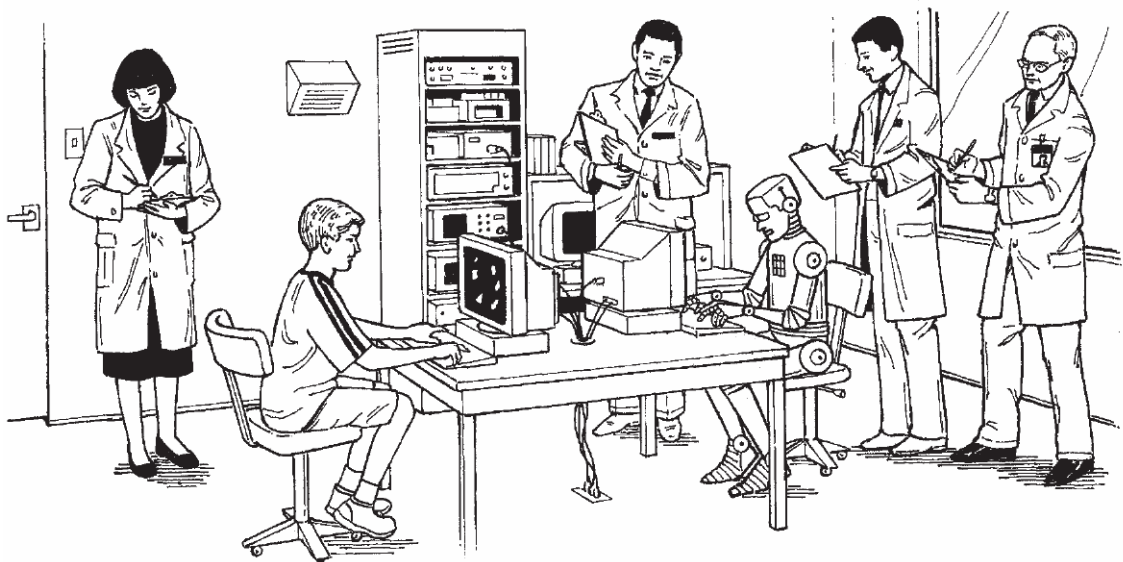
## Reading Passages: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **The Best**

1. "O.K., that's enough," Dr. Clifford said, scribbling something in his notebook. Chris slowly walked away from the game station. He wondered what could have gone wrong. He had played this video game thousands of times. He was supposed to be the best. So why couldn't he win?
2. All around him the scientists at Harris Laboratories checked data and made adjustments. For more than five years they had been working on building a robot that could do everything a human teenager could do, only better. Now they thought they had finally succeeded. Chris looked across the room at his opponent—Sam, they called him. It didn't seem possible to Chris. He wondered how something so clumsy and simple could keep beating him.
3. "Let's get ready for the next test," Dr. Clifford called. "Fifteen minutes."
4. Chris walked back over and sat down at the game station. Sam was already seated across from him.
5. "Good luck," Sam said. The words caught Chris's attention. Sam had never spoken to him before. "You're a good player, the toughest competition they've ever had for me here."
6. "But I'm supposed to win," Chris said. That was the thought that kept racing through his mind. He had played the game for more than two years. He hadn't thought it was possible that he could lose. It was still hard for him to believe what was happening. "Will you answer a question?" Chris asked.
7. "What is it?" Sam replied.
8. "How do you do it?" Chris asked. Sam stared back with a puzzled look. "How can you be so fast? How can you react to the game as quickly as you do?" Chris continued.
9. Sam seemed to consider the questions a long time before answering. "I'm not sure," he finally answered. "But I've played this game thousands of times. I seem to know what the game will do before it happens."
10. "That's impossible," Chris said. He knew the game had millions of possible combinations and that each one was selected at random. "There's no way you could have memorized the game program. There are too many possibilities even for a computer to analyze."
11. "It's not exactly memory the way you think of it," Sam said. "It's something else. It's complicated. You wouldn't understand."
12. "Thirty seconds," Dr. Clifford called. Technicians and scientists scurried about, making last-second preparations for the next game. "Twenty seconds," Dr. Clifford called, beginning a countdown.

## Reading Passages: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

13. "How could I not understand?" Chris thought. He gripped the controls of the game. This time he would show Sam. This time he would prove that he was superior. Dr. Clifford gave the signal, and the final game started. Chris's eyes scanned the screen. The game was a simulated space adventure. The players had to destroy make-believe meteors before the huge rocks collided with their ships. Chris reacted quickly as the game's speed increased. His point total climbed higher and higher. He had never played so well.
14. Chris looked across the game station. As usual, Sam was impassive. He held the controls and responded calmly. Sam never showed any signs of nervousness or concern during the games. His eyes fixed straight ahead, he seemed to stare through the machine instead of at it.
15. "Stop," Dr. Clifford called at last. The scientists swarmed around the game station again. They checked the score, they checked the game, and they even checked both Chris and Sam. The scientists were all talking excitedly and joking with Sam. One of them handed a large clipboard of papers to Dr. Clifford. Dr. Clifford studied the papers for a long time, sometimes stopping to write something down on them. "Well, we're definitely making progress," he told the group after making a notation on the last report. "I'm very pleased with today's test results. I think we're through for now."



16. Chris noted his score. It was much higher than he had ever scored in the past. It was even higher than Sam had scored in the games they had played against each other earlier that day. He looked across the game station at Sam's score. Sam had won again. How was that possible? There had to be something wrong with the game. One of the scientists came over and faced Chris. "You gave him a good game," the scientist said. "We didn't expect you to come as close as you did."
17. "I'll never beat that boy," Chris said.

## Reading Passages: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

18. "You're the most advanced CHRIS model we've ever built," the scientist replied. "You did better than any previous Custom Home Robotic Intelligence System, competing against the best player in the world."
19. "Yeah," Sam said, smiling from across the table. "And for a few seconds I thought you had me. I even broke my own record."
20. "But I'm programmed to win," Chris said. "I think faster. I move faster. My reactions are better. How could I lose?" He looked across at the human.
21. Sam shrugged his shoulders. "It's just a feeling I get. It's called intuition. Somehow I just know. I can anticipate what's going to happen."
22. "You're right," Chris said. "I don't understand." There would be more testing the next day. "It's no use," the robot's computerized brain repeated. "I'll never beat that boy. He's the best."