

# NOT BORING MEDIA

## THE DOOR THAT OPENS ONCE EVERY 25 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.*

## NOT BORING MEDIA — TERMS OF USE

### 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!

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Reading they'll actually do.

# THE DOOR THAT OPENS ONCE EVERY 25 YEARS

In Vatican City, there's a door that stays sealed for a quarter century at a time. The Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica is bricked up from the inside and only opened during special Jubilee years—approximately once every 25 years. When it finally opens, over ten million pilgrims travel from around the world to walk through it.

The tradition dates back to 1500, when Pope Alexander VI established the practice of opening special doors at Rome's four major basilicas during Holy Years. The ceremony is rich with symbolism. The Pope approaches the sealed door and knocks three times with a silver hammer. Workers then remove the bricks from inside, revealing the passage. The Pope walks through first, followed by cardinals, then ordinary pilgrims.

Between Jubilees, the Holy Door exists but cannot be used. A wall of bricks, blessed and inscribed with the date of the last opening, blocks the entrance. Pilgrims can see the bronze door panels from the outside, but the passage leads nowhere until the next Holy Year arrives.

The door itself is a work of art. Cast in bronze in 1950, its sixteen panels depict scenes from the Bible and church history. It stands over twelve feet tall and weighs approximately 3.5 tons. Despite its massive size, it swings open smoothly on enormous hinges designed to last for centuries.

For Catholics, walking through the Holy Door carries profound spiritual meaning. It symbolizes the passage from sin to salvation, from darkness to light. Pilgrims who pass through during a Jubilee year can receive a special indulgence—a remission of the punishment for sins they have confessed.

The most recent Holy Year was 2025, proclaimed by Pope Francis. The previous one occurred in 2000, marking the turn of the millennium. Special "extraordinary" Jubilees can also be called for specific reasons, as Pope Francis did in 2015 for a Year of Mercy.

The Holy Door reminds us that some things cannot be rushed. Some passages only open when the time is right—and patience is sometimes the price of entry.

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

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**1 How often is the Holy Door typically opened?**

- A) Every year
- B) Every 10 years
- C) Every 25 years
- D) Every 100 years

**2 What happens to the Holy Door between Jubilee years?**

- A) It is left open for tourists
- B) It is sealed with blessed bricks from the inside
- C) It is removed and stored
- D) It is covered with a curtain

**3 What does the Holy Door symbolize for Catholics who walk through it?**

- A) Wealth and prosperity
- B) The passage from sin to salvation, from darkness to light
- C) Entry into heaven
- D) Membership in the church

**4 What is an 'indulgence' as described in the passage?**

- A) A type of prayer
- B) A remission of punishment for confessed sins
- C) A certificate of membership
- D) A blessing from the Pope

- 5** The passage describes the ceremony in detail: the Pope knocking three times, workers removing bricks, the order of who walks through. Why might such specific rituals be important? What purpose do ceremonial details serve in religious traditions?

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- 6** The passage ends: 'Some passages only open when the time is right—and patience is sometimes the price of entry.' What broader life lessons might this idea suggest? Can you think of situations where waiting or patience is necessary before you can move forward?

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## ANSWER KEY

### The Door That Opens Once Every 25 Years

#### 1. C) Every 25 years

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states the door 'only opened during special Jubilee years—approximately once every 25 years.'

#### 2. B) It is sealed with blessed bricks from the inside

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'A wall of bricks, blessed and inscribed with the date of the last opening, blocks the entrance.'

#### 3. B) The passage from sin to salvation, from darkness to light

DOK 2 — Text evidence. The passage states: 'It symbolizes the passage from sin to salvation, from darkness to light.'

#### 4. B) A remission of punishment for confessed sins

DOK 2 — Vocabulary in context. The passage defines it: 'a special indulgence—a remission of the punishment for sins they have confessed.'

#### 5. Sample Response:

Specific rituals create a sense of importance, continuity, and shared meaning. The three knocks, the silver hammer, the specific order of entry—each detail has been repeated for centuries, connecting modern pilgrims to generations before them. Ceremonial details also distinguish sacred events from ordinary ones. The elaborate ritual signals that walking through this door is not like walking through any other door—it's a meaningful spiritual act.

#### 6. Sample Response:

Answers will vary. The Holy Door suggests some opportunities require readiness, timing, or maturity. Examples might include: college (you must complete earlier grades first); certain careers (requiring years of training); relationships (trust builds over time); or personal growth (some lessons only make sense after experience). Strong responses will connect the metaphor of the sealed door to real-life situations where patience opens possibilities that rushing cannot.

## TEACHER GUIDE

The Door That Opens Once Every 25 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
- 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

- The Holy Door requires waiting 25 years. What's valuable about things that can't be rushed or accessed on demand?
- Elaborate rituals mark the door's opening. Why do ceremonies and traditions matter, even in a modern world?
- Some things only 'open' when we're ready. What doors in life require patience or preparation before we can walk through?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Research: Find another ritual or tradition that only happens rarely (Olympics, cicadas, etc.). Compare the significance.
- Math: Calculate how many Holy Years have occurred since 1500. Create a timeline of significant Jubilees.
- Reflection: Design your own meaningful 'door' ritual—what would it symbolize and when would it open?

### DIFFERENTIATION

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

### SOURCE

- USGS / Nature Journal