
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE WOMAN STRUCK BY LIGHTNING SIX TIMES

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 WOMAN STRUCK BY LIGHTNING SIX TIMES

Most people will never be struck by lightning even once in their entire lives. The odds are simply too small—about 1 in 1.2 million in any given year. Yet Roy Sullivan, a park ranger in Virginia's Shenandoah National Park, was struck by lightning seven separate times between 1942 and 1977. He survived them all, earning a place in the Guinness World Records as the person struck by lightning more times than any other human being.

Sullivan's relationship with lightning became legendary. He was first struck in 1942 while working in a fire lookout tower. The bolt burned a half-inch strip down his right leg and blew off his big toenail. Over the following 35 years, lightning found him again and again—while driving his truck with the windows open, while in his backyard, while working outdoors in the park, and even while fishing. His hair caught fire on two separate occasions from lightning strikes.

Scientists have studied cases like Sullivan's to understand why some people seem to attract lightning more than others. Theories include body chemistry differences that might make some individuals slightly more conductive, occupation and lifestyle factors that increase outdoor exposure during storms, and simple statistical variance—someone has to be at the extreme end of the probability curve.

Lightning survivors often report strange and lasting aftereffects. Some develop chronic pain that persists for years. Others claim they can sense approaching storms before any visible signs appear. A few report personality changes or increased sensitivity to electrical devices. The neurological effects of surviving a massive electrical discharge are still not fully understood by medical science.

Survival depends heavily on the path the lightning takes through the body. A direct strike to the head is usually fatal, but strikes that pass through the extremities or briefly touch the body's surface may cause serious injury without death. Remarkably, about 90% of lightning strike victims actually survive their encounters.

Park rangers, farmers, golfers, and others who work or play outdoors remain at highest risk. Modern safety guidelines recommend the '30-30 rule': if thunder follows lightning by less than 30 seconds, seek shelter immediately and remain inside for 30 minutes after the last thunder.

Word Count: 358 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: Guinness World Records

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 How many times was Roy Sullivan struck by lightning?

- ☐ A) Three times
- ☐ B) Five times
- ☐ C) Seven times
- ☐ D) Ten times

2 What are the odds of being struck by lightning in a given year?

- ☐ A) 1 in 12,000
- ☐ B) 1 in 120,000
- ☐ C) 1 in 1.2 million
- ☐ D) 1 in 12 million

3 What percentage of lightning strike victims survive?

- ☐ A) About 10%
- ☐ B) About 50%
- ☐ C) About 90%
- ☐ D) About 99%

4 What is the '30-30 rule'?

- ☐ A) Run 30 feet every 30 seconds
- ☐ B) Seek shelter if thunder follows lightning within 30 seconds, stay inside 30 minutes after
- ☐ C) Call for help after 30 minutes
- ☐ D) Lightning strikes 30 times per storm

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Why might some people be struck multiple times?

- ☐ A) They attract lightning on purpose
- ☐ B) Body chemistry, occupation, or time spent outdoors during storms
- ☐ C) Lightning targets the same people
- ☐ D) They carry metal objects

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What does Sullivan's survival suggest about human resilience?

- ☐ A) Humans are immune to lightning
- ☐ B) The body can survive tremendous trauma and recover multiple times
- ☐ C) Lightning isn't dangerous
- ☐ D) Park rangers have special protection

ANSWER KEY

The Woman Struck by Lightning Six Times

1. C) Seven times

DOK 1 — Recall.

2. C) 1 in 1.2 million

DOK 1 — Recall.

3. C) About 90%

DOK 2 — Inference.

4. B) Seek shelter if thunder follows lightning within 30 seconds, stay inside 30 minutes after

DOK 2 — Inference.

5. B) Body chemistry, occupation, or time spent outdoors during storms

DOK 3 — Analysis.

6. B) The body can survive tremendous trauma and recover multiple times

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Woman Struck by Lightning Six Times

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

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

- Some people seem to attract lightning more than others. If you knew you were statistically more likely to be struck, how would you change your behavior?
- Roy Sullivan survived seven strikes but eventually died by suicide. What might this suggest about surviving repeated trauma?
- Should outdoor workers in high-risk areas receive special hazard pay or protections? Why or why not?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Research lightning safety guidelines and create a poster for your school or community.
- Map the locations of Roy Sullivan's seven strikes and analyze what they had in common.
- Interview someone who works outdoors about how they handle weather-related risks.

DIFFERENTIATION

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

SOURCE

- Guinness World Records / National Weather Service