

# NOT BORING MEDIA

## THE MAN WHO HICCUPPED FOR 68 YEARS

High-Interest Nonfiction Reading Passage

### WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ Reading Passage ✓ Comprehension Questions
- ✓ Answer Key ✓ Teacher Guide

GRADES 4-6 • LEXILE ~750L • DOK LEVELS 1-4

*Reading they'll actually do.*

## NOT BORING MEDIA — TERMS OF USE

### TERMS OF USE

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### WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ High-interest nonfiction reading passage (300-400 words)
- ✓ 6 comprehension questions spanning DOK levels 1-4
- ✓ Complete answer key with explanations
- ✓ Teacher guide with standards, pacing, and extensions

Questions or feedback? Leave a review or message us through TPT!

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Reading they'll actually do.

# THE MAN WHO HICCUPPED FOR 68 YEARS

Charles Osborne started hiccupping in 1922. He didn't stop for 68 years.

It began on a farm in Anthon, Iowa. Osborne was 28 years old, preparing to slaughter a hog. As he lifted the 350-pound animal to weigh it, he fell. At first, he thought nothing of it—just a stumble. But then the hiccups started, and they wouldn't stop.

Doctors later determined that the fall had damaged something deep inside Osborne's body. Some believed he had burst a tiny blood vessel in his brain stem. Others thought he had injured a nerve that controlled his diaphragm. Whatever the cause, the result was the same: his body was stuck in an endless hiccup cycle.

At first, Osborne hiccupped about 40 times per minute—once every 1.5 seconds, around the clock, even while sleeping. Imagine trying to eat dinner, have a conversation, or fall asleep with a hiccup interrupting every other breath. Over time, his body adjusted slightly, and the rate slowed to about 20 hiccups per minute. But they never stopped. By the time his ordeal ended, he had hiccupped an estimated 430 million times.

Osborne tried everything. He traveled to see specialists around the world. He attempted home remedies, experimental treatments, and folk cures—holding his breath, drinking water upside down, even having friends scare him. Nothing worked. Eventually, he learned to suppress the hiccupping sound by breathing rhythmically between spasms, which helped him eat, sleep, and even work as a farm machinery salesman and auctioneer.

He refused to let the condition define him. Osborne married twice, raised eight children, and lived a full life—all while hiccupping every few seconds.

Then, in 1990, something remarkable happened. The hiccups simply stopped. Osborne was 96 years old. After nearly seven decades, his body finally found peace. "I'm so thankful," he told reporters. He died one year later, at 97, holding the Guinness World Record for the longest continuous hiccups in history—a record that still stands today.

Word Count: 337 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: Guinness World Records

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**1 What was Charles Osborne doing when his hiccups started?**

- A) Eating dinner with his family
- B) Lifting a hog to weigh it before slaughter
- C) Working as an auctioneer
- D) Visiting a doctor for a checkup

**2 How many times did Osborne hiccup over the course of his life?**

- A) About 68 million times
- B) About 430 million times
- C) About 40 million times
- D) About 1 billion times

**3 What does the word 'ordeal' most likely mean as used in this passage?**

- A) A pleasant experience
- B) A type of medical treatment
- C) A long, difficult, or painful experience
- D) A world record

**4 Which detail from the passage best supports the idea that Osborne adapted to his condition?**

- A) He fell while lifting a 350-pound hog
- B) He traveled to see specialists around the world
- C) He learned to suppress the sound and worked as an auctioneer
- D) His hiccups finally stopped in 1990

5

The passage says Osborne 'refused to let the condition define him.' What evidence does the author give to support this statement? Identify at least two specific ways Osborne lived a full life despite his hiccups.

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6

Osborne's hiccups stopped when he was 96, and he died one year later at 97. He said he was 'so thankful' for the silence. What do you think those final months of silence meant to him after 68 years? What does his story teach us about perseverance and hope?

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## ANSWER KEY

### The Man Who Hiccapped for 68 Years

**1. B) Lifting a hog to weigh it before slaughter**

DOK 1 — Recall. *The passage states he was 'preparing to slaughter a hog' and 'lifted the 350-pound animal to weigh it' when he fell.*

**2. B) About 430 million times**

DOK 1 — Recall. *The passage directly states 'he had hiccupped an estimated 430 million times.'*

**3. C) A long, difficult, or painful experience**

DOK 2 — Vocabulary in context. *The passage uses 'ordeal' to describe 68 years of constant hiccupping, which the surrounding text makes clear was extremely difficult.*

**4. C) He learned to suppress the sound and worked as an auctioneer**

DOK 2 — Text evidence. *Working as an auctioneer—a job requiring constant clear speech—while managing his hiccups shows remarkable adaptation.*

**5. Sample Response:**

The author provides several examples: Osborne 'married twice, raised eight children, and lived a full life.' He also worked as 'a farm machinery salesman and auctioneer'—jobs requiring speaking to people constantly. He learned to suppress the sound to eat and sleep normally. These details show he built a complete life around his condition rather than being limited by it.

**6. Sample Response:**

Answers will vary. After 68 years of constant interruption, the final year of silence was likely profound—Osborne could finally experience peace, quiet conversation, and undisturbed sleep. His gratitude shows how much the small things matter. His story teaches that humans can endure remarkable hardships while still building meaningful lives. It also shows that relief can come unexpectedly—even after decades—which might give hope to others facing long-term challenges.

## TEACHER GUIDE

The Man Who Hiccapped for 68 Years

### STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 — Refer to details and examples in a text
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4 — Determine meaning of words and phrases
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.8 — Explain how author uses evidence
- NGSS — Connections to scientific practices

### PACING OPTIONS

- Quick Read (10-15 min): Passage + questions 1-4
- Standard (20-25 min): Full passage + all questions
- Deep Dive (35-40 min): Add discussion + extension

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Osborne raised a family and worked as an auctioneer despite hiccupping every few seconds. What does this tell us about human adaptability?
- If you had a condition that couldn't be cured, would you keep searching for treatments or focus on adapting? Why?
- Why do you think Osborne said he was 'so thankful' when the hiccups stopped, even though he was 96 and died a year later?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Math: Calculate how many times Osborne hiccupped per day, per year, and total. Create a visual representation.
- Research: Investigate the science of hiccups—what causes them and why are they so hard to stop?
- Writing: Interview a family member about a challenge they've adapted to. Write a short profile of their resilience.

### DIFFERENTIATION

- Struggling: Pre-teach vocabulary, partner reading
- Advanced: Add research, compare to related events
- ELL: Visual supports, pre-teach context

### SOURCE

- Guinness World Records