

NOT BORING MEDIA

THE MAN WHO WORE THE SAME SUIT FOR A YEAR

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.

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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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THE MAN WHO WORE THE SAME SUIT FOR A YEAR

In 2012, a high school teacher in Tennessee named Dale Irby realized something startling: he had accidentally worn the same outfit in his yearbook photo for the second year in a row. Rather than feel embarrassed, he decided to commit to the accident—and wore that same brown sweater and brown leisure suit in every yearbook photo for the next 40 years.

What started as coincidence became a tradition. Every fall, Irby would pull out the same outfit, pose for his yearbook photo, and put it away for another year. His students didn't notice for decades, but his wife Catherine (who taught at the same school) thought it was hilarious. She kept the secret, enjoying the long-running joke.

The tradition finally became public in 2013 when a local newspaper ran a story about his retirement. A side-by-side comparison of all his yearbook photos went viral. The images showed Irby aging from a young teacher with dark hair and sideburns to a gray-haired veteran, but the outfit remained frozen in 1973 fashion.

Irby's commitment to the bit required real dedication. Over four decades, his body changed—he gained and lost weight multiple times. But he always managed to squeeze into that brown polyester suit each September. His wife even had to help him button it in later years.

'I thought it would be a fun thing,' Irby told reporters. 'I never expected anyone outside the school to care.'

The story resonated with people around the world. Something about his persistence—the patience to maintain a private joke for 40 years—struck a chord. Irby became briefly famous, appearing on television programs and giving interviews.

Dale Irby proved that sometimes the smallest commitments, sustained over time, create the most memorable stories. His yearbook photos became a visual record of both one man's life and one man's sense of humor.

Word Count: 310 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: The Guardian

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 How many years did Irby wear the same outfit for yearbook photos?

- A) 10 years
- B) 20 years
- C) 40 years
- D) 50 years

2 Who else knew about Irby's tradition for most of those years?

- A) All his students
- B) Only his wife Catherine
- C) The school principal
- D) Everyone in town

3 How did the tradition start?

- A) Irby planned it from the beginning
- B) It started as an accident when he wore the same outfit two years in a row
- C) His wife suggested it
- D) The school required it

4 What challenge did Irby face in later years?

- A) The outfit went out of style
- B) His body changed and the outfit didn't fit as well
- C) The school banned the outfit
- D) He forgot where he put it

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Why might Irby's story have 'resonated with people around the world'?

- A) Everyone loves fashion
- B) The patience to maintain a private joke for decades shows dedication and humor that people admire
- C) Brown suits are very popular
- D) People love yearbooks

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What does Irby's story suggest about what makes something memorable?

- A) Only big dramatic events matter
- B) Small, consistent commitments over time can create more meaningful stories than grand gestures
- C) Wearing the same clothes is always funny
- D) Teachers should all wear uniforms

ANSWER KEY

The Man Who Wore the Same Suit for a Year

1. C) 40 years

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'wore that same brown sweater and brown leisure suit in every yearbook photo for the next 40 years.'

2. B) Only his wife Catherine

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'his wife Catherine... thought it was hilarious. She kept the secret.'

3. B) It started as an accident when he wore the same outfit two years in a row

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage explains: 'he had accidentally worn the same outfit... for the second year in a row. Rather than feel embarrassed, he decided to commit to the accident.'

4. B) His body changed and the outfit didn't fit as well

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage notes: 'he gained and lost weight multiple times. But he always managed to squeeze into that brown polyester suit.'

5. B) The patience to maintain a private joke for decades shows dedication and humor that people admire

DOK 3 — Analysis. The passage notes: 'Something about his persistence—the patience to maintain a private joke for 40 years—struck a chord.'

6. B) Small, consistent commitments over time can create more meaningful stories than grand gestures

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking. The passage concludes: 'sometimes the smallest commitments, sustained over time, create the most memorable stories.' Persistence transformed a small joke into something meaningful.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Man Who Wore the Same Suit for a Year

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

- Irby kept his joke going for 40 years without anyone noticing. What does this say about how much we pay attention to others?
- Would the joke have been as funny if it lasted only 5 years instead of 40? Why or why not?
- What small, silly commitments do you or your family maintain over time?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Find your own yearbook photos over multiple years. What has changed? What has stayed the same?
- Interview a teacher or other adult about traditions they've maintained over their career.
- Design a 'long game' tradition you could maintain over your school years.

DIFFERENTIATION

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

SOURCE

- The Guardian / Today Show Australia