
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE CAT THAT WAS MAYOR FOR 20 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.

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 CAT THAT WAS MAYOR FOR 20 YEARS

In the small town of Talkeetna, Alaska, a cat named Stubbs served as honorary mayor for nearly 20 years. He didn't pass any laws or balance any budgets, but he did attract tourists and bring smiles to residents from 1997 until his death in 2017.

Stubbs became mayor under unusual circumstances. During a local election, voters were so unhappy with the human candidates that many wrote in the name of a cat as a protest vote. Stubbs—a ginger cat without a tail—won the write-in campaign and became Talkeetna's most famous citizen.

Of course, Talkeetna is an unincorporated community of only about 900 people, which means it doesn't have an official government. The 'mayor' position was always more ceremonial than powerful. But that didn't stop Stubbs from taking his duties seriously—or at least appearing to.

Every afternoon, Mayor Stubbs would visit the local general store and restaurant, greeting visitors and accepting treats. He'd drink water from a wine glass garnished with catnip. Tourists would drive hours out of their way just to meet the famous feline politician.

Stubbs's tenure wasn't without controversy. In 2013, he was attacked by a dog and suffered serious injuries. The town rallied around him, raising money for his veterinary bills and celebrating when he recovered. 'He's our mayor,' one resident said. 'Of course we'll take care of him.'

Stubbs served until his death in July 2017 at the age of 20. The town mourned their beloved leader. Tributes poured in from around the world. Some residents suggested finding another cat to take his place, though others felt Stubbs was irreplaceable.

The story of Mayor Stubbs might seem silly, but it reveals something deeper about small-town life. In a place where everyone knows everyone, a cat can become the heart of a community. Sometimes the best leaders aren't the ones with the most power—they're the ones who bring people together.

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

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 How long did Stubbs serve as mayor of Talkeetna?

- ☐ A) 5 years
- ☐ B) 10 years
- ☐ C) Nearly 20 years
- ☐ D) 30 years

2 Why did Stubbs become mayor in the first place?

- ☐ A) He was appointed by the governor
- ☐ B) Voters wrote in his name as a protest against human candidates
- ☐ C) He won a contest
- ☐ D) The previous mayor chose him

3 Why was the mayor position in Talkeetna 'more ceremonial than powerful'?

- ☐ A) Stubbs refused to use his power
- ☐ B) Talkeetna is an unincorporated community without an official government
- ☐ C) Alaska doesn't allow mayors to have power
- ☐ D) The position was only for one year

4 How did the community respond when Stubbs was injured in 2013?

- ☐ A) They replaced him immediately
- ☐ B) They ignored the situation
- ☐ C) They raised money for his veterinary bills and celebrated his recovery
- ☐ D) They closed the town to visitors

5

What does the author suggest about leadership through the story of Mayor Stubbs?

- ☐ A) Cats make better leaders than humans
- ☐ B) The best leaders are those who bring people together, not necessarily those with the most power
- ☐ C) Small towns don't need real leaders
- ☐ D) All mayors should be animals

6

What does the worldwide reaction to Stubbs's death suggest about the power of unusual stories?

- ☐ A) People only care about famous humans
- ☐ B) Quirky, heartwarming stories can connect people across cultures and distances
- ☐ C) Alaska is the only place that cares about animals
- ☐ D) News travels slowly to small towns

ANSWER KEY

The Cat That Was Mayor for 20 Years

1. C) Nearly 20 years

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'a cat named Stubbs served as honorary mayor for nearly 20 years.'

2. B) Voters wrote in his name as a protest against human candidates

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage explains: 'voters were so unhappy with the human candidates that many wrote in the name of a cat as a protest vote.'

3. B) Talkeetna is an unincorporated community without an official government

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage states: 'Talkeetna is an unincorporated community of only about 900 people, which means it doesn't have an official government.'

4. C) They raised money for his veterinary bills and celebrated his recovery

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage states: 'The town rallied around him, raising money for his veterinary bills and celebrating when he recovered.'

5. B) The best leaders are those who bring people together, not necessarily those with the most power

DOK 3 — Analysis. The passage concludes: 'Sometimes the best leaders aren't the ones with the most power—they're the ones who bring people together.'

6. B) Quirky, heartwarming stories can connect people across cultures and distances

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking. 'Tributes poured in from around the world' for a small-town cat. This shows how unusual, heartwarming stories can capture global attention and create connections between people who've never met.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Cat That Was Mayor for 20 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
- C3 Framework — Historical thinking skills

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

- Voters wrote in a cat's name because they were unhappy with human candidates. What does this say about how people feel about politics?
- The passage says Stubbs 'brought people together.' Can a figurehead with no real power still be an effective leader? How?
- Some residents wanted to replace Stubbs with another cat; others said he was irreplaceable. Which side do you agree with?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Research other animals that have held honorary positions (stray cats in Japan, dog mayors, etc.) and create a presentation about them.
- Design a campaign poster for an animal running for honorary mayor of your town. What qualities would make them a good 'leader'?
- Write an obituary for Mayor Stubbs that celebrates his 'accomplishments' in office.

DIFFERENTIATION

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

SOURCE

- NBC News / Atlas Obscura