
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE VILLAGE WITH NO ROADS

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 VILLAGE WITH NO ROADS

In the Netherlands, there's a village where cars are useless. Giethoorn has no roads in its historic center—only canals, footpaths, and more than 180 wooden bridges. To visit your neighbor, you take a boat. To get groceries, you take a boat. To go almost anywhere, you take a boat.

Giethoorn was founded around 1230 by fugitives fleeing religious persecution in the Mediterranean region. When they arrived, they discovered the land was rich in peat—a dense, earthy material that could be dried and burned as fuel. For centuries, villagers dug up peat and sold it, gradually carving out the waterways that define Giethoorn today.

The canals weren't planned. They emerged as residents removed more and more peat from the ground. Water filled the empty spaces, creating a network of narrow channels. Rather than fight the water, villagers adapted. They built houses on small islands, connected their properties with arched wooden bridges, and learned to navigate by boat.

Today, Giethoorn is often called the "Venice of the North" or the "Dutch Venice." But unlike Venice, which bustles with tourists and motorized water taxis, Giethoorn maintains a striking peacefulness. Motor boats are banned in the village center. The only sounds are birdsong, quiet conversations, and the gentle splash of paddle or electric motor.

About 2,600 people live in Giethoorn year-round. They've adapted their lives completely to water transportation. Mail carriers deliver packages by boat. Emergency services arrive by boat. Children learn to paddle almost before they learn to walk. In winter, when the canals freeze, residents simply switch to ice skates.

Tourism has transformed the village in recent decades. Over a million visitors arrive each year—many from China, where a viral social media post made Giethoorn famous. The influx has brought economic benefits but also tensions. Some residents complain about crowds and noise. Others welcome the income that keeps the village alive.

Giethoorn stands as proof that communities can be built around water instead of roads—and that sometimes, the absence of something we consider essential creates something unexpectedly beautiful.

Word Count: 340 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: CNBC

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1

How do Giethoorn residents travel around the village center?

- ☐ A) By car
- ☐ B) By boat
- ☐ C) By bus
- ☐ D) By train

2

Why were the canals originally created?

- ☐ A) The government built them for transportation
- ☐ B) Residents dug up peat, and water filled the empty spaces
- ☐ C) A flood created them naturally
- ☐ D) They were designed by architects

3

What does the phrase 'adapted their lives completely' suggest about Giethoorn residents?

- ☐ A) They wish they had roads
- ☐ B) They have organized every aspect of life around water travel
- ☐ C) They are unhappy with the village
- ☐ D) They plan to build roads soon

4

According to the passage, what makes Giethoorn different from Venice?

- ☐ A) Giethoorn has no canals
- ☐ B) Giethoorn is quieter, with motor boats banned in the center
- ☐ C) Venice is smaller than Giethoorn
- ☐ D) Venice has no tourists

5

The passage mentions that tourism has brought both 'economic benefits' and 'tensions.' What specific evidence does the author provide for each? What challenges might a small village face when over a million tourists visit annually?

6

The passage ends by saying 'sometimes, the absence of something we consider essential creates something unexpectedly beautiful.' Roads seem essential to modern life, yet Giethoorn thrives without them. What other 'essentials' might communities benefit from removing or limiting? What might we gain by having less of something we assume we need?

ANSWER KEY

The Village With No Roads

1. B) By boat

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'To visit your neighbor, you take a boat. To get groceries, you take a boat.'

2. B) Residents dug up peat, and water filled the empty spaces

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'For centuries, villagers dug up peat and sold it, gradually carving out the waterways.'

3. B) They have organized every aspect of life around water travel

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage gives examples: mail by boat, emergency services by boat, children learning to paddle young, ice skates in winter—showing complete adaptation.

4. B) Giethoorn is quieter, with motor boats banned in the center

DOK 2 — Text evidence. The passage states: 'unlike Venice, which bustles with tourists and motorized water taxis, Giethoorn maintains a striking peacefulness. Motor boats are banned in the village center.'

5. Sample Response:

Benefits: tourism brings 'income that keeps the village alive.' Tensions: 'Some residents complain about crowds and noise.' With only 2,600 residents and over a million annual visitors, tourists likely outnumber locals dramatically on busy days. Challenges might include crowded canals, damage to historic bridges, higher prices, loss of privacy, and the village feeling more like a theme park than a home.

6. Sample Response:

Answers will vary. Examples might include: limiting cars creates walkable cities with cleaner air and more community interaction; reducing screen time could improve mental health and relationships; fewer commercial stores might strengthen local businesses and community identity. Strong responses will identify something typically considered essential, explain what problems it causes, and describe benefits of its absence—similar to how Giethoorn's lack of roads creates peacefulness.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Village With No Roads

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

- Giethoorn has no roads—only canals. What 'essential' things might communities actually be better off without?
- Over a million tourists visit 2,600 residents annually. How should small communities balance tourism income with quality of life?
- Children there learn to paddle before they can walk. How does your environment shape the skills you develop?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Design: Draw a map of a neighborhood designed around canals instead of roads. Include key features.
- Economics: Research the pros and cons of tourism for small communities. Apply your findings to Giethoorn.
- Writing: Write a real estate listing for a Giethoorn home—what would you emphasize? What challenges would you mention?

DIFFERENTIATION

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

SOURCE

- CNBC / Various news outlets