
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE COW THAT ESCAPED TO FREEDOM

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.

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!

THE COW THAT ESCAPED TO FREEDOM

In January 2011, a cow named Yvonne escaped from a farm in Bavaria, Germany, just before she was scheduled to be slaughtered. What followed was a three-month saga that captivated a nation and turned a simple farm animal into a celebrity.

Yvonne bolted through a fence and disappeared into the forests near Munich. For weeks, she evaded capture, using the dense woods as her hiding place. Hunters, police with helicopters, and animal experts all failed to catch her. She became known as Germany's most wanted cow.

The story made national headlines. Animal rights groups offered rewards for information. Thousands of people followed Yvonne's adventures online. She became a symbol of freedom, an animal who had chosen her own fate rather than accepting the one humans planned for her.

Authorities grew frustrated. Yvonne occasionally wandered near roads, creating traffic hazards. The regional government issued an order allowing hunters to shoot her if she posed a danger. Public outrage was immediate and intense. Over 20,000 people signed petitions to save Yvonne's life.

The breakthrough came when experts brought in Yvonne's sister, Waltraud, as bait. They also brought her calf, who had been born after Yvonne's escape. After 98 days on the run, the lure of family proved irresistible. Yvonne emerged from the forest and was peacefully captured.

But her story didn't end in a slaughterhouse. An animal sanctuary called Gut Aiderbichl purchased Yvonne and promised she would live out her natural life in peace. She was joined by her calf and her sister.

'Yvonne showed extraordinary intelligence and survival instincts,' said one of her rescuers. 'She deserved a second chance.'

Yvonne lived at the sanctuary until her death in 2018, having spent seven years as a free cow rather than the few months she would have had otherwise. Her escape proved that sometimes, even the most unlikely hero can capture our hearts.

Word Count: 318 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: BBC

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 How long did Yvonne evade capture?

- ☐ A) 2 weeks
- ☐ B) 1 month
- ☐ C) 98 days
- ☐ D) 1 year

2 What finally lured Yvonne out of the forest?

- ☐ A) Food left by farmers
- ☐ B) Her sister and calf
- ☐ C) A male cow
- ☐ D) Sounds of other farm animals

3 Why did the regional government order that Yvonne could be shot?

- ☐ A) She attacked people
- ☐ B) She damaged crops
- ☐ C) She occasionally wandered near roads, creating traffic hazards
- ☐ D) Her owner requested it

4 How did the public's reaction affect Yvonne's fate?

- ☐ A) People ignored the story completely
- ☐ B) Public pressure helped prevent her from being killed and led to her rescue
- ☐ C) The public wanted her captured faster
- ☐ D) People demanded she be returned to her original farm

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Why do you think Yvonne's story resonated with so many people?

- ☐ A) People enjoy seeing animals suffer
- ☐ B) Her escape represented a desire for freedom that humans relate to
- ☐ C) Germans have nothing else to care about
- ☐ D) The media forced people to follow the story

6

What does Yvonne's story suggest about the relationship between public opinion and animal welfare?

- ☐ A) Public opinion has no effect on animal treatment
- ☐ B) Animals are always protected by law
- ☐ C) Public attention and pressure can change outcomes for individual animals and potentially influence broader attitudes
- ☐ D) Only farmers should decide animal fates

ANSWER KEY

The Cow That Escaped to Freedom

1. C) 98 days

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'After 98 days on the run...'

2. B) Her sister and calf

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage explains: 'experts brought in Yvonne's sister... They also brought her calf... the lure of family proved irresistible.'

3. C) She occasionally wandered near roads, creating traffic hazards

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage states: 'Yvonne occasionally wandered near roads, creating traffic hazards. The regional government issued an order allowing hunters to shoot her if she posed a danger.'

4. B) Public pressure helped prevent her from being killed and led to her rescue

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage notes 'over 20,000 people signed petitions to save Yvonne's life,' and ultimately an animal sanctuary purchased her instead of her being slaughtered.

5. B) Her escape represented a desire for freedom that humans relate to

DOK 3 — Analysis. The passage states 'she became a symbol of freedom, an animal who had chosen her own fate.' People connected emotionally to her fight for survival and self-determination.

6. C) Public attention and pressure can change outcomes for individual animals and potentially influence broader attitudes

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking. Yvonne was scheduled for slaughter but public pressure—petitions, media attention, outrage—led to her rescue. This demonstrates how public engagement can directly affect animal welfare outcomes.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Cow That Escaped to Freedom

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

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

- Yvonne became a 'symbol of freedom.' Why do you think people connected so strongly to a cow's escape?
- Over 20,000 people signed petitions to save Yvonne. When does public opinion have the power to change outcomes for animals?
- The passage says Yvonne 'chose her own fate.' Do you think animals can make choices in the way humans do? Why or why not?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Research another animal escape story that made news and compare it to Yvonne's. What made these stories capture public attention?
- Design a poster that could have been used in the campaign to save Yvonne. What images and words would be most persuasive?
- Write a persuasive essay arguing either for or against the idea that farm animals should have legal protections against slaughter.

DIFFERENTIATION

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

SOURCE

- BBC / Der Spiegel