
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE TOWN THAT MOVED TWO MILES

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 TOWN THAT MOVED TWO MILES

In the 1920s, the small town of Hibbing, Minnesota faced an unusual problem: there was a fortune in iron ore directly beneath its downtown. The mining company offered residents a choice—move the entire town or watch it be swallowed by an enormous pit mine.

Hibbing was built on top of the Mesabi Iron Range, one of the richest iron deposits in the world. As mining operations expanded, geologists discovered that the richest ore lay exactly where people had built their homes, schools, and businesses. The Hull-Rust Mine needed to expand, and the town was in the way.

Starting in 1919, residents began relocating Hibbing piece by piece. Over the next two decades, more than 200 structures were moved approximately two miles south. Workers used horses, steam engines, and eventually trucks to drag buildings across the frozen winter landscape. Some buildings were moved intact; others were taken apart and rebuilt.

The mining company paid for much of the relocation and sweetened the deal by building new infrastructure. The new Hibbing got paved roads, modern utilities, and even a high school so elaborate that it was nicknamed 'The Castle in the Woods.' The auditorium alone cost a million dollars and featured crystal chandeliers.

Not everyone was happy. Some residents refused to leave until the last possible moment. A few watched as the mine crept closer and closer to their property lines. The old downtown eventually disappeared into what became one of the largest open-pit mines in the world—the Hull-Rust-Mahoning Mine, over three miles long and 500 feet deep.

Today, the mine is a tourist attraction. Visitors can stand at overlooks and peer into the massive pit where a town once stood. The current town of Hibbing continues to thrive, proof that communities can survive even the most dramatic relocations.

Sometimes moving forward means literally picking up and moving—buildings, memories, and all.

Word Count: 312 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: Minnesota Historical Society

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1

How far was the town of Hibbing moved?

- ☐ A) A few hundred feet
- ☐ B) About one mile
- ☐ C) Approximately two miles
- ☐ D) Five miles

2

What valuable resource was found beneath the original town?

- ☐ A) Gold
- ☐ B) Oil
- ☐ C) Iron ore
- ☐ D) Diamonds

3

How did the mining company convince residents to move?

- ☐ A) They threatened to arrest anyone who stayed
- ☐ B) They paid for relocation and built modern infrastructure in the new location
- ☐ C) They offered free vacations
- ☐ D) The government forced everyone to leave

4

Why was the new high school nicknamed 'The Castle in the Woods'?

- ☐ A) It was built on a hill
- ☐ B) It was so elaborate and expensive, with features like crystal chandeliers
- ☐ C) It was surrounded by a moat
- ☐ D) The principal was called 'the king'

5

What does the Hibbing relocation reveal about the relationship between natural resources and communities?

- ☐ A) Communities are never affected by mining
- ☐ B) Economic interests in natural resources can dramatically reshape where and how people live
- ☐ C) Mining companies always lose conflicts with towns
- ☐ D) Iron ore is worthless

6

If a similar situation happened today, what factors might make it harder or easier to relocate a town?

- ☐ A) It would be impossible because buildings are heavier now
- ☐ B) Modern technology could help move structures, but larger populations, more regulations, and environmental concerns would make it harder
- ☐ C) People today would never agree to move
- ☐ D) Mining is no longer done anywhere

ANSWER KEY

The Town That Moved Two Miles

1. C) Approximately two miles

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'more than 200 structures were moved approximately two miles south.'

2. C) Iron ore

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'there was a fortune in iron ore directly beneath its downtown.'

3. B) They paid for relocation and built modern infrastructure in the new location

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage explains: 'The mining company paid for much of the relocation and sweetened the deal by building new infrastructure. The new Hibbing got paved roads, modern utilities, and even a high school.'

4. B) It was so elaborate and expensive, with features like crystal chandeliers

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage describes it as 'a high school so elaborate' with an auditorium that 'cost a million dollars and featured crystal chandeliers.'

5. B) Economic interests in natural resources can dramatically reshape where and how people live

DOK 3 — Analysis. An entire town moved because the value of the iron ore beneath it was greater than the cost of relocation. This shows how resource extraction can reshape communities.

6. B) Modern technology could help move structures, but larger populations, more regulations, and environmental concerns would complicate decisions

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking. Modern equipment could physically move buildings more easily, but today's larger towns, environmental impact reviews, property rights laws, and community resistance would make the decision-making process more complex.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Town That Moved Two Miles

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
- 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

- Would you be willing to move your home if a company offered to pay for it and build you better infrastructure? What would matter most in your decision?
- Some Hibbing residents refused to leave until the last moment. What might motivate someone to stay in a place even when it's being destroyed?
- The mine is now a tourist attraction. Is there something strange about visiting a place that used to be someone's home? Why or why not?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Research the Mesabi Iron Range and create an infographic showing how much iron has been mined there and what it's been used for.
- Calculate approximately how much it would cost to move a house today (research house-moving services) and compare to moving 200 buildings.
- Interview someone who has moved to a new home and ask about the experience. Write a reflection comparing their feelings to what Hibbing residents might have felt.

DIFFERENTIATION

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

SOURCE

- Minnesota Historical Society / Atlas Obscura