
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE CHURCH THAT'S NEVER FINISHED

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 CHURCH THAT'S NEVER FINISHED

In Barcelona, Spain, construction workers show up every day to build a church that has been under construction for over 140 years. La Sagrada Família, designed by architect Antoni Gaudí, broke ground in 1882 and still isn't finished.

When complete, La Sagrada Família will have 18 towers reaching up to 560 feet—taller than any building in Barcelona. The design combines Gothic architecture with nature-inspired shapes that look almost alien. Columns branch like trees. Facades tell biblical stories through thousands of carved figures. Light streams through stained glass windows in constantly changing colors.

Gaudí knew he would never see his masterpiece completed. When asked about the long timeline, he replied, 'My client is not in a hurry'—referring to God. Gaudí devoted the last 15 years of his life entirely to the project, even living on site. When he died in 1926, less than a quarter of the church was finished.

The project faced numerous setbacks. The Spanish Civil War destroyed Gaudí's original plans and models in 1936. Workers had to reconstruct the designs from photographs and fragments. Two world wars interrupted funding. For decades, progress crept along at a glacial pace.

Modern technology has dramatically accelerated construction. Computer modeling allows engineers to solve problems that once took years. 3D printing creates complex stone pieces quickly. Completion is now projected for 2026—the 100th anniversary of Gaudí's death.

But will it truly be 'finished'? Gaudí designed buildings that were meant to evolve. The church has already changed in ways he never planned. Some argue that a Gaudí building is never really complete—it should keep growing and changing like a living thing.

Over 4 million tourists visit the still-unfinished church each year, making it Spain's most visited monument. La Sagrada Família proves that sometimes the journey matters more than the destination—and that some dreams are worth waiting 140 years to see.

Word Count: 310 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: Sagrada Familia official

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1

In what year did construction begin on La Sagrada Família?

- ☐ A) 1826
- ☐ B) 1882
- ☐ C) 1926
- ☐ D) 1936

2

What happened to Gaudí's original plans and models?

- ☐ A) They were lost in a flood
- ☐ B) They were destroyed during the Spanish Civil War
- ☐ C) Gaudí took them when he died
- ☐ D) They are still used today

3

What did Gaudí mean when he said 'My client is not in a hurry'?

- ☐ A) The construction company was patient
- ☐ B) He was referring to God, suggesting the church was being built for eternity
- ☐ C) The Spanish government had no deadline
- ☐ D) Tourism would wait for completion

4

How has modern technology changed construction of La Sagrada Família?

- ☐ A) It has made construction slower
- ☐ B) Computer modeling and 3D printing have dramatically accelerated progress
- ☐ C) Technology is not used on the project
- ☐ D) Robots have replaced all workers

5

Why do some people argue La Sagrada Família may never be truly 'finished'?

- ☐ A) Spain will run out of money
- ☐ B) Gaudí designed buildings meant to evolve and keep changing
- ☐ C) The workers refuse to complete it
- ☐ D) The church will be demolished

6

What does the 140-year construction of La Sagrada Família suggest about the nature of great achievements?

- ☐ A) All projects should take over 100 years
- ☐ B) Great works often require vision beyond one lifetime and the dedication of many people across generations
- ☐ C) Only one architect should work on a building
- ☐ D) Modern buildings are always better

ANSWER KEY

The Church That's Never Finished

1. B) 1882

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'La Sagrada Família... broke ground in 1882.'

2. B) They were destroyed during the Spanish Civil War

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'The Spanish Civil War destroyed Gaudí's original plans and models in 1936.'

3. B) He was referring to God, suggesting the church was being built for eternity

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage clarifies that Gaudí was 'referring to God.' Building a church for God, Gaudí felt no urgency—divine projects can take as long as needed.

4. B) Computer modeling and 3D printing have dramatically accelerated progress

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage explains: 'Computer modeling allows engineers to solve problems that once took years. 3D printing creates complex stone pieces.'

5. B) Gaudí designed buildings meant to evolve and keep changing

DOK 3 — Analysis. The passage notes: 'Gaudí designed buildings that were meant to evolve... Some argue that a Gaudí building is never really complete—it should keep growing and changing like a living thing.'

6. B) Great works often require vision beyond one lifetime and the dedication of many people across generations

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking. Gaudí knew he wouldn't see completion, yet devoted his life to it. Multiple generations of workers have continued despite wars and setbacks. This shows that some achievements require passing vision and effort across generations.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Church That's Never Finished

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

- Gaudí knew he'd never see his church completed. What does it take to work on something you know you'll never finish?
- The Spanish Civil War destroyed Gaudí's original plans, but workers reconstructed them from fragments. Should they have built something new instead?
- Is La Sagrada Família more meaningful because it's taken so long to build, or would it be just as special if it had been completed quickly?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Research Gaudí's nature-inspired design techniques and sketch your own building that uses natural shapes (branches, shells, bones, etc.).
- Create a timeline of La Sagrada Família's construction, marking major events like Gaudí's death, the Civil War, and technological changes.
- Calculate how many generations of workers have contributed to La Sagrada Família (assuming 25 years per generation from 1882 to now).

DIFFERENTIATION

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

SOURCE

- Sagrada Família official / Architectural Digest